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**UNDERSTANDING THE RESILIENT PRACTICES OF JOURNALISTS IN THE FACE
OF HOSTILE SOURCES: AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH**

by

KELSEY R. MESMER

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

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Advisor

Date

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to all of the women, trans, non-binary journalists and journalists of color, past and present, who face constant gendered and racial challenges in the journalism industry while seeking out truth and reporting the news. Your voices are powerful and necessary. Keep telling your stories and the stories of your community members.

May we, as journalism educators and practitioners, strive to improve working conditions for the next generation journalists, so that they do not endure the same challenges.

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CHAPTER 1 NEWS MEDIA UNDER NATIONAL ATTACK

Standing outside the Michigan Senate chamber, Allison Donahue, a 22-year-old reporter covering politics in Lansing, asked then-Senator Peter Lucido a question about a report he was listed in, trying to get a comment about his involvement in a controversial Facebook group. Also outside the Senate chamber was a group of schoolboys from Lucido's alma mater. Instead of answering her question, Lucido ignored it, and "what was meant to be an opportunity for Lucido to respond to the report, turned into him making comments that objectified and humiliated me in front of a group of young boys" (Donahue, 2020a). The reporter chronicled the scene for her online newspaper, *Michigan Advance*, as a way to hold the senator accountable for his actions. She quotes him and recalls the response to his public comments:

"You should hang around! You could have a lot of fun with these boys, or they could have a lot of fun with you." The teenagers burst into an Old Boys' Network-type of laughter, and I walked away knowing that I had been the punchline of their "locker room" talk. Except it wasn't the locker room; it was the Senate chamber. And this isn't high school. It's my career. I'm 22 years old and one of the youngest current Capitol reporters. The senator's insinuating comments about the "fun" I might have with a group of teenage boys was belittling and it came from a place of power. (Donahue, 2020a)

Donahue's experience is just one example of sexual harassment from a source that garnered national attention (Hauser, 2020) because she had the gumption to write about the interaction. Donahue, a young White woman, had editors who were supportive and allowed her to publish a response to the senator's comments. But many more women in the journalism industry experience hostility in the form of sexual harassment, sexual assaults and microaggressions all the time and the situation goes unreported (Pasha, 2017; Chocarro, 2019). And while this type of gendered hostility is one systemic problem, there is also a broader problem of hostility toward journalists in general.

Hostility toward the news media is not new, but it did increase in frequency and intensity in the United States after former President Donald Trump ran for and then won office in 2016, as he began labeling members of the press “the enemy of the American people” (Davis, 2018; Meeks, 2020; Whipple & Shermak, 2020). While some members of the public offered support for journalists by condemning the president’s words on social media and by showing support for journalists and their role in democracy (Whipple & Shermak, 2020), others began to mimic his words and behaviors, even on a global scale (Farhall et al., 2019). The United Nations’ human rights council “warned that the U.S. president’s vitriolic rhetoric could result in violence against journalists” (Siddiqui & Smith, 2018). More than 350 newspapers published editorials shortly after his statement to address the president’s onslaught of anti-media rhetoric, with a concern that such “rhetoric is trickling down across the country. And it's having an impact in lots of communities... [journalists] are worried about their local officials adopting some of this language and some of their readers turning away” (Folkenflik, 2018).

While conditions for journalists are certainly grim on a global level (Dunham, 2020)—a band of “ideological cousins” who remained in power after Trump’s presidency ended similarly opposed a free press and practiced what commentators have dubbed “global Trumpism” (Beinart, 2019; Saramo, 2017)—the United States, specifically, has seen an increase in violence toward journalists since the Trump administration’s anti-media rhetoric became prominent: “This dangerous anti-press sentiment has trickled down to local governments, institutions and the American public” (Reporters Without Borders, 2021). The United States was labeled a “problematic” place for journalists for the first time in 2018, and again in 2019 by Reporters Without Borders. The deadly shooting at the *Capital Gazette* newsroom in Annapolis, Maryland is the most horrific example of violence toward journalists in the United States (Morales &

Sanchez, 2018), however, in the U.S., most hostility toward the press takes the form of verbal and online attacks. While it might be easy to dismiss Trump’s anti-press comments as off-hand, or distasteful but tolerable, scholars have noted how communicable such sentiments are (Saramo, 2017). One observer noted the atmosphere at a Trump rally:

It was a long, full-bodied roar—hands clapping, fists stabbing the air. The roar you give when things that you and your family and your friends have long believed are suddenly utterable on what is arguably the greatest stage on earth: the American presidential election. It was a roar of relief: These were no longer notions that had to be muttered under your breath. Trump wasn’t just “saying what he means” ... He, the freest of men, was saying what they meant. (Giridharadas, 2016, as cited in Saramo, 2017, p. 4)

What a United States president says so publicly and confidently likely has a trickle-down effect, as it becomes admissible for others to mimic. Furthermore, many of Trump’s verbal attacks included sexist and racist language in addition to simply being anti-press. For example, he accused Yamiche Alcindor, a Black woman and White House correspondent for *PBS Newshour*, of asking racist questions and instructed her during a televised press conference to “Be nice. Don’t be threatening” (Emmrich, 2020). He has told other journalists of color to change their tone, lower their voice, and not be nasty, and accused them of asking “a lot of stupid questions” (Morin, 2018).

Since the former U.S. president began constantly flinging strings of hateful comments and sexist remarks at women journalists (Cohen, 2017), state and local-level government officials have increasingly followed suit, as in the case of former Michigan Senator Lucido telling the young woman reporter that a group of schoolboys could “have a lot of fun” with her as she tried to interview him (Donahue, 2020a). Although verbal attacks on journalists are not solely directed at women, the nature of such attacks is often different. Insults flung at men primarily attack their professional identity or political ideology, but not their physical appearance, overall demeanor or sexuality. So while the fears and repercussions of such anti-media rhetoric are real for any journalist, they may be heightened for women journalists. This is compounded by the fact that

women journalists have long faced harassment and gendered hurdles in the journalism field (Chambers et al., 2004; North, 2015; Harris et al., 2016). And women of color in the industry have faced even more challenges (Chen et al., 2018; Gardiner, 2018).

Such a national attack on the journalism industry and these everyday challenges faced by local journalists begs the question: Why and how do reporters keep doing the job? Given this growing need to pay attention to hostility toward journalists, this project seeks to better understand the ways journalists experience the trickle-down effects of anti-media rhetoric in the form of hostile interactions with sources who vilify journalists; how women and men and women journalists of color experience these effects to different, possibly heightened degrees; and how journalists are resilient in spite of these challenges. Drawing on in-depth interviews with local journalists from across the United States, the ultimate goal is to understand what strategies these journalists use to be resilient and keep doing their jobs, despite safety concerns and daily struggles within their own journalistic routines and practices, and while their profession is attacked at the national level. This project is grounded in literature on women and journalists of color, the Communication Theory of Resilience (CTR), the feminist theory of intersectionality, and professional identity, specifically within the profession of journalism.

Longstanding Hardships for Women and Journalists of Color

Previous research on the journalism industry has focused primarily on the ways journalists interact within their newsrooms and the steps journalists take to produce the news. Ethnographies of newsrooms have been conducted to study how journalists collectively enact news routines and values such as objectivity, news judgement, and audience engagement (see Boczkowski, 2009; Tuchman, 1978; Usher, 2014). Other studies have used in-depth interviews and surveys with journalists to probe how journalists understand their professional identity and journalism's role in

democracy (Hanitzsch et al., 2011). Many have questioned whether men and women report the news and orient themselves to their careers differently (see Steiner, 2012), though little to no difference has been found in the ways men and women journalists understand their professional roles or in their professional values (Hanitzsch & Hanusch, 2012) and scholars have found only subtle differences in the news that men and women produce (Beam & Di Cicco, 2010; Craft & Wanta, 2004; van Zoonen, 1998).

Despite finding that gender does little in the way of affecting journalists' news work, women have still faced hardships within the journalism industry (Chambers et al., 2004). Research on gender and other aspects of journalists' identity has focused on barriers to the success for women and journalists of color and the effects of harassment on their news routines. Scholars largely acknowledge that women journalists face a double bind within the journalism profession, in which feminine traits and values are both expected of them as women and deemed unprofessional by the industry's masculine culture and norms (see Chambers et al., 2004; van Zoonen, 1998). Women journalists of multiple other marginalized identities—based on the intersections of race, ethnicity, sexuality, social class, language, and/or (dis)ability—face even more challenges, as they not only have to navigate the gendered field, but find themselves an even smaller minority within newsrooms. People of color made up 22.6% of the workforce in the 293 newspaper organizations that participated in the American Society of News Editors' annual Newsroom Employment Diversity Survey in 2018. This is up from 16.5% in 2017, but participation in the diversity survey also hit an all-time low in 2018, which could be skewing that picture of progress (ASNE, 2019). Still, 28 newsrooms reported having no newsroom employees of color, and on average newsrooms reported only 19.62% of their employees as being people of color. When looking at the gendered makeup of newspaper newsrooms in 2018, 41.7% of

newsroom employees were women, up from 39.1% in 2017. Although still a minority, this shows steady progress as compared to 2010, when 36.6% of all newsroom staff were women (Steiner, 2012).

Even after reaching a critical mass within the profession (Chambers et al., 2004; van Zoonen, 1998), women journalists have faced a myriad of challenges, which are exacerbated for women journalists of color and other marginalized identities. For example, in a study of how Black women journalists understand their position as a minority journalist, Meyers and Gayle (2015) found that those interviewed felt they had to work harder to reconcile their professional and racial identities by not only doing their jobs, but by also concerning themselves with their publication's coverage of Black communities. The women interviewed took on additional burdens professional and emotional burdens, as they felt the need to educate their coworkers by sharing their sensibilities—"a product of their social location as both African Americans and women" (Meyers & Gayle, 2015, p. 307)—and calling out others when a story reinforced racial stereotypes. Journalists of color—both men and women—have to take on additional cognitive and emotional work to appear neutral and professional when covering their own communities, even if they do not wish to cover those topical areas, while simultaneously knowing that if they do not cover their communities, others in the newsroom might not, or might cover them but in stereotypical ways (Meyers & Gayle, 2015; Nishikawa et al., 2009). And Black journalists have recently taken to Twitter to call out media employers that have historically disenfranchised their Black employees by paying them less, failing to promote Black journalists, and allowing for a toxic newsroom culture (Flynn, 2020).

Research on harassment and the gendered and racial hardships faced by journalists has largely focused on harassment and struggles coming from inside the newsroom and journalism

industry (e.g., Grady Gilger & Wallace, 2019; North, 2009, 2015, 2016; Smith, 2015, Tropic & Bruegmann, 2020) or from those external to the newsroom and journalistic practices, such as readers and (mostly online) commentators (e.g., Adams, 2017; Chen et al., 2018; Gardiner, 2018; Miller, 2020; Miller & Lewis, 2020). Miller and Lewis (2020) created a useful typology of harassment directed at journalists, distinguishing online from in-person forms of harassment and disruptive forms of harassment from more physical, safety threats. However, Miller and Lewis (2020) only looked at harassment coming from readers or random people the reporters encountered, essentially documenting one-off instances of harassment encountered while reporting in public and by unknown online users. They focused on the emotion work needed to deal with instances of harassment, however they stopped short of taking a critical approach that probes into the effectiveness and adaptive nature of journalists' emotional labor. Invoking emotional labor in the moment might help explain the way a single hostile interaction is dealt with, but it doesn't explain what keeps those journalists, especially ones who encounter harassment frequently, coming back to work each day. This leaves an important gap in the research, especially as many politicians and elite sources mimic former President Trump's anti-media rhetoric and act in hostile ways toward the press, with local community members likely following suit.

Missing from the literature, then, is an exploration of how journalists interact with and cope with hostility from sources, including routine, elite sources such as those a reporter would need to talk to multiple times on their beat. Take again the case of Allison Donahue and former Senator Lucido. As the reporter covering the Michigan capitol, Donahue reported on the senator's business regularly, and likely encountered Lucido and interviewed him frequently until he left office. In fact, Donahue published a news article a month later in which he was quoted (Donahue, 2020b). For a reporter covering a specific beat, a defined topical area in which the journalist is the go-to

person for all news stories in that area, elite sources are almost impossible to ignore or cut out of the reporting process entirely, even if they are hostile toward the journalist. This is because elite sources hold prominence in the community and are newsworthy because of their title and/or status (Tuchman, 1978), and if the beat reporter simply chose not to cover what they did because of the source's personality or behaviors, the public would miss out on the right to know what is going on in their community. And from a news market standpoint, it is likely that other journalists and news outlets would be covering the elite source, again despite any hostility they engaged in, so the reporter and news outlet *not* covering the story would seem incompetent for missing the story (Soloski, 1997; Tuchman, 1978).

The journalist-source dynamic is not well explored by previous research. Media effects scholarship captures the various ways readers respond to news, and most journalism scholarship seeks to understand the ways news is gathered holistically, but the actual one-on-one interaction between journalist and source has yet to be fully explored. Some scholarship has covered the ways journalists coordinate coverage with sources (Grunberg & Pallas, 2013), and tried to derive meaning from the ways journalists talk about sources within news stories (Clayman, 1990), but this research still does not explain the complex dynamic between journalist and source. Palmer (2017) sought to understand the by-product of this interaction in a study of 83 "ordinary" people who had been quoted in the news. Regardless of whether they were pleased with the experience or the final product, sources shared one common belief: that journalists exploited them for their stories (Palmer, 2017). While reporters might believe that their role is necessary for democracy and want to share subjects' stories for the good of public knowledge (Tuchman, 2010), subjects were keenly aware that the journalists they interacted with "had self-servingly taken their stories in order to profit from them" (Palmer, 2017, p. 585). But sources are not the only victims. One

study found sources to be one of the main proponents of sexual harassment toward women journalists, with 70% of women journalists saying a source had verbally sexually assaulted them (Walsh-Childers et al., 1996). The current study will use in-depth interviews with journalists to better understand the journalist-source interaction when there is hostility on the part of the source, possibly because of the perceptions illuminated by Palmer (2017) or as a consequence of Trump's anti-media rhetoric. In addition to simply describing journalists' experiences with hostile sources, the Communication Theory of Resilience and the feminist theory of intersectionality will be employed to understand how reporters react to hostile interactions from sources, and how they press on, despite continuous challenges.

Need to Understand Resilience Among Journalists from an Intersectional Lens

Often described as the ability to “bounce back” from some form of trauma, resilience can be enacted to overcome everyday situations, not just instances of intense trauma, such as prolonged periods of intense workplace stress (Buzzanell, 2010). This makes resilience an appropriate communicative process to study in relation to occasional, or continuous, hostile interactions in the work context. Important to note is that resilience, while usually discussed in positive terms, can actually hinder positive growth. Buzzanell and Houston (2018) critique scholars' too-common assumption that resilience is an inherently good process, without acknowledging that not everyone might have the resources to be resilient at a given moment in time, and that people might bounce back in destructive, rather than productive, ways. Furthermore, resilience as used for adaptation to, rather than transformation from, trauma or chronic stress might simply uphold the status quo without offering positive interventions and opportunities for growth (Buzzanell & Houston, 2018). Underexplored in the literature, then, is how enacting resilience might have unexpected

consequences. This project seeks to understand the varied ways journalists enact resilience and interrogate how these resilience strategies can be adaptive and transformative.

Theoretically, this project helps bridge the gap between CTR and intersectionality, to probe into the ways identity may limit or expound the need for resilience. The theory of intersectionality realizes “that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities” (Collins, 2015, p. 2). In this project, professional identity is conceptualized as an identity marker, since journalism is a profession in which its members usually feel a strong attachment to their work (Deuze, 2005; Russo, 1998). Pragmatically, this project identifies proactive, transformative resilience processes, which can then be shared with others, while also pointing out problematic, adaptive resilience processes, in an attempt to offer more helpful solutions. Transformative processes of resilience include the creations of journalistic teaching moments when journalists are confronted with hostile sources who buy in to anti-media rhetoric and have a fundamental misunderstanding of how the news works, while adaptive processes of resilience include avoiding potentially hostile sources who would utilize anti-media rhetoric, which perpetuates bias in the news. Many resilience processes are enabled or constrained by facets of the journalists’ identity, such that gender, race and age intersect to influence both the forms of hostility experienced by journalists and the ways they are able to be resilient in response to that hostility.

In sum, the purpose of this dissertation is to understand how journalists of various identities react to and overcome interactions with hostile sources by drawing on resilience processes, and if/how such hostile interactions and acts of resilience influence their journalistic routines. Similar to how a “hostile source” in hostile media effects studies is one that “does not align with their own

political perspective” (Yun et al., 2018, p. 23), this study operationalizes the term “hostile source” to refer to a source who holds biased perceptions of the journalist because of the journalist’s personal identity (rooted in sexism, racism, xenophobia, etc.) or professional identity, as perceived by the journalist interacting with them. The following sections will provide additional background on journalists’ news routines, hostility toward journalists in general, and the experiences of women and journalists of color. I’ll then overview my theoretical lens for this project, propose research questions and discuss my methods of data collection and analysis. Finally, I will share findings and discuss in-depth theoretical and practical implications stemming from this dissertation.

CHAPTER 2 A HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT FOR JOURNALISTS

Hostility toward journalists has been on the rise, even as the number of journalists killed globally has declined (Reporters Without Borders, 2021). “An intense climate of fear” (Reporters Without Borders, 2021) permeates the profession, especially in the United States where “near-daily denunciations of the press” during the Trump administration “helped normalize abuses against journalists by ordinary people” (Sterne & Peters, 2017). According to the U.S. Press Freedom Tracker, 426 physical attacks were made on journalists in the United States in the year 2020, and 106 had their equipment damaged while they were reporting. This was a drastic increase from just 35 physical attacks in 2019, 35 attacks in 2018, and 50 attacks in 2017 (U.S. Press Freedom Tracker, 2021). And anti-media sentiments remained high even after Trump’s election loss, as evidenced by events in early 2021¹:

The events of Jan. 6 in Washington crystalized the worsening atmosphere and threat to journalists in the United States from political extremists and conspiracy theorists. Words that were written on a door of the U.S. Capitol, “Murder the media,” by some of the armed protesters were a stark and frightening warning to all of us. (International Press Institute, 2021)

While acts of physical violence against journalists in the United States are still relatively rare, President Trump’s largest trump against the press was in destroying its credibility (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2020). Public trust in journalists declined dramatically in the United States in the years directly before and during the Trump administration (Schudson, 2019). Trump’s anti-media sentiments trickled down to shape the views of the American people. One study found 29% of Americans agreed with the statement “the news media is the enemy of the American people,” and 26% of Americans surveyed agreed the president should have the power to shut down news

¹ Right-wing extremists raided the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, in a demonstration of support for President Trump, after he lost the 2020 Presidential Election.

outlets for “bad behavior” (Ipsos, 2018). Additionally, 56% of Americans surveyed believed the journalism industry is “on the wrong track” (The Media Insight Project, 2018).

Hurdles Specific to Women in Journalism

Women are known to be at greater risk of attacks and harassment than men working in journalism (Harris et al., 2016). And although women have long faced harassment and gendered hurdles in the journalism field (see Chambers et al., 2004; Harris et al., 2016; Miller & Lewis, 2020; North, 2009; 2015; 2016), new hurdles have developed, specifically in the United States, in response to President Trump’s sexist and anti-media rhetoric. Such rhetoric and the visible hostile treatment of women reporters “contribute to diminishing attitudes about [women] reporters as a whole” (Khalidi, 2017). Many have long believed that White women and men and women of color are less capable of working in the journalism field than men.

In a comparative media study aimed to further research on gender difference in news production by looking at the professional views of men and women journalists from 18 countries, Hanitzsch and Hanusch (2012) didn’t find any significant differences in how women and men journalists thought about or did their jobs. Once indoctrinated into the masculine field of journalism, women tend to operate on the same wavelengths as men. This is largely unsurprising, given that women are held to and judged by the same journalistic standards as men in the newsroom. Little changes in terms of the news produced when women journalists become newsroom leaders, as women are taught how to identify, gather, and write news by men, and therefore are socialized to follow long-standing organizational norms (Beam & Di Cicco, 2010). The only substantial changes when women are in charge include management strategies such as more open communication and teamwork throughout the newsroom and the addition of more family-friendly policies for news workers (Everbach, 2006). Women have—consciously or

unconsciously—learned to adapt to the masculine industry of news and do their jobs in similar ways of men.

Despite this lack of observable differences in practices between men and women in their journalistic routines, there is a long-standing *perception* that women are not as well-suited for journalism (van Zoonen, 1998). This causes women to experience a double-bind as women enacting masculine values: “they have to show in their daily performance that they are good journalists as well as ‘real’ women” (p. 28). Ultimately, men’s voices are viewed as more authoritative and objective than women’s, even when they are reporting, saying, and writing the same exact thing. This paradox—as women journalists produce quality journalism on par with their men in the industry but continue to be perceived as lesser journalists—is made worse when public attacks are directed at women journalists by respected politicians. One woman lamented for *The Columbia Journalism Review* that for her and other women in the field:

[T]heir very status as a female reporter—asking questions, being in public—made them vulnerable. It’s exhausting to try to experience the reporting world from the same place of safety as a straight white man, but female reporters, especially minorities and those who identify as queer, often forget how many things are making us tired—and making our jobs so much harder. (Petersen, 2018)

The double-bind women experience occurs because journalism is a patriarchal industry, and newsrooms, as well as professional norms that transcend the newsroom, take on masculine gender identities. The concept and recognition of gendered organizations and careers can be difficult to ascertain on its face because “we don’t even notice how members construct jobs, tasks, occupations, and settings to sustain gender” (Buzzanell, 1995, p. 332). Extended work hours, a lack of work-family benefits, and stigma associated with gaps in one’s resume—typically taken by women in order to birth and raise children—are just a few of the ways organizations are structured to propel men forward while holding back female counterparts. Furthermore, men are

offered promotions at greater rates than equally qualified women because leadership is often conflated with masculinity in the workplace (Buzzanell, 1995). Reflecting on why the “glass ceiling” for women is still intact, Weyer (2007) outlines the socially constructed reasons men are so commonly evaluated more positively than women in the workplace. In sum, scholars agree that agentic traits (assertiveness, ambition, and problem-solving) are generally designated to men, while communal traits (supporting others, offering help and sympathy, and tentativeness) are associated with women (Buzzanell, 1995; Eagly & Carli, 2003; Weyer, 2007). These traits also correspond to preferred leadership styles so “male” becomes synonymous with “leader” in the organizational context.

Translated to journalism, Jenkins and Finneman (2018) point to the multi-layered ways news work restructures a system of rules and norms that cater to masculine needs as one reason for why women still lag behind men in the journalism field. Masculine gender norms are ingrained through policies and procedures, the ways communication flows through the newsroom, and in newsroom culture. Gendered story assignments are another factor that prevents a majority of women from rising through the newsroom hierarchy, as women journalists are victims of both horizontal (North, 2016) and vertical segregation (Chambers et al., 2004) in the newsroom. In sum, the constraints placed on women journalists relating to masculine values and routines stem from the persistent belief that women are incompatible with routines of news practice. These values and routines have been reaffirmed over time, as women and men are socialized into the news organization. Additionally, gendered newsroom policies and norms that prevent the majority of women from staying in the field long-term or from advancing within the field. Former women journalists interviewed by Elmore (2009) said the 24-hours news cycle and unsustainable balancing act between work and family was one of the main reasons they chose to leave the

profession. Many women found it impractical to be both a working journalist and a primary caregiving parent (Elmore, 2009). Women also left the journalism field because of sex discrimination, lack of advancement and recruitment, low pay and a lack of mentoring opportunities for women as compared to men (Everbach, 2013).

In addition to simply navigating gender politics and norms within the workplace, women journalists have also faced rampant sexual harassment within the newsroom, especially as they rose to ranks of editors or when they were the exception and covered hard news. As Chambers et al. (2004) describe:

A major problem is male innuendo, or worse, explicit sexual objectification used to undermine women's confidence and discredit their professionalism. Even women who have reached senior positions and achieved high levels of career success have been subjected to misogynistic comments and implications that they offered sex, flirted, or flaunted themselves in order to obtain a story to compromise their expertise (p. 100).

Roughly 60% of women when surveyed say they have experienced sexual harassment from their male co-workers and editors in the newsroom (Chambers et al., 2004), and women journalists largely report having to cope with the behavior and learning to joke alongside men in order to get ahead (van Zoonen, 1998). In terms of their journalistic routines, it's unclear whether women journalists use more women as sources because they want to, or because their beats include more women in official roles, or because men in official roles give women journalists the cold shoulder, forcing them to find women to quote (North, 2016). The rise of the #MeToo movement has helped uncover cases of sexual harassment in the media industry, but Eckert and Steiner (2018) assert that the sexual harassment of women in journalism and other media fields is still pervasive.

Miller and Lewis (2020) identified four distinct types of harassment—including sexual harassment—that the women broadcast journalists experienced. Two of these were offline forms of harassment (disruptive in-person harassment and physical and abrasive in-person harassment)

and two were online (online harassment as unwanted sexual advances, and online harassment as threats and criticisms). This typology offers a helpful way to categorize harassment, since some of these types of harassment are more or less serious than others, while some are more or less gendered than others. In regard to online harassment, for example, they found that the women broadcast journalists had received pornographic photos sent to them through social media messages, repeated requests for dates, demeaning comments about their voice and physical appearance, and were even sent videos of journalists being beheaded in other countries. To cope with these forms of harassment, the women performed emotional labor, defined as the mental/emotional labor required to regulate workers' feelings and expressions to conform to organizational and professional demands (Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983). However, Miller and Lewis (2020) did not consider differences based on race or other marginalized identities. Left to be explored is how harassment is not only experienced reporters in other types of media (besides broadcast), but also how this is exacerbated along the lines of race and other identity markers.

Technological Changes and Increased Opportunities for Harassment

The move from traditional to online news drastically changed journalists' news routines. In her ethnographic study of *The New York Times*, Nikki Usher (2014) documented the tensions embedded in journalists' news work in 2010, as the print newspaper began prioritizing online news and developing its website. In this digital-first news environment, traditional news values are joined, and altered, by the digital news values of immediacy, interactivity, and participation. Although Usher's work does not focus on gender, the rise of participation as a digital news value (Usher, 2014) has led to further opportunities for harassment toward women journalists.

With the advent of online news and the growing presences of social media, journalists are encouraged to have an online presence and engage with readers online. The result has been

problematic, with readers writing hateful and sexist comments underneath online news stories targeted toward women and minority journalists much more often than toward men. Chen et al. (2018) interviewed 75 women reporters and online editors from various countries (Germany, India, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and the United States) about their experiences with online gendered harassment. The authors found that 73 of the 75 women interviewed experienced some level of gendered online harassment, which put them in a double bind. The women were expected to engage online as part of their job, but then faced vitriolic comments from online readers. Engagement with those commenters potentially escalated the harassment. Some participants said they received more harassment when they covered “men’s” topics, which made the journalists try to avoid writing about those topics to avoid the harassment (Chen et al., 2018). Likewise, other scholars have found that women journalists covering “masculine subjects,” (Chambers et al., 2004; North, 2015; van Zoonen, 1998) such as, for example, politics, sports, business and technology, have experienced heightened levels of gendered harassment. Through questionnaires with women journalists writing about technology and a textual analysis of sexist, abusive comments directed at those journalists, Adams (2017) found that 62% of the women she interviewed had experienced abuse, and many said that influenced their career and personal lives in negative ways. Through these examples, it becomes evident that the new routine of online engagement—the digital news value of participation (Usher, 2014)—feeds into a cycle that further excludes women from hard news stories and therefore prevents women from rising through the ranks of the newsroom (Chambers et al., 2004).

This problem extends past news organizations' websites, though. The rise of social media has led to more opportunities for personal branding online, via journalists’ own Facebook and Twitter profiles. While some journalists can simply create a professional social media page and

share strictly news, journalists are “in some cases being compelled by particular organizational and institutional mandates, to blur distinctions between the representation of personal and professional identity in social media spaces to more effectively participate in emerging cultures of reciprocity, sharing, and transparency” (Bossio & Holton, 2018, p. 249). Journalists have to navigate their professional and personal identities in these online spaces, being aware that their every word is scrutinized by the public. Typically, online personal branding consists of two types of posts by journalists: those considered self-promotion (i.e., links to news stories, behind-the-scenes photos or commentary, and teasers to future stories) and those designed to humanize them by offering glimpses into their personal life (i.e., quips about their family life and hobbies or interests) (Bossio & Holton, 2018; Finneman et al., 2019). This negotiation is particularly difficult for women journalists, who take stronger precautions to protect themselves against harassment (Bossio & Holton, 2018) and receive sexualized comments in vastly disproportionate numbers than men (Finneman et al., 2019). And such gendered online abuse is particularly problematic because it has the potential to transform into offline threats and abuse: In a global study including 125 countries, 73% of women journalists have been harassed online, with 20% of those women reporting that online attacks have bled into their physical lives (Posetti et al., 2020).

Many women journalists feel their journalistic training and newsroom leaders have not equipped them to combat online harassment (Chen et al., 2018; Harris et al., 2016). Of the 75 women interviewed by Chen et al. (2018), 24 said they had to develop their own strategies to deal with the online harassment they experienced. While some of their strategies simply involved moderation, such as setting keywords that get flagged to stop a comment from appearing on their pages, others said “they shifted how they told a story to head off harassment” (Chen et al., 2018, p. 10). Sometimes this meant avoiding covering news that would anger viewers, while other times

it caused the reporters to be more reflective in their work and think about alternative voices that could be surfaced in their reporting. The women also said the online harassment forced them to become emotionally girded to protect themselves from the disparaging comments they knew they would have to encounter online. This included creating a mental division between one's work and personal life, and to try not to take the comments personally. It also included protecting loved ones from the online harassment by instructing them not to follow or read comments on their work. Similarly, Miller and Lewis (2020) found that women broadcast journalists, especially news anchors who have a very prominent physical presence in the news, received online harassment in the form of unwanted sexual advances, threats and criticisms.

Since the value of participation deems it necessary that journalists engage online—and women journalists are not well-equipped to combat online harassment—Chen et al. (2018) called for both journalism educators and newsroom editors to prepare journalists for online harassment, to provide them with scripts they can easily use to respond to harassers, and to step in and support journalists when needed. Ging and Siapera (2018) make the case that the online news domain and online instances of harassment are important to pay attention to because online actions have off-line ramifications. Gardiner's (2018) work showcases how hate spewed toward journalists through online comment sections on their stories can have very real consequences for journalistic content. Gardiner, a former *Guardian* news editor, analyzed all comments posted to the online news website between 2006 and 2016, including those that had been blocked by moderators because they violated the site's community standards. Women and ethnic minority reporters received more hateful comments than white male journalists, supporting the claim that journalists of marginalized identities receive more public abuse. Many of those targeted changed their journalistic routines to try to dissuade further abusive comments. This included toning down their opinion in future

stories, changing a story's angle to placate readers and appear less controversial, or turn down story assignments on topics they knew would elicit more hateful comments (Gardiner, 2018).

In sum, the constraints placed on women journalists relating to harassment stem from both a masculine culture within the newsroom, and from those who journalists interact with outside of the newsroom, specifically readers through online comments. Technology, in this case, has reinforced other constraints placed on women, by making women vulnerable to readers' sexist comments (Chen et al., 2018; Gardiner, 2018). Because of this, women have altered their news routines and avoided hard news topics where they received the most online harassment, which reinforces the pre-existing constraint of gendered story assignments. While Miller and Lewis (2020) found that women journalists often experience harassment from onlookers while they are out reporting, and they do interact with hostile sources occasionally—usually one-time sources they are interviewing as a person-on-the-street—not enough research has been done on women journalists' interactions with sources and the possible sexism (or racism and other prejudices) and hostility taking place on that front. Furthermore, too much research has focused on either gender or race in journalism, and not enough has considered the compounded effects of gender *and* race on the experiences of journalists, and more specifically women of color in the industry.

Hurdles for Journalists of Color

Although extensive research has documented the role of the Black press, the work of early journalists of color, and the ways race is covered in the news, research on the day-to-day experiences of journalists of color and the challenges they face is severely lacking. The lack of diversity in newsrooms (Grieco, 2018) and failure to promote journalists of color into management positions has been well documented (see Arana, 2018). We also know that journalists of color, specifically Black journalists, take on additional emotion work, as they often have to use their

“sensitivities” to police and educate their white colleagues when a story reinforced racial stereotypes. Meyers and Gayle (2015) interviewed Black women reporters and found that they were highly aware and concerned about the overall negative coverage of African Americans in the news. To combat this, they tried to create racially balanced stories that showed an equal number of white and Black expert sources and avoid images of Black people they deemed stereotypical (Meyers & Gayle, 2015).

As previously mentioned, journalists of color are known to receive more online harassment than their white, male counterparts (Gardiner, 2018), but qualitative and large quantitative studies of harassment typically include too few journalists of color to make substantial claims about their experiences (see Miller, 2020; Miller & Lewis, 2020). Furthermore, most national and global datasets documenting the number of attacks on journalists fail to break those statistics down by race (for example, the Committee to Protect Journalists tracks journalists’ gender but not race, Reporters Without Borders lists the names of journalists who have been killed but not demographic information, and UNESCO provides demographics for survey takers but does not provide an analysis of online harassment of women broken down by race). Chen et al. (2018) were able to make a connection between gender, race, and story topic, finding that women journalists of color who reported on topics such as politics, immigration and race were more likely to become targets for online harassment. All of this points toward a need to better understand the experiences of journalists of color, specifically their experiences of hostility both within the newsroom and outside of it as they go about their news routines.

CHAPTER 3 HIGHLIGHTING THE NEED FOR RESILIENCE IN JOURNALISM

Given the multiple challenges journalists, and especially women journalists, have to face in their daily routines, the Communication Theory of Resilience (CTR) is an appropriate lens to understand how journalists work through these routine stressors and more intense instances of trauma experienced while reporting. In particular, when paired with the theory of intersectionality, CRT can help explain how journalists negotiate, adapt to, and potentially work to transform a social climate of anti-media rhetoric and hostility toward journalists. The professional identification of journalists will also be considered.

The Communication Theory of Resilience

Resilience is often described as one's ability to "bounce back" after trauma or some stressful event. The study of resilience has grown exponentially over the last decade in the field of communication (see the Journal of Applied Communication Research's 2018 special forum on resilience) and the construct has many definitions. Within psychology, where the concept originated, resilience has been conceptualized in two ways. First, resilience is understood as a cluster of personality traits that one possesses to varying degrees and is described as "the personal qualities that enables one to thrive in the face of adversity" (Connor & Davidson, 2003, p. 76). Second, resilience is understood as a coping mechanism used to adapt to and overcome stress, and is described as "a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" (Luthar et al., 2003, p. 543). Communication scholars typically conceptualize resilience in line with this second approach, as a process enabling people to bounce back from traumatic events, such as job loss, financial crises, abusive relationships, war, or natural disasters (Buzzanell & Turner, 2003; Buzzanell, 2010; Lucas & Buzzanell, 2012). This is a notable shift away from the first treatment of resilience as a personality trait that determines why some

individuals or entities are able to surmount challenges, while others are not, to instead tracing how communicative practices accomplish resilience while acknowledging that anyone, regardless of their personal traits, can enact resilience. Furthermore, Buzzanell (2010) proposes that resilience can be enacted to overcome everyday situations, not just instances of intense trauma, such as prolonged periods of intense workplace stress. This makes resilience an appropriate process to study in context wherein individuals are facing harassment, high, persistent levels of stress and emotional exhaustion. Journalism is one such profession, especially when there is a social climate of anti-media rhetoric, in which resilience is necessary to cope with the constant onslaught of attacks on the profession.

Brit et al. (2016) called for more research that examined resilience in the context of adverse workplace stress. In their study of job insecurity, burnout, and psychological contract breach, Shoss et al. (2018) positioned resilience as both a moderator of emotional exhaustion and burnout, and as a coping strategy for dealing with stress. They found that higher levels of resilience, measured as a trait, did result in lower levels of emotional exhaustion and all other outcome variables measured (Shoss et al., 2018). Likewise, “resilient coping” behaviors resulted in lower levels of emotional exhaustion over an extended period of time, a month after participants took the survey measuring their trait resilience (Shoss et al., 2018). While survey research such as this is helpful in finding relationships between resilience and other organizational variables, they lack the ability to fully investigate resilient behaviors. This is because surveys often ask about participants’ perceived ability to use given resilient coping strategies (as was the method used by Shoss et al., 2018) rather than allowing participants to describe the coping strategies that they actually used. Furthermore, Ungar (2004) advocates for “a constructionist interpretation [that] explicitly tolerates diversity in the way resilience is nurtured and maintained” (p. 345). This constructionist approach

allows participants to describe for themselves the ways they are resilient and avoids the *a priori* characterization of certain behaviors as “resilient” or “destructive.”

In line with process views on resilience and the constructionist approach, the Communication Theory of Resilience (Buzzanell, 2018a) focuses on actual communicative processes, as expressed reflexively by individuals who have, or still, experienced long periods of high workplace stress. CTR offers a more precise understanding of how resilience processes unfold and how it is used to overcome—and potentially transform—stress and trauma. Resilience in this case is defined as “constituted in and through communicative processes that enhance people’s abilities to create new normalcies” (Buzzanell, 2010, p. 9). CTR focuses on tensional processes that allow for adaptation and transformation, stability and change, and disruption and reintegration (Buzzanell, 2018a).

CTR details five specific resilience subprocesses (similar to what Shoss et al. 2018 would describe as resilient coping behaviors) that individuals can engage in to work through disruption. These five key communicative subprocesses (Buzzanell, 2010; 2018b) through which people construct resilience are: 1) the creation of new normalcies through storytelling, 2) the use of identity anchors, or a set of discourses that help individuals explain who they are and why getting through this stress is integral to their self-concept and future self, 3) the strategic use of communication networks for support, 4) the development of alternative logics, which help individuals reframe the stress and find silver linings, and 5) the legitimation of negative emotions while simultaneously foregrounding productive action. These processes are not mutually exclusive and may be used in combination and to varying degrees, depending on the context. And while these are the most frequently observed resilience subprocesses, others have been documented (see Brandhorst, 2018 and Tian & Bush, 2020 for examples).

CTR also recognizes “that there are both benefits and costs for the particular ways in which resilience is constituted” (Buzzanell, 2018a, p. 99), and that a person’s inability to enact resilience does not only occur at the level of the individual, but might also be because of structural, cultural, or political structures that limit individuals’ agency (Buzzanell, 2018a). Moreover, resilience can be enacted on two different levels, the micro-level in which individuals make sense of and do resilience in their everyday lives, and the macro-level, in which organizational and societal discourses shape, or construct, the way members enact resilience (Buzzanell et al., 2009). Differentiating between the two levels of resilience discourse can help separate the individual, personal ways journalists might use resilience processes and the ways whole newsrooms might reorganize to enact resilience together. Central themes in resilience discourse at the micro-level are acceptance, preserving dignity of those stuck in debilitating or stressful situations, the crafting of new procedures for dealing with the new reality and a strengthening of identity stories and actions (Buzzanell et al., 2009; McGreavy, 2016). At the macro-level, though, discourse within larger journalistic communication networks could reveal the ways journalists enact resilience to make sense of the problems they are facing in today’s political climate and together create strategies for dealing with uncooperative sources and untrusting readers (Buzzanell et al., 2009; Buzzanell, 2010).

While resilience is usually discussed in positive terms, Buzzanell and Houston (2018) critique scholars’ too-common assumption that resilience is an inherently good process, without acknowledging that not everyone might have the resources to be resilient at a given moment in time, and that individuals might bounce back in destructive, rather than productive, ways. Furthermore, resilience as used for adaptation to, rather than transformation from, trauma or chronic stress might simply uphold the status quo without offering positive interventions and

opportunities for growth (Buzzanell & Houston, 2018). Underexplored in the literature, then, is how enacting resilience might have unexpected consequences. While some might view these unexpected consequences as a potential “dark side” to resilience, such unexpected heterogeneity should be considered from the standpoint of those using the resilience processes. What one person deems an unacceptable outcome and failure to thrive or be resilient may actually be successful in the mind of another individual (Ungar, 2004). When used in combination with the theory of intersectionality, we can see how macro-level context, organizational context, and individual identity can influence resilience processes.

Accounting for Intersectionality Among Journalists

In addition to being largely dominated by men, newsrooms are also largely white. People of color make up only 22.6% of U.S. newspaper journalists (American Society of Newspaper Editors, 2018), causing “many observers [to] argue that news coverage still has a long way to go before it fairly portrays all of America’s distinct communities” (Nishikawa et al., 2009, p. 243). And while intersectionality has often been used to critique the media (Molina-Guzman & Cacho, 2015; Armstrong, 2013), it has infrequently been used as a lens to understand power relations within media organizations such as newspapers and broadcast news stations. An intersectional approach that successfully interrogates domains of power and identity in the journalistic context can help explain how minority journalists see their journalistic role in light of their intersecting identities, point out ways in which their jobs are made more difficult because of these intersections, and illuminate intensified needs for or possible barriers to the enactment of resilience. By drawing on the theory of intersectionality, this project realizes “the critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but

as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities” (Collins, 2015, p. 2).

Intersectionality was first formally introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), a lawyer and critical race scholar, as she made sense of the experiences of Black women in America who were trying to gain equal rights in the workforce in the 1970s. In building off the work of social movements and community organizers of her time (Collins, 2015), Crenshaw (1989) proposed intersectionality as a way to combat single-axis thinking, which she argued was marginalizing Black women by overlooking their unique position. By only focusing on race, anti-racist discourse was only viewed through the lens of middle- or upper-class black men, and when focusing on gender/sex discrimination, the feminist movement was only viewed through the lens of middle- or upper-class white women. By looking at both race and gender, and how those two identities interacted to create a unique, situated form of inequality, Crenshaw (1989) described how Black women were left out of feminist and anti-racist discourses because they didn't fit neatly into either movement's agenda. Crenshaw's (1989) focus was on how this failure to consider Black women's unique experiences, as shaped by race and gender, marginalized them in very tangible ways within the legal system. Crenshaw (1991) later used intersectionality as a way to explain the marginalization of battered women, with lower class Black women and immigrant women as example cases. Government-offered “solutions” to help women who were being abused by their partners couldn't adequately be accessed by many lower-class women, women of color, and immigrant women who couldn't speak English. The established solutions catered to the upper class and failed to consider multiple, intersecting sources of inequality. Throughout these two early works, Crenshaw uses intersectionality to explain the various ways race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of women of color's lived experiences, and she adds social class as

a category working along race and gender to socially construct inequalities. Later, Patricia Hill Collins, another of intersectionality's founding mothers, helped establish core tenants that transformed the concept into what many consider a theory and/or analytic tool. In her development of Black feminist thought, Collins (2000), used intersectionality to center the experiences of Black women along the intersections of race, gender, class, and sexuality. Her framework for analyzing the interconnectedness of these identities transformed into the more formal study of intersectionality.

Grounded within the social contexts of individuals, intersectionality asks us to consider social inequalities as stemming from multiple, intersecting power relations that are grounded in “particular historical, intellectual, and political contexts that shape what we think and do” (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 28). This creates a complicated picture of socially constructed reality that is not generalizable, meaning visions of social justice stemming from intersectional research are equally complex. The very categories of race, gender, class, sexuality, etc. are fluid in that individuals can choose to privilege certain aspects of their identity over others in certain situations. In this way, intersectionality allows for contradiction and ambiguity as individuals enact agency in creative and strategic ways within their everyday lived experiences.

Together, social phenomenon should be analyzed across four levels of analysis, what Collins and Bilge (2016) call domains of power. These domains help us understand how power is organized and interconnected, and they exist at the interpersonal, disciplinary, cultural, and structural levels. The interpersonal domain lies at the micro level and highlights multi-layered identities. This level is “about people's lives, how people relate to one another, and who is advantaged or disadvantaged within social interactions” (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 7). Here scholars consider combinations of identities along the lines of race, gender, class, sexuality,

citizenship, and so on characterize the experiences of individuals. Next, the disciplinary domain exists at the meso level, and involves the implementation of rules and processes which may be enacted differently for individuals based on their multiple identities. The goal here is to account for differing treatment that might make certain individuals or groups more vulnerable than others. Third is the cultural domain of power, which is ideological and involves the manufacturing and dissemination of beliefs and norms within society. The mass media “present important scripts of gender, race, and nation that work together and influence one another” (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 11). While the mass media may serve the function of entertainment, it also upholds capitalism and nationalism, and can mask social inequalities by creating a façade of equal opportunity. Finally, the structural level operates at the macro, institutional level, and reflects the way that power is solidified by organizations and institutions such as governments, religion, and education systems. These four levels can be analyzed separately for the sake of thick description; however, the domains mutually influence each other and no one domain is more important than the others (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

Very few scholars have applied the theory of intersectionality to news work. Meyers and Gayle (2015) used the concept of intersectionality to look at the experiences and practices of Black women journalists. Based on previous research findings that more minorities do not lead to more diverse news covers and that more women do not lead to changes in news content or newsroom culture, the authors were interested in whether an identity at the intersection of those marginalities would be more effective at producing change because she would have double the reason to push back on norms and structures. The Black women reporters were more concerned with racial coverage than with the coverage of women, as Meyers and Gayle (2015) found that the women deemed reporting on women’s issues to already be sufficient and fair. They didn’t see a need to

seek out specific stories about Black women, ultimately privileging their racial identity over their gender identity. In another example, Nishikawa et al. (2009) explored the intersection of race and professional identity to investigate the extent to which minority journalists feel constrained by traditional journalistic norms and whether they feel that they have to power to “make a difference in mainstream news” (p. 243) through their reporting. They found that the Hispanic and African American reporters they interviewed felt both constrained by journalistic norms but also that they could make a difference through their engagement in the newsroom. The norm of objectivity prompted minority journalists to avoid covering certain subjects that could be misconstrued as advocacy journalism. But the participants noted that they could pursue stories about their community that white journalists might overlook, as long as they stayed objective, and said they sought out community leaders as sources and tried to include diverse perspectives into their news stories, whereas white journalists might only include traditional, government sources in their stories. Similar to Meyers and Gayle’s (2015) finding, the journalists also said they would frequently speak up in their newsrooms when a story was ignoring a certain minority angle, or when a story included a problematic cultural stereotype. Participants said they felt compelled to voice their concerns and enact what the authors called “stealth advocacy” in which they stood up for their communities without writing overly biased news stories. Ultimately, the authors found that many “seek a balance between being a minority journalist and acting as a professional journalist” (Nishikawa et al., 2009, p. 253). This finding hints at the idea that a “minority journalist” is somehow thought of as different, and possibly less than, a “professional journalist.” Since journalism is a profession in which most members have very salient professional identities, journalistic identification is important to consider alongside other axes of the journalists' identity.

Journalists' Social and Professional Identification

Journalism is a profession in which workers have especially salient attachments to their profession (Russo, 1998; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986, 1996, 2012). Journalists are trained to uphold rigorous ethical guidelines—in the United States, this is usually the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics, or an equivalent—and practice a consistent set of news routines (Tuchman, 1978). While the news routines vary depending on the country context, most journalists agree on a set of universal values, even on a global scale (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Weaver, 1998), and the knowledge of and belief in these values serves as a professional identification mechanism. These “ideal-typical traits or values” are public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy and ethics (Deuze, 2005). Such a professional culture has been apparent in the United States since the end of World War II and operates under a “social responsibility model” (Deuze, 2005; Hallin, 1992) that centers on journalist's function as “expert communicators for the public” (Williams et al., 2018, p. 821).

Journalism students are often able to articulate their sense of professional identity before entering the industry in ways that align with Deuze's ideal-types of journalistic values (Nygren & Stignrnad, 2014; Williams et al., 2017), and that sense of professional identity can carry on after leaving the journalism profession (Sherwood & O'Donnell, 2018). Journalists often “refer to themselves first or elementally as members of that profession” (Russo, 1998, p. 73) above other aspects of their identity. But one's professional identity is just one part of their social identity.

According to Social Identity Theory, an individual's sense of self comes from both their social identity (comprised of their professional roles, organizational affiliations and group memberships) and their personal identity (comprised of their immutable characteristics, cognitive abilities and interests) (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Although journalists' sense of professional

identification is generally strong, it can vary in intensity based on aspects of individuals' social identity, especially their gender and race. While they share the same professional values, women and journalists of color have had to work harder to feel as if they are full members of the profession. For example, women were originally excluded from press clubs and had to form their own professional organizations in the 1960s (Jenkins et al., 2018). Networking organizations are a key component of professional culture, and provide members with not only social contacts and emotional support, but also with training and professional development opportunities (Allison, 1986). While women are now allowed in traditional press clubs, they originally had to—and sometimes still do (Mesmer & Jahng, 2019; Mesmer & Jahng, 2021)—create their own professional networking spaces (Jenkins et al., 2018). Women journalists are thought to have “a much more fragmented and contradictory professional identity than men” (Van Zoonen, 1998, p. 45) as they navigate the double bind of being a woman-journalist. Journalists of color often feel as though they have to choose between their professional identity and their racial identity as they enact their journalistic routines (Meyers & Gayle, 2015; Nishikawa et al., 2009). They have also struggled with autonomy in the newsroom, as journalists of color have been found to be held to different standards, have their minority perspectives edited out of stories, or be pigeonholed into minority beats they didn't want to be covering (Johnston & Flamiano, 2007; Pritchard & Stonbely, 2007).

Finally, it is important to recognize that professional identification is an ongoing process not only influenced by members' actions or actions of the group, but also takes place “against a backdrop of change and ‘outside’ elements” (Cheney & Tompkins, 1987, p. 5). Furthermore:

The image of the organization—what journalists think of how outsiders see their organization, whether it is seen as successful or not—is still ‘one of the most important predictors of job well-being’ for journalists (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996: 110) (De Bruin, 2000, p. 230).

Against a backdrop of anti-media rhetoric and a rise in verbal attacks toward journalists, it is likely that journalists are reacting to these messages in ways that reaffirm, or potentially challenge, their professional identification. This project is interested in those reactions to the extent that they are also enactments of resilience (i.e., holding onto the values of journalism as an identity anchor) and dependent on other identity markers (i.e., based on gender, race and/or class).

Statement of Research Questions

Based on the scholarly literature reviewed above, the overarching goals of this research are to 1) understand the trickle-down effects of anti-media rhetoric by describing the forms of hostility journalists experience from sources, 2) explore how hostility is experienced differently by women and journalists of color, 3) understand the resilience processes used by journalists in light of hostility, 4) explore how resilience processes also vary based on social differences such as gender, race, and age, and 5) illuminate the ways hostility and resilience processes have affected news routines and the resulting news product. This study therefore proposes the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the experiences of journalists who interact with hostile sources?

RQ1a: How does hostility vary at the intersections of gender, race, and other axes of difference?

RQ2: How do journalists use resilience processes in response to interactions with hostile sources?

RQ2a: How does the use of resilience processes vary at the intersections of gender, race, and other axes of difference?

RQ3: How do hostile interactions with sources and journalists' resulting use of resilience processes influence journalistic routines and the resulting news product?

CHAPTER 4 METHODS

To reiterate, the goals of this project are to understand 1) the experiences of journalists who interact with hostile sources, 2) how those experiences differ because of identity, 3) how journalists use processes of resilience in response to hostility, 4) how the use of those processes differ because of identity, and 5) how hostility and resulting resilience processes affect the journalistic process. To explore these phenomena, this study takes an interpretive and feminist approach and relies heavily on qualitative research methods. In-depth, semi-structured interviews are the primary method, as the goal was to acquire an in-depth understanding of journalists' lived experiences. This required that participants share their stories, share feelings and emotions, and provided rich descriptions of their experiences with hostile sources, which could not be transferred through quantitative methods (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Tracy, 2013).

After further justifying my use of qualitative research methods, I will outline my positionality as a researcher and the sensitivities I bring to the research process. Next, I will detail my data collection and sampling processes, including the use of a short, online pre-interview survey in addition to my interview protocol. Then, I will provide details about my research sample and the data collected, data analysis and interpretation, and steps taken to ensure the quality of my findings.

Rationale for Using Qualitative Methods

As part of this project focuses on identity and all its complexities, a method was needed that could account for that complexity. Qualitative methods employed from an interpretive perspective are ideal because this lens acknowledges that “there are no simple explanations for things. Rather, events are the results of multiple factors coming together and interacting in complex and often unanticipated ways” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 8). By allowing participants to share

their stories in detail, encouraging them to provide thick description and be reflexive, the researcher is able to collect multiple viewpoints and unpack the conditions and contextual factors that add to the complexity of a phenomenon (Tracy, 2013). While quantitative methods seek to generalize, instead I wanted to allow for variation among my participants, and I wanted to be able to highlight that complexity by privileging participants' voices throughout my findings. Qualitative methods allow for this by focusing on lived experiences placed in context, allowing me to showcase resonant examples from my data (Tracy, 2013). Under the interpretivist framework, there is no one answer to a research question, but rather many complex answers, as all individuals' lived experiences and their understandings are valid in their own right. The goal, then, was to identify patterns among groups of people and make sense of these multiple realities while staying as true as possible to the participants' points of view (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Tracy, 2013). Given my focus on intersectionality as a guiding theoretical framework, this study is also heavily attuned to power differentials associated with participants' gender, race, age, class, and nationality, as well as the identity of and context surrounding the source(s) they describe as hostile. A qualitative approach allows participants to focus on aspects of their identities that they deem most salient, rather than making assumptions from demographic information collected with narrow survey categories. Finally, since Ungar (2004) advocates for a constructionist or interpretive approach to resilience that "reflects a postmodern interpretation of the construct and defines resilience as the outcome from negotiations between individuals and their environments for the resources to define themselves as healthy amidst conditions collectively viewed as adverse" (p. 342), qualitative methods allowed participants to relay their own account of resilience processes and coping mechanisms, rather than asking participants to select from a curated list of predetermined productive or destructive behaviors and processes.

This study used in-depth, semi-structured interviews as its primary method of data collection. Interviews are particularly well-suited to answer my research questions because they “provide opportunities for mutual discovery, understanding, reflection, and explanation via a path that is organic, adaptive, and oftentimes energizing. Interviews elucidate subjectively lived experiences and viewpoints from the respondents’ perspective” (Tracy, 2013, p. 132). Hermeneutic, or interpretive, interviews embrace dialog and reflection between researcher and participant, and allow interpretation to happen during the actual interviewing process, rather than regulating analysis for a later point after the interview’s completion (Alvesson, 2011; Roulston & Choi, 2018). I draw further on Alvesson (2011)’s “reflexive pragmatism” view on interviewing, as it is especially relevant within the interpretive framework. Under this approach, rather than conducting interviews in a highly structured manner and then diving into the analysis phase after data collection has been completed,

It is far better if planning and the carrying out of a study is informed by awareness of the complexity of the interview situation and if practical work is guided by on-going considerations of interpretation. The latter should thus not be reserved for the phase when the empirical material (interview transcripts) lay there on the table in the form of perhaps several hundred pages of texts. This may be too late. Rather than mainly relying on the well structured interview guideline and technical correct acting in the interview (neopositivistic neutrality or romantic empathy and rapport opening up interviewees), the researcher should be prepared to interpret what goes on in the interview situation and try to deal with unwanted ingredients in this. (Alvesson, 2011, p. 46)

In addition to the in-depth interviews, this study also used a short online survey to aid in participant recruitment. While the survey does include quantitative aspects (detailed below), its main purpose was to aid in the collection of open-ended demographic data about participants and provide a secure way for participants to sign up for the study and schedule a time to complete the main research interview. Analysis of the survey data is secondary to the qualitative interview data and is exploratory in nature.

My Positionality as a Researcher

As a qualitative scholar, it is important to be transparent about my positionality and how it affects my sensibilities as a researcher (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Tracy, 2013). This acknowledges that the way I have oriented myself to this research and my interpretation of the resulting data and findings might be very different from another researcher's interpretations of the same data. These are not flaws of the research process, but a necessary part of the process, in which we acknowledge that objectivity cannot be achieved—and is not the goal— in qualitative research, and that sensitivity

requires that a researcher put him- or herself into the research. Sensitivity means having insight, being tuned in to, being able to pick up on relevant issues, events, and happenings in the data. It means being able to present the view of participants and taking the role of the other through immersion in data. (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 31)

This does not mean that the findings are simply a product of my imagination, whims or biases. Rather, “findings are a product of data *plus* what the researcher brings to the analysis” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 32, emphasis original).

My positionality in relation to this research is that I am a former newspaper journalist, and therefore have relevant professional experience on which I can and do draw from both in the interview setting and when analyzing and interpreting the resulting data. I am also a journalism instructor and spend a lot of time teaching students what are considered to be best reporting strategies and news routines as established by other industry professionals and scholars and from my own experiences. Therefore, when listening to participants explain their journalistic routines and how those might change in response to hostility, I have made every effort to bracket my professional understanding of those habits and listen for new understanding and with genuine empathy. I have diligently tracked my emotions and gut reactions to participants' stories by taking notes during interviews and writing memos as soon as possible after each interview as a way to

grapple with my thoughts and reactions to what participants are telling me. My knowledge of professional norms and routines has colored my final interpretations of the findings as I unpack the “dark side” of some changes in routines and resilience processes shared by participants. In some cases participants openly acknowledge the shortcomings of their routines and processes. In other cases, this required an informed judgement call colored by my sensitivity to the research topic, as I outline the reasons why certain changes in routine and certain processes are problematic.

In addition to my professional orientation, I also bring my feminist sensitivities to the research. Because of my overarching interest in questions about power as it relates to gender and its intersections with other aspects of identity, I have sought out a sample that is a majority of women, and I have also sought out diverse participants in terms of race. This makes my sample atypical in the sense that it does not match the actual percentage of women and journalists of color in U.S. newsrooms (for which both percentages are much lower, see American Society of News Editors, 2019) and is instead purposefully disproportional in those respects. I likewise paid special attention to issues and nuances related to gender, race and age as participants recounted their experiences with hostile sources. To ensure I did not impose my assumptions and biases on my participants’ experiences, when a participant shared an example that seemed to involve a source using sexist, racist or ageist language, I would engage in mirroring, a strategy for engaging in ongoing member reflections throughout the interview process (Way et al., 2015). I would repeat the scenario back to the participant and ask if they believed that what was said or what happened was sexist/racist/ageist in nature. Participants could then reflect on the source’s intentions and how the interaction made them feel. Finally, because of my feminist positionality, I believe in the importance of activism and giving back to my research participants so they can benefit from the research process. To this end, I shared my research findings with my participants so they could

offer their feedback and take my results back to their newsrooms where, hopefully, recommendations can be put into action. This not only helped participants learn from this research, but also served as a final member check for my findings as participants could offer their thoughts on my interpretations of the data (Tracy, 2013).

Data Collection and Sampling

After approval from Wayne State University's Institutional Review Board, data collection for this project began on June 17, 2020, and lasted until February 18, 2021². Journalists from across the United States who were professionally employed by a newsroom and who habitually interview sources and interact with the public collecting material for stories were recruited as participants. This excluded journalists who work primarily in editing or online news production, such as designers or content aggregators who typically work from the office, collecting information online or through brief phone calls. This also excluded student journalists who worked for their college newspaper and freelance journalists without a newsroom affiliation. It did include reporters working for print, online or broadcast news publications or programs, multimedia journalists, also known as MMJs, and photographers. I included multimedia journalists and photographers in the participant pool for two reasons: First, because there is not much research on the experiences of journalists in these roles, except, for example, on how photos get selected for print/online news stories and how journalists think about multimedia content (Davidson-Scott, 1993). Therefore, their experiences of harassment and hostility are missing from the literature. Second, women journalists working in these roles have been found to experience unique safety concerns related to the equipment they carry (Mesmer & Jahng, 2019). For example, one multimedia journalist

² Data collection naturally waned between late October 2020 and mid-January 2021 because of the 2020 presidential election and events leading up to the inauguration, as this was a busy time for journalists in the United States. This was also a difficult period to recruit a sample of journalists, as they were working under unique demands because of the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic.

described how she had to be extra mindful when covering a Trump rally for fear that people might get physical if she pointed a camera in their direction. Finally, current news editors who had formerly worked as reporters were also allowed to participate in the study if they had salient experiences with hostile sources in their former roles. This was established through the pre-interview survey and, at times, through dialogue with the potential participants before the interview about whether or not they were a good fit for the study. These participants, of which there were a few, were also asked about whether their reporting staff came to them about issues related to hostility.

Participants were recruited in a few ways to reach a heterogeneous, maximum variation sample (Schreier, 2018). First, convenience sampling was used to recruit journalists I knew. The approved recruitment script and recruitment flyer were posted on my social media accounts as a way to tap into my professional network of journalists. Likewise, I reached out to journalists and journalism professors I knew through email and asked those individuals to help disseminate my research call to others in their networks. Second, I recruited journalists by emailing information about my study to the heads of professional journalism organizations, asking them to share the information with their members. These groups included the Society of Professional Journalists, National Association of Black Journalists, National Association of Hispanic Journalists, Asian American Journalists Association and the Journalism and Women Symposium. In total, the heads of eight national organizations and 133 local chapters (all local chapters of SPJ, NABJ, NAHJ and AAJA that had up-to-date contact information listed on their websites) were contacted. Whenever possible, I also joined and posted the recruitment materials in social media groups for journalists, specifically ones for women and journalists of color. Examples of these groups include the Facebook groups Visual Journalists of Color, Journalists of Color in Public Media, and Riotrrrs of

Journalism (a feminist journalism group specifically for women and other non-male-identifying journalists³). Finally, I utilized snowball sampling so that each participant in my study was asked to recommend others and/or pass along my study information to journalists who they thought would be interested in participating. The goal was to include a variety of participants of various gender and racial identities in my sample. While my focus is on the experiences of women journalists, men were included in the study for purposes of comparison along gender lines, and to understand how men's racial identities influence their experiences. Through maximum variation sampling and recruiting via groups specifically for women and journalists of color, the aim was to “specifically recruit underrepresented or marginalized groups, so that their views can add complexity and breadth” (Tracy, 2013, p. 136).

The recruitment script used for this project (see Appendix A) called for journalists who had experiences working with sources who were hostile toward them, and allowed for the journalist to assign their own meaning to hostility in the context of this project. Specifically, the script read:

A “hostile source” in this project is subject to the viewpoint of you, the journalist. It may be someone who uses frequent microaggressions. Or they might make inappropriate comments and jokes. They might call you fake news or insinuate that you're not trustworthy because you're a journalist. Or it might be along the lines of harassment (sexual or otherwise) and threats. If it offends you, makes you uncomfortable, and/or makes your job difficult, it counts.

The recruitment materials included a link to an online pre-interview survey, housed on Qualtrics, which served as a mechanism for participants to sign up for the study. Interviews were scheduled after the survey was completed. Data collection lasted until data saturation was reached, defined as the point at which additional data/interviews do not yield new insights (Schreier, 2018; Guest

³ Although none of the participants in this project identified as non-binary, and therefore I analyze the data in terms of men and women, it should be noted that there are a multiple of other gender identities outside of these binary categorizations.

et al., 2006) and content categories stemming from the data reached maximum variation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Although some scholars have found data saturation can be reached in as few as 12 in-depth interviews for homogenous groups (Guest et al., 2006), because of the desired variability in research participants for my project and the understanding that sample size should increase with both heterogeneity and the ways the process of interest could be experienced (Schreier, 2018), data saturation was not confidently reached until 38 interviews had been completed.

Participants

In total, 61 journalists attempted to complete the online survey to sign up for the study. Of those, eight were removed during the data cleaning and screening process because the surveys were incomplete, bringing the final sample for the online survey portion of the study to 53. Of the survey participants, two were not invited to participate in an interview because they had retired and, as determined through brief email exchanges, they did not have relevant salient experiences with hostile sources to share. A third survey participant could not be reached because they did not provide an accurate email address for follow-up, and a fourth did not provide their email address. This resulted in 49 journalists being invited to participate in the interview portion of the study. The survey respondents who did not respond to the first attempt to schedule an interview were contacted a second time a week later. The final sample of interview participants included 38 journalists, for a retention rate of 77.6%⁴.

Of the survey respondents, 39 were women (73.6%), 12 were men (23.5%), and two did not disclose their gender. In terms of race, the sample identified as 58.5% White, 11.3% Black,

⁴ Since not all emails to journalism organizations (such as SPI, NABJ, etc.) received a response, there was also not a way to ensure that those who did respond forwarded the study information and there is not a public record of how many journalists belong to each chapter, it is impossible to calculate a true response rate based on recruitment methods.

5.7% Latinx/Hispanic, 5.7% Asian or Indian, and 17% who identified as something else (which included four who identified as biracial, three as Arab, one as Aztec and one as Guyanese). One participant did not disclose their race. Participants were allowed to provide open-ended responses for their race, and I created these categories for race to help make sense of the data after the survey data was aggregated. Survey respondents were between ages 20 and 70 ($m = 34.6$, $sd = 13.39$), and had been working in the journalism industry between 1 and 42 years ($m = 10.82$, $sd = 11.75$). The majority of participants worked for newspapers or online news websites (54.7%), while 30.2% worked for broadcast news stations and 15.1% worked for another type of news organization (including a magazine, radio station, and a news nonprofit). The majority worked as reporters (77.4%), five were editors who used to be reporters, three worked as photographers and two identified as MMJs⁵. The majority of participants had received either a bachelor's degree or higher degree in journalism ($n = 36$), with two not completing a college degree and 11 majoring in something other than journalism. Finally, participants indicated that, on average, they experienced hostility from sources "more than a couple of times" during their career ($m = 2.98$ on a scale of 1 to 5, $sd = .796$), and 54.7% of participants indicated that they had experienced hostility from a routine source, defined as someone they interacted with numerous times on their beats.

Of the interview participants, again the majority were women (76.3%, and 23.7% men). The sample identified as 52.6% white and 47.4% as journalists of color (see Table 1 for a breakdown of differences in race by gender and additional demographic information and see Appendix D for a complete list of participants' pseudonyms and demographics). Interview respondents were between the ages of 22 and 67 and had been working in the journalism industry

⁵ Although the number of MMJs self-identified in the online survey, which allowed for open-ended responses, is only one, many more broadcast reporters disclosed in the interview portion of the study that they were MMJs. The distinction between broadcast reporters and MMJs is, therefore, fluid.

between 1 and 42 years for a combined tenure of 429 years of journalism experience. Interviews were conducted over the phone or on Zoom, an online video-conferencing platform, and the medium was determined by participants to ensure the method was most convenient and comfortable for them. The interviews were digitally recorded, and in the case of interviews conducted on Zoom, only the audio portion of the call was recorded. Since this population is most likely used to working with recording devices in their own journalistic routines, the announced use of a recording device was much less likely to restrict or alter participants' behavior in the research process, which is a common concern when using a recording device for data collection (Jenks, 2018). Interviews were transcribed with a professional transcription service, Scribie.com. Data collected amounted to 29 hours and 58 minutes of interview data, with conversations lasting between 27 minutes and 73 minutes ($m = 47$ minutes). This resulted in 498 pages of transcribed data.

To protect the identities of participants, all identifying information, such as the journalists' specific newsroom affiliation, specific location, and names of sources, were stripped from the interview transcripts and participants were assigned pseudonyms via an online name generator (from the website random-name-generator.info) to be used throughout this project. Participants were informed of the pseudonym assigned to them at the time of the interview and were allowed to suggest an alternative pseudonym if desired. This option was given just in case the randomly assigned pseudonym coincidentally matched a middle name or nickname commonly used by the participant, to ensure the participant was comfortable with the anonymity of their participation in the project. Only one participant rejected the computer-generated name and decided to provide their own pseudonym.

Table 1*Demographics for Interview Participants*

| Variable | Gender | | n = 38 | | |
|----------------------|--------|-------|--------|---------------------|-------|
| | Women | Men | m | Standard deviation. | % |
| Race | | | | | |
| White | 16 | 4 | | | 52.6% |
| Black | 4 | 2 | | | 15.8% |
| Latino/a | 2 | 1 | | | 7.9% |
| Asian/ Indian | 2 | 1 | | | 7.9% |
| Other ^a | 5 | 1 | | | 15.8% |
| Age | 22-62 | 23-67 | 33.81 | 12.59 | |
| Media type | | | | | |
| Newspaper/ online | 16 | 7 | | | 57.9% |
| Broadcast | 9 | 0 | | | 26.3% |
| Other ^b | 4 | 2 | | | 15.8% |
| Job role | | | | | |
| Reporter | 17 | 8 | | | 65.8% |
| MMJ | 7 | 0 | | | 18.4% |
| Photo-J | 0 | 1 | | | 2.6% |
| Editor | 5 | 0 | | | 13.2% |
| Tenure | 1-40 | 1-42 | 11.28 | 12.17 | |

^a Participants self-identified as: Biracial (three women identified as Black and white, and one man identified as Filipino and white), one woman identified as Arab, and one woman identified as white but passing as Arab.

^b Two women worked for magazines, one woman and one man worked in radio, one woman worked for a news nonprofit, and one man worked as a freelance journalist for multiple news outlets.

Pre-interview Survey

In addition to serving as a means to sign up for the study by collecting participants' email addresses to coordinate interview times, the pre-interview survey was used to collect information about participants' experiences with hostility, their use of resilience processes, their professional identification and their demographic information. Participants were recruited for this non-representative, cross-sectional, self-report survey with the sampling procedures described above. The survey (see Appendix B) drew on previous literature, including scales adapted and compiled from multiple sources. Once participants clicked on the anonymized, multi-use survey link distributed with my recruitment materials, they first saw an information sheet about the study and participants were asked to both confirm that they were over the age of 18 and give their informed consent to participate in the research. Those who consented (all who clicked on the survey link did consent to participate) were taken to the main survey which consisted of 19 questions. On average, it took participants 6 minutes to complete the survey, which asked about the following variables:

Hostility

Two questions were used to get a broad sense of how often participants experienced hostility from sources. First, participants were asked to think about the number of times they have encountered a source they would describe as hostile. Possible examples of hostility were listed to jog the participants' memory, such as "someone who called you 'fake news,' who verbally insulted you, made you feel uncomfortable, who spoke down to you because of your profession or because of some other aspect of your identity, or engaged in behavior that could be considered harassment (like threatening you, making sexualized comments, touching you, throwing things at you, etc.)". Then they were asked how many times they have encountered hostile sources during their time working in journalism on a 5-point scale ranging from *Never* (1) to *Almost Always* (5). Second,

participants were asked whether or not they had any routine sources who they considered to be hostile, defined as someone they interviewed frequently because of their beat (e.g., a police chief, the mayor, a senator, or an important businessperson). Participants responded to this question with a Yes or No. These questions were designed to inform the following interviews with participants, so I knew going into those interviews how often the participant dealt with hostility and could tailor follow-up questions accordingly.

Resilience

To get a baseline measure of participants' use of the five resilience processes outlined by Buzzanell (2010), a condensed version of the Communication Resilience Processes Scale (CRPS-7) (Wilson et al., 2020a; Wilson et al., 2020b) was adapted for use in this survey. The scale contained one item representing three of the resilience processes (*affirming identity anchors, using communication networks and foregrounding productive action*), two items for the process of *crafting normalcy* (one item for maintaining old routines and one for adapting or creating new routines) and two items for the process of *using alternative logics* (one item for reframing and one for using humor). This condensed scale is a shortened version of the longer CRPS-39 (Wilson et al., 2020a; Wilson et al., 2020b), and uses an item from each subscale with the highest factor loading for each resilience process (ranging from .671 to .821). Scale items were modified slightly to better fit the journalism context. For example, "I have adjusted some of my daily habits to the new circumstances" was changed to "I have adjusted some of my journalistic routines to the new circumstances." Participants responded to the scale twice. The first time the scale was presented, participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each of the statements about how they have responded to *interactions with hostile sources*. Then, they were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement about how they have responded to *anti-media rhetoric in*

general (for example, being called fake news and hearing that journalists are the “enemy of the American people”). Items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* (1) to *Strongly Agree* (5).

Professional Identity

Mael and Ashforth’s (1992) 5-item organizational identification scale was adapted to measure participants’ levels of professional identity, a strategy used by numerous other scholars (see Bamber & Iyer, 2002; Loi et al., 2004; Garcia-Falieres & Herrbach, 2015). The reliability of such a modified organizational identification scale to measure professional identification was found to be reliable in previous studies, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .80 (Garcia-Falieres & Herrbach, 2015). Scale items were further modified to fit the context of the journalism profession. For example, one original scale item read “When someone criticizes my firm, it feels like a personal insult,” and this was changed to “When someone criticizes journalism or journalists, it feels like a personal insult.” Items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* (1) to *Strongly Agree* (5).

Demographics

Open-ended survey questions asked participants to describe their gender, race, sexuality and age. Participants were also asked whether or not they had a disability, their level of education and if their degree (if they received one) was in journalism. Finally, they were asked to identify their primary job role (as a reporter, photographer, etc.), the type of media outlet they worked for (newspapers, broadcast, etc.), and how long they have worked in the journalism industry. The final question on the survey asked participants to provide their email address so they could be contacted to schedule the interview portion of the study.

Interview Procedure

Survey participants were contacted via email within two days of taking the survey to schedule an interview. In-depth interviews were semi-structured in nature, so that while core questions were asked of all study participants, some were omitted or added depending on the flow of the conversation, and probing questions and additional reflexive interviewing strategies (Alvesson, 2011; Way et al., 2015) were used as deemed appropriate in each interview setting. Additionally, this structure allows for variation in the flow of interviews, so that “the same topics form the basis for questioning, yet interviewers’ sequencing of questions is participant-led” (Roulston & Choi, 2018, p. 223) and the conversation could naturally unfold. Ultimately, although this structure does not allow for neat, systematic comparisons of responses to interview questions between participants (Tracy, 2013), it did allow me to be dialed in to my instincts and generally steer the conversation as I saw fit. This was what I found most comfortable, given my own positionality as a former journalist and my comfort level with the interviewing process. The goal was to create opportunities to discuss the research subjects from a variety of angles, (Alvesson, 2011) while recognizing opportunities to foster “flickers of transformation” among participants during the interview setting (Way et al., 2015). This allowed for the capturing of rich data, as meaning-making unfolds during the interview process.

By implementing strategic interviewing techniques—specifically, probing questions and member reflections—I was able to capitalize on opportunities for reflection and meaning-making. Probing questions were built into my interview protocol as much as they could be planned for ahead of time, and also generated spontaneously in the moment. It should be understood that probing questions come naturally during the interview process and cannot be entirely planned for. These probing questions are small follow-up questions that encourage participants to dig deeper

into their line of thinking by asking them to “reflect on, explain, and modify initial statements” (Way et al., 2015, p. 723). These are useful when the participant gives answers that seem hesitant, uncertain, or are in need of further explanation, as “probing questions encourage participants to verbalize or think aloud about their beliefs, letting the interviewer in on their process of sensemaking” (Way et al., 2015, p. 724). Member reflections were also incorporated within the interview process. This traditionally involves “sharing and dialoguing with participants about the study’s findings, and providing opportunities for questions, critique, feedback, affirmation, and even collaboration” (Tracy, 2010, p. 844), but rather than simply using these strategies as a member “check,” or a way to verify that data analyses were representative after the fact, this process was used within the interview setting to allow participants to reflect on their ideas and co-create meaning as I mirrored participants’ words and made sense of their experiences with them. Through mirroring, participants were able to hear how they sound through another’s voice. I was also able to call out opportunities to delve into underdeveloped points raised and the glossed over by participants, and could reassure participants that I, the researcher, understood their point of view and was not passing judgement (Way et al., 2015).

Before beginning the interview, I read participants an IRB-approved oral consent document that overviewed the research process and how I was keeping their information anonymous. Participants were informed of the pseudonym I was assigning them and given the opportunity to change it, and informed that the conversation was being audio recorded. They were informed that while I was not keeping any records of their names or personally identifying information, I was keeping their email addresses in a list separate from their data until the completion of the project so that I could reach back out to participants at a later date to share my research findings and solicit their feedback on my interpretations of the data. Participants were then given an opportunity to ask

any questions about the study before ultimately giving their oral consent to participate in the project.

Since this study utilizes a lens of intersectionality, the interview protocol (see Appendix C) began by asking participants to describe themselves, talking about parts of their identity that were most important to them. This question helped to discern what participants viewed as their salient identity constructions. As Winker and Delege (2011) argue, it “makes no sense to limit the categories of gender, class and ethnicity. Consequently, an intersectionality-based approach has to always keep open the number of socially defined categories available and necessary for analysis” (p. 54). Since almost all participants included their professional identity as a journalist in this description, probing questions allowed me to gain a sense of what topics the journalists typically covered and therefore what types of sources they regularly interacted with.

The next three questions were designed to answer my first set of research questions, which sought to understand the experiences of journalists who interact with hostile sources, how those experiences differ along lines of difference, and how participants make sense of those experiences in terms of their identity. Participants were first asked to describe a salient positive interaction they had with a source, in which they felt as though they bonded with the source or got more out of the interview because of some aspect of their identity. Then they were asked to do the opposite and to think of a salient experience in which a source was hostile toward them. When thinking about sources and experiences of hostility, I took an inductive approach, telling participants to think about hostile interactions in broad terms, as any interaction that made them feel angry, uncomfortable, on edge, threatened, and/or unsafe, and further “allowing respondents the freedom to characterize harassment on their terms and clarify distinctions that were meaningful to them” (Miller & Lewis, 2020, p. 7). Participants were asked to reflect on how they felt in the moment,

how they reacted, and how they processed the experience afterward. They were asked whether or not they got what they needed from the source to complete the story they were working on, and whether or not they talked to their editor or others about the hostile interaction after it happened. This series of questioning was repeated as many times as necessary until the participant ran out of hostile experiences to share. Participants were also asked whether any of the sources discussed in those examples were routine sources, and asked follow-up questions about the frequency of those source interactions and strategies to manage the hostility as they were relevant.

The next set of questions was designed to answer my second research question, which sought to understand the specific resilience processes used by journalists, and whether these differ based on their various identity constructions. It should be noted that I was not asking participants whether or not they believed that they were resilient, but rather looked for evidence of their use of resilience processes as described by how they managed hostile interactions with sources during and after those encounters. Participants were asked about how they drew on identity anchors, especially focusing on their professional identity, if and how they turned to others in their communication networks for support, if and how they attempted to reframe or make light of the hostile interactions, how they maintained productivity, and how they maintained or altered their journalistic routines when dealing with hostile sources. This last question also helped answer my third research question, which focused on how resilience processes and hostility affected journalistic routines and the final news product. Participants were asked to consider how their strategies for dealing with (and in some cases trying to avoid) hostility altered the content and quality of their resulting news stories. These questions were based on previous findings by Chen et al. (2019) and Gardiner (2018), who found that women and minority journalists avoided certain topics to avoid harassment by commenters on social media, and Miller (2020), who found that

journalists engaged in affect-driven behaviors to avoid harassment from newsroom outsiders (but not directly from sources). Finally, at the end of this section of questioning participants were asked to consider any other strategies they used to cope with hostility, as a way to account for potential new resilience processes not established in the literature or captured by previous interview questions.

Next, participants were asked to reflect on how their identity influences their interactions with sources, possibly making it easier or harder for them to do their job than it is for others. Here I prompted participants to think about their gender, race, age or other aspects of their identity. This helped me answer my research questions focusing on intersectionality and how it relates to hostile interactions (RQ1a) and the use of resilience processes (RQ2a). I then asked participants why they remained in the journalism profession, given their experiences with hostility and anti-media rhetoric toward their profession at the national level. This question was designed to further unpack participants' sense of professional identification and explore their motivations for being resilient under such circumstances. I closed the interview with a general catch-all question (Tracy, 2013), asking participants if there was anything else they would like to share that we had not yet covered during the interview. This was also implemented to help prompt participants to recall additional information they may have skipped over on earlier responses.

At the end of the interview, I asked participants if they could think of one or two other journalists who might be a good fit to be interviewed for this project and asked that they forward the recruitment materials they saw to those individuals. In some cases the participants supplied me with names and email addresses so I could reach out to additional contacts directly. I reiterated to participants that I would send them my findings from the study when it was completed, and encouraged them to reach back out to me if they experienced any new, salient hostile interactions

that they wanted me to know about. Two participants emailed me after the interview to share such additional experiences.

Data Analysis

Because this study uses the lens of intersectionality, aspects of Winker and Delege's (2011) multi-level approach to intersectional analysis were combined with Corbin and Strauss's (2008) method of qualitative data analysis. These two strategies work well together because the intersectional analysis informs how we think about individual identity categories and how they are interrelated with structural power relations and cultural scripts. Both strategies encourage the researcher to consider structural context ranging from the micro to the macro levels when analyzing data. Winker and Delege's (2011) approach prompts the researcher to look outside the collected data to consider additional layers of context stemming from current events, news reports, laws and policies, and even advertising and pop culture references. Corbin and Strauss (2008) encourage the use of the "Conditional/Consequential Matrix" (p. 94) as an analytic tool for thinking about the ways international, national, community, organizational and group structures and conditions influence individual action/interaction/emotion, and how those individual inter/actions and emotions thereby influence structures and future conditions. This allowed me to consider, for example, contextual factors such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and continued anti-media rhetoric being employed by the former presidential administration during data collection, as well as the racial protests in response to the murder of George Floyd, which brought on new forms of hostility toward journalists as they dealt with police and tried to cover protesters. All of these events took place during data collection, and many participants referenced their challenges when interacting with sources for various news stories. I consumed countless stories, thought pieces, and data that touched on what these challenges mean for journalists and used them

to help make sense of the stories participants shared with me through interviews. Participants also often talked about the geographical area that they worked in, and when they described broad resentment toward their news outlet and distrust of the media, I was able to research the demographics and voting behaviors of that area to help contextualize those accounts. For example, most reporters who expressed frustration because the general public refused to talk to them and mimicked Trump's fake news rhetoric lived in rural, conservative areas, mostly in the American Midwest. This additional data was not formally coded, as Saldaña (2013) points out that not all data need, or even should, be coded, but it helped provide context for how journalists and broad topics (such as immigration, COVID-19, protests, fake news, etc.) are represented and understood at the cultural level.

As data analysis began at the time of data collection, I engaged in analytic memoing as soon as possible after each interview with participants as well as during the coding process to tie different data together and make sense of relationships (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Saldaña, 2013; Tracy, 2013). These memos gave me a chance for me to think about the significance of interesting stories and points within each interview, make connections between what I was learning from one participant as compared to others, and think through initial codes and themes before (and later, while) going through the data line-by-line. Memoing also allowed me to consider how I “personally relate to the participants and/or phenomenon” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 46) given my journalistic background, providing a space to unpack the processes and journalistic routines described by participants, emergent themes in the data, and make connections between the data and sensitizing theories. Analytic memos were separate and in addition to field notes, which were taken during each interview and used as the basis for some memos. These analytic memos, which amounted to 58 pages of single-spaced, 12-point text, then became additional data that could be

analyzed, as well as what was a rough draft of my findings, since memoing is interrelated with the coding process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Saldaña, 2013; Tracy, 2013).

The actual coding of interview data was done on an ongoing basis throughout data collection, with interview recordings sent out for transcription in small batches and coded as they were received. This allowed me to stay attuned to the data as they came in so I could ask more probing questions of future participants that seemed to be of interest in the early data, and it allowed me to assess whether or not I had reached theoretical saturation of the data on an ongoing basis. Coding as data was collected also prevented me from facing a stack of unanalyzed transcripts at the completion of data collection, which can not only be intimidating, but can stall research progress (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Coding was an iterative process that took place through a process of open and axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) using Atlas.ti qualitative coding software. Transcripts were read carefully before they were coded so that I could better familiarize myself with the data, and memos written shortly after the interview was conducted were also read before each coding session. Open coding was done simultaneously with additional memoing and readings of sensitizing theories and literature, all while keeping in mind my guiding research questions. Initially, I engaged in a “microanalysis” of the early transcripts, a more detailed form of open coding used to “break open the data to consider all possible meanings” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 59). This involved going line-by-line through the transcripts and coding for all possible meanings in the data. Some of these codes were later deemed unnecessary or were revised and/or collapsed into broader codes. Once I became more comfortable with the data and started to notice a recurrence of initial codes and ideas, a more general approach to open coding was used. This is in line with recommendations that focused, microanalysis be used at the beginning of a project to complement and supplement a general analysis of the entire dataset (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Throughout the coding process, I paid particular attention to how participants described their self-positioners (Winker & Delege, 2011), or their self-described identity constructions, and denoted this information not as a traditional code, but rather by creating a note attached to the participants' transcript in Atlas.ti that appeared with each excerpt coded for that participant. This allowed me to select a piece of coded data and quickly see that, for example, the statement was made by a woman who identified as young and Black, or a man who identified as a white veteran journalist. By doing this, I could more easily make connections between the stories, processes, and journalistic routines being shared with me and how they related to the four structural power domains—gender, race, class and body—integral to an analysis guided by intersectionality (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Winker & Delege, 2011). The goal was to “examine inductively if and how the interviewees, in their narratives about their everyday social practices, relate to these four structural power relations—be it directly or indirectly” (Winker & Degele, 2011, p. 59).

The second phase of data analysis involved axial coding, which is a more focused process used to develop salient content categories, or themes. In this phase of coding, which overlapped with the first phase of coding, as the two are a natural extension of each other (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), I began collapsing codes that were similar, essentially removing redundant codes. I then grouped open codes that were about the same main idea to create themes, so that lower-level concepts were grouped together under a higher-level concept. (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In line with Winker and Delege's (2011) intersectional approach, themes were also considered in terms of identity constructions and participants' gendered and/or racialized practices in response to power relations across the interpersonal, disciplinary, cultural, and structural levels. Finally, I mapped themes onto my research questions (see Table 2 and Table 3 for sample lists of open and axial codes and their frequencies, presented in the following chapters) and looked at the original

data to extract exemplars to showcase the themes in the participants' own words, which allowed me to interpret the data and develop analytic storylines that answered my research questions.

Ensuring Quality of Findings

As aforementioned, this qualitative project is not seeking to make generalizable claims that hold true for all journalists. Rather, the goal was to understand how one subset of journalists, with all of their differences, experienced a phenomenon (hostility from sources) and how they responded to that phenomenon (by drawing on resilience processes and/or making changes to their journalistic routines). In lieu of the quantitative assessment measures of reliability and validity as measures of good research, this project seeks to satisfy Tracy's (2010) eight "big tent" criteria for high-quality qualitative research. Those criteria are: "(a) worthy topic, (b) rich rigor, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethics, and (h) meaningful coherence" (p. 839). I have detailed my positionality in relation to the research and described my data collection and analysis processes in detail in an effort to be transparent about my methods and challenges related to this research (such as the time period in which data was collected).

Some additional steps were taken to ensure my findings are valid and of high quality. First, to help ensure the validity of my interview protocol, all questions were pilot-tested before data collection began with two former journalists, one Black woman and one Arab-American woman. These women were interviewed separately, with the interviews lasting 41 minutes and 28 minutes, respectively. Through this process, one main question and two potential follow-up questions were added to the protocol, and some questions were re-worded to remove academic jargon, ensuring they sounded conversational and were clearer to the participant.

Second, during data collection, participants were invited to muse over my initial observations and thoughts on findings as they naturally came up during the interview setting. This

resulted in a form of on-going member reflections, which, when incorporated into the interview setting instead of saved for a separate step after the fact, can prompt self-reflexivity and generate additional data that can deepen the analysis (Bloor, 2001; Way et al., 2015). For example, Quinn, a young white newspaper reporter who covered education, was the fifth participant to describe hostile scenarios with sources on the local school board. I mentioned this to her and told her that I found it surprising that so many problems were arising on the education beat. We then pondered this together, coming to a realization that there are very few qualifications required to run for a local school board, and so those sources are unlike many other elite sources who go through training to achieve their status. We kicked this idea around for a while and discussed its implications for journalists covering education. In this way, Quinn and I co-created knowledge, resulting in richer data collected during the interview and a deeper understanding of what was going on to guide my future analysis.

Finally, after data analysis was complete, I created a .pdf “brochure”-like version of my findings (see Appendix E), outlining the problem I sought to explore, presenting my research questions, summarizing findings, and outlining recommendations journalists could implement in their processes and routines. This was sent to all 38 interview participants via email, and they were invited to comment on and critique my findings. Additionally, I emailed this document to all of the local journalism organization leaders who responded to my initial request to help spread my recruitment materials. This was done so that additional journalists could offer their feedback on my findings, ensuring that other journalists could “see themselves” in the data and interpretation of the findings (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Eight participants responded with comments after I sent out the brochure, and the feedback resulted in no changes to the findings: One White man was surprised, six women of various racial identities simply thanked me and agreed with what they

saw, and one White woman who was in her first year on the job asked me for more information and we continued to talk about some of the strategies I identified through email. Participants and organization leaders were also encouraged to share the findings with others in their newsrooms and professional networks, one of whom asked me to work with her to develop a workshop based on my findings for her chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, to which I agreed.

CHAPTER 5 JOURNALISTS' HOSTILE INTERACTIONS WITH SOURCES

My first research question (RQ1) asks: What are the experiences of journalists who interact with hostile sources? To answer this question, this chapter will first take up the task of describing the forms of hostility experienced by participants. Then, to answer RQ1a, which focuses on how hostile interactions vary at the intersections of gender, race, and other axes of difference, hostility will be discussed through the lens of intersectionality. After presenting the interview data, this chapter will close by presenting relevant exploratory pre-interview survey data, which will be analyzed and put in conversation with the qualitative findings for this first set of research questions. My remaining research questions will be answered in the following chapter.

Forms of Hostility Experienced by Journalists

This project looks solely at hostility directed at journalists from sources, defined as people the journalist included (or tried to include) in a news story. This hostility may be experienced within the interview setting and also in interactions before and after the interview takes place, as journalists are requesting an interview, talking with sources off the record or following up with sources after the interview. In some cases, participants also described indirect hostility, in which the source did not directly communicate hostility to the journalist, but rather went around or above the journalists' head to communicate hostility about the journalist to others (such as to a boss, or other sources in the community) and/or make public posts about the journalist online after working with them on a story. Based on 38 in-depth interviews with U.S. journalists, five distinct forms of hostility were experienced (see Table 2): 1) hostility stemming from a *general distrust of the news media*, 2) the act of being *blocklisted*⁶ by elite sources, 3) source *boundary crossing* that breaks professional norms of engagement to make journalists feel uncomfortable and/or vulnerable, 4)

⁶ The term "blocklisted" is being used instead of the more colloquial term "blacklisted," which has racist connotations as it equates Blackness with "negative" people or things (Andrew & Kaur, 2020; Kraft, 2020).

safety-violating hostility, including sexual harassment and physical violence and/or threats, and 5) *personal and professional microaggressions*. These five forms of hostility vary in terms of their intensity and frequency, and in the extent to which they pose real safety threats as opposed to simply being a source of frustration, annoyance and/or stress. Each form of hostility will be discussed in detail in the next sections.

Table 2

Frequency of Sample⁷ Open Codes for Types of Hostility Experienced by Journalists

| Code | Count |
|--|-------|
| General distrust of news media | |
| Use of “fake news,” anti-media rhetoric | 48 |
| Accused of being biased | 32 |
| Interviews denied | 21 |
| Performative hate | 8 |
| Resentment of news media in sensitive contexts | 7 |
| Blocklisting | |
| Source denied access after negative coverage | 19 |
| Natural part of the journalist-source interaction | 15 |
| Proof they’re doing something right, point of pride | 12 |
| Harassment | |
| Physical harassment/aggression | 4 |
| Threats of physical violence | 6 |
| Repeated calls/messages at inappropriate times | 12 |
| Going above the reporter’s head, complaining to boss | 17 |
| Sexual harassment/assault | 3 |

⁷ Only a sample of codes is provided because of the sheer number of open codes in the dataset, which amounted to 197 in total, although not all of those codes were specific to this research question.

| | |
|---|----|
| Microaggressions | |
| Comments about age | 17 |
| Undermining intelligence, competence | 21 |
| Jabs at news media in general | 19 |
| Confusing/calling out the identity of the only journalist(s) of color | 5 |
| Unsafe reporting conditions | |
| Reporting door-to-door | 9 |
| Person-on-the-streets | 23 |
| Reporting alone | 16 |

Hostility Stemming from a General Distrust of the News Media

The first form of hostility, hostility stemming from a *general distrust of the news media*, is the best indicator that there is a trickle-down effect of former U.S. President Donald J. Trump’s anti-media rhetoric seeping into communities and affecting small-town journalists⁸. Almost every participant shared at least one experience in which they were called “fake news,” the phrase made popular by Trump, were accused of being biased by sources, or were denied an interview because the potential source indicated that they did not trust and want to work with the news media when they approached would-be sources for a story. Andrew, a biracial newspaper reporter, summed up the situation that most participants experienced when they approached community members to get their comments for stories. He explained that upon first meeting someone and telling them that he is a journalist who would like to interview them, “There’s sort of like the rush to judgment or assumption of bad faith. I think much more often it comes from the job, just the general perception

⁸ All participants except one (Lenard, who freelanced for multiple national outlets) identified as a “local” journalist, seen as inherently different than journalists working for national outlets, such as the 24-hour news networks FOX and CNN.

of what a journalist does and that kind of thing.” On finding out that he is a journalist, people’s guard immediately went up and they got defensive. Andrew went on to note that that response has increased since Trump moved into the political spotlight in 2015, when he announced he was running to president. Likewise, Quinn, a White newspaper reporter who worked in a rural county in the Northeast shortly after Trump was elected, said:

People were becoming less willing to talk to us just for routine interviews. If you would approach someone and tell them, “Hi, I’m here from [the newspaper],” they would not wanna talk to you and they would be rude about it, not just normally declining an interview. I got accused of being anti-Trump. [chuckle] It was very bizarre. And I think that’s definitely gotten worse for people who are still there now. My friends who are still at the paper will tell me that that’s only become worse... It would usually be to the effect of like, “Oh, this is a liberal rag.” Like, “Oh, you’re not gonna report what I say right anyway, look at what you say about Donald Trump.”

Sometimes Trump’s words were mimicked verbatim, as sources used the term “fake news,” or, as in the case of Audrey, a broadcast reporter, they were accused of doing “gotcha journalism.” Other journalists said they were frequently accused of working for a “biased” news publication, and their credibility and objectivity as a journalist was often put into question. Ada, a White newspaper reporter, said potential sources would voice concerns such as, “I don’t want the story to get spun.” Likewise, Chris, an Asian photographer, said, “Sometimes people are very suspicious and they’re just like, ‘Oh, you work for [the newspaper]. What, are you gonna make up another story today or something?’” Previous research has also found that journalistic audiences buy in to Trump’s definition of fake news (conceptualized as any news that veers from their views or is critical of Trump’s presidency) rather than journalists’ and scholars’ common definition of fake news (conceptualized as news that is fabricated and/or untrue) (Jahng et al., 2021). Statements like these attacked the journalists’ professionalism.

This refusal to work with the media because of a general distrust of news workers was present no matter the topic of the story, which baffled some participants. While it was assumed

that people would be more hesitant to comment on political stories, or stories about sensitive social issues, even finding community sources for general interest stories could be a challenge. Meena, a White newspaper reporter in the Midwest, recalled working on a story about a local airshow by the Thunderbirds, the U.S. Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron that performs around the country:

I was covering just basically a puff piece. I was covering an air show, so just like an event story, a fun thing. And so I really didn't expect any real trouble with this story, but I really had the hardest time getting the event-goers to give me statements or a brief interview. And I was really confused, 'cause I was like, well, there's nothing really political about this story, there's nothing that would really be controversial or could give anybody backlash from having attended or saying anything. I was just expecting people to be like, "Yeah, we have fun. I like to bring my kids here," really just light-hearted stuff. And I had asked a couple of families like, "Hey, I'm with [the local paper], I'm covering this event. Do you guys wanna talk? Do you wanna share your experience of being at the air show with me today?" And I just had a really hard time getting people to comment for me. And that was kind of unexpected. I went up to a couple of families, and they just looked at me like I was, I don't know, evil. [chuckle]

Meena went on to explain that even though her newspaper leaned more toward the conservative side on its opinion pages, it had a reputation in the community as being a "liberal rag," and many community members thought badly of it. Although Meena said the community members she approached and wanted to use as sources didn't overtly call her "fake news," the implication from their stares and silence was that they did not like nor want to work with the newspaper. After this happened at other events, Meena began to develop anxiety when she had to approach people for stories:

It happened enough to where, at one point, I was just psyching myself out. It happened, for real, enough times to where when I had any sort of man⁹-on-the-street or just a story where I just needed to go up to random people—when it wasn't a question of, OK, I need to research a source and then reach out to them—when it was just something where I just needed to go up to people in a place, I found myself feeling really stressed and anxious

⁹ Calling this form of reporting the "man"-on-the-street is an outdated, sexist use of language, however, it is a common phrase used by participants quoted in this study. Unless used in a direct quote, I refer to this style of reporting as "person"-on-the-street throughout the text.

about that after a few of these instances, where I was just like, ‘Oh god, no one wants to talk to me.’ At a certain point, then it was just me, me making it harder on myself.

One interesting way distrust toward journalists manifested itself was through what Hope, a White broadcast reporter, described as “performative hate.” Hope used the term to describe what seemed to be a disingenuous hostility toward the news media, one that fed into the anti-media rhetoric and aggressive energy Trump created, but that was merely an act. There was little or no authentic hostility behind the performative “fake news” chants. This occurred in specific, public event settings, such as at rallies for Trump or other Republican leaders, at anti-mask demonstrations during the COVID-19 pandemic, and during the racial protests that occurred in the summer of 2020. Hope said these were situations where she expected the public to be hostile toward journalists, but was surprised by how many attendees actually *wanted* to speak with her while she was covering the event. She reflected on her experience covering a Trump rally:

You would expect that to be one of the most hostile experiences you’re going into, is a Trump rally. Normally, the sources would be the core people that hate who you are as a person, and it was so bizarre because everyone walking up was so excited to talk to us and to tell us how great it was to be there. And then Trump would get there and he would start talking and they would be all eyes glued on him until he was like, “Oh turn around and boo the media,” and they would turn and boo at us, and it was almost funny because, I don’t know. There are people that truly believe that you’re [journalists] bad people, and then there’s people that almost say it—I don’t know if it’s just because it’s part of the package or just to push an agenda—I don’t know, that was one of the more strange experiences that I’ve had... that was one of the weirder experiences where you show up and you’re like, “Oh, these people won’t want me to be there,” but then they want you to be there, but then it’s performative hate. I don’t know.

Hope said she never felt unsafe while covering these types of rallies. Rather, she was surprised because the people who were excited to talk about why they were there were the same people who joined in on the “fake news” chants and booed her with the rest of the crowd. In some cases they would even talk about the “fake” and “biased” media with her, as they were granting the media an interview. Other journalists who covered rallies recounted similar stories. Chris, an Asian

photographer, experienced something similar when photographing a demonstration being held in protest of a Confederate statue being torn down. Although the collective response to his presence was general distrust and hostility, Chris said that if he was able to make small talk with a few people one-on-one, they were happy to talk with him. In some cases, Chris said they would bash his paper in one breath, and then offer up a quote in the next because, at the end of the day, Chris said “people with opinions love other people to hear their opinions.” These scenarios point to a paradox, in which sources openly declared that the media was fake and shouldn’t be trusted, but still wanted to have their opinions in the news they had just denounced.

Resentment stemming from valid criticisms of the press. The final way sources expressed hostility as a function of distrust of the news media was unrelated to politics and was removed from Trump’s anti-media rhetoric. Instead, participants described a sense of general resentment toward the media as it was linked to sources’ perceptions of unfair news coverage and/or a lack of attention to minority communities. Also notable is that while participants said the use of phrases such as “fake news” was new, and began around the time Trump was running for office, this more general sense of resentment of the press—most often from people of color—has been long-standing, and their resentment stemmed from valid criticisms of the press. Bernie, a Black newspaper reporter in a predominantly Black, Midwestern city, explained:

When it came to the resentment from the public toward newspaper reporters, it usually came in the form of some people in the minority, the racial minority community saying we don’t cover them enough, but that criticism was not nasty, it was not mean. It was just a complaint or a criticism that, “We only see you guys out here when there’s a shooting. How come you guys don’t cover positive news about our community? Why is everything negative when it comes to the African American community, or the Arab American community, or Muslim community?” I’ve heard that kind of resentment, but the fake news, that was a term I’ve only heard in the last four years. It’s astounding because I’ve been a journalist since 1981, and this [fake news] is very new.

Notable here is that Bernie emphasizes that this particular form of hostility is more akin to a criticism of the news. In her case, this came in the form of questions she was asked when trying to interview community members for a story, usually as she was following up on a breaking crime or courts story, since that was part of her beat. Others saw this resentment in more hostile ways. Terri, a biracial newspaper reporter, recalls an interaction she had while reporting in the South. She was trying to interview a store clerk and the customers in the store after it had been robbed. Instead of answering her questions, one of the Black women in the store yelled at her and slapped her phone out of her hand. Terri recalled that after the woman knocked her phone to the ground, she reiterated that she was a journalist working on the story, but the woman yelled at her and smacked her phone out of her hand a second time. As they both left the store, Terri said the woman continued to yell at her in the parking lot. While this interaction included safety-violating hostility, as the source physically invaded the journalist's space and assaulted her, Terri said she believed the hostility came from a place of general resentment toward journalists. She reflected on the interaction:

I think I also questioned, is this the result of journalists, or this paper specifically, historically, not serving its readers in the way that it should, I guess? It just made me think, why is this person so angry at me? [laughter] Is there some deeper reason? Is there some way that journalists have failed her, and so that's why she's thinking this way?

This echoes long-standing claims that journalists only cover the negative aspects of minority communities and therefore perpetuate negative stereotypes through their news coverage (Robinson & Bartzan Culver, 2019).

Finally, Brenden, a Black newspaper reporter working on the East Coast, said he experienced this form of hostility when covering the racial protests during the summer of 2020. Many of the Black protesters tried to bar reporters from covering the events. Some would form barricades to keep reporters out, some would push cameras away, and others would simply refuse

to speak with the press¹⁰. Brenden said the sentiment expressed by the activists at those protests was that, “we don’t want to be covered by the press if you’re not going to use our whole words, and you’re going to just take snippets.” This displays understanding on the part of the protesters in the sense that they know news stories are short and often lack context. Without context, they believed their cause would be misrepresented, and so it was deemed better to just not engage with the press at all. This thought process also recognizes what is, again, a long-standing pattern of journalists getting racial news coverage wrong (Robinson & Bartzen Culver, 2019).

In sum, hostility stemming from general distrust of the news media was displayed through the overt mimicking of Trump’s anti-media rhetoric, the use of credibility questioning statements and accusations, performative hate in public settings, and general resentment over (legitimate) perceptions of unfair coverage. While this general distrust and refusal to work with journalists was frustrating for participants, and in some cases it altered their journalistic routines (to be discussed in Chapter 6), it did not pose any safety threats to the journalists. These types of accusations from sources simply became a frequent headache journalists had to work through.

Being Blocklisted by Elite Sources

The second form of hostility experienced by journalists is in the form of being *blocklisted* by elite sources. Blocklisting is the act of putting the journalist on a (real or metaphorical) list of people not to talk to, essentially cutting them off from any form of correspondence. This is especially problematic when done by elite sources, who are people holding important positions in the community and whose actions and voices are deemed worthy of being reported on. These elite sources may also be gatekeepers in the community, people who have important information or

¹⁰ It is not only Black activists and protesters that have tried to prevent reporters from covering events. For an example, see the Melissa Click case, in which a white university professor tried to prevent student journalists from covering a protest (Helsel, 2015).

connections that no one else has. Lauren, a White broadcast reporter in the Midwest, said the public information officer (PIO) for the largest city in her market blocklisted her after she included a voice in a story that she didn't like. Lauren interviewed a community member who had spoken up in a city council meeting to protest an item on the agenda, and the PIO accused her of being dishonest about her coverage of the city council. After that incident, Lauren said, "I know that she won't call me back. She doesn't answer my emails. Sometimes, I'll text her on the phone, but it's like she doesn't wanna have anything to do with me. I just burned that bridge with her." Since the PIO acts as the gatekeeper between journalists and the city's officials, such as the city council members, the mayor, and so forth, Lauren said it became almost impossible for her to cover the city because she couldn't get interviews with any of the elite sources.

Nick, a Black newspaper reporter who covers City Hall, said he had multiple sources who blocklisted him at various times, but one city council member did so for a substantial period of time. He recalls that she, "just cut off all the media, because of a story [I wrote about her tax bills]. From there for about 18 months she did not speak to anybody in the media." Nick said that when the source began running for reelection, she started answering his calls again and working with more media outlets. Most participants, like in Nick's case, described this type of hostility as cyclical, as the relationship between the journalist and the elite source goes through amicable periods, followed by strained periods of blocklisting, usually after the journalist publishes a news story or series of news stories that paint the source in a negative light. After a period of being blocklisted, the source eventually decides to work with the journalist again and the cycle repeats. As Nick described, sources who temporarily cut off reporters from information might start talking with them again if they need the reporter to cover some positive news story.

Many journalists, including Nick, believed that blocklisting was a natural part of the source relationship. In fact, many indicated that being blocklisted was a sign you had done something right. If a source was angry enough about a story the journalist published, it meant the reporter succeeded at exposing some type of injustice and therefore fulfilled their watchdog role as a journalist. Consistent with findings in other studies on harassment and receiving enraged reactions or criticisms from the public, being blocklisted was, in a sense, honorable (Miller, 2020). As Chris explains, “When that happens, I’m like, all right, well, clearly like this, whatever journalism I’m in the middle of doing is important because there are people who are actively trying to stop it.”

Others see blocklisting and hostility from sources less as a badge of honor, but still a normal part of the journalist-source relationship, especially in the case of elite sources. Nancy, a White reporter and founder of a news nonprofit and former investigative newspaper journalist, believes that source pushback should be expected. She explains:

This is messed up, but I do feel like being harassed, being criticized is part of the job. And so that is kind of how I interpreted it, especially if you’re doing things that are going to piss off people, especially if they’re in power. This is par for the course and kind of just something I’ll always have to deal with as being a journalist, and something that tons of journalists have to deal with.

Mariah, a White newspaper reporter covering local and state government, reflected more on why that relationship is often strained:

I think it’s that politicians really have one of two modes with the press. One is, “The press is here to make me look bad. The more I talk to them, the less ground that I get in the election.” And the other is, “The press is here to help me get my message out.” And so, the people who have the attitude that the press is their enemy are very quick to just completely shut you out of the conversation. This is especially true if you have ever given them negative press. If you’ve ever been critical of them, they become much less likely to talk to you at all in the future. And unfortunately, you regularly, as a journalist, have to be critical of politicians because it’s integral to informing the public. And so, I found that a lot of times, covering someone in a way that is less than favorable, is just, it burns the bridge.

She interprets blocklisting as a strategy used by politicians to prevent negative coverage from making it into the news. This may be a flawed assumption, though, as almost all of the participants who had been blocklisted said they simply found alternative ways to tell the story they were working on and that the omittance of the elite source was annoying but, ultimately, not detrimental. In just a few cases, the journalists did have to change their story angle because of information that was held by an elite source who blocklisted them.

Sometimes, instead of completely cutting off the reporter, the source would do everything they could to make the interactions with the reporter difficult. This was usually the case when face-to-face interactions with the journalist could not be avoided, such as when the reporter covered meetings where the source was a key member. Ada, a White newspaper reporter covering education, described her relationship with a school board member who tried to blocklist her, but then ultimately just made her job more difficult:

We actually haven't had a really good relationship for several years, and after a series of stories they [the school board member] declined speaking with me. They decided that they were never going to speak with me anymore, which wasn't really an option, 'cause they're a school board member, and I covered the school board. But then they would talk to me, but they would front it with [the conversation being] off the record, and then I'd be like, "Okay, well, cool. Can I ask you a few questions?" But it would turn into, "I'm gonna bitch at you," sometimes name calling. And just shouting or hanging up. And so that was a situation where I was like, OK, they're hostile. They're hostile, but also they're an elected official, so we need to push for them to answer us or we're gonna point out [in the news story] that they're not." It's not a source where we can just say, "Fine, I guess we're not gonna deal with this source."

Here, Ada describes a source who would give her some information "off the record," meaning it is prefaced by an agreement that the information is not to be printed in the news, but then makes things difficult for her when they go on the record. And as Ada makes clear, elite sources are not sources journalists have the luxury of simply ignoring or avoiding, even when they are hostile. This means she still has to push the source to give comments, even when they do not

want to engage with her and when she knows she will encounter hostility. And when the source does successfully avoid communication with her, Ada makes it clear that she still does her due diligence to try to contact her. Then she holds the source accountable by printing the fact that the source denied to provide a comment for the news story.

While blocklisting was usually a cyclical event, and sources would eventually begin working with the journalists again, in rare situations blocklisting was permanent. In these cases, the source refused to interact with the journalist for the remainder of their time on the beat. This happened to Jodie, a Black newspaper reporter covering education. She was blocklisted by the superintendent of a school district she covered, and their relationship never recovered. Jodie recalled:

She hated me from the start, she made my life extremely difficult. I asked her one question, and from that moment—the question was, “Have you spoken to the public school community about transportation?”—and from that moment she just disliked me. Her PR person, he told me that she advised everyone in the district to not speak to me because I'm trying to take her down and make her look bad in the newspaper. She sent a—it wasn't violent, like physically violent email, but the words in it were violent—email at 3 a.m. to the [state's] Board of Education Advisors and Executive Editors, and she CC'd my editor to tell them that I'm unethical... that I need to be fired... And so she went on a “I Hate [Jodie]” campaign. And she banned me from going to school properties, public school property... And when I would go to the board meeting, I would ask questions and she would not pick on me.

Jodie said this went on for the duration of her time at that paper. Although she kept attending school board meetings, none of her questions would be answered in the meetings, and Jodie published stories that said the superintendent did not provide a comment. Even more frustrating for Jodie, she said, was that the superintendent would publish her own statements on the school's website shortly after Jodie's stories were published, essentially circumventing the press. In another example, Maria, a Latinx automotive reporter, said she was blocklisted by one of the leading car companies after publishing a negative review of one of their vehicles. For some reason—and quite

possibly because of her gender—Maria said her voice was deemed more offensive than that of other car reviewers, most of whom were men, and Maria was denied access to all press cars from one of the companies. Even though others also wrote negative reviews, she said, “A lot of my colleagues would have access to cars that I didn't, and press releases and things like that.” In these cases, the source relationships did not improve and the sources continued to blocklist the reporters until they eventually left to work elsewhere.

In sum, blocklisting is a common issue journalists encounter from elite sources. Many participants accepted this form of hostility as a natural part of the job, and some even believed it was an indicator of a job well done. In most cases, blocklisting only lasted a short period of time and was cyclical in nature, as the journalist-source relationship naturally went through periods of highs and lows that corresponded to positive and negative news coverage. While this form of hostility is routine, as Mariah points out, it is “a huge problem, but a less threatening one.” None of the journalists believed this type of harassment was a threat to their safety, although some did recall being verbally abused by the elite sources who had blocklisted them. In most cases, journalists were able to create work-arounds and still complete their news stories without the use of the elite sources who blocklisted them, even if that meant they simply included that the source could not be reached for comment in their story.

Source Boundary Crossing

The third form of hostility that participants experienced was *boundary crossing* that broke professional norms of engagement in ways that made the journalists feel uncomfortable and/or vulnerable. Quinn, a White newspaper reporter who covered education, described a local school board member who called her incessantly on her personal phone, called her senior editors and

people even higher up in her media organization to try to get her in trouble, and posted about her on social media. She explained:

He got so angry with me, he left a nasty comment on our website demanding that I be fired. And then he called the CEO of the company in New York [laughter] and demanded that the little girl who covers our school district be fired. And this was after just he would call me and harass me. He would call my cell phone in the evening, he would call our executive editor, he would call our publisher... He was crazy.

This exemplifies the three main ways sources would cross boundaries with journalists: by calling them at all hours on their personal phones and/or contacting them on their personal social media accounts, by going above or around the journalist to complain about them to their senior editors/bosses and threaten to get them fired, and by posting hostile/defamatory content about the journalists on social media.

Some hostile sources would call the journalists frequently, much more often than necessary. This was especially problematic when the source would call the journalists' personal cell phone numbers, rather than their office phone, and would do so outside of business hours. This was often the case with routine sources who felt like they should be a priority to the reporter. Christa, a White print journalist on the East Coast, said she has a spokesperson for a city she covers who calls her constantly. "I talk to him multiple times a day. He's incredibly hostile. He's incredibly demeaning," she said. The source often makes sexist and ageist comments when interacting with her, and has screamed at her if she printed something that he didn't agree with. Christa said the situation has become so untenable that she will sometimes purposefully ignore his calls and then follow up via email to try to avoid getting yelled at over the phone. In some cases, one-time sources would get hostile after a news story they participated in was published, if they didn't like the final product. These sources would call and yell at them or send messages through social media platforms, like Facebook. Louise, a White newspaper reporter in the Midwest, said a local business

owner “went off on” her after a story ran because he thought it made him look bad. One evening he messaged her multiple times on Facebook. The messages were concerning enough that Louise took screenshots of them to send to her editor. Other sources had done something similar, which prompted her to change her name on her profile so it was harder for sources to find her.

The second way sources crossed boundaries was by contacting the journalists’ editors and higher ups to try to get them in trouble, essentially “tattling” on the reporters. As Christa said, “It feels very kind of like going to your parents and getting you in trouble.” She worked with a spokesperson for a city in her coverage area almost daily, and the source had a personal connection with one of her editors. He would frequently threaten to call her boss if she was asking questions or using quotes he didn’t like, and he had sent a few emails to her supervisors complaining about her reporting. In another example, Audrey, a White broadcast reporter, had a source on the local school board who called her editor to not only complain about her reporting, but also her demeanor. She said, “He proceeded to call my news director afterwards and tell him that I was very fake news and that I was trying to do gotcha journalism and I was trying to make the district look bad. Went into me not having manners and that I was rude and everything.” Audrey said her boss confronted her about the rudeness, and she had to have a photographer who was on the assignment with her vouch for her professionalism. While Christa—and most other participants who had sources complain to their editors—didn’t suffer any consequences from the complaints, Audrey was forced to “make nice” with the source and have a sit-down with him to apologize for her behavior. She was not happy about the situation:

My news director asked me to go have a sit down with this person to make nice. And I was kind of offended that I had to go make nice, and I said to my news director, “You know what? I didn’t do anything wrong. I’m not gonna let some guy...” And my news director agreed with me, that I shouldn’t let people tell me how to write a story, but the relationship was such that they wanted to make sure everything was cool. So I had to sit there and talk to this man about what had happened... and basically was scolded for a half hour.

Audrey said the sit-down didn't really help matters. Although he cooperated when she would ask him questions during future school board meetings, he also continued to joke about her doing "gotcha journalism," especially in public settings, to irritate her.

In rare scenarios, sources would spread negative statements about the journalists online, as a way to retaliate against the reporters for publishing content they didn't like. In the most severe case among this sample, Ada, a White newspaper reporter covering the education beat, had a source on the school board who began creating memes about Ada and spreading them on social media sites with the help of local conservative Facebook groups who supported the source. Ada said:

They made some internet memes, and took personal pictures of mine off Facebook or whatever, and photoshopped like "racist," or "radical activist," "fake news," on it and spread it around on the internet and within local groups... Sometimes [my photos were] superimposed with a picture of the school board member who then, they would put stuff like targets, as if you're like the sights of a gun, on her face.

And in addition to the memes, the school board member also wrote columns about Ada that were published in a community blog. The columns would "call out the paper as a whole, as fake news, but specifically would also name me and my editor, written by the school board member," Ada explained. She said the memes and columns were personal attacks that crossed a line and were "demoralizing," especially since she had to keep trying to interact with that source on a regular basis, until the source eventually blocklisted her. Other minor cases of online harassment from sources usually manifested as comments sources would leave on news stories or posts on the sources' personal social media pages trying to discredit the story and the journalists' credibility. Marissa, a Black broadcast reporter, recalled a source who was angry after only a few seconds of their interview was included in a broadcast story. She explained that the source not only "took to

Facebook and blasted me in the story,” but also engaged in another form of boundary crossing by sending an email to her entire newsroom, including all of the producers at the station, in an attempt to get her fired.

In sum, sources engaged in boundary crossing when they ignored professional boundaries by calling repeatedly outside of normal business hours and on personal phone numbers, by trying to get reporters in trouble with senior editors for their actions and reporting, and by making personal attacks about the journalists, usually on social media. Participants felt these actions violated professional codes of conduct that sources violated—especially elite sources who should be trained on how to interact with the media. This form of hostility was, again, not a safety threat, but was often, as Ada said, demoralizing. It also gave journalists additional work by having to defend themselves to editors when sources complained to their bosses. Finally, this form of hostility could also be exhausting, as journalists dealt with work calls while off duty. This invaded the journalists’ personal lives and disrupted their work-life balance.

Safety-violating hostility

The fourth type of hostility experienced by participants was *safety-violating hostility*, which involved hostility that either caused the journalist direct physical and/or emotional harm, or involved the threat of physical harm. Participants who experienced this type of hostility expressed feeling uncomfortable, unsafe, or violated by a source in some way. Although this was not a common form of hostility experienced by participants in this sample, when it was experienced the cases were more intense and salient to those journalists.

The first way participants experienced safety-violating hostility was through physical or verbal threats made by sources. These were instances where nothing physical ever transpired, but the journalists were afraid that something bad could happen because of the sources’ actions and

words. Quinn, a White newspaper reporter who covered education in a small, rural county in the Northeast, became scared for her safety while working on an on-going story about the school district's financial issues and a battle between the school board and parents over a new football stadium. The parents, who she had worked with as sources in the past because they did a lot of fundraising for the school, began cornering her after local school board meetings. She recalled:

There were these two dads who were very macho, angry people. And they would actually accost me after the board meeting and back me, you know, up against the wall and scream at me. And that was a point where I bought pepper spray for my keychain. I started varying my exit routes from the school after board meetings, so that they couldn't figure out which exit I was using... When you're 5'4 and a small lady, and there's these two big guys who are following you around screaming at you in the evening in an empty school, that was actually really scary.

As Quinn described above, this happened repeatedly and she began taking safety precautions on her own to try to protect herself, in case the men became physically violent. She dealt with this group of angry parents twice a month (which was the frequency of the school board meetings) for almost six months before she left that paper for a different job.

Safety-violating hostility didn't have to be expressed in overt threats or confrontations, but also through a source's actions and situations that allowed for journalists to feel their safety was compromised. Lauren, a White broadcast reporter, recalled a time when her producers asked her to go door-to-door to get comments for a story. She was reporting alone, and one man who seemed nice agreed to be interviewed. It was about to rain, so he suggested she come inside to do the interview there, but Lauren said that as soon as she got inside he locked the door behind her and she immediately felt scared:

I went ahead and went inside and then he slammed the door behind me and locked all the locks on the door. He had like five locks on the door. I was like terrified, because I was like, I'm gonna be like raped and murdered, or I don't know, like be held hostage or kidnapped. It was scary. His demeanor completely changed, and I made up some excuse that I had to get back to my car for something.

She and many others said that reporting door-to-door or doing any type of person-on-the-street reporting was often problematic and led to potentially dangerous interactions. Lauren explained, “You just never know who's on the other side of the door, which is why I really don't know why they keep telling us to go out and do them, ‘cause I think it’s dangerous.” Nevertheless, this was a common reporting practice that many journalists engaged in, usually at the request of their editors.

Reporting on stories alone, without a photographer or partner to accompany them, also landed reporters in potentially dangerous situations. Lauren recalled another scenario where she was reporting on a group of semi-truck drivers who were traveling in a convoy across the state to raise money for soldiers. She was interviewing one of the main organizers of the event and he invited her to climb onto the truck to get a good shot of the convoy behind them. Although the interaction originally seemed safe, Lauren said the truck driver started driving away while she was still in the truck, leaving her feeling vulnerable and scared:

I had no way to get back. I was completely at his mercy. And he was weird, and I just kept saying, “I’ve really gotta get back. I have a deadline, they’re gonna miss me. I really need to do this story and people are gonna be looking for me.”

This lasted for almost two hours before the truck driver finally turned around to take her back to her car. Although nothing bad physically happened to her, Lauren said she often thought about all of the things that could have gone wrong in that scenario and it was terrifying.

Many other women (of all races) shared stories about this kind of situational safety violation. Wendy, an Indian broadcast reporter, said she developed anxiety and depression and considered leaving the journalism field because she was put in so many unsafe reporting situations. While doing a person-on-the-street about community members’ opinions on immigration policy (and Wendy agreed that those situations were the most problematic because reporters don’t know

anything about the people they are approaching to interview), she interviewed a man who became agitated to the point where his demeanor scared her. She described the interaction:

He went into this full rant, basically saying that, accusing journalists of being biased, and it was just such an aggressive tone. And mind you, I'm 5'1", I'm very petite. And this guy was above 6 feet, just very big, and he's just coming in my face and yelling at me. He threw off his mic, and he said, "I bet you your station won't have the balls to post this interview." And all of that was recorded. I just kept filming as long as I could. He just got irate. It just got to the point where I was like, "Okay, I need to just stop filming," and I threw my equipment in the car. I jumped in my car and he walked away. I was shaken.

After Wendy got in her car and began to drive away, she said the man appeared in his car right next to her, yelling at her to pull over so they could "have a conversation." She was able to get away from him before the situation escalated further, but, as she said, the situation left her shaken.

On rare occasions journalists were physically assaulted, as was the case with Terri, the Black reporter whose phone was slapped out of her hand twice. And although again less common, at least for those in this sample of journalists, was safety-violating hostility in the form of sexual harassment and/or sexual assault. The most prominent example of sexual assault from a source was Jodie, a Black newspaper reporter covering education on the Northeast. Jodie met with her state's expert on the Freedom of Information Act, a man who was a well-known, common resource and source for reporters in her state. She met him at a diner to discuss problems she was having on a story and she said that about half way through their meeting he began to give off what she described as a creepy vibe. Jodie said, "he just kept looking down at my chest and my chest wasn't exposed, so there's nothing necessarily to look at. He just progressively got more inappropriate as the interview went on." He commented on her looks and asked personal questions about her dating life, and then began touching her. "He touched my shoulder when he went to the bathroom. He just kept touching my hands, just putting his hands on me for no reason. And then as we were exiting, he put his hand around my waist," she said. Once they were outside Jodie said he tried to

get her to take a walk with him and to go near his car. As she tried to leave, she said “he follows me and then he grabs my face and he just kisses me, and then I just run in my car and I just started crying and I drove off.”

Not all instances of sexual harassment ended in assault, as Jodie’s did. Other participants—all women from this sample, although men can also be victims of sexual harassment and assault—said sources would make sexualized comments about their looks and/or try to ask them out on dates. This was more often the case with one-time sources, rather than routine sources. Nina, an Indian broadcast reporter, said that sexual advances made her uncomfortable, especially when she was reporting alone. She said that it’s happened so often that she feels on edge whenever she is working one-on-one with a source who is a man or with a group of all men. She said that when she’s “in the field interviewing a group of men, and me being a female, it does make me feel some type of way, ‘cause I never know. Sometimes they are looking some type of way, they are trying to flirt.” Nina said that it’s often right after an interview that the source will try to make an advance, trying to trade an interview for a date. She recalled a recent interview at a boxing gym where she interviewed one of the gym members:

Then after the interview, he just got to, “Oh, since I gave you an interview, you have to give me your number. Let me take you out.” And I’m just like, “No.” It’s like, first of all, this is really unprofessional ... you are gonna say that to me? Like, oh, just ‘cause I gave you an interview, now you have to give me your number. No, no, no, no.

Experiences like these were echoed by other young, women journalists who felt that they needed to be more professional and cold when working with men to try to dissuade these types of interactions.

Editors’ responses to safety-violating hostility. As this form of hostility is the most serious in regard to the safety of journalists, it was also the form of hostility that most often prompted journalists to seek help and/or support from their editors. Participants who experienced

threats and verbal abuse said that when they reported those events to their editors, more often than not those editors would verbalize support but then take no action to follow-up on the situation or actually protect and defend their reporters. Christa, a White newspaper reporter, said she has tried to talk to her editor about the spokesperson that calls her constantly and screams at her if she prints information he doesn't like. She recalled one day when the spokesperson called accusing her of printing a quote that was supposed to be off the record, even though she said she had recorded their conversation and it was on the record. He called her repeatedly throughout the day to yell at her, and it got so bad that Christa turned to her editor for help:

I was just very, very upset because he kept calling and he kept screaming, and he kept saying he's gonna take away certain access so we weren't gonna be able to do this. And so I was really frustrated that day, and so I called her [my editor] a couple of times. And she just usually says things along the lines of like, "I'm sorry that's happening. You know, it really doesn't matter." I mean, she's a pretty passive person. But she doesn't really do anything about it... I think I would just like to be defended once. Explicitly to him, defended.

Christa went on to say that she really believed that the spokesperson would treat her better if her editor stepped in to intervene, but after repeated complaints her editor never addressed the problem. She also felt like her editor could have better prepared her for such hostility from the spokesperson, because he had been working for the city for a long time and had treated former reporters similarly. Since the editor knew he was a difficult person to work with, Christa believed she should have at least been warned so she knew what she was getting herself into by working with him.

Oftentimes, threats and verbal abuses made to reporters were taken with a grain of salt, even when they were communicated to senior editors. Quinn said as she was reporting on the criminal record of a candidate for district judge she called the candidate to confirm the charges on his record and get a statement, and he proceeded to threaten her. She said, "He told me that if I printed that, he would put my arm in a sling and I'd better think twice before I'm slandering him."

Quinn said the threat was initially shocking and she told her editor about the threat, just in case more became of it. She said it wasn't taken seriously by her editors, though:

I told my editors, "This man just threatened me and he does have a history of assault, so just like FYI." And probably more should have happened, but then he never tried anything, so... If he had called me back and continued to threaten me, I think more would have been done. But yeah, I think that there was not enough done, actually, in hindsight.

Others shared similar experiences, in which a source made a threat over the phone because of negative information being printed about them, and when editors were alerted of the threats they often told the reporters not to worry.

Ada also got little to no support in her situation, when the school board member published memes with her picture and defamatory statements on them. Even though it was a personal attack, her editor failed to act in any meaningful way to support her. Ada recalled her frustrations due to this lack of support:

I was mostly concerned with just, basically any meme where there's targets and stuff, on reporters or even on the meme, I think are inappropriate. And then just the fact that columns were being written, calling us, our paper fake news, calling me like a not credible reporter... it got to a point where it's like, okay, they're calling out the credibility of me and my organization, something has to be done. 'Cause this is also an elected official, it's not John Doe writing and saying, "Your piece sucks." It's like the president saying that the *New York Times* is fake news. And my editor was like, "Well, no, the more attention we give them, the more we keep it up." And I was like, OK, but [the source] is considered a voice of authority in town, and she does have a following and she does have, like, she's an elected official, you know, like, write an editor's note or just write an editorial saying "Look, we stand by all of our reporting." There was never any of that... eventually I felt like there needed to be an editorial, like, "No, we stand by our reporting. We stand by our reporter." And normally, my editor would re-schedule my meetings to talk to her about this or not respond to my emails.

Ada said this continued lack of support caused her to find a different job, because nothing was ever done to defend her despite the public attacks on her character and credibility. Important to note in the excerpt from Ada is that she not only turned to her editors for support, but she also provided clear, actionable ways her editors could support her and justified why it was needed. This

was unique because often participants said they had hoped their editors would support or defend them, but didn't provide clear ideas as to what that support might look like. It could be assumed editors didn't know how to proceed as well, attributing to the lack of action. But here Ada was clear about what she wanted to see done and still did not receive the help she needed from her editors.

Even in more overtly dangerous scenarios, when participants felt scared to be out in the field doing the job rather than just dealing with online harassment or threats over the telephone, some editors still failed to support their reporters. In Lauren's situation above, she said she called her editor after the strange man tried to lock her in his house while she was reporting door-to-door:

I immediately called my assignment editor and I was like, "Hey, this super scary thing just happened to me," and it wasn't like they were concerned at all, the message was to be more careful and keep knocking on doors. Like literally, I told her, "I think I was almost raped and murdered, or kidnapped." And she was just like, "Well, did you get the interview? Did you get the story?" I was like, "No." And so then it is like, "Keep knocking, just be smarter." And then she told me, all of our cars come with a tracking sticker on them, and she said, "Well, if you ever feel like you're in a dangerous neighborhood or situation or whatever, you can just peel the tracking sticker off the car and put it on your arm." And so like, "OK, what? So then you will be able to find my dead body?"

Lauren felt like her editor valued the story she was working on more than her personal safety. Likewise, when Quinn was worried about the group of school parents who would corner her at school board meetings, her editors again did little to support her. She asked for a photographer to accompany her to the meetings, but was told it wasn't feasible because there weren't enough photographers and the meeting wasn't a good photo opportunity for the newspaper. This was frustrating because, as Quinn said, their refusal "logistically made sense. But I don't think that they were taking seriously that I was starting to feel pretty unsafe in that environment." This was another example of a time when the journalist provided their editor with a way to help her feel

more safe, and they denied the request because of business-related reasons, prioritizing the end product over the safety of their reporter.

A handful of participants said they did feel as though they were supported when they reached out to their editors for help. Jodie, the reporter who was sexually assaulted by a source, said that while she didn't initially go to her editor for help—she needed time to process the events, and then she sought advice from a woman in the office before turning to her editor, who was a man—swift action was taken as soon as she did tell him what had happened. In fact, the source was fired from his position after Jodie talked to her coworkers and editor about what happened. She recalled that “my editor was extremely upset... then it escalated pretty quickly until he [the source] got fired within a week I think.” In another example, Chris said that when he and other photographers had concerns about their safety when covering protests, their editor went above and beyond to provide tangible support for their team. While many left reporters and photographers to buy or create their own safety gear, Chris' editor provided their photographers with protective equipment, implemented a buddy system so reporters were never alone in potentially dangerous situations, and made it clear that no staff member had to cover events where they felt they would be unsafe or were uncomfortable.

In sum, safety-violating hostility was experienced by journalists as explicit threats and verbal abuse, as situational and brought on by source actions, and less commonly as physical and/or sexual assaults. This form of hostility was much less frequent than other forms of hostility, but it was the most salient for those who experienced it. Safety-violating hostility was also the most likely to be brought to an editor's attention, as journalists sought help and support from those higher up in the newsroom. Many were disappointed and frustrated after bringing these issues to their editors, though, because they found their editors to offer only superficial, verbal support or

to clearly prioritize the news product over the safety and well-being of the journalists. For these reasons, some journalists developed mental health issues and/or contemplated leaving the profession.

Personal and Professional Microaggressions

The fifth and final form of hostility journalists experienced was in the form of personal and professional *microaggressions*. Microaggressions are defined as brief statements woven into everyday conversation that subtly attack a person's group membership. These statements are short, pervasive and seem automatic (Sue, 2010). The person using the microaggression may or may not realize they are using "injurious, and toxic communication practices" (Yep & Lescure, 2018, p. 113) because such practices are "often normalized as innocent and innocuous in everyday interactions" (Yep & Lescure, 2018, p. 113). Likewise, while the person on the receiving end of the microaggression does experience hurt and anger in response to the "subtle snubs or dismissive looks, gestures, and tones" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273), they are not likely to address the microaggression as problematic because the statements are so commonly interwoven into routine conversations.

Personal microaggressions were those referencing the journalists' immutable characteristics, such as comments about their gender, race and/or age. A lot of younger Black and White women covering education said that sources would often comment on how they looked like they could be one of the students in the high schools they were covering. This alone was frustrating, but sometimes sources would make even more overtly ageist comments. Quinn, a 28-year-old White newspaper reporter, recalled a time when she was covering an event focused on financial literacy skills for high school students:

The woman who was running the event told me that since I was a young person, I could understand what it felt like to not work very hard and have everything given to you. So at

that time, I'm like 10 years older than all of the high school kids and also, it was just a weird, very anti-young person comment.

Quinn went on to explain that the comment felt belittling, but she wasn't in a position where she felt she could do anything other than awkwardly chuckle and otherwise ignore the statement because she needed to continue working with the source to complete the news story. Ada, a 29-year-old White newspaper reporter, said she is often treated differently because of her gender, and she notices common microaggressions in the form of a more condescending tone, or being treated like a child. She explained, "I have sources who like side hug me or call me little lady. And obviously, my [male] colleagues wouldn't be getting that. They wouldn't be getting the, I'm gonna talk to you like I'm your dad, versus I'm your equal." Ada, and many other women, said they also get emails from sources (and readers) critiquing their writing and reporting and offering journalistic advice. They believed that this was also a form of gendered hostility. Ada said:

I talk with my male colleagues about this a lot, whereas they get the emails just saying they suck, whereas I get the emails where they're like, "Wow, you should have done this." And I'm like, OK John Doe who's 66 and not a journalist. Thank you for telling me I should have done that. Appreciate it. Great advice.

Maria, a 52-year-old Latinx newspaper reporter, said she struggled with racist microaggressions while working in a small, mostly White region of New England. She has a Hispanic last name but explained that she passes as White. If she introduced herself in person or over the phone to a source she had no issues, but she said that if she had to introduce herself via email—where her last name was prominent—she would have strained interactions with the source unless (or until) she met them in person. "It always made a difference when they saw me, because... I don't look Puerto Rican and I don't look like a member of MS-13¹¹, which is their big fear," Maria said. Sources who knew her full name experienced relief and changed their demeanor

¹¹ MS-13 is a criminal gang made up of Hispanic immigrants that was at large in the 1970s and 1980s in Los Angeles, California, and has been more widely distributed in recent decades.

when they met her in person. Maria said sources would always ask about her last name, if it was her husband's. That question is a common microaggression, as it insinuates that the Hispanic name doesn't belong and acts as way for the source to reconcile their preconceived notions with the person they met, who doesn't align with those stereotypes. Maria said this was awkward, because she told them the truth—that no, it was her father's last name.

In another common example experienced by journalists of color in this sample, sources would mistake them for one of the few other reporters of color on the news staff (and sometimes, in the entire community if the area was rural and mostly White). Grace, a 25-year-old biracial newspaper reporter, said that she was at a city council meeting when the mayor came up to her and called her by the wrong name. He mistook her for a Black activist in the area, even though Grace had interviewed the mayor earlier that same day (she was wearing the same outfit she was wearing when she interviewed him), and had a much lighter complexion and a different hair style than the person he mistook her for. Reflecting on that moment, Grace said, "I don't think it was necessarily malicious, but it is definitely ignorant. So I felt kind of upset. A little sad." These feelings were especially relevant in that interaction because, again, Grace had just interacted with the source earlier that day and looked the same as she did before. By confusing her with another Black person, the mayor was demonstrating that he wasn't making an effort to match her name and job role to her person, as though she wasn't important enough to remember.

Professional microaggressions attacked the journalists' intentions and competence as journalists, overlapping in some ways with hostility in the form of general distrust of the news media. Microaggressions did not overtly mimic former President Trump's anti-media rhetoric, but they suggested that the journalist was biased or incompetent. Hailey, a 28-year-old White

newspaper reporter, recalled covering a local government event and asking a group of people sitting at a table if she could have a program because she wasn't sure what was going on:

One of the state senators, who is a big man, both in stature and importance in the community, he said, "Where did you say you were from?" And I said, "I'm the reporter from [the local paper]." And he's like, "Oh, that's why you don't know anything."

Hailey was new to the paper and the area, and she hadn't worked with any of those sources before. She felt defeated, and actually stepped outside so that she could cry before returning to cover the event. Although she worked with him many times after that, and he was always cordial toward her, Hailey said she always dreaded interacting with him and it made her think badly of him. "I was just so offended that somebody, even just with the name association of the newspaper that I worked for, would be bold enough to speak so negatively to my face about that," she explained.

Sometimes the microaggressions were in the form of an offhand comment that could be construed as a joke, such as a source adding, "Now don't go spinning this story," before answering a question. Other times they were even more subtle. Ellie, a 22-year-old White newspaper reporter, recalls working with a county clerk:

She was very patronizing. I was writing about mail-in ballots and what that's gonna look like in the county. And she was like, "I'm excited to read your little article," and things like that, very patronizing, very demeaning, and I walked out like, "Wow. That sucks, that was terrible, I'm mad."

By calling it her "little article," the source is insinuating that the story is silly. This made Ellie feel as though the source wasn't taking her seriously, which was irritating.

In sum, sources frequently used hostile personal and professional microaggressions while interacting with journalists. These brief, seemingly off-hand comments were offensive, and were racist, sexist, and/or ageist comments that targeted the journalists' identity groups, or they were targeted at the journalists' professional identity. In many ways, the latter form of microaggressions were a less overt form of hostility stemming from a general distrust of the news media.

Microaggressions were also one form of hostility that illustrated how journalists experienced hostility differently, according to their gender, race and/or age.

Viewing Hostility through the Lens of Intersectionality

While my first research question focused on the forms of hostility experienced by all journalists in my sample, RQ1a, asks: How does hostility vary at the intersections of gender, race, and other axes of difference? Not all participants in this sample experienced hostility to the same degree or in the same ways. As described above, personal microaggressions showcase how women and journalists of color had to deal with this unique form of hostility aimed at their personal identities instead of just their professional identities. Sometimes sources would use microaggressions aimed at multiple identity markers at once. Jodie, a Black woman, said the source who sexually assaulted her made comments about her gender and race, and how they presumably affected her ability to do her job, before assaulting her. She recalled, “He made comments about my race, he said that it must be easy being a journalist as a woman because people wanna talk to me, then he said, ‘Oh, you’re Black, so it must be hard for you.’” This insinuates that because she is a Black woman, she is less attractive or approachable than non-Black women.

Indeed, many of the young white women in my sample said being a woman did help them, at least to some extent. When sources who were men used condescending tones or tried to insinuate that the women reporters may not know what they’re talking about, some women played up their White femininity instead of trying to correct the men. Meena, who was White but could pass as Middle Eastern, said that she would perform emotional labor by trying to make herself “very non-threatening, just like, White girlishness, when talking to some of these sources. I found myself using a lot of humor, trying to make light of situations, self-deprecating humor.” This performance was in conflict with Meena’s (and others’) professional identity and general sense of self, as she

liked to think of herself as smart, competent, and a hard-hitting reporter. But for Meena, this ability to put on a performance was especially important because of her ability to pass as Middle Eastern. While she played up her “White girlishness” in certain situations when it would benefit her, there were other situations when she would emphasize her Middle Eastern roots. For example, when covering a case of vandalism, Meena was able to connect with the owner of the Indian restaurant because she understood how Islamophobia could be misdirected at Indian Americans. She connected with the source by talking about how she grew up in a Muslim home and seeing her non-Muslim but brown-skinned friends experience the same kind of discrimination. As Meena chose which aspects of her identity to draw on, she was keenly aware of this privilege:

When I could, I just eventually learned to play into just like, I am just like a sweet, non-threatening young lady, I’m playing into just a girlish persona. I felt like I ended up doing that a lot, which is not something that every young reporter could do, it worked because I am White. It worked, ‘cause I am—I’m short, I’m traditionally feminine. It was something that worked well, especially with the older members of the community, but that really wouldn’t be an option for a young male reporter, a young Black reporter, for anyone who doesn’t resemble a young White woman. That wouldn’t work for you, but sometimes it was the only approach that really worked for me.

Meena points out that in addition to race, age—being or at least looking “young”—also matters. The women with more tenure in the journalism field acknowledged that while they used to be able to play up their femininity, that performance didn’t work once they reached (or looked) a certain age. Gloria, a 47-year-old White automotive reporter, described how this changed her as she navigated a traditionally masculine beat:

I think earlier in my career, I definitely used humor. I definitely relied more on the fact that I was younger, I was sorta new to this whole area of business, cars in general. So, I would kinda play up on that and sorta try and elicit help from a source. So, rather than kind of come off as sort of being threatening—as having joined this boys club—I would more try to be like, “Oh, I’m new here. I don’t really know much. Could you help me with this?” and I would often get a more favorable response out of folks that way. I remember one executive that I interviewed who I reminded him of his granddaughter. We got along pretty well. But I just kept kind of playing him. Just knowing that he had a favorable thought to

me, just kept asking questions, and just keeping it light, but also sometimes throwing in something harder there. So yeah, I mean, I have definitely done that.

Here we can see how Gloria believed she was manipulating the source with her performance to get what she wanted. As she got older, she wasn't able to use her age and femininity to her advantage:

I started covering autos when I was 28. At that time, I looked pretty young for my age. So, I probably looked more like 22. I no longer look young for my age, and I've been doing this now since, almost 20 years. So, I can't get away with being like, "Oh, I just don't know much about this. Can you help me?" Because that's going to look really bad. Then you just sorta look like an idiot.

Now when she goes into interviews, she has to be more aggressive and in-the-know than her counterparts who are men because her gender now works against her. Research on longstanding sexism in the auto industry (which includes automotive news) found automotive leaders—sources who are primarily men—"often question women's expertise and credibility in their field," (Automotive News, 2017) so that women have to constantly be at the top of their game and prove themselves, no matter their title or years of experience.

No White men in this sample indicated that sources used personal microaggressions when interacting with them or felt the need to perform self-degrading emotional labor. Asian men indicate that, like Grace and Maria in the examples above, sources would confuse them with other journalists of color and/or ask them about their last names and where they are from. Chris, a 26-year-old Asian photojournalist, said that although he is much younger than the other Asian photojournalist who worked with him, he is often mistaken for him, both by sources and even within his own newsroom. And Andrew, a 31-year-old biracial Asian newspaper reporter, is often asked where he is from when interacting with sources on his business beat. These mistakes and additional questions can be a burden for the journalists, who experience them time and time again. Although the mistakes and answers in those moments are quick to respond to, they make the

journalists feel like they don't belong. And when those microaggressions are coupled with additional comments about other aspects of identity, such as the journalists' age, it can be damaging to the journalists' self-esteem. Chris said those comments led to nagging feelings of self-doubt when he first started out as a photojournalist:

I think it's like you're constantly reminded in little ways that you are younger or different and then I think that creates more anxiety in your mind when you have, when you're in a high pressure situation and you have to remind yourself, "No, I got hired because I'm qualified..."

While all journalists experienced anti-media rhetoric in similar ways, there were differences in some of the more nuanced expressions of distrust. As previously described, hostility in the form of general resentment of the press, as it is related to a lack of news coverage and unfairly negative coverage, came primarily from sources of color. Also notable is that although these sentiments were expressed by sources to many journalists, they were expressed specifically to many *Black* journalists. Bernie, Terri and Brenden, whose examples were shared above, are all Black journalists who had to bear the additional burden of hearing and responding to sources who felt as though the news had failed them. In all of these cases, the journalists experienced tension because they understood the sources' point of view and acknowledged that the resentment and criticisms were valid. But they also understood why such skewed coverage happens—because of common journalistic routines and a news cycle that privileges breaking news and event-based coverage (Tuchman, 1978) and a thin newsroom staff. Participants had to perform emotional labor when confronted by sources who raised these issues to both remain professional and get the story they are working on, and to let the sources know that they hear them and want to provide better coverage of their communities. Bernie explained how she typically handled those interactions, with lots of empathic listening:

Sometimes you may go on a breaking news story, there's been a shooting, go out to a neighborhood, and you may have people who just feel frustrated that the only time we show up is when there's somebody who's been killed, or that we don't understand their pain. Living in an area that's prone to violence, it's got a lot of shootings, a lot of murders, and they don't see reporters or the media. They don't see us until something has happened. We don't come out any other time to talk about, the street is dark, broken street lights or anything like that. And so, there is that level of resentment out there, and when you're covering, maybe, a breaking news story, and people might say, "Well, I don't wanna talk 'cause the only time you guys come out is when we got a shooting. Where were you before? You never cover anything. You don't cover the little kids who won the chess championship." And when people say that to me, I don't argue them down, I just listen. I offer my card and say, "Call us sometime. Let's talk about those stories that you would like to see us cover."

Here we see how Bernie opens up the door for continued conversation with the source, so they're not just a voice in a breaking crime story, but they have the opportunity to be a voice in a more positive story, or a story about *why* such crimes are common in the area. But as Bernie and Brenden pointed out, not all of those story ideas could make it in the news if they were not tied to some kind of timely event or other news value.

In some cases, Black journalists were put in positions where they couldn't effectively move forward with the sources as Bernie had. Brenden had difficulties covering racial protests. He got pushback from the Black activists because they believed Brenden, as a Black man, was being sent to cover the protests in an act of tokenism, since there were very few reporters of color at their local paper. Brenden recalled, "I also got pushback [from the activists] saying, like, why are local outlets sending their reporters of color to specifically be at these protests? It's almost like you're sending token representatives to be out here to cover these issues." Although Brenden might have been able to cover the protests more holistically, as a member of that racial group who understood the historical context of the movement and the protesters' anger and pain, the activists were offended that the newspaper wouldn't send other reporters to cover the event.

Although emotionally harmful, microaggressions, needing to perform emotional labor, and having to absorb and navigate community distrust does not endanger women or journalists of color. There were some instances where participants said they were put into unsafe situations with hostile sources, and the danger largely stemmed from their identity. Many of the young women expressed feeling unsafe when conducting person-on-the-street interviews or having to knock on people's doors in an attempt to find sources. For young White women, their main safety concern was sexual harassment and assault—that, while out reporting alone, a source would make sexual advances and potentially overpower them. This was the case with Lauren when she was temporarily stuck in a source's house and then in a source's truck. But for young women of color, there was an additional layer of fear when in these reporting scenarios. Depending on the story topic the women were working on, they could become targets because of the source's political beliefs. Wendy, a 29-year-old Indian broadcast journalist, experienced safety-violating hostility when covering immigration issues (described above). Wendy said she knew before she began reporting on the story that she was going to encounter problems because of her identity and the region she worked in. She described the situation:

They put me [on the story], as a woman of color, especially an Indian American woman. I was [on the East Coast], but it was a very rural county. It felt almost like [the South]. It was a county where it's 90% White, heavily, heavily Republican. It's just like, you need to make sure the journalist fits a beat. I didn't fit the beat at all. And I already knew it was a bad idea to send me on the streets to ask people their opinions on the government shutdown and immigration. I just didn't think it was a good idea. I didn't like it. But I had to do it.

Wendy “had to do it” because of her age and tenure on the job. Because she was just starting out in her career, Wendy didn't feel as though she could turn down the story assignment or bring up her concerns to her editor for fear of looking weak, unprofessional, or unmotivated. In this situation, Wendy's gender, race, age, tenure and professional identity all intersect to create a unique, unsafe situation. Even the geographical area she was working in contributed to the

situation and increased the chances that she would encounter hostility. Before the source she interviewed in the example above became hostile—outright accusing her of being biased and eventually chasing her in his car—he “would get very offended at almost all of the questions” and turn the questions back around on Wendy to question her stance on immigration. She believed she was put in this unsafe position because of poor editorial judgement:

Sending an Indian-American reporter, so I already look like an immigrant or I look like I came from someone who was an immigrant... I was definitely targeted in that interview. He would say things like, “Don’t you believe immigration should be legal, huh?” And I don’t think he would have said that to a White person. So I think it’s definitely sending—you need to have the wherewithal that, it’s not enough to hire just a woman of color for the sake of hiring a woman of color, you have to have the wherewithal that you have a woman of color on your staff, and journalists are already a target on top of a journalist who is a woman of color. Sending her out in this situation where the town is 90% White, heavily Republican, and to ask about a topic that is so contentious, that was just poor editorial judgement, in my opinion.

Other women of color were put in similar situations. Terri, a Black woman, was often sent to cover Confederate flag demonstrations when she worked in the South. Although she said nothing physically threatening ever happened while she was covering the events, she was always on edge. She got an anonymous racist email from someone she suspected was a source from those events, and from then on she would alert her friends and family when she had to cover them and would check in with them frequently, just in case something bad happened. When Terri later moved to paper in the Midwest, she was asked to write a story about a business owner who displayed a mask of President Barack Obama’s head on a noose outside his shop. Terri said the shop owner made her uncomfortable not only because of the context of the story, but because he kept accusing her of not believing what he was saying and asking her what she was going to print, insinuating she was biased. When “the mood was getting a little bit dicey,” she ended her interview with him abruptly so she could get out of there. Like Wendy, Terri’s tenure in her position prevented her from speaking up and turning down the story:

This was for an editor who I didn't work with on a typical basis because I was filling in for a breaking news shift. And so when they asked me to go, it was like, okay, I don't think I—I didn't love the idea, but I had also only been working there for a few months, and I was filling in, and I'm someone who's there on contract so I think I just sort of thought, "OK, I have to just be game and do it."

An added level of precarity here was, as Terri said, she was a contractual employee with this newsroom and didn't have as much job security as a regular staff member. Although she was uncomfortable covering the story, she did it anyway and chose to put her safety at risk instead of her job.

As journalists gained more tenure in their positions, some of them began raising safety concerns to their editors and turned down stories they were uncomfortable with. Nick, a Black man who had been at the same newspaper for 30 years, said that he used to put his safety at risk by knocking on doors for stories. As a young "Black reporter covering counties that are predominantly all White," he would have to walk onto strangers' porches, usually in an unmarked or hard to recognize media car. Nick said sources would often call the police. He would be waiting for a source or talking with them on the porch and "inevitably someone would call the police on me," he said. He would notice police slowing driving by again and again until he left. Sometimes he would leave the scene if the police approached him, and he was worried he would one day be arrested while doing his job. It got so bad that he would come up with ways to avoid that kind of reporting:

That is something your editors will never understand. I'm a Black man who is sitting outside someone's home. They don't know that I am a reporter. They don't know anything. All they know is that there is a Black man and he's sitting outside a house on the corner... And to be honest, you always have to do your job, right? But you don't have to do your job exactly how they [your editors] say you should do it. There was a time where I—again, I was getting the police called on me—and they were like we need you to go to the house and I'm thinking oh no, here we go again... I drove and went to the house, sat outside for five minutes and I didn't go to the door but then I left and said no one was there. So I didn't refuse the assignment, but I didn't do it the way they asked me to do it. As a journalist you have to do your job, you know? But as a Black journalist and being younger—I'm talking

18, 19, 20 years old—I was put in some very tough situations that I don't think my editors even knew.

If asked to do something like that today, Nick said he would refuse the assignment and try to explain to the editor why sending a Black reporter to knock on doors in certain neighborhoods is a bad idea. He also said that he would try to advocate for other, younger, journalists put in that position so they didn't feel torn between their professional success and their safety like he was.

In sum, White women and men and women of color experienced hostility in different ways and to different degrees than White men in the journalism profession. While all journalists were subject to professional microaggressions, White women and men and women of color were also subject to personal microaggressions. In some cases, these microaggressions prompted the journalists to actually play into sexist or ageist assumptions by duping the sources into thinking they were innocent, incompetent reporters who didn't know anything and needed their help. This worked particularly well for young, White women, but stopped working as the women aged and was not as effective for women of color. This performance of emotional labor was also opposed to the journalists' sense of professional identity and left them feeling untrue to their normally strong, competent and professional selves. Additionally, while all journalists experience hostility in the form of general distrust of the news media, especially as anti-media rhetoric, journalists of color, specifically Black journalists, also had to bear the emotional burden of sources who critiqued the news' coverage of minority communities. This left the journalists torn between their personal and professional identities, as they both recognized the truth in these criticisms and the sources' distrust, but also needed to do their jobs and understood the journalistic norms and routines that led to such unbalanced coverage. Finally, men and women of color—regardless of their race—were often put in unsafe reporting situations because of their racial identities and the topics they were asked to cover and/or the type of reporting they were asked to do. These journalists largely

believed their editors were ignorant to their struggles and the safety concerns they faced. Regardless of the safety concerns, many participants said they went along with the unsafe assignments because they were young and new to the job and didn't want to jeopardize their careers by turning down stories, which would make them appear too timid, unprofessional and unmotivated. In these ways, gender, race, age, tenure, and professional values all culminated to create hostile situations for women and journalists of color much more often than for white journalists.

Exploratory Survey Data

In addition to findings stemming from the qualitative data described above, some additional insights about how participants experienced hostility can also be gleaned from the survey data collected. However, all findings in this section should be interpreted with the understanding that the survey sample size is too small ($n = 53$) to reach statistical significance, and additional, larger surveys would need to be done to validate these results. Given that understanding, the results can still add value to the qualitative data.

An independent samples T-test revealed that journalists who interacted with a routine hostile source experienced slightly more hostility ($M = 3.14$; $SD = .789$) than those who did not interact with a routine hostile source ($M = 2.79$; $SD = .779$), $t(51) = 1.599$, $p = .116$. This makes sense, considering those who interact with a routine hostile source likely interact with that person a few times a month, if not a few times a week, which is in addition to any hostile interactions that occur with one-time sources in the community. Furthermore, the lack of a substantial difference in the frequency of hostility is in line with the qualitative findings, in which if participants dealt with a routine hostile source they only had one or two routine sources who fit that description instead of many routine hostile sources.

Next, I explored the relationship between frequency of hostility and participants' demographic characteristics, specifically their gender and race. Interestingly, T-tests revealed that White reporters experienced slightly more hostility ($M = 3.10$, $SD = .746$) than journalists of color ($M = 2.86$; $SD = .854$), $t(39) = 1.044$, $p = .303$, and that men experienced slightly more hostility ($M = 3.17$, $SD = .835$) than women ($M = 3$, $SD = .725$), $t(16) = -.623$, $p = .542$. These results are surprising when compared to the literature, but may be a result of participants' perception. If White women and men and women journalists of color are more used to experiencing hostility from sources, they may consider it to be a routine part of the job and therefore not as salient, causing them to under report the actual frequency of hostility. Furthermore, since having a salient hostile experience was an inclusion criterion in the study, the men and White reporters who signed up (opposed to all of those who saw the research call and did not sign up) might not present a true picture of the frequency of hostility experienced by those groups compared to others. If this exclusion criterion was not present, we might see a much larger difference between White journalists and journalists of color, and between men and women. And finally, since the p value of these results is so high, it is also possible that a larger survey of journalists would result in very different findings, which might be more in line with this study's qualitative findings.

A chi-square test was conducted to explore the relationship between gender, race and the likelihood of having a routine hostile source. The results showed a non-significant relationship between gender and routine hostile sources, $\chi^2(1) = 1.477$, $p = .224$, however women in this sample were more likely to have a routine hostile source (24 women compared to just 5 men). This meant that more than 75% of the women in this sample dealt with a routine hostile source, while only about half of the men dealt with the same problem. And notably, sustained harassment, the type of

hostility coming from a reporter's routine source, has been deemed a characteristic of "severe" harassment, according to the Pew Research Center (Vogels, 2021).

A chi-square test also found a non-significant relationship between race and routine hostile sources $\chi^2(1) = .164, p = .686$. Because the sample size for this survey was so small, statistical tests looking at the combined effects of race and gender could not be performed. Again, it should be noted that these results should be interpreted with caution, and that finding no statistically significant results is not surprising, given the low number of survey respondents. A larger sample size would be needed to draw meaningful conclusions about these relationships. However, since some counterintuitive findings emerged from the survey data, this will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

Summary

This chapter sought to answer this study's first set of research questions, which focused on the forms of hostility journalists experienced from sources, and how that hostility varied for journalists according to their gender, race, age and other differences. Participants described five unique forms of hostility: hostility stemming from a general distrust of the news media, being blocklisted by elite sources, source boundary crossing, safety-violating hostility, and personal and professional microaggressions. Hostility stemming from a general trust of the media, especially in the form of anti-media rhetoric, supported assumptions that President Donald Trump's rhetoric has seeped into local communities and made work harder for journalists. This type of hostility was also the most frequent, although it was not considered dangerous. Safety-violating hostility was the least common form of hostility, but it was the most intense, dangerous form of hostility. Safety-violating hostility was also disproportionately experienced by women and journalists of color, as their gender, race, age, tenure, and even their geographical location all worked against them to

create more unsafe situations. Common reporting practices, such as engaging in person-on-the-street interviews, knocking on sources' door unannounced, and reporting alone, without a photographer or fellow reporter, all contributed to these unsafe situations.

CHAPTER 6 RESILIENCE AND ITS EFFECTS ON JOURNALISTIC ROUTINES

After having described the forms of hostility from sources experienced by journalists, my second research question asks: How do journalists use resilience processes in response to interactions with hostile sources? In this chapter, I will begin by describing the ways my participants used resilience processes to cope with hostility from sources (see Table 3 for a sample of open codes), highlighting processes that are especially transformative or adaptive. Then, to answer RQ2a, I will explore how identity both enables and constrains journalists' ability to use resilience processes by applying the lens of intersectionality. Finally, I will address my third research question, which considers how hostility and resilience processes affect journalists' routines and their resulting news stories. Again, after answering these research questions, I will provide an exploratory analysis of relevant pre-interview survey data to complement my qualitative findings.

Table 3

Frequency of Sample Open Codes for Resilience Processes

| Code | Count |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| General hostility - Reframing | |
| Flipping the script | 12 |
| Self-fulfilling prophecy | 10 |
| Using hostility for soundbites | 6 |
| General hostility - Accepting | |
| Disengaging | 19 |
| Source has the right to say no | 7 |
| Need to find alternative angles | 11 |
| Selecting 'safe' sources | 9 |

General hostility - Transforming/Teaching moments

| | |
|---|----|
| Fundamental misunderstanding of news | 36 |
| Explain ‘rules of engagement’ | 17 |
| Gaining source consent | 8 |
| Used ‘scripts’ to teach sources | 10 |
| Local vs. national journalists | 19 |
| Focus on community benefit | 42 |
| Non-safety violating - Identity anchors | |
| Journalism is a calling | 52 |
| Hostility is worth it | 29 |
| Need to better the community | 47 |

Resilience in the Face of Hostility

To understand how journalists use resilience processes in response to hostility, it is first important to consider the form of hostility encountered. Resilience processes varied depending on the form of hostility, which ranged from being extreme and threatening to mild and annoying. Resilience will first be explored in the face of non-safety violating forms of hostility (i.e., general hostility stemming from general distrust of the news media, blocklisting, boundary crossing, and microaggressions). Then, resilience will be explored in the face of safety-violating hostility.

Resilience in Response to General Distrust of the News Media

As previously stated, almost every participant shared at least one experience in which they were called “fake news,” or accused of being biased. Most often, would-be sources simply refused to work with the media, reciting Trump’s rhetoric. As Andrew pointed out, this “assumption of bad faith” about journalists most likely stemmed, at least in part, from a place of ignorance. If the potential source has never worked with the media before, they have no way of knowing how

journalists operate. The only pictures in their heads are based on what they see on TV and social media, which largely includes Trump's anti-media rhetoric. To combat this, journalists used resilience processes in three key ways to deal with hostility in the form of anti-media rhetoric and a general distrust of the news media: 1) they *reframed the hostility* to get usable content, 2) *accepted the hostility* as part of the job and find alternative sources/story angles to get the job done, and 3) *they transformed the hostility* to create teaching moments between themselves and the source. Each resilience strategy will be discussed in detail below.

The first resilience process used by participants was reframing. When community members—in this case, people who the journalist wanted to interview for a story—started to accuse the journalists of being biased, too liberal, and only including opinions that bolster their agenda, many participants indicated that they reframed the hostility into an opportunity to get the source to talk with them. Reporters tried to be understanding and respond to those claims from a place of empathy, but they also reframed the sources' argument as a self-fulfilling prophecy. By doing this, participants tried to reason with the source by convincing them that if what they are saying is true (that the media only presents one-sided, liberal arguments in the news) and if they and people with similar opinions all refuse to be interviewed by journalists, then they will never see their opinions presented by the news, furthering the problem. Bernie, a reporter of 40 years, said she tries to reason with sources who complain about not seeing their opinions or their communities' stories in the news, but then also refuse to be interviewed:

I tell them, "I'm here because we want to hear your side of it. And if you don't tell us what the concerns are, how are we gonna know? You've gotta make your feelings known, you've gotta make your concerns known, you've gotta give us the information... If you wanna be an advocate for your community, then you would want to tell a reporter what it is that you're trying to get across. You would wanna do this interview, think about it."

Reframing as a resilience process is usually an internal device used by individuals to create a mental shift and help the individual think more positively about a stressor or source of trauma. In this case, reporters are reframing anti-media rhetoric not for themselves, but for others. This strategic use of reframing helps the reporters overcome the obstacle in front of them (that is, the source who distrusts the media and is refusing to grant them an interview) so that they can get what they need for the news story they are working on. Flipping the script like this worked in many cases, especially when the source seemed passionate about the issues being discussed. Mariah, a reporter of seven years, said it's important to work through the interaction even when the sources are attacking her credibility and professionalism. She tries to feign empathy with sources and pretend to see the situation from their side. She said she tells them that she can give them a platform for their views, but only if they talk to her. "The only approach I have is to fall back on being empathetic, 'Okay. You don't trust me, so give me your narrative. Tell me what you want people to hear,'" she said. While it didn't work in all cases, it did work a lot of the time:

Even if they're angry, I find that people want to tell their story, so even if they're yelling at me, and telling me that I'm not covering it because I'm in the pocket of whoever their perceived enemy is, they often, if given the chance to tell their story, will do so. 'Cause people want to be heard.

The key here, according to Mariah, is to keep reiterating that the source is heard and the reporter's goal *is* to get their point of view out, if the source will let them.

Participants also reframed source hostility for themselves by choosing to see at least some of that hostility and anti-media rhetoric as colorful (if not outrageous) content for their stories. This occurred in cases when sources granted an interview, but then drew on anti-media rhetoric or grew hostile during the interview. Nina, a broadcast reporter in her first year on the job, said that when sources start to get worked up during interviews and grow hostile, she lets them continue talking and tries not to interrupt. This is because she has found sources will start yelling directly

at her if she tries to interject. Then, she finds joy in using a clip from that portion of the interview when she can. She said it can make for a good sound bite:

I'm not gonna cut them off because that's even more problematic. I just kind of just hear what they have to say... Sometimes they have good sound bites, they do, because [chuckle] because I always try to look for the most bizarre, most emotional sound bites, and sometimes when they're acting, like, crazy and mean, we have that 5 to 10 second sound bite that I would wanna use. So, sometimes I do stick it in [the video].

Mariah also found angered sources to produce usable content, because, as she observed, people are more likely to open up and talk freely if they are agitated and worked up. She said, "If someone is discomforted, but it opens them up, I can work with that. If you get mad at me and start yelling at me, hey, I'm taking notes."

In sum, by reframing anti-media rhetoric, journalists were able to flip the fake news article on its head to convince sources that if they don't interact with the news media, their side of the story may never make it into the news. But if sources did cooperate, they could get the "real" story out and help stop the cycle of fake news. This counterargument was attractive to sources, and most did grant an interview when presented with that alternative frame. Additionally, some journalists choose to reframe hostility for themselves, seeing those more aggressive comments as an opportunity to add emotion to their news stories.

Another subset of participants was unable to productively reframe the anti-media rhetoric and instead accepted it as the new reality—or new normal—they were dealing with. As soon as a source started mimicking that rhetoric, most of these reporters saw it as an impassable roadblock and instead chose to move on without trying harder to get that potential source to work with them. Quinn, a newspaper reporter of four years, explains that after so many failed attempts at reasoning with sources who believed all media is fake and biased, she has grown pessimistic:

All you can really do is just try to reassert to them that like, "We're trying to be fair and we're talking to you to get your perspective so that we can have a balanced story, and if

you don't talk to us we can't report your side.” The normal things that you would say to try to convince the source to talk to you, and obviously, for a lot of reasons with that type of—someone who's in that mindset, there's limited success. It becomes just a larger philosophical problem 'cause, how do you reach that person if they won't even give you a chance to report on them in a way that is fair? And how can you show them that actually, no, I'm just trying to do my job and I have good intentions? You can't show them 'cause they won't give you the opportunity.

Quinn now just politely says, “Thanks anyways,” and moves on to someone else when she encounters someone who uses such rhetoric. Likewise, Audrey, a broadcast reporter of 28 years, shared the sentiment that some people just couldn't be reasoned with because they are set in their (mis)beliefs:

There's so much information out there and some people choose to, they don't wanna do their homework. They wanna pick and choose the facts they believe. And so that invites a lot of hostility and mistrust and it's difficult to overcome, because some people, no matter what you tell them, think vaccines cause autism, or that the Holocaust didn't happen. And it's a very, ah, it makes it very difficult.

Many others took up this same mindset and would simply disengage as soon as possible with those potential sources. Donna, a newspaper reporter of 40 years and mentor of college journalism students, said she used such scenarios as a way to teach her mentees that everyone “has the right to say no” when approached by a journalist, and this demonstrated a need to look for additional news angles and ways to tell the story. Sometimes this meant reporters would strategically approach people for interviews who looked like they might be more media-friendly. Meena, a newspaper reporter in her first year on the job, said that after having so many bad experiences trying to interview community members in her small, rural town, said she began only approaching people she thought would be nice to her:

This wasn't really an ideal solution, and it's an example of how just even well-intentioned reporters also get it wrong, but I found myself preferring to gravitate towards younger [chuckle] younger people, because I found that their reactions tended to be less negative. Which is not good, 'cause then it's a self-selecting bias, it still hurts the coverage, and it still hurts the story. But that is, I think, what I found myself doing. I was just gravitating towards people who are younger, and women as well.

As Meena noted, this was not a perfect solution, as selecting younger people to interview, and primarily women, omitted differing opinions on the story topic.

Finally, participants accepted hostility but also anticipated it and tried to dispel it in advance. They did this by identifying as a more traditionally conservative news source whenever possible. Lauren and Danielle, both broadcast reporters, worked for news stations that had affiliations with local Fox News stations. Because of that affiliation, their microphones had their local ABC (or equivalent) station call letters on one side, and their local Fox call letters on the other side. Lauren also had access to press cars with a Fox News car decal that she could take when reporting on location. Although she didn't officially work for a Fox station and she typically identified as a reporter for the other local news station in her region, she would use the affiliation to her advantage:

I would plan, just knowing, if I had to cover a story that I felt like I was going to be going into some sort of political territory or covering some sort of like issue where I knew that I would need to either talk to conservatives, or be on their good side, I would always take the Fox [News] car. It seriously made a world of difference. [chuckle] People made comments about it... So let's take for instance, like here in [the Midwest] masks are a really controversial issue. We've had back and forth, this mask ordinance, whether or not it would pass, and it's failed twice and it finally passed and people were like, "Well we're gonna boycott these businesses. We're not gonna shop in [this town] because they have this mask ordinance 'cause we believe in living in the land of the free" or whatever. So, if I needed to talk to somebody and I needed to get the con against someone who was against the mask ordinance, someone who didn't want masks, if I was in the Fox car, I knew that I could find somebody who would be like, "Oh, they're on our side. This is a journalist who gets me." [chuckle] And I had people say, "Well, I wouldn't talk to you, but since you're with Fox, that's the only channel I watch," or, "You're the real news, so OK." But I could be in the [other news station's] car and it would be a completely different experience.

Likewise, Sean, a reporter of five years for a radio station affiliated with NPR, would play up his connection with the larger station when interacting with most sources, but he would say he was affiliated with a smaller, local station when reporting on events such as the opening of a local

Trump campaign office and at a Mike Pence rally. These strategic moves were not lies, but small changes in how the journalists introduced themselves that eased potential hostility.

By accepting hostility, this group of participants simply adapted to the new normal created by President Trump's anti-media rhetoric and did their best to work around it. Sometimes this pushed journalists to find creative ways to find people and information for their stories. Other times, this caused a perpetuation of one-sided, biased stories, as journalists avoided interacting with people who might buy into the anti-media rhetoric.

The final and most common strategy used by journalists when confronted with general hostility was by creating *journalistic teaching moments*, a result of two, combined resilience processes: reframing and drawing on identity anchors. Many participants saw these moments of hostility, when a source didn't trust the news media because of a lack of understanding about the journalistic process, as an opportunity to create teaching moments between themselves, the journalists, and the community member, who they hoped would be a source in their story. These participants reframed and transformed the experiences into journalistic teaching moments, which served as an opportunity to educate and form positive connections with sources, and also allowed them to draw on their professional values and routines to teach sources about journalism's benefit to the community.

They did this by first helping the sources understand how news is made, at least at a basic level. Sean referred to this as explaining the "rules of engagement" with the media. He explained the need for such discussions:

I think there's a lot of squeamishness that kind of happens when people are trying to figure out what [journalists] are doing... I kind of explain to them what my job is, and part of that is also explaining how journalism works. That, "Hey, just because I'm talking to you at this second, and if I identify myself as a reporter, it doesn't mean that everything that you say to me at this second is going to be on the record."

These rules of engagement include explaining what is and is not on the record, the expectation that sources provide their name and basic information if they agree to be interviewed, and, if there is a procedure for fact-checking or follow-up, when and who the source can expect to hear from. Sean also said that if he's working on a multimedia piece, it's important to inform the source that if the interview is on video, the whole interview may last 10 minutes but he may only be able to use a 30-second clip from their conversation. Understanding all of this information is important so that the source can give consent to be interviewed and feel comfortable with the process:

If I'm doing man-on-the-street stuff—I'm just kind of going up to people—it might be their first time really experiencing somebody interacting with them through journalism, and I feel like I have to kind of explain what I'm asking of them. 'Cause to me consent is really important about this whole situation, they have to understand fully what I'm doing... Generally, people are very skeptical of media and of journalism... And part of the reason that I think people are skeptical is because they don't fully understand what it is that we're doing some of the time. So, if I'm relying on somebody to tell me their perspective or tell me their narrative, then I also feel like I owe them an explanation of how my job works and how this whole process works. And then I find that people are very receptive to that.

Sean and many others recognized that their interaction with this source from the community might be that person's first interaction with a journalist. Those first-time interactions are critical, because they have the power to alter the source's mindset about what journalism is and who journalists are. As Andrew pointed out, most people only see journalists on television or social media, and then they hear the way some politicians talk about journalists, often in negative ways that vilify the profession. When Mariah convinces a source to work with her and the two end the interview on amicable terms, she said, "I think I've started them on a positive path by telling their story. I've given them the counter examples that they need to start thinking critically about whether or not the things that they believe about the media are fair."

In addition to helping sources understand the basic rules of granting an interview, some participants indicated a need to go even further. Reporters said they needed to be transparent about

the story they were working on, what it's about, who they are talking to for the story, and so on, so the source could see the whole picture and understand the mission the journalist was on. Audrey said:

When I do have somebody that is hostile or says some snide remark like, 'Fake news,' you really have to remind yourself that, hey, they don't understand your job. They don't understand what you're trying to do. And so engaging with them... in those times, you gotta dig deep and you have to educate. If that person is willing to have a conversation with you, you need to explain to them exactly, 'This is why I'm here. This is the story that I'm trying to get done. I'm trying to talk to everybody I possibly can.' And just communicate your mission to them.

If the story is still developing, that information is important to share as well, so sources aren't caught off guard if the news angle isn't what they thought when it goes to print, or if they are left out of the story altogether. Audrey went on to explain that she shares her basic reporting steps with sources who aren't familiar with the process, so they can see the bigger picture she's trying to paint. This offers a possible solution to issues identified by Palmer (2017)—that sources were frustrated because all or large parts of their interviews with journalists were omitted from the final story. Those sources felt like they were misled and that their time was wasted.

Andrew, a reporter of nine years, said he will prepare a "mental kind of script" that he defaults to when explaining his process to sources who seem skeptical of his motives or outright accuse him of being biased in his reporting. Having that "script" ready has helped him because if you're not prepared for those types of conversations it can be overwhelming if the sources are hostile, and it could further perpetuate negative stereotypes if you can't explain yourself to a source who isn't hostile but just genuinely doesn't understand how the news works.

The third way journalists tried to educate sources was by distinguishing themselves—local journalists—from national journalists. Many participants said they spend time trying to overcome distrust by convincing people that they are well intentioned, and by distinguishing themselves as

local journalists and not a part of the national, 24-hour news stations that often can take up a political agenda. This difference isn't clear to potential sources on its own, and when sources use terms like "fake news," they are often thinking of national Fox News and CNN shows but wrongly associating those terms with their local newspapers and broadcast stations. Marissa, a reporter of 13 years, said she sees that problem all the time:

There's just a widespread mistrust, because you have so many people looking at [news] media on Facebook and seeing a poor representation of what it is. You have people looking at right-wing and left-wing news outlets that do swing news to their favor, and I believe that local media, the commercial TV stations become the punching bag. And that's just a total lack of understanding, because media is widespread... they put you into the big melting pot that includes the fake news articles that people create and spread on social media, and they put your local TV stations in there, the local newspapers, and the people who are just trying to make your local community a better place, and it makes our job harder.

Making that distinction can be tricky for some reporters who work at local papers but are affiliated with national outlets through a parent company. Ada, a reporter of five years, has struggled with that tension:

I'm working for a local paper, but that's part of one of the biggest chains in the industry. And I think that does not help with the trust, because sometimes people forget that now there's local journalists on the ground who are part of this community, who are reporting the news. And we also do have a parent company that sometimes makes crappy decisions, or decisions that don't necessarily reflect our community.

To combat this, Ada says she tries to emphasize that she is a local reporter when meeting a source for the first time, and even points out that she lives in their community and is therefore invested in the community's wellbeing. Stressing that the goal of their reporting was to help the local community was a strategy shared by others, as well. Donna adds, "I always tell them, first of all, we're local. We are serving [this] community... this is for the people we live with, our community." In these ways, the reporters are trying to draw a line between the outlets that produce commentary news shows and smaller outlets that do real, beneficial journalism. They are also

drawing on professional identity anchors as they communicate that their role is to serve the community, to help inform the public and overall try to do good with their journalism.

By choosing to see moments of hostility stemming from a general distrust—and misunderstanding—of journalists as opportunities, participants transformed the situation to make it educational for potential sources. By creating journalistic teaching moments, these reporters hoped not only to get the sources to work with them for one news story, but that those interactions would start to alter the sources' mindsets about journalism as a whole.

Resilience in Response to Blocklisting, Boundary Crossing & Microaggressions

The journalists in this sample used three of Buzzanell's five resilience processes to some extent to combat hostility in the form of blocklisting, boundary crossing and microaggressions. Participants most often drew on their professional identity anchors and accepted hostility as normal, processes used no matter what form of non-safety violating hostility was faced. When blocklisted or dealing with a source who crossed boundaries, participants turned to people in their personal and professional networks for support. Participants also used two additional resilience processes: they performed emotional labor by compromising—or sometimes for the sake of—their professional identity, and they disengaged from their work. Each of these processes will be discussed next.

The most common resilience process used by participants was the reliance on their professional identity anchor. This seemed to be a subconscious process. When asked to describe the types of things participants did to work through hostile interactions and how they coped with the problem, the journalists referenced many other processes, such as venting to friends and finding ways to blow off steam after a tough day. But when asked why they continue to stay in the journalism field, despite frequent hostile interactions with sources and verbal attacks on their

profession at the macro level, all of the participants gave a similar response: “I feel a responsibility. I want to do this and I feel like I have to,” Myra, a newspaper reporter said. Marissa, a broadcast journalist, said:

I want to see my community informed. I want to see people kept safe, I want them aware... My prayer is always, “God let me tell the stories that will impact this community, and that will help bring change and help someone.” And so there are countless stories where I have helped to get people more funding, make changes, start projects, what have you, let people know what’s going on and keep them safe. And so what drives me, what keeps me going is I feel like this is my assignment, this is my mission.

Over and over, the journalists framed their profession as a calling and said that their mission was to help better the community, even despite the hostility they received from sources and community members. Their professional identification as journalists was strong enough to overcome the stress and adversity within the field.

Although their professional identity anchors kept them in the industry, all of the journalists also accepted hostility as a normal part of their job. When blocklisted by sources, many participants said that they still went through the motions of trying to contact those sources, even though they knew they wouldn’t get a response. Nothing changed about their journalistic routines. Ada said when she wanted a comment from the school board member who blocklisted her, she would call, leave messages, follow-up via email, and try again before their story went to print:

I’d follow-up with emails and just make sure it was documented that, “Look, I reached out, I left you a voicemail.” And I’d list, like, called you at the hair salon, called you at home. The story’s going to get printed at this time. Just to, like, kind of document that that ethical side had been taken care of.

As Ada pointed out, going about her reporting as usual was necessary because, despite being blocklisted, she still had to follow ethical journalistic guidelines and provide the source with the opportunity to provide a comment for the story. By doing this, these participants were also drawing on their professional identity anchors by falling back on journalistic ethics and their desire to be

objective. Jodie said that continuing to try to work with a source who blocklisted her spoke to her credibility and professionalism:

I think I was able to hold on to my credibility because a lot of people would notice. They're like, "Why are you putting so much effort into reaching out to her?" And I was like, "So that she can't say I didn't try."

Since hostility was so common, some participants said it was important not to dwell on those interactions. Gloria, an editor and reporter, said that once she learned who was going to give her a hard time on her beat, by blocklisting her or crossing boundaries, she mentally blocked it out and focused on the news story. "I don't really have an emotional reaction to it. I'm just accustomed to it at this point," she said. Nancy, a former newspaper reporter now working for a news nonprofit, said she even accepted sexist behavior and microaggressions as par for the course. A county judge she regularly used as a source would harass her and make inappropriate jokes toward her during public meetings, which, she said, "I don't think would have happened if I'd been older and not a woman." Nancy said she accepted it as a normal part of the job she had to endure, while acknowledging that her acceptance might not be the best way to process such hostility:

I feel like to some degree, that's kind of a messed up way to look at it, too. Because like with the county judge, I've just always assumed sexism was part of the thing, part of the package, and there's no way to change that. And that might be because I'm in my 30s. I don't know, people who are younger than me might be willing to fight back a little bit more, but that's not how I look at it. I don't know.

Many others shared this perspective. Personal microaggressions were another form of hostility that participants felt like they had to accept and laugh off or simply not acknowledge, even though the sources' comments stung and potentially ruined their mood for the day. Christa said, "Obviously—well, unfortunately, obviously—I deal with quite a bit of misogyny when I'm dealing with my male bosses and male sources." Accepting misogyny and hostility as an "obviously" normal part of the job was an adaptive resilience process that allowed the journalists to focus on what they

deemed more important aspects of the job, but did not relieve any of the stress or trauma felt each time that form of hostility was experienced.

Next, after participants had a hostile encounter with a source they would often turn to colleagues for support or vent to their friends and family. Participants with less tenure in the field found sharing their experiences with colleagues and editors especially helpful, because it helped them realize that others were dealing with the same problems they were. Gloria, an auto reporter, said, “It’s nice to know you’re not crazy, you’re not the only person dealing with it.” Ada echoed that receiving validation from others in the field was important, especially when editors were not offering support or taking her complaints seriously. Talking with other reporters also helped them learn others’ strategies for dealing with hostility. Nina, a broadcast journalist in her first year on the job, said:

You can always get advice—especially from your newsroom—of how to deal with that. Everyone deals with those situations differently, and sometimes it’s good to hear from a person in the journalism business for 10-plus years, how they deal with it. So, that’s how I sometimes learn from it as well.

Nina compared talking with her coworkers about hostility to talking with her friends and family, who were removed from journalism. Since they didn’t understand the demands of her job or why she had to continue interacting with some of the routine sources on her beat, they couldn’t truly empathize with her:

Sometimes, because the people I talk to, they’re not in journalism, so they won’t understand. So it’s like, “Oh, it’s another day. Don’t worry about it.” Whereas sometimes I do bring up these issues to co-workers and stuff and they understand. They may have gone through something or they just know something else like, “Hey, you could have done this better,” or, “Yeah, it happens on those types of scenes, be aware of this, that.” So, yeah, sometimes when I do talk about it with friends, they don’t really fully understand it.

While reaching out to colleagues was helpful at times, it could also leave participants frustrated if they couldn’t offer helpful solutions. Participants said that turning to colleagues just to vent was a

good emotional release in the moment, but it offered little in the way of helping them confront a hostile source and prevent future hostile interactions. Ellie, a newspaper reporter in her first year on the job, said her editor tried to empathize with her when she vented about a county clerk who often talked down to her because of her age. Ultimately, she said he couldn't offer her any real support:

He is still an old man so it's hard to relate, of course, but he does listen, but that's kind of it. He can't really give much advice 'cause he hasn't experienced it. He just kind of says, like, "I've had weird situations too, I feel you," but it's not the same, of course.

Other times, the advice they got from co-workers wasn't satisfying, as was the case for Meena, who had problems with the local spokesperson for the police department:

When I told one of the other reporters, like a middle-aged man reporter, he said, "Yeah, I mean, she's being a piece of work. I generally just email her and ask for the rep reports." My direct supervisor had just told me to always call instead of email, but I think that... I mean she was just so difficult to work with. I think that the veteran reporters had just figured out, "Well, we can really only interact with her meaningfully in this way." And they were very good reporters, but it seemed like they didn't really know how to deal with her that well either.

Meena was frustrated with this response because it catered to the whims of the source and meant that she was doing her job to a lesser quality by resorting to email. And while she didn't question the advice of her older, more experienced co-workers, she wondered how their strategy for dealing with the source affected news coverage:

You have to wonder if that affects how crime is covered in [this city], and it's just, it's unsettling to think that just a few uncooperative people in the police department have made everybody in the newspaper have to adapt to them rather than focus on getting the information.

The fourth way participants demonstrated resilience was through emotional labor. These performances were used strategically as participants compromised their professional identity by acting aloof, overly friendly, or "kissing ass" to get information from a source. These performances were usually successful, but they made the participants feel disingenuous because those acts were

in tension with their professional values. As mentioned above, Meena had issues with sources in the local police department, and she felt that she needed to perform emotional labor when interacting with them:

I found myself—and I really didn't enjoy doing this—but I found myself being effusively nice and very differential in the way I spoke to them, because you'll get so much better results. But you shouldn't have to sort of, excuse my language, like kiss ass to them to get them to cooperate. But that's what I ended up doing. And it was, I don't know, it felt kinda demeaning, just to feel like you have to compliment them all the time, like, "Oh you guys are doing a great job." Stuff that I feel like it's not that objective and it's not the best way to cover or talk to police when they're providing comments for an on-going story. But I felt like I had to do it or they weren't going to talk to me, and the story would suffer. I felt like I had to just be so sickeningly sweet to them, and that's not really the point of being a journalist, and you shouldn't have to do that to get the police to do their own job. Especially someone who is the communication officer, that's what you're getting paid for, specifically. I just felt like I was not being genuine anymore.

As she makes clear, Meena felt this performance was in conflict with her professional identity and she felt uncomfortable doing it. Still, through trial and error, Meena found this performance to be the best way to get what she needed for her stories, and she was committed to doing the job despite this internal conflict. As discussed in Chapter 5, many younger White women said they would play up their White femininity to coerce sources into talking with them, which was also an act that the participants weren't proud of or comfortable with, but served as a means to an end.

Participants also performed emotional labor when they worked on stories and with sources that they didn't feel comfortable with. These acts were in an attempt to protect their professional identity, as they didn't want to seem biased in the eyes of their sources. Mariah performed emotional labor by feigning empathy for sources who expressed ideological stances she was vehemently opposed to:

It's tough. I'm a naturally very empathetic person, but trying to empathize with certain viewpoints and be on the side of someone who's expressing a statement like, "Keep our city White," it's a deeply uncomfortable place to put yourself.

Chris said that although this emotional labor was tough to grapple with, it was necessary. Even when covering what he described as a “right-wing extremist rally” he said, “You just have to be nice and polite and professional to everyone, even if they are terrible and have terrible ideologies or whatever, because otherwise you're just not gonna be able to do your job.” In these ways, emotional labor can either detract from or uphold the participants’ professional identity anchor.

The final resilience process used was disengagement from work, which helped the participants mentally distance themselves from hostility, regroup, and eventually return to work refreshed. Myra said that she normally puts in a lot of extra work at home, after hours, but not if she’s dealt with a particularly hostile source that day:

If someone’s mean to me, I’m definitely gonna remove myself from my work, which I don’t always do. Sometimes I’m like at night working on stuff, but if someone’s mean to me, nope, not doing a feature at 11:00 tonight. That’s over now.

After a long period of difficult stories and sources, Hope said she took a few days off work for her mental health. Taking this step back enabled her to refocus on the job:

I took a couple of days for me to really just give myself, like, a good pity party. Every once in a while, you need to unbox yourself and just throw a really good pity party and be miserable before you get back up on the bandwagon... I was like, “I’m just gonna be sad for a while.”

But not everyone was able to disengage and then recommit themselves as Hope had. Quinn said that she became less invested in her work overall and began making stronger separations between her work and personal time in response to on-going hostility from sources:

I started to cope by being less invested in work. Kind of what I was talking about before, I find journalism [to be] part of my identity because it’s like an extension of my personality and the things that I enjoy. And so at a certain point, I just started checking out. I would work my eight hours and then I’m done, my work cell phone is off, and I started doing yoga. I would try to take to take walks outside and I would just really not think about work. And it did help, but then I was definitely feeling less invested in the job and in doing the job well, even when I was on the clock.

As Quinn mentioned, sometimes disengagement could affect productivity and commitment to work. While most of the participants indicated that they disengaged at the end of their workday, some used this strategy to avoid particularly hostile sources—especially boundary crossers—during normal working hours as well. Christa, referring to the local spokesperson who calls her multiple times a day and is often rude to her, said, “I have learned for myself, for my own sanity, if I’m in a bad mood, or if something’s going wrong or something’s really hectic, I just won’t pick up the phone. I’ll call him back when I’ve prepared myself.” Others, like Ada, would delay reaching out to a routine hostile source as long as possible, until they could mentally talk themselves up enough to finally engage with that person:

I just pace around my apartment and procrastinate for hours before I call her, honestly, and just like mentally prepare myself until I feel the most strong in the day. Like post yoga some time, like definitely post lunch- time yoga.

Although disengagement might seem like a destructive process, knowing when to put up boundaries between an unhealthy situation at work and one’s personal time is a positive strategy that usually helped participants regroup and get ready to tackle another day on the job. Disengagement only became problematic when it led to a lack of job commitment.

Resilience in Response to Safety-Violating Hostility

Fewer resilience processes were used by participants in response to safety-violating hostility. When faced with safety-violating hostility, participants would foreground productive action, turn to their editors for support, or disengage from the job. This type of hostility was not accepted as normal, but rather seen as a situational challenge to overcome. Most often, participants found ways to acknowledge their negative emotions in relation to safety-violating harassment and then foreground productive action in the form of strategies to mitigate the hostility. Chris, a

photographer, took a practical approach to safety concerns he had while covering protests and rallies:

I think if it's like, definitely talking with other journalists, other photographers, just seeing if they are experiencing the same things, reading about some of these things. I think if it's something where it's like there's a safety concern with police and tear gas and stuff, talking a lot with my boss or colleagues, other editors, that stuff. I guess it's frustrating and it gives me anxiety, but to me it's like ... I go to my boss and we talk it out, and it's like a pragmatic, like a practical conversation about what to do in our policies and procedures and all that.

Chris noted here and throughout our interview that covering those events is uncomfortable and scary, but he takes as many precautions as possible to prepare for unsafe reporting conditions. Likewise, when Quinn was afraid of the parents who cornered her at school board meetings, she proactively bought pepper spray. Terri let friends and family know her whereabouts when she had to cover the Confederate flag demonstrations. Mariah, a transgender woman, would dress conservatively and take steps to conceal her gender identity when covering conservative events, and Holly, who frequently interviewed her Republican government officials, would take steps to conceal her sexuality and the fact that she had a girlfriend. All of these protective measures were taken to reduce the likelihood of a dangerous, hostile encounter with sources. And while none of these participants were happy about being put in positions where these precautions were necessary, they all agreed it was an unfortunate part of the job that they had to navigate.

As Chris mentioned above, his editor was the primary person he turned to for help when in a safety-violating situation. Many others also said they turned to their boss for help in these situations, but, as mentioned in Chapter 5, not all editors provided adequate support. In the best cases, editors took action against sources who harmed or threatened to harm a reporter. This was the case for Jodie when she was sexually assaulted by a source. Her editor helped her take action and that source was eventually fired from his job, in a case that garnered national attention. Likewise, when some participants told their editors they felt uncomfortable covering a story

because it jeopardized their safety, they were reassured that that was OK and the stories were given to someone else without any repercussions. Holly, who was bisexual, said:

If I'm uncomfortable with a story or a source—so there was this guy who is from my town that I reported, and he was going around [the state] with a big ass Trump flag and spreading the message, is kind of like what he said. And he's super active on Facebook, and he would make these terrifying posts, and one of the posts that he had was, if Trump loses this election there will be blood, stand by. Oh my god, right? So that's just kind of scary. And so [my editor] asked me like, "Hey [Holly], this guy is going to be in town, would you take care of the story for me?" And I was honestly like, "He'll probably commit a hate crime against me, and no, I don't wanna do that story," so he took it for me. And so having that person that, like my boss, that I know I can kind of trust to say I'm not comfortable with that and he'll respect it, that's huge.

Not everyone was lucky enough to have a supportive editor like Holly. Meena said she tried to turn down an assignment when her boss asked her to knock on the door of a felon, but her editor didn't understand her concerns. She asked for a photographer to go with her, so she had backup in case she ran into problems, but her editor denied that request as well. Meena ended up doing the assignment (no one answered when she knocked on the door) because, she said, "I was worried that they perceived me as being too timid ... I didn't want to push the issue 'cause I thought they already thought that I was not assertive enough." Because of her editor's lack of support and because she was afraid of being perceived as less of a reporter, Meena went along with the potentially dangerous assignment. Likewise, many participants tried pushing back when editors would send them on person-on-the-streets or make them knock on doors, but very few editors saw the harm in those reporting practices.

Almost all of the participants who experienced safety-violating hostility disengaged from their work in some way, and many thought about quitting (or were going to quit) the profession. Wendy developed anxiety and PTSD after many hostile encounters and started seeing a therapist. Lauren also began seeing a therapist. While seeking out therapy can be viewed as one way these participants acknowledged their emotions and foregrounded productive action—by trying to tackle

their stress and anxiety head-on—both ultimately wanted to find alternative careers. Wendy was actively looking for work outside of journalism. Lauren had put in her two weeks' notice at her news station, and her last day was the day after our interview. She was also looking for a journalism-adjacent job. Jodie and Quinn both decided to go to graduate school and were leaving the field. While these scenarios could be perceived as a failure to be resilient, they could also be viewed as a form of resilience that is transformative for these specific individuals. As Ungar (2004) points out, researchers shouldn't determine what is and is not a resilient behavior for participants. Rather, we should let participants indicate what works for them. For this small group of participants, disengaging from their hostile work environments was what was best for their mental health, and should therefore be celebrated as a form of resilience. Wendy said:

It's just so bad that I will start having this feeling in my throat where I feel like I'm choking. And at first I thought maybe I'm not drinking enough water, but it isn't that. It is clearly like panic attacks I just feel like I need to get out, fight or flight.

This was a big step for all of them to take, as they each acknowledged that journalism was part of their core identity. The decision to leave the field was not taken lightly. Lauren said she planned to use her reporting skills to do something equally fulfilling, but without the same stressors as journalism:

Life is really short and this job makes me miserable. And it's really hard, and the pay is awful. I could make more pushing carts at Walmart. [chuckle] So why am I doing this thing that—initially, I loved it. I love telling stories and I love people, I love all those things—but I just got to a point where I was just really miserable in my job. Because I do really love storytelling, I didn't want to give that up completely. So I'm starting my own videography business and it's focused specifically on keepsake videos. I'm doing it in memory of my grandmother who passed away.

By choosing to disengage completely and leave the profession, these participants were transforming their own lives for the better, even if they weren't transforming the hostile environment.

Resilience Through the Lens of Intersectionality

Just as White women and men and women of color experienced hostility in different forms and to different degrees than White men, not all journalists were able to use resilience processes the same ways. Differences emerged in the way participants performed emotional labor, their reliance on identity anchors, and their use of professional networks. These differences will be explored in relation to the participants' gender and racial identity, as well as their age and tenure in the field.

All of the participants in this sample who indicated that they compromised their professional identity by performing emotional labor were women. In addition to just feigning niceties, kissing up, or playing up their femininity to appease and coerce sources, as described above, women also had to perform emotional labor by pretending to go along with source's sexist jokes and inappropriate comments. Often, this was compounded when the women were also younger, or younger looking. Holly, a 23-year-old White woman, said:

Just kind of the way they talk to me sometimes it makes me feel like they're trying to talk to a child. That happens sometimes, and I feel like if I was older, presented more maturely, maybe that wouldn't happen as much. Some of the officials, I don't know, they're almost more willing to make jokes with me and sometimes the jokes aren't funny, [chuckle] and so that's kind of annoying. There's a line between professionalism and stuff, and sometimes they'll cross it, and I think it is because I'm younger. And so you're just kind of stuck in this situation where you're kind of like you have to laugh a little bit so that you don't make them mad, and so that they don't write you off, but I don't know. It just gets awkward ... Like I said, I think just because I am younger and everything ... I don't think that they view me as a professional, if that makes sense.

As women journalists got older and gained more tenure in the field, they were less likely to perform emotional labor and more likely to correct a source when they crossed a line. Audrey, a 53-year-old White woman who was well established in her career, said she wouldn't tolerate those behaviors anymore:

It was probably the second time that I'd interviewed [this public figure] and he called me "honey" and put his hand on my shoulder. I immediately told him, "Please don't call me honey, and do not touch me." You have to draw that line because oftentimes people see you as a pretty thing that's coming into their office and they can tell you what they wanna tell you, and that's what's gonna go out. But the moment you write it the way it is, they're on that phone and you've changed from a pretty little thing to, "Bitch, you need to be fired because you're saying things that aren't true." The attitude immediately changes. If we were men, it'd be like, "Oh, that jerk." Or it'd just be, "Whatever." But it's a whole different world when you're talking about the role of a female in this industry.

Gloria, a 47-year-old White woman, said that she wouldn't tolerate hostility from sources who were men anymore either, but she chose disengagement as a strategy instead of directly calling them out:

Those real powerful [executives], they don't really have any patience for women... they just ignore you, they don't have any time for you and it's frustrating... I feel confident enough in where I'm at in my career right now that I know that this is a symbiotic relationship and that they need me as much as I need them, and so if they're not going to give me the time of day then I just don't engage... I just don't need to waste any time or effort on that.

This ability to call out sources or to simply disengage was true for established White women in the field, but journalists of color—especially women of color—often felt compelled to perform emotional labor because of their racial identity anchor. Grace, a biracial 25-year-old woman who identified strongly with her Black roots, said that she feigns humor when dealing with hostility, and especially personal microaggressions:

On the surface, I laugh it off, and I've talked to my co-workers about this before. These sort of things, you can't really draw a spit over, or else you get tagged as the angry Black woman. And so I really haven't... I just laugh it out like, "Ha ha, it's OK."

Not only does Grace have to remain professional so she can do her job, but she also considers the racial stereotypes that would be invoked if she were to stand up for herself. Likewise, Jodie, a 24-year-old young Black woman, felt constrained by every aspect of her identity in the small, rural town she worked in:

Everything worked against me. In terms of who I am, I would go out and I would not be taken seriously, and I'm not sure if it was a combination, because I'm really small or because I'm a Black woman, because I'm a woman period, or because I looked young, but people would ask if I was an intern. Often, I would go up to them, try to talk to them, and they would go up to the photographer who was holding a camera and ask them if they're the journalist, and they'd be like, "No, she is." And they'd be like, "Oh. I didn't notice." And then I'm just like, I'm just not sure exactly what part of my identity played into that.

In these scenarios, Jodie felt like she had to laugh it off and pretend the mistake wasn't a big deal. She also felt pressured to smile and accept racist comments disguised as compliments, especially "being Black going to very White spaces." Jodie said sources would be overly polite, to the point of it being disingenuous. Jodie said she would get "compliments on, 'You're very eloquent.' That's very micro-aggressive. So many people I've interviewed were like, 'You're very eloquent. I like your poise.' And I'm like, as if I'm not supposed to have eloquence and poise." In these moments, like Grace, Jodie felt compelled to perform emotional labor by smiling politely and accepting the microaggression, because if she stood up for herself she would be labeled the angry Black woman.

In certain situations, participants felt defeated when they tried to draw on their gender and racial identity anchors. Some women said they thought they would be embraced by elite woman sources, since they were both anomalies in their roles, and they were disappointed when they didn't receive the solidarity they expected. Hope, a 24-year-old White woman, said she was excited to work with a woman in a powerful position in her region. Then the woman actually engaged in sexist behavior:

I was really excited when I got there and found out that there was a woman in this office. I was like, "Oh, wonderful, how great." And everything you say, she looks at you like you're stupid, and she does not do it to the young men. She does it to all the new young women, which really sucked because I was really excited to get to work with her.

Hope went on to describe how in one press conference she asked a question and was given a nasty look and ignored. Then a man asked the same question she did and the source gave a thorough answer without hesitation. Jodie had this experience with the school superintendent who

blocklisted her. She said, “I was excited to not only be one of the youngest and only Black female journalists of the newspaper, but to also be interacting with the only Black superintendent who was also a woman.” Jodie had actually attended the school the source was the superintendent for, and she was left hurt and confused by the hostility she received from that source: “I thought she would see me and be happy... This is a person from your district who is now a local reporter. That’s something to brag about or just to say like, ‘Look, kids, we have representation.’” In these situations, the women journalists were let down by other women. They expected some form of solidarity, or to at least receive respect from those women in power. When those sources were hostile, the reporters took it more personally. This might be because if the hostility had come from a man or from a woman who wasn’t in power, it could be brushed off more easily as part of the routine microaggressions and anti-media rhetoric they heard from other sources.

Another difference that emerged was women and journalists of color’s ability to draw on their professional networks. As described in scenarios above, editors did not always understand the safety concerns journalists had because of their gender and race. While some of the participants indicated that they did try to explain those concerns to their editors, they were often not successful and continued with the unsafe assignments anyway. Others felt that they couldn’t bring up their concerns for fear of looking too timid to be a reporter. Nick, a 50-year-old Black man, said that his editors couldn’t possibly understand the safety concerns he had as a young Black reporter being asked to knock on doors in a white neighborhood. Heidi, a 25-year-old Latina broadcast reporter in her second year on the job, said she and another Hispanic reporter were sent to cover an anti-mask rally at a business that got local attention because the owner called COVID-19 the “China virus” on social media. Heidi said she felt targeted while at event because of her race, and she was frustrated because her editor didn’t see the issue:

You have a bunch of anti-media people there, telling us to leave. We feel uncomfortable; we're just over it. Me and another Hispanic girl who went, it was irritating that they had sent us there alone... I kind of felt [disrespected] like, Oh, it's two dark women covering your anti-mask protest. You're defending someone who called the coronavirus the China virus.

Heidi felt like she couldn't turn down the story or raise her concerns to her editor even though it made her uncomfortable, because she wanted to get ahead in the business. This put her in a difficult position because she had to compromise her safety for the sake of her professional goals.

Since many journalists of color in this sample said they were one of few (or the only) people of color in their newsroom, many had to turn to external professional networks for support. Bernie and Brenden said the National Association of Black Journalists has provided them with a space to seek advice and make connections. Likewise, many women journalists sought out other women for advice when they dealt with hostility. Some kept in touch with small groups of women who they graduated from journalism school with, others joined social media groups specifically for women in the industry, and some veteran women, like Audrey, said "I've made it my mission to find female journalists and build relationships." This is in line with research on the use of Facebook groups for women journalists that found those women sought out spaces to discuss safety concerns and receive gendered professional support to fulfill needs that weren't being met within their physical newsrooms (Mesmer & Jahng, 2021), and research on women in leadership roles within journalism that found women aim to increase networking opportunities among other women (Eckert & Assmann, 2021).

The final difference, although less commonly expressed by participants in this sample, was that some women of color drew on their racial identity anchors to explain why they remained in the journalism field. Because there are so few journalists of color in the industry, they felt a sense

of pride being one of the few, and they wanted to stick it out so that others could see themselves in the role of a journalist. Nina, a 24-year-old Indian broadcast reporter, said:

Me being Indian, you don't really often turn on the TV and see an Indian woman being a reporter. Oftentimes, growing up, we're told to be in the medical field or be an engineer, so me actually stepping out of that boundary and being a reporter, it's more like as an example to other females that are Indian that, "Oh, I can do that as well." So, that's something I take really pride in. Plus, when I go out in public in [the community]... Indian people will be like, "Wow, I've seen you on TV, you make us proud." So, that's something that really sticks with me.

Nina thought of herself as a role model for other women of color.

Overall, many women journalists had to perform additional emotional labor that men did not have to perform, especially if they were younger. None of the men in this sample shared an experience in which they had to pretend to not know as much as they did about a subject or smile and laugh at comments about their age or gender. Emotional labor was used even more by women of color, who often experienced tension between their professional and racial identities. Even if they wanted to stand up for themselves, they were mindful of racial stereotypes that they might take on if they did not perform emotional labor. This made transformative forms of resilience more difficult to achieve, as competing identity anchors made participants act in ways that helped them work through hostility but ultimately failed to call out sources who were sexist, racist and ageist.

Hostility's Effects on Journalistic Routines

This study's final research question explored how hostility and journalists' resulting resilience processes affect their journalistic routines. Specifically, RQ3 asked: How do hostile interactions with sources and journalists' use of resilience processes influence journalistic routines and the resulting news product? Participants developed reporting strategies to help ease the strain of hostile interactions, in situations where the hostility could be anticipated. These strategies veered away from their regular journalistic routines and sometimes compromised the end news

product. In addition to the creation of journalistic teaching moments—a transformative strategy, described above—three additional strategies emerged: Participants learned to avoid potentially hostile sources, they resorted to alternative news gathering techniques, or they doubled-down in their reporting efforts. Each strategy will be discussed next.

First, some participants said they learned to anticipate the types of people who might be more hostile than others. They created profiles of these people in their heads (that of a “conservative White person”) and would avoid approaching them for an interview. After talking about how she couldn’t even get a lot of people to talk to her for feel-good human interest stories, Nina said she began only approaching people who looked like they identified along the same lines as her—younger, of color, women—because they were a safer bet. She recognized that they meant a certain viewpoint was being left out of her news stories, but since she was turned away from so many people anyway, she wasn’t sure it mattered in the long run. She believed that approaching other people in town would have been futile, as they would have turned her down and she would have had to deal with the hostility. Christa said she would only approach young people and women as potential sources if she was in an uncomfortable reporting environment. “I do build a shield for myself with young people and with women,” Christa said, because she had never had a negative experience when interviewing a young person. Likewise, as discussed in Chapter 5, Meena said that although these reporting strategies were well-intentioned, they were problematic because they created a “self-selecting bias [that] hurts the coverage, and it still hurts the story.” This reporting strategy, a byproduct of accepting hostility as normal and trying to avoid it as much as possible, perpetuated stereotypes of biased reporting, as conservative viewpoints were often left out of the news.

Some sources were left out of the story if they blocklisted a reporter, if they would cross boundaries, or if they would use frequent anti-media rhetoric. If it was feasible (and in most situations, as in the case of prominent school board members, police chiefs, and the like, it wasn't), reporters would stop contacting routine sources on their beat if they knew the person was hostile. Instead, reporters would call other, less important sources, to get as much information as they could. Andrew said he tried to avoid one of the primary sources on his business beat as much as possible:

It's a name that I need to include in the stories, but there are ways around talking to him that I would take sometimes. So in this case, he's a real estate broker, so there are usually a couple of, there are usually three or four different real estate workers who run a deal, so I would just reach out to other people. But there are cases sometimes when it's like, he's the only person that's on a deal.

In Andrew's case, it would have looked like he wasn't doing his job if he didn't at least mention the hostile source.

Other times, reporters would only include the source if they could be quoted during a meeting and what the source said was a matter of public record. Nick frequently used this strategy when sources in the mayor's office and city council would blocklist him. If he needed additional information, he would contact other sources or consult public records to help fill in the gaps. By avoiding primary, elite sources—or not using them because they were blocklisted—these journalists were missing out on an opportunity to ask follow-up questions of the key players on a story. This resulted in stories that often lack depth or context. Mariah said that when she is blocklisted by elite sources who are central to a story, it changes her whole story angle. Instead of being able to focus on what the source is doing to address a problem, she has to focus on the data alone. Mariah said this detracts from the value of her journalism: “I think it's a less useful article... when you don't have solutions, just mentioning problems, it kind of becomes background noise.”

If she could have included the sources she wanted to, she could add context to the data and focus on why the data matters. She said, “Then I would be able to hang it on something. I would be able to point to an action or an activity or an idea, something that would elevate it above just, ‘This is a problem.’”

The second change in journalistic routines was in the ways that reporters reached out to sources, another byproduct of using the resilience process of acceptance and trying to avoid hostility. Interviews are traditionally done face-to-face or over the phone, so the reporter has the chance to assess the source’s nonverbal cues and ask follow-up questions as necessary. Capturing a source’s words in the moment also helps quotes sound less scripted and prevents sources from taking the time to carefully craft a response, which can result in strategically ambiguous answers to questions. Although some participants noted that they were taught not to conduct interviews over email or instructed not to do so by their editors, they would do it anyway because it was a means of avoiding direct contact with hostile sources. Meena acknowledged that she used email as a reporting crutch:

The more sort of uncomfortable situations I had with sources, the more I found myself just emailing with people or messaging with them, even though I don’t like that, I think it’s not as good a quality of interviews. I found myself just leaning on it more than I would have in the past, and I was like, well, let’s just do this instead. I just didn’t have the energy to mess with it, sometimes.

Holly said that while she doesn’t prefer to work through email, she’ll do it if a source has blocklisted her because they may be more likely to respond if they have time to curate a message. Alternatively, if she sent in questions via email, elite sources could have their public relations staff address the inquiries. Although it wasn’t ideal, Holly learned it was the only way to get a comment from some sources, particularly her district’s congressman.

While most participants who relied on email to conduct interviews pursued interview through that medium, sometimes sources drove the reporter to work through email. Nancy said that any time she tried working with a large, national government agency they would only communicate through email. This went against her normal means of reporting. She said, “I would like to actually talk to people. I’d like to actually get interviews from people who work in the government and they won’t do it. They insist on doing things by email, which I don’t care for.”

The third way participants altered their journalistic routines was by doubling down in their efforts and being overly prepared for future encounters with routine hostile sources. This was an unexpected positive change in their routines, as participants said they didn’t want to give sources any reason to lash out at them or make them feel incompetent. Maria said she felt pressured to always be at the top of her game when interacting with certain sources:

I kept finding myself very stressed by having to deal with a few of those people because I felt like they were looking for me to slip up. So I had to be very on top of it and very conscious of what I was asking, how I behaved around them.

Nancy also said that “knowing your shit” was key, because knowing she had a strong foundation of knowledge going into the interview helped her “continue to be polite and keep cool” when sources became difficult.

Sometimes the preparation was in the form of simply writing out a list of questions that the reporters were sure to stick to, even if a source rattled them. Betty, a newspaper reporter, said, “Those are the [hostile] interviews that I always make sure I am prepared for. I make sure I have my list of questions. No matter what, these I have to ask. I can’t let ‘em stiff me.” Likewise, Holly said:

I think if I am nervous though about trying to contact somebody, I’ll write out my questions prior, which is something I normally don’t do. It’s just to have a little bit of a better idea of what I’m gonna be talking with them about. Not like a script, but I’ll write out some of the topics that I wanna get to just so that I’m making sure that I don’t forget anything, and

especially if they say something that upsets me or something, I wanna make sure that I'm not gonna be getting too off topic.

Holly sometimes gets flustered when interacting with hostile sources, so she has learned how to stay more focused during those interviews. These strategies, which were described as acts of over-preparation, were positive changes in the participants' journalistic routines and helped them craft more thorough news stories. Over-preparation was another byproduct of accepting hostility as normal, but it was a more productive strategy because it allowed the journalists to feel more in control of their interactions with sources.

Exploratory Survey Data

Again, exploratory results will be used to supplement the above qualitative findings. There was not a significant relationship between frequency of hostility and participants' overall use of resilience processes ($r(52) = .034, p = .814$). This may be because participants used resilience processes as articulated in the above findings, and that varied too much from the resilience processes included on the survey instrument. For instance, the survey did not include items for emotional labor or disengagement. A positive significant relationship was found between participants' overall use of resilience processes and their level of professional identification ($r(50) = .547, p < .001$). This is interesting, considering resilience was not correlated to hostility. It could be that participants with stronger professional identification were less likely to use the alternative resilience processes, such as disengagement, and more likely to use the resilience processes in Buzzanell's (2010) original typology.

T-tests were performed to explore participants' use of resilience processes and professional identification according to gender and race. Women were found to use resilience processes slightly more often ($M = 28.34, SD = 2.70$) than men ($M = 27.17, SD = 3.69$), $t(15) = 1.021, p = .324$. There were almost no differences in women's levels of professional identification ($M = 20.74, SD$

= 3.49) as compared to men's (M = 20.45, SD = 2.84), $t(19) = .275$, $p = .786$. Neither of these relationships were statistically significant. White journalists used resilience processes more often (M = 28.23, SD = 2.68) than journalists of color (M = 26.75, SD = 5.74), $t(24) = 1.077$, $p = .292$. White journalists also felt stronger levels of professional identification (M = 21.10, SD = 2.93) than journalists of color (M = 19.33, SD = 4.97), $t(30) = 1.46$, $p = .155$. This is in line with the qualitative findings, which suggest that journalists of color can be torn between their professional and racial identities, therefore lowering their overall professional identification and making it harder for them to draw on identity anchors in resilient ways. This also makes sense given the lack of journalists of color in newsrooms and failure to promote journalists of color into leadership positions. These extenuating factors could be attributed to their lower levels of professional identification. These relationships did not reach statistical significance, but again, that is to be expected with such a low sample size.

Summary

This chapter was centered on participants' use of resilience processes—how they used them in response to hostility, how that use was mitigated by the participants' identity, and how hostility and resilience processes altered journalistic news routines. Participants used different resilience processes, depending on the form of hostility they were facing. When facing general hostility stemming from a lack of trust in the news media, participants were able to utilize the most transformative resilience processes by reframing hostility and drawing on their professional identity anchors to create journalistic teaching moments. When faced with any form of non-safety-violating hostility, participants relied on their professional identity anchors and accepted hostility as a normal part of the job, especially since anti-media rhetoric became prominent. Only when

hostility was safety-violating was it not accepted as normal, and those experiencing safety-violating hostility were most likely to draw on their professional networks for support.

Two additional resilience processes were also identified, emotional labor and disengagement. Although previous research has identified emotional labor as its own construct, here we can see how emotional labor is performed alongside other resilience processes as just one way participants navigated hostility and were resilient. Often, and especially for women and journalists of color, emotional labor was tied to professional, gendered and racial identity anchors. Additionally, participants said they sometimes needed to disengage from work. Sometimes this was a temporary act of disengagement, but participants who experienced particularly frequent and salient safety-violating hostility were more likely to disengage from the profession entirely. Although this may be seen as a problematic strategy, or even the failure to be resilient, these participants chose to transform their own lives and move forward in ways that prioritized their mental health and physical well-being. This was a courageous act, as it often involved self-reinvention, since they identified strongly with journalism as a profession.

Participants who accepted hostility as a normal part of the job and worked to avoid hostile interactions often changed their journalistic routines in problematic ways. This included only approaching “safe” looking sources and avoiding those more likely to believe in anti-media rhetoric, which led to unbalanced reporting that lived up the “fake news, liberal bias” stereotypes. Others chose to interact with routine hostile sources through email, which hurt the overall quality of the information they could extract from those sources. Not all participants chose avoidance strategies, though. Some chose to try to take control of interactions with routine hostile sources and over-prepared for interviews, resulting in better-reported stories.

CHAPTER 7 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to better understand the trickle-down effects of anti-media rhetoric and the related hostility U.S.-based journalists were experiencing from sources at the local level. This research is important because research on the journalist-source interaction is lacking. Furthermore, this research explored how women and men and women of color experienced hostility from sources differently than White men journalists. This is important because research on women journalists has primarily focused on online harassment (Chen et al., 2018; Gardiner, 2018) and harassment and gendered hurdles within the newsroom (Elmore, 2009; Jenkins & Finneman, 2018; North, 2009; 2015; 2016; Tropic & Bruegmann, 2020) but not from sources. And while research has focused on the historic and contemporary Black press (for examples, see Wade-Gayles, 1981; Wang & Armstrong, 2012) and on how racial issues are covered in the news (see Carroll, 2017), research on the day-to-day experiences of journalists of color is also lacking (for exceptions, see Douglas, 2021; Johnson & Flamiano, 2007; Meyers & Gayle, 2015; Nishikawa et al., 2009). This research was also focused on journalists' responses to hostility, specifically how they used resilience processes to work through a climate of distrust toward journalists and frequent hostile interactions, and how they altered their journalistic routines because of such hostility. In the sections below, I will present a summary of findings, followed by a discussion of this research's theoretical and practical implications. Finally, I'll discuss this project's limitations and present directions for future research.

Summary of Findings

The first goal of this dissertation was to identify the forms of hostility journalists experienced from sources. Participants described five unique forms of hostility: hostility stemming from a general distrust of the news media, being blocklisted by elite sources, source boundary

crossing, safety-violating hostility, and personal and professional microaggressions. Hostility stemming from a general trust of the media, especially in the form of anti-media rhetoric, supported assumptions that former President Donald Trump's rhetoric has seeped into local communities and made work harder for journalists. This type of hostility was also the most frequent, although it was not considered dangerous. Safety-violating hostility was the least common form of hostility, but it was the most intense, dangerous form of hostility. Since safety-violating hostility is the most serious in regard to the physical well-being of journalists, it was also the form of hostility that most often prompted journalists to seek help and support from their editors. Participants who experienced threats and verbal abuse said that when they reported those events to their editors, more often than not those editors would verbalize support, but then take little or no action to follow-up on the situation to protect or defend their reporters. While all journalists were subject to general hostility, blocklisting and professional microaggressions, women were more likely to have sources who crossed boundaries, and women and journalists of color were more likely to experience safety-violating hostility and personal microaggressions.

One substantial finding from this dissertation is how journalists used resilience processes to respond to frequent, everyday iterations of anti-media rhetoric, in the form of general hostility stemming from a distrust of the news media. They did this by: *reframing* the situation by flipping the fake news script in their favor and/or choosing to use hostile content to color their stories; *accepting* the distrust as part of their new normal on the job and disengaging with it whenever possible; and *transforming* the situation by drawing on identity anchors and reframing the distrust as an opportunity for journalistic teaching moments. These processes vary in their adaptive or transformative nature.

By reframing distrust and using the fake news argument to their advantage, journalists are adapting to the phenomenon and finding creative ways to get what they need from the source for their stories. While this is a productive strategy because it helps the journalists do their jobs more efficiently, it does not help to dispel anti-media rhetoric and instead simply upholds the status quo. This is also true of those who simply accept widespread distrust of journalists as the new normal. Disengaging from sources who call them fake news or accuse them of being biased is akin to putting a Band-Aid on the problem—one that will be ripped off and then need reapplied time and time again. Disengaging and finding other sources or story angles helps the reporters complete their assignments, but the process takes longer and it again does nothing to help lessen the public's belief that all journalists are creating fake news. And when reporters begin to strategically avoid a certain class of people in an attempt to avoid hostile interactions, this strategy actually worsens the problem. By choosing to interview "safe" looking sources, journalists engaging in this type of reporting sometimes unconsciously contributed to the problem most people using fake news rhetoric were accusing journalists of—reporting one-sided stories that omitted their views. While it may be the easier strategy, accepting the situation as the new normal is, therefore, a problematic enactment of resilience when it leads to disengagement and avoidance of a subset of potential sources. Finally, by creating journalistic teaching moments, reporters are working to transform the situation, leading to at least a small shift in the climate of distrust toward journalists one source at a time. Although this strategy requires more time and effort on the part of the reporter, it has the potential to create long-term change. Sources who have a positive experience with a reporter might be more likely to speak to future reporters. They may also develop more positive feelings about the press, which they might share with others who believe in fake news rhetoric.

When faced with other forms of hostility, particularly when that hostility is not safety-violating, journalists primarily draw on their professional identity anchors, accept hostility as normal, and, to a lesser extent, turn to their professional networks. Participants also indicated that they used two additional resilience processes in the form of emotional labor and disengagement from the job. Women journalists and journalists of color had to perform emotional labor that conflicted with their professional identity anchors while white men in the profession did not. Women and journalists of color were also less able to rely on professional communication networks in their physical newsrooms, because there were so few others who understood their concerns and experiences, and instead had to find professional support elsewhere, from professional organizations and online social media groups. Women who experienced salient safety-violating hostility often chose to disengage from journalism entirely. While disengagement was transformative for the individuals who chose to prioritize their mental and physical health, it was problematic for the journalism field overall, which historically has driven out women (Elmore, 2009) and had trouble recruiting and retaining journalists of color (Arana, 2018).

Theoretical Discussion

Findings from this research have revealed some of the day-to-day challenges journalists face and how they use resilience processes to work through, and potentially transform, chronic stress stemming from hostility. Since this project is guided in part by the theory of intersectionality, it is important to consider the ways journalists are constrained by the four domains of power. To recap, those domains are interpersonal (concerning identity anchors and relationships with others in their network), disciplinary (concerning rules and who they do/do not apply to), cultural (concerning media frames and capitalistic representations), and structural (concerning an organization's structure and interrelations with other institutions, such as big business,

government, etc.) (Collins, 2016). Winker and Delege's (2011) multi-level analytical approach is a useful tool to help consider these domains of power. Their method calls for the consideration of individual identity constructions (at the interpersonal level), symbolic representations (scripts individuals use to help them make sense of the relationship between the interpersonal and disciplinary levels), and social structures (such as classism, sexism and racism which span the macro cultural and structural levels). In the next sections, findings from this research will be mapped onto each domain of power.

Interpersonal Domain

At the beginning of each interview, participants were asked to describe themselves by explaining the most important parts of their identity. Every single participant described their professional identity as a journalist as one of the most (if not the most) important things about themselves. This became a core identity anchor that participants drew on as they explained the importance of their jobs and why they continued to stay in the profession despite frequent hostility. This identity construction at the interpersonal level prompted participants to create scripts, or symbolic representations of themselves, such as "journalism is a calling" and "my journalism is essential because it betters the community." Framing journalism as some higher calling and noble responsibility was a way of justifying the hostility they experienced by staying in the profession. This also involved a commitment to the societal values of democracy and the right to information. These symbolic representations were so powerful that many journalists not only put up with daily verbal attacks on their profession at the cultural level and through interactions with sources and community members, but they were also willing to compromise other aspects of their identity and risk their safety.

Women journalists often (but not always) listed their gender as a core identity anchor. Men did not mention their gender. Likewise, all but one Black journalist mentioned their race as an important aspect of their identity if they were a journalist of color. Only two white journalists mentioned their race, but they associated their race or ethnicity with their Jewish heritage. This demonstrates how gender and race were only considered central identity anchors to those in the minority. Women and journalists of color were also the ones who had to compromise aspects of their gender and racial identity for their profession. It was women and journalists of color who had to perform emotional labor, defined as the necessity to put on a fake display of emotions to fulfill a public-facing job role and meet organizational goals (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), such as the case in journalism when reporters have to conceal their true opinions and beliefs for the sake of objectivity and remain calm and cordial to get sources to provide information for them (Miller & Lewis, 2020).

Additional factors at the interpersonal level were participants' age and tenure in the journalism field, which often affected participants' comfort levels in addressing concerns with senior editors. Those with established careers felt less pressure to perform emotional labor with sources and also felt able to turn down assignments that they didn't feel comfortable with and to advocate for themselves when problems arose. Job tenure led to more equitable relationships between the reporters and their editors, whereas new reporters felt pressured to take on work they were uncomfortable with so they didn't appear too timid.

Disciplinary Domain

Applied to journalism, the disciplinary domain involves traditional journalistic news routines that guide the actions of journalists. The news has been gathered and written in fairly consistent ways since the mid-twentieth century. Tuchman (1978) identified how professionalism

and news routines worked to socially construct the news at the organizational level, enabling and constraining news workers, regulating what constitutes news and what that end product looks like. These values and routines—such as the value of objectivity, the “fetishization of facts,” and the need for news to be timely—influenced the roles of all journalists. The value of objectivity involves the need for journalists to convey balanced information (showcasing all sides of a story topic/issue), and to report that information in a straightforward, unbiased manner. The journalist is to be removed from the story and act as an omniscient narrator who has no self-made opinion on the matter. Finally, the journalist is also preoccupied with facticity. The goal is to fill a story with facts, which are empirical and come from credible sources—“elite” people occupying high power positions who can officially speak about topics with authority (such as police, the mayor, politicians, high-ranking businessmen and other organizational leaders).

Journalists’ gender and race may amplify their need to perform emotional labor and background their personal identity anchors while reporting on sensitive topics in the name of objectivity (such as immigration, as was the case with Wendy, and Confederate flag demonstrations, as was the case with Terri). The use of routine elite sources also puts journalists at the mercy of those sources when they are hostile, because the reporters are obligated to keep returning to those newsworthy individuals. Elite sources are also in a position of power over reporters when they blocklist them from information, which can force reporters to alter their story angles or delay publishing important information. Although there are some cases where journalists can find alternative means to get information, others were unable to do their jobs effectively. This can sometimes have implications for the journalists’ careers. For example, Lauren said she was unable to cover important city government news in the largest city in her market because she was

blocklisted by an elite source. This meant she received fewer lead stories, which would have been to her detriment if she had wanted a promotion or to find a job in a bigger market.

Cultural Domain

The cultural domain during the time period of this study involved three key cultural scripts that affected journalists. First, President Trump had cultivated widespread distrust of the news media through his constant use of anti-media rhetoric (Hetherington & Ladd, 2020). This rhetoric permeated through political discourse, was picked up by national news outlets, and was circulated on social media until it became a part of the public's everyday language. Participants lamented that even some of their parents and close friends and family would harp about "fake news," much to their dismay. Second, and in relation to this widespread distrust, journalists were framed as fearmongers during the COVID-19 pandemic and accused of exaggerating the extent of the outbreak (Mitchell et al., 2020). And third, a summer of racial protests in response to George Floyd's and Breonna Taylor's murder by police officers left many questioning the ways journalists covered protests and race in general (Chakrabarti & Kotsonis, 2020; Kilgo & Harlow, 2019).

Aside from these cultural scripts framing the media, long-standing journalism tropes also worked against reporters. Master narratives and storylines about the journalism profession have been portrayed in countless films and TV shows. "Journalists have been ubiquitous characters in popular culture, and those characters are likely to shape people's impressions of the news media at least as much if not more than the actual press does" (Ehrlich & Saltzman, 2015, p. 1). Dominant journalistic themes throughout popular literature, film, and TV include:

the energetic, opportunistic newshound who would do anything for a scoop; the tough, sarcastic female reporter trying desperately to outdo her male competition; the enthusiastic "cub" who wants more than anything else to be a bylined reporter; the big-city newspaper editor committed to getting the story first at any cost; and the ruthless media tycoon using the power of the press for his or her own selfish ends. (Ehrlich & Saltzman, 2015, p. 2)

And when focusing specifically on themes associated with women journalists, we see sexist storylines: the reporter who sleeps with her source; the sarcastic, head-strong journalist who doesn't have time to nurture a personal life; or the superficial columnist who only writes fluff pieces (Cvetkovic & Oostman, 2018). These unflattering and largely inaccurate journalistic tropes, combined with widespread distrust of the media, all worked against the credibility of journalists by depicting them as villainous or problematic in some way. All of these elements contributed to general hostility stemming from a distrust of the news media, and sexist tropes contributed to microaggressions and sexual harassment experienced by women journalists. Furthermore, race relations in the United States in 2020 and 2021 created additional tensions for journalists of color who, as Grace articulated, had to “decide if I should come at it with a journalism first perspective or a Black person first perspective.” This tension occurred when journalists covered racial protests, interacted with sources who openly shared racist viewpoints or used racial microaggressions, and even within the newsroom as editors directed coverage of race and sought journalists of color's (mostly Black reporter's) feedback. Traditional journalistic routines and norms of objectivity at the disciplinary level constrained journalists' ability to push back on many of these cultural factors working against them.

Structural Domain

Finally, at the structural level, journalists are constrained by the saturation of the media environment, which forces journalists to compete against a host of other news items for attention. The need to work fast can prevent journalists from taking the time to develop relationships with sources (and using strategies such as journalistic teaching moments). National news outlets and bipartisan media continue to push out biased news content, exacerbating the “fake news” problem and making local journalists' lives harder as they try to distinguish themselves from those national

outlets. And finally, news conglomerates that take ownership of smaller publications often cut staff and set general guidelines for news coverage, so that reporters are stretched thin and, again, unable to develop community sources and report on stories outside of traditional event coverage and breaking news. Brenden, a Black newspaper reporter, described this problem as he grappled with his desire and ability to adequately cover communities of color in his region:

Because of just the landscape of the industry, we're not always covering things. We're not covering every city council meeting. We're not covering every event. So that contributes to the kind of like, under coverage of communities of color. But this created a little of a problem in that like, even if I were to attend all those community events organized by those local activists, like I wasn't able to cover all of them.

Brenden, and many others, had the desire to provide better coverage to those underserved communities, but faced practical limitations because of the media landscape and organizational constraints. Similarly, because no stories were coming from attending community events, Brenden said he had to put in extra (unpaid) time to make appearances and develop community sources. This relates back to the interpersonal domain, in which Brenden, a single Black man, could commit to this type of source development because he had connections inside the community and he had the resources (time, transportation, a lack of dependents) to put in the extra work. Someone with dependents who needed their time and attention, or someone who had a lack of transportation, wouldn't have been able to work overtime for free as Brenden did.

Theoretical Implications

In addition to the theoretical discussion above, some theoretical implications can also be offered. First, this study builds on existing literature looking at violence and harassment of journalists. Currently, much of the literature focuses on online harassment toward journalists (Chen et al., 2018; Gardiner, 2018), which often comes from readers and anonymous individuals. Other research has focused more generally on harassment from people outside of the newsroom

(Miller & Lewis, 2020; Miller, 2020) and on global levels of violence toward journalists (Chocarro, 2019, Dunham, 2020). This project extends the topic to a new context to focus on journalist-source interactions. This is valuable because these are the people journalists have to interact with on a daily basis, which affects not only their ability to do their jobs but also their personal well-being.

Second, this project also offers a new typology of hostility toward journalists. Miller's (2020) listed sexual harassment as its own category and "personally attacking harassment" as another, which included microaggressions, threats and physical abuse. Here, sexual harassment is combined with other forms of direct harassment (threats and physical abuse) to focus on any action that makes the journalist feel unsafe, attacked and/or violated. Microaggressions are a separate category, as those verbal hostilities are described as offensive, frustrating and annoying, but are not as concerning from a safety standpoint. This prioritizes safety concerns. Furthermore, adding general distrust of the news media, blocklisting, and boundary crossing as forms of hostility paints a broader picture of the hostility journalists are experiencing on a regular basis.

Next, this project extends the study of resilience to a new context and illuminates two additional resilience processes—emotional labor and disengagement. Although emotional labor is traditionally conceptualized as a standalone construct, here I argue it is used strategically among other resilience processes. Here, emotional labor also serves a larger purpose than simply helping the journalist meet organizational goals (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). The performance helps journalists shift between personal and professional identity anchors as they work through hostile interactions. This is also in contrast to organizational studies that focus on emotional labor in customer service settings such as the jobs of waitresses (Leidner, 1993) or flight attendants (Murphy, 1998), in which frontline workers simply have to appear pleasant at all times, even if

they are not feeling happy and when a customer has a complaint about their service. Participants in this study described performances of emotional labor in response to sources who offended aspects of their core identity anchors. And although disengagement might seem counterproductive to resilience, I'm arguing that disengaging from work was a strategic move that, in short periods, helped participants create necessary boundaries between work and their personal lives so they could return to work refreshed. More permanent disengagement, while problematic for the journalism profession as it was a strategy used by those traditionally hard to retain in the profession, was transformative for the individuals who chose to disengage from the hostile work environment entirely.

Finally, through the identification of journalistic teaching moments as one transformative process for combating anti-media rhetoric, this study also has implications for the concept of media literacy. One way journalists, scholars, and industry observers have tried to combat the “fake news” problem—the most common reiteration of Trump’s anti-media rhetoric and the accusation most commonly hurled at journalists—is through media literacy initiatives. There are many definitions of media literacy, along with variations of the term. The most succinct and common definition of media literacy is “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms” (Center for Media Literacy). Longer definitions also focus on understanding how media shapes our perception of reality (Center for Media Literacy; National Council of Teachers of English, 2021). Media literacy classes have been deemed critical at all levels of education, and studies have found support for media literacy interventions as a way to combat fake news (Mo Jang & Kim, 2018). However, these classes and initiatives focus on the evaluation of media content *after* it has already been published. This often involves evaluating the sources used within news stories, identifying biased funding sources and publications, looking for indications that a story

might be fake, such as from the online story’s URL, and by teaching students how to cross-check information with other sources and news outlets. Findings from this study suggest that media literacy interventions need to teach individuals about more than identifying fake news and credible sources from biased ones. We also need to focus on the journalistic process, so individuals can understand what journalists do and what their role is in society. Furthermore, research has documented the ways journalists signal to the public that their news is “real”—as opposed to “fake”—news (Jahng et al., 2021), however little research has focused on the ways journalists work directly with sources or the public to counteract fake news and protect their reputation as authentic journalists. For that reason, I am calling for a greater focus on *news literacy*, rather than the broader focus on media literacy. News literacy is defined as the ability to apply critical-thinking skills to access, evaluate and analyze the news (Ashley et al., 2013; Aufderheide, 1993; Craft et al., 2016; Tamboer et al., 2020).

Even so, news literacy also focuses on assessing the already-produced news product. Just being able to spot fake news once it’s published online and knowing how to delete or call out that fake news is not enough, and it’s not helping journalists as they are doing their jobs. This leads me to propose an expanded definition of news literacy. That is: News literacy is *the application of critical-thinking skills while seeking out, consuming, and analyzing news, as well as the understanding of the basic journalistic news-making process and journalists’ role in society*. News literacy initiatives would then cover topics such as basic news values, the “rules of engagement” for working with journalists, when and why anonymous sources may be used by journalists, and so forth. Such a focus and definition would help the public understand what it means to work with a journalist and some of the principles they abide by so they can develop more positive feelings about the press in general.

Pragmatic Implications

In addition to providing theoretical implications, this study also offers several pragmatic recommendations for journalists and journalism instructors. First, based on the forms of hostility experienced and the support participants did (or did not) receive from their editors, recommendations can be made to newsroom leaders. Editors should listen to their reporters when they bring concerns about sources to their attention and take those concerns more seriously. Editors should work with the reporters to decide how to move forward with the source and the news story so that the journalists feel comfortable continuing with the reporting. Many journalists indicated that they didn't think their editors knew how to help them or didn't fully understand their dilemma. But there were also cases in this study (such as when Quinn was dealing with the group of school board parents and Ada was dealing with the school board member who posted memes and columns about her online) when the reporters experiencing hostility made very specific requests of their editors, and those requests were denied. Editors, who may have been years removed from the day-to-day grind of reporting, need to make stronger efforts to empathize with reporters and be open to their requests for help while acknowledging that they, as the ones working safely from their office instead of in the field, may not understand the hostility their reporters are facing.

Likewise, safety and hostility toward journalists should be normalized as a point of conversation within newsrooms. Common reporting methods—such as knocking on doors and doing person-on-the-streets—should be reevaluated and considered from a safety perspective. Rather than approaching random community members, other reporting methods, such as utilizing social media to find people with opinions on a topic, should be used so reporters can set up interviews in advance. If unsafe methods are necessary, reporters should be sent in pairs. Since many participants in this study said that they agreed to go on assignments that made them

uncomfortable because they felt like they had to prove they weren't "too timid," editors should work to dispel the common assumption that the best reporter is the reporter who risks everything for a story. But it's not enough to pay lip service to these topics. Many participants were disappointed and frustrated after bringing these issues to their editors because they found their editors to offer only superficial, verbal support but to still clearly prioritize the news product over the safety and well-being of the journalists. Editors need to follow through when reporters ask for support and, over time, prove that a reporter's career will not be affected if they turn down a story assignment that makes them feel unsafe. This will require a sustained, newsroom-wide effort to change the culture and demonstrate that safety is a priority.

In response to hostility experienced because of a lack of (or perceived unfair) coverage of communities of color, a few recommendations can be made, as derived from conversations with participants who grappled with this problem. Bernie and Brenden, both Black newspaper reporters, stressed the need to make regular outreach to communities of color a priority, even when breaking news is not occurring in those areas. Just focusing on breaking news will inevitably perpetuate negative coverage of those communities. Brenden said relationships with community leaders and local activist should be cultivated like any other elite source:

I think it's the same thing I would apply to any type of source development, or how you build the source relationship. You're just trying to keep on staying in touch, you know, periodically check in, see how they're doing... I don't think it's rocket science. Like, I think we just like, you know, keep on connecting with folks. Over time, they're gonna trust us, or we know we're gonna earn their trust, and that's gonna benefit in the long run.

Bernie reiterated the need to show up and checking in with community leaders, even if breaking news is not going on. Based on these participant-sources ideas, journalists should find local community members to connect with and make conversations with those individuals a part of their weekly routine. Join community Facebook groups to stay connected with local groups and get

story ideas, as community members may post about issues in their neighborhoods that would otherwise go unnoticed. If there are regular community meetings in those neighborhoods, reporters should add them to their calendar and make an effort to attend or follow up with key members after each meeting, so they stay in the know. Editors should also acknowledge community development as a legitimate use of reporters' time and should pay them for it, even if that time doesn't always result in the production of a news story.

Next, many participants, especially those who had less tenure in the field, mentioned feeling unprepared for the amount of hostility they experienced. This points to a need for journalism instructors and newsroom editors to better understand and then inform new journalists of the realities they will experience in the field. Journalism programs should develop units or whole courses dedicated to hostility, mental health and resilience in journalism, and these topics should be part of newsroom orientations and/or training. As the creation of teaching moments is the most transformative of participants' resilience processes in response to distrust and anti-media rhetoric, journalists should prepare for this general form of hostility and distrust by planning in advance for teachable moments. Participants explicitly referenced or alluded to "scripts" they drew on when they encountered a source who called them fake or biased. These scripts can be prepared in advance, rehearsed, and then adapted to fit the specific situation. Scripts can be developed to help reporters explain the "rules of engagement," the ways stories shift with additional reporting, and the difference between national outlets—that profit on news personalities' opinions—and communities' local newspapers. If reporters who would otherwise choose to accept and disengage from distrustful sources were coached on how to develop these scripts, more journalists could use this strategy and work to transform the culture of distrust toward journalists. Furthermore, journalism instructors should prepare up-and-coming reporters for these interactions while they

are still in school. Instructors can create role-playing scenarios to help students prepare for those moments when they get on the job.

In addition to individual reporters preparing situational scripts, newsrooms can adopt protocols for gaining consent from community members before they are interviewed. As participants were read the informed consent document for this research project, many commented on how thorough and helpful that information was, and some mused that they wished they had such a procedure for their sources. As Sean pointed out, gaining consent from sources and ensuring that they understand the journalistic process is only fair, since journalists rely on sources to share their opinions and stories. The creation of a document to share with sources or a list of points to discuss with sources before going on record could become standard practice and would only require a small change in the reporting process.

Finally, committing to viewing distrust as a teaching moment is a commitment of time and energy, as this strategy requires the most emotional restraint and energy from the reporters. For that reason, the burden to teach the public about what journalists do shouldn't be all on the shoulders of our local reporters. These teaching moments can also occur in our local communities, starting as a component of a media literacy class in high school or in our universities' undergrad curriculum, and also being implemented in community workshops as needed. In many cases, media literacy classes and workshops are already happening across the country, but most of those programs focus on recognizing fake news and bias in already published news stories and fail to explain the process through which news is made. These findings and recommendations are in line with my call for the theoretical expansion of news literacy.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study is limited in a few ways. First, because of its non-random recruitment methods, only journalists involved in professional organizations and online spaces (or who were connected to the journalists in this study) had the opportunity to participate and share their experiences. A broader call for participants is needed to reach a larger sample. Additionally, these results are not generalizable to journalists outside of this sample, and larger quantitative studies on journalists' experience with hostile sources are needed. However, larger surveys using the lens of intersectionality must be attuned to the demographic makeup of survey participants. The survey data explored in this project offered some findings that were counterintuitive, given the robust evidence presented above from the qualitative findings. These quantitative results might illuminate a shortcoming of quantitative research when using intersectionality as the guiding lens. It's possible that quantitative datasets cannot account for the valuable nuance that is gleaned through intersectional research, in which just one case of, for example, a Latina woman working on a masculine beat, gets lost because so few participants fit that same profile. In order for a survey using intersectionality to derive meaningful results, large, equal numbers of participants from a variety of demographics would be needed, and this is often a shortcoming of journalism survey research, which often have a majority of White men as participants (for example, see Miller, 2020). This might also suggest a need to re-evaluate large survey studies that found no significant differences along lines of gender and race and to pursue additional qualitative research in those areas. Furthermore, experience with hostile sources was an inclusion criterion for journalists to participate in this study, so it is important to remember that not all journalists are experiencing the forms of hostility found here. Presumably, many journalists saw the research call and did not sign up to participate because they had not dealt with this issue. And although this study was well-

rounded in the sense that almost half of the participants were non-White, studies should continue to seek out journalists of color, as their voices are often underrepresented in journalism research.

This timeframe this study was conducted in also created some limitations. The COVID-19 pandemic and shift to remote work for both researchers and journalists meant this study was not conducted during a period of “business as usual.” Other methods, which could not be used because of the shift to remote work, should be used to explore this topic further, such as the use of voice memo diaries (Bellar, 2017) to document hostility immediately after it is experienced and to capture raw emotions. This method would require participants to keep a digital voice diary after each hostile interaction they experience, detailing what happened and how they felt in the moment. Since reporters were reporting from home, primarily over the phone, via email, or even by sitting through Zoom meetings, participants did not experience hostility as frequently from sources as they did before the pandemic when reporting face-to-face. A trial run of the VDM method revealed this shortcoming near the beginning of the data collection period and the method was abandoned. That said, the method should be pursued in future studies to triangulate interview data. “Recording thoughts and feelings as they happen reduces memory errors that may occur when only using reflective interview methods” (Bellar, 2017, p. 116). This may also help overcome another limitation of this study, which involves the downfall of relying on interview methods. Some doubt participants’ ability to tell what they know on the spot in the interview setting, because of a lack of words in the moment or the inability to recall certain examples or put distant emotion and feelings into words (Alvesson, 2011). Using voice memo diaries would allow participants to generate insights as they are inspired to do so, they’ll be able to express what they know in more natural ways.

More future research should explore how journalists cope with hostility in the field to discover best practices for dealing with the issue at both the individual and newsroom level. Likewise, additional research should focus on the development of news literacy interventions that include information about the news-making process. Various models of those interventions should be designed and tested to assess how learning more about what journalists do and how they do it affects the public's feelings about journalists and their overall trust in the news media. Finally, future experimental research should explore what specific features of journalistic scripts help disarm sources who use anti-media rhetoric against journalists, so reporters can more effectively navigate teaching moments with the public.

APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT SCRIPTS

Recruitment email to professional journalism organization leaders (SPJ, NABJ, etc.):

Subject: Seeking journalists for research study on hostile sources

Hello [fill in name],

I hope this email finds you well! My name is Kelsey Mesmer and I am a doctoral candidate at Wayne State University. I'm reaching out because I am seeking participants for my dissertation research project, which focuses on journalists and how they encounter hostility from sources. I am hoping you can help me by **passing this message along to your [fill in org name] chapter members who may be interested in participating.**

A little more on my project: Since public distrust of news media is at an all-time high, the goal of this research is to understand how journalists experience the trickle-down effects of anti-media rhetoric, in the form of hostile interactions with sources who may vilify and distrust journalists; how women and BIPOC journalists experience these effects to different, possibly heightened degrees; and how journalists cope with these challenges.

I'm happy to chat more about my project if you would like, and I would greatly appreciate if you would consider sharing the following call with your members (or simply forward this email, whichever method you prefer):

As a U.S.-based reporter, photographer, or videographer, do sources you interact with sometimes call you "fake news," refuse to work with you, or make the job more difficult because they don't trust you or other journalists? Are sources ever rude to you because of your gender, your age, your race, or some other aspect of your identity? If any of these examples apply to you, I'd like to invite you to participate in a research study about the experiences of journalists who interact with hostile sources. A "hostile source" in this project is subject to the viewpoint of you, the journalist. It may be someone who uses frequent microaggressions. Or they might make inappropriate comments and jokes. They might call you fake news or insinuate that you're not trustworthy because you're a journalist. Or it might be along the lines of harassment (sexual or otherwise) and threats. If it offends you, makes you uncomfortable, and/or makes your job difficult, it counts.

This research involves two phases. You'll be asked to take a short online survey, and then to participate in a phone/video interview lasting about 40-60 minutes. Participants can rest assured that all information shared during this study is confidential and your identity will not be linked to any data collected in the process.

If you are interested in participating, you can click on this link to be taken to the online study survey: [add study link]. The interview will be scheduled after you complete that portion of the study. This research is being conducted by Kelsey Mesmer, a PhD candidate studying journalism at Wayne State University in Detroit. If you have any questions or concerns, you can email Kelsey at kelsey.mesmer@wayne.edu. And please feel free to share this post widely with your friends who are journalists! Thank you!

Thank you so much for your time and consideration!

Sincerely,

Kelsey Mesmer
PhD Candidate & Thomas C. Rumble Fellow
Wayne State University, Department of Communication

Recruitment script to post on social media pages (Facebook groups):

Hello! I'm hoping you'll be interested in my research project and help me out by participating or sharing this with your networks! If you're a U.S.-based journalist who has experienced any type of hostility from a source, I'm inviting you to participate in a research project! Please see the call below:

As a reporter, photographer, or videographer, do sources you interact with sometimes call you "fake news," refuse to work with you, or make the job more difficult because they don't trust you or other journalists? Are sources ever rude to you because of your gender, your age, your race, or some other aspect of your identity? If any of these examples apply to you, I'd like to invite you to participate in a research study about the experiences of journalists who interact with hostile sources. A "hostile source" in this project is subject to the viewpoint of you, the journalist. It may be someone who uses frequent microaggressions. Or they might make inappropriate comments and jokes. They might call you fake news or insinuate that you're not trustworthy because you're a journalist. Or it might be along the lines of harassment (sexual or otherwise) and threats. If it offends you, makes you uncomfortable, and/or makes your job difficult, it counts.

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If you are interested in participating, you can click on this link to be taken to the online study survey: [add study link]. The interview will be scheduled after you complete that portion of the study. This research is being conducted by Kelsey Mesmer, a PhD candidate studying journalism at Wayne State University in Detroit. If you have any questions or concerns, you can email Kelsey at kelsey.mesmer@wayne.edu. And please feel free to share this post widely with your friends who are journalists! Thank you!

Follow-up email after survey:

Subject: Study participation – schedule your interview for the research on journalists and hostility

Hello,

Recently you participated in an online survey for a research study about the experiences of journalists with hostile sources. Thank you for participating in that survey! My name is Kelsey Mesmer, and I'm the researcher conducting that study. I am following up with you to schedule an interview, which is part two of that research study. I'll be asking you some more detailed questions about your experiences with hostile sources and how you cope in and after those situations. The interview will last between 40-60 minutes.

We can conduct the interview over Skype, Zoom, Google Meets, or over the phone (whichever method you most prefer). The conversation will be digitally recorded, but if we conduct the interview via video chatting platforms, only the audio will be recorded. All identifying information will be removed from the transcript of these recordings, so your information remains confidential.

To schedule the interview, please respond with a day and time that works best for you, and one or two possible back-up options, in case that time slot has already been booked on my end. Also, please indicate your time zone. My schedule is flexible, so I can accommodate most times.

Thank you, and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Kelsey Mesmer
PhD Candidate and Rumble Fellow
Wayne State University, Department of Communication

Reminder email, if necessary:

Subject: Follow-up- Schedule your interview for research on journalists

Hello,

I hope you're doing well! — I'm following up with you from my last email in case it was lost or skipped over. About a week ago you participated in an online survey for a research study about the experiences of journalists with hostile sources. Thank you for participating in that survey! My name is Kelsey Mesmer, and I'm the researcher conducting that study. I am following up with you to schedule an interview, which is part two of that research study. I'll be asking you some more detailed questions about your experiences with hostile sources and how you cope in and after those situations. The interview will last between 40-60 minutes.

To schedule the interview, please respond with a day and time that works best for you, and please indicate your time zone. My schedule is flexible, so I can accommodate most times.

Thank you, and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Kelsey Mesmer

PhD Candidate and Rumble Fellow
Wayne State University, Department of Communication

Discontinuation/Exclusion email, if necessary:

Hello, A few days ago you participated in an online survey for a research study about the experiences of journalists with hostile sources. Thank you for participating in that survey! My name is Kelsey Mesmer, and I'm the researcher conducting that study.

I am recruiting a diverse sample, and I already have reached my quota of study participants who are similar to you in terms of gender, race, or age. While I appreciate your willingness to participate, I will not be scheduling an interview with you for phase two of this project.

I wish you all the best in your journalistic endeavors and thank you again for your interest in the study!

Sincerely,

Kelsey Mesmer
PhD Candidate and Rumble Fellow
Wayne State University, Department of Communication

APPENDIX B: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Q1 Study Title: Understanding the resilient practices of journalists in the face of hostility

By: Kelsey Mesmer

Welcome! You've been invited to take part in a research study because of your identification as a journalist who has interacted with hostile sources. Before taking part in this study, please read this consent document carefully and click on the "I Agree" button at the bottom of the page if you understand the statements and freely consent to participate in the study.

This study is designed to understand journalists' experiences with hostile sources, and how journalists cope with those experiences. This study is particularly interested in how those experiences vary because of aspects of the journalists' identity (such as gender, race, disability, etc.). For the purpose of this study, a hostile source could be someone who called you "fake news," who verbally insulted you, made you feel uncomfortable, who spoke down to you because of your profession or because of some other aspect of your identity, generally made your job more difficult because they do not like you or journalists in general, or engaged in behavior that could be considered harassment (for example: threatening you, making sexualized comments, touching you or throwing things at you).

The study is being conducted by Kelsey Mesmer, a PhD candidate at Wayne State University, and it has been approved by the Wayne State University Institutional Review Board. No deception is involved, and the study involves no more than minimal risk to participants (i.e., the level of risk encountered in daily life).

The study will include two phases, depending on your eligibility and willingness. First, you will be asked to take a short, online survey that you will be directed to from this page. This survey will start by asking some basic questions about your experiences with hostile sources and how you reacted to those, and then you will be asked a series of demographic questions. From there, you will be asked to schedule phase two of the study, which is an in-depth interview. In this interview, we will more thoroughly discuss your experiences with hostile sources and how you have coped with them.

All responses and data collected are treated as confidential, and in no case will responses from individual participants be identified. Rather, all data will be pooled and published in aggregate form only. Participants should be aware, however, that the survey is not being run from a "secure" https server of the kind typically used to handle credit card transactions, so there is a small possibility that responses could be viewed by unauthorized third parties (e.g., computer hackers).

Participation in this research is voluntary; refusal to take part in the study involves no penalty or loss of benefits to which participants are otherwise entitled, and participants may withdraw from the study at any time.

If you have further questions about this study or your rights, or if you wish to lodge a complaint or concern, you may contact Kelsey Mesmer at 330-503-6003; or the Wayne State University Institutional Review Board, at 313-577-1628. If you wish to keep a formal study information sheet (essentially a copy of this information) for your records, you can email Kelsey at gj5820@wayne.edu and she will provide you with a PDF copy of the document.

If you are 18 years of age or older, understand the statements above, and freely consent to participate in the study, click "I Agree" below to begin the study.

I Agree (1)

I Do Not Agree (2)

*Skip To: End of Survey If Study Title: Understanding the resilient practices of journalists in the face of hostility
By: Ke... = I Do Not Agree*

End of Block: Consent

Start of Block: Experiences

Q2 Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project about journalists and their experiences with hostile sources! Welcome to phase one, in which you'll complete this short survey. After you submit the survey, I will contact you to set up the next phase, which will be an interview to be completed over the phone or online via Skype or Zoom (whichever method you most prefer).

First, please think about the number of times you've encountered a source you would describe as hostile. This could be someone who called you "fake news," who verbally insulted you, made you feel uncomfortable, who spoke down to you because of your profession or because of some other aspect of your identity, or engaged in behavior that could be considered harassment (like threatening you, making sexualized comments, touching you, throwing things at you, etc.).

How many times have you encountered hostile sources during your time working in journalism?

Never (1)

A couple of times (2)

More than a couple of times (3)

A lot of times (4)

Almost always (5)

Q3 Do you have any regular sources who you would consider hostile? This might be someone you interview frequently because they are on your beat (e.g., a police chief, the mayor, a senator, an important business person).

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q4 Next, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about how you have responded **to interactions with hostile sources**. For each, select your level of agreement on a 5-point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

| | Strongly disagree (1) | Somewhat disagree (2) | Neither agree nor disagree (3) | Somewhat agree (4) | Strongly agree (5) |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I have made an effort to keep up with my daily journalistic routines when these situations happen (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have adjusted some of my journalistic routines to the new circumstances (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have relied on humor to get through these situations (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have held onto the most important parts of myself despite everything that is going on (4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I have tried to see these situations in a new light (5) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Despite how I am feeling, I have chosen to focus on things that are productive (6) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have relied on my connections with family, friends, and other journalists when these situations happen (7) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Q5 Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about how you have responded to **anti-media rhetoric in general** (for example, being called "fake news" or "the enemy of the American people"). For each, select your level of agreement on a 5-point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

| | Strongly disagree (1) | Somewhat disagree (2) | Neither agree nor disagree (3) | Somewhat agree (4) | Strongly agree (5) |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I have made an effort to keep up with my daily journalistic routines when these situations happen (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

I have adjusted
some of my
journalistic
routines to the
new
circumstances
(2)

I have relied
on humor to
get through
these
situations (3)

I have held
onto the most
important
parts of myself
despite
everything that
is going on (4)

I have tried to
see these
situations in a
new light (5)

Despite how I
am feeling, I
have chosen to
focus on
things that are
productive (6)

I have relied
on my
connections
with family,
friends, and
other
journalists
when these
situations
happen (7)

Q6 Next, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about your profession. For each, select your level of agreement on a 5-point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

| | Strongly disagree (1) | Somewhat disagree (2) | Neither agree nor disagree (3) | Somewhat agree (4) | Strongly agree (5) |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| When someone criticizes journalism or journalists, it feels like a personal insult. (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I am very interested in what others think about journalism. (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| When I talk about journalists, I say “we” rather than “they.” (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The profession’s successes are my successes. (4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| When someone praises journalists it feels like a personal compliment. (5) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

End of Block: Experiences

Start of Block: Demographics

Q7 Finally, please answer these demographic questions for me. Because this study seeks to understand how your identity affects your hostile experiences and coping methods, I am asking more demographic questions than what is standard. While you are free to skip any questions that make you uncomfortable or that you simply don't want to answer, answering these questions help me get a better sense of how identity shapes your experiences, and it will inform our interview in Phase 2.

How do you describe your gender?

Q8 How do you describe your race?

Q9 How do you describe your sexuality?

Q10 What is your age?

Q11 Do you have any disabilities?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Display This Question:

If Do you have any disabilities? = Yes

Q12 If you selected "yes" to the above question, please explain:

Q13 What is the highest level of education you've received?

High school diploma (1)

Some college (2)

Associate's degree (3)

- Bachelor's degree (4)
- Some graduate school (5)
- Master's degree (6)
- PhD or other doctoral-level degree (7)

Display This Question:

If What is the highest level of education you've received? = Bachelor's degree

Or What is the highest level of education you've received? = Some graduate school

Or What is the highest level of education you've received? = Master's degree

Or What is the highest level of education you've received? = PhD or other doctoral-level degree

Or What is the highest level of education you've received? = Associate's degree

Q21 Did you receive your degree in Journalism/News?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q14 What is your marital status?

Single (1)

Married (2)

In a domestic partnership (or any live-in/serious relationship) (3)

Other (divorced, separated, widowed) (4)

Q15 What is your household income?

Less than \$25,000 (1)

\$25,000 to \$34,999 (2)

\$35,000 to \$49,000 (3)

\$50,000 to \$74,999 (4)

\$75,000 to \$99,999 (5)

\$100,000 or more (6)

Q16 How long have you been working in the journalism field?

Q17 What is your primary job role?

Reporter (1)

Photographer (2)

Videographer/Multimedia (3)

Editor (4)

Q18 What type of journalism outlet do you work for?

Newspaper (print and/or online) (1)

Broadcast (2)

Magazine (3)

Radio (4)

Other (5)

Display This Question:

If What type of journalism outlet do you work for? = Other

Q19 If you selected "other" for the above question, please describe the type of journalism outlet you work for.

Q20 What is your email address? This will be used to coordinate an interview day and time, which is the next phase of this study. I will send you an email within the next 1-3 days to schedule the interview.

End of Block: End of Survey

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

This interview protocol is designed to be semi-structured, meaning that while most of these questions were asked to each participant, some questions may have been added or skipped because of the appropriateness of the individual interview. Additionally, although all interviews started out with the same order of questioning, later questions may have been asked out of order to accommodate the natural flow of the conversation during the interview. Finally, sub-questions listed on this protocol are meant to indicate additional probing questions, to be used if necessary to gather additional information from the interviewees. Not all sub-questions were used during each interview.

1. Can you please describe yourself for me? Tell me about the parts of your identity that are most important to you and why.
 - 1a. Do you think that being a journalist is a central part of your identity? Why or why not?
 - 1b. Can you describe your job for me?
 - 1c. What's a typical day for you like on the job?

2. Think of a time you had a particularly positive interaction with a source, when you felt that you bonded because of some aspect of your identity. Can you describe what that interview was about and how that specific interaction unfolded?
 - 2a. How did this make you feel?
 - 2b. Do you think that you got more out of the interview with this source because of how you identify, than someone who identifies differently would have got?

3. Think of a time you had a particularly negative interaction with a source, when you felt that you were judged because of some aspect of your identity. Can you describe what that interview was about and how that specific interaction unfolded?
 - 3a. How did this make you feel?
 - 3b. How did you work through that interaction?
 - 3c. Did you finish the interview?
 - 3d. Did you get what you needed from the source?
 - 3e. Did you talk to your boss or others about the experience after it happened? What did they do/say?
 - 3f. If this happened again, how would you react?

4. These types of negative interactions with sources, have they typically happened with one time source, or with routine sources?
 - 4a. Do you have any routine sources, like on your beat or a typical topic you cover, who have a strained rapport with because they are routinely hostile toward you?
 - 4b. How often do you have to interact with that person?
 - 4c. In general, about how often would you say you have hostile interactions with sources?

5. For the next few questions, let's think about how you cope with sources who you perceive as hostile. What is your routine like when you know you might have to deal with this type of person? How does it compare to your routine in other situations?
 - 5a. Do you do anything differently to prepare, mentally or strategically?

- 5b. Do you find yourself thinking about your body language or the way you physically present yourself when going into these interviews? (For example, do you think about your posture, how you sit, your clothing, or your hair?)
6. Do you fall back on any parts of your personal or professional identity to help you cope with these interactions with hostile sources?
- 6a. Do you draw on any journalistic values or ethical codes in these moments?
- 6b. Do you draw on any other personal value systems?
7. When you have these experiences with hostile sources, do you find yourself relying on people in your network for support of any kind? This includes people from your personal or professional life, and it could be a mix of both.
- 7a. Who do you typically reach out to?
- 7b. How is this communication helpful?
- 7c. Is this communication ever not helpful?
- 7d. Do you feel comfortable talking to your editor or boss about issues you have about your job?
8. During or after interactions with hostile sources, do you attempt to reframe the situation in any way to help you cope and make sense of it? This might be through the use of humor, making excuses for the other person's behavior, trying to find a silver lining to the situation, etc...
- 8a. What are some common ways you've done this in the past?
- 8b. How has this helped you move forward from the negative experience?
9. Do you ever find yourself justifiably upset or stuck in a negative mindset because of interactions with hostile sources?
- 9a. How do you push those negative feelings aside to keep doing your job?
10. Do you have any other ways of coping with this problem — with sources being hostile toward you — that we haven't talked about yet?
- 10a. Do you do anything else to prepare for these interactions or decompress afterward?
11. Have any of these experiences, or coping strategies, influenced the way you do your job?
- 11a. Does the end news product you create look differently because of hostile interactions with sources?
- 11b. Do you change your typical news routines because of hostile sources?
- 11c. Do you ever find yourself trying to use or to avoid certain sources?
12. Do you think your job is any easier, or harder, than your co-workers because of aspects of your identity? This might be because of your gender, race, age, or another aspect of your identity.
- 12a. If more difficult, how do you cope with that? What makes you want to keep going to work each day?
- 12b. If more difficult, have you found any strategies to make your job easier?
13. What keeps you in the journalism industry? Why do you stay in this job, despite the growing attacks and hostility toward journalists on a national level?

14. Is there anything else you would like to add about how your identity influences how you interact with sources or members of the public while you're doing your job?

APPENDIX D: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS AND DEMOGRAPHICS



| Participant No. | Pseudonym | Gender | Race | Age | Tenure | Medium |
|-----------------|-----------|----------------|--------------------------|-----|--------|----------------|
| 1 | Kelyen | Woman | Black | 37 | 12 | Newspaper |
| 2 | Zaina | Woman | Arab | 26 | 3 | Newspaper |
| 3 | Meena | Woman | White | 22 | 4 | Newspaper |
| 4 | Lenard | Man | White | 67 | 42 | Freelance |
| 5 | Maria | Woman | Latinx | 52 | 15 | Magazine |
| 6 | Audrey | Woman | White | 53 | 28 | Broadcast |
| 7 | Nancy | Woman | White | 34 | 10 | News nonprofit |
| 8 | Andrew | Man | Biracial, Asian/White | 31 | 9 | Newspaper |
| 9 | Gloria | Woman | White | 47 | 25 | Magazine |
| 10 | Grace | Woman | Biracial, Black/White | 25 | 2 | Radio |
| 11 | Nina | Woman | Asian/Indian | 24 | 1 | Broadcast |
| 12 | Sean | Man | White | 29 | 5 | Broadcast |
| 13 | Mariah | Trans Woman | White | 32 | 7 | Newspaper |
| 14 | Joshua | Man | White | 32 | 10 | Newspaper |
| 15 | Wendy | Woman | Asian/Indian | 29 | 6 | Broadcast |
| 16 | Ada | Woman | White | 29 | 5 | Broadcast |
| 17 | Louise | Woman | White | 28 | 7 | Newspaper |
| 18 | Derek | Man | White | 35 | 5 | Newspaper |
| 19 | Jodie | Woman | Black | 24 | 6 | Broadcast |
| 20 | Ellie | Woman | White | 22 | 1 | Newspaper |
| 21 | Betty | Woman | White | 31 | 6 | Newspaper |
| 22 | Christa | Woman | White | 22 | 1 | Newspaper |
| 23 | Hailey | Woman | White | 28 | 5 | Newspaper |
| 24 | Marissa | Woman | Black | 36 | 13 | Newspaper |
| 25 | Holly | Woman | White | 23 | 2 | Newspaper |
| 26 | Quinn | Woman | White | 28 | 4 | Newspaper |
| 27 | Chris | Man | Asian | 26 | 4 | Newspaper |
| 28 | Lauren | Woman | White | 23 | 3 | Broadcast |
| 29 | Nick | Man | Black | 50 | 30 | Newspaper |
| 30 | Bernie | Woman | Black | -- | 40 | Newspaper |
| 31 | Donna | Woman | White | 62 | 40 | Newspaper |
| 32 | Myra | Woman | Biracial, Black/White | 24 | 2 | Broadcast |
| 33 | Heidi | Woman | Latina | 25 | 6 | Broadcast |
| 34 | Danielle | Woman | White | 59 | 33 | Broadcast |
| 35 | Hope | Woman | White | 24 | 3 | Broadcast |
| 36 | Victor | Man | Latino | 55 | 25 | Newspaper |
| 37 | Brenden | Man | Black | 23 | 1 | Newspaper |
| 38 | Terri | Woman | Biracial, Black/White | 31 | 9 | Newspaper |

APPENDIX E: RESULTS BROCHURE FOR PARTICIPANTS

RESILIENT PRACTICES OF JOURNALISTS

IN THE FACE OF HOSTILITY FROM SOURCES

AN OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

| | |
|--|---|
|  <p>The Problem: Anti-media rhetoric has seeped into public discourse</p> |  <p>What forms of hostility do journalists experience from sources?</p> |
| <p>Five forms of hostility were identified:</p> | <p>1) General distrust stemming from a distrust of the news media</p> |
| <p>2) Being blocklisted* by elite sources</p> <p><small>*The term "blocklisted" is being used instead of the more colloquial term "blacklisted," which has racist connotations as it equates blackness with "negative" people or things</small></p> | <p>3) Boundary crossing that breaks professional norms</p> |
| <p>4) Safety-violating hostility, including sexual harassment and physical assaults/threats</p> | <p>5) Personal and professional microaggressions</p> |

Data collected and analyzed by Kelsey Mesmer, PhD Candidate in the Department of Communication at Wayne State University between June 2020 and March 2021.

1

GENERAL HOSTILITY

- Almost all journalists said they encountered anti-media rhetoric from potential sources at some point, and most said it happened on a regular basis (weekly).
- Reporters were accused of being biased, twisting people's words, working for a "liberal rag," etc.
- Many community members refused to grant interviews because of their distrust of the news media.



Interesting finding: This happened no matter what the story topic was—it even happened for light-hearted, human-interest stories.

- Journalists experienced "performative hate" at Trump rallies and other conservative political events; the crowd booed at the press when prompted to, but was happy to talk with the media before and after the rallies. Reporters seldom felt unsafe.

2

BLOCKLISTING

- Elite sources refused to grant interviews to reporters after they published negative content
- This was typically cyclical; the source would eventually cooperate again, usually when they wanted something positive covered in the news.
- Journalists said this type of hostility was a natural part of the job due to the conflictual relationship between journalists and elite sources.
- In rare cases, a source targeted a particular journalist and made it impossible for them to cover the area/topic. In these cases, the reporter often passed stories involving that source to other reporters.

3

BOUNDARY CROSSING

- Some routine sources would call reporters incessantly, at all hours and on their personal phones.
- These sources would often yell at reporters about coverage and use condescending tones, insult their intelligence and capabilities, etc.
- Some sources would send complaints about the reporters to senior editors, "tattling" on them.
- In rare cases, a source would spread credibility-attacking statements on social media.



Craziest example: An elite source in the community stole a reporter's photos and created memes of the journalist, labeling her as fake news and putting targets on her and her newspaper.

4

SAFETY-VIOLATING HOSTILITY

- The least frequent, but most salient form of hostility.
- Caused the journalist direct physical/emotional harm or involved the threat of physical harm.
- One woman in this study experienced sexual assault, many more experienced sexual harassment from sources.
- Reporters felt the most unsafe when doing man-on-the-streets and knocking on doors for a story, especially if reporting alone.
- Sources often made physical threats when they were angry, although these were often taken with a grain of salt.



Unfortunate finding: Although some editors were supportive, many were not. Reporters were left frustrated when their bosses would provide lackluster verbal support, but not follow-up with tangible ways to make them feel safer while doing their jobs.

5

MICROAGGRESSIONS

- Professional microaggressions involved short digs at the journalists' credibility, the quality of their newspaper, their background knowledge on a topic, and the seriousness of their work.
- Personal microaggressions referenced reporters' gender, race, or age.

Who participated in the study?

38 journalists from across the U.S. were interviewed

- 29 women; 9 men
- 20 were white; 18 were journalists of color
- 24 worked for newspapers, 10 for broadcast news and 4 for other (radio, magazines, freelance)
- Between the ages of 22 and 67
- Tenure in the field ranged from less than one year to 42 years (combined total of 429 years of journalism experience)

Did women and journalists of color experience hostility differently?

In some ways, yes.

All journalists experienced general hostility as a by-product of anti-media rhetoric, and all journalists were likely to experience blocklisting.

Women were more likely to deal with sources who were boundary-crossers.

Only women experienced sexual harassment (in this study, although men can also be victims of sexual harassment).

Women and journalists of color were more likely to experience safety-violating hostility and be put in unsafe situations, especially when working on stories involving sensitive topics (like immigration, political rallies, race, etc.)

While all journalists were likely to experience professional microaggressions, only women and journalists of color experienced personal microaggressions.

How do journalists work through hostility?

By reframing anti-media rhetoric

1

When sources called journalists fake news and accused them of being biased, journalists flipped the script to their advantage. They convinced potential sources to help them tell the other side, because if everyone who shared their viewpoint refused to talk to the press, it would be self-fulfilling prophecy and their views would continue to be left out of the news.

Trying to avoid hostility by selecting 'safe' sources

2

Some reporters created profiles in their heads about who was "safe" to approach for an interview and who would give them a hard time. This resulted in more interviews with young people and women.



This was a problematic strategy because it perpetuated biased, one-sided reporting.

By creating journalistic teaching moments

3

Some journalists recognized that distrust of the media largely stemmed from fundamental misunderstanding of the news. They took the time to engage sources in a dialogue about the "rules of engagement" for how news works, talk to them about the story they were working on, and distinguish themselves from national media outlets when necessary.



Although the most time consuming, this strategy was the most beneficial because it helped sources get a better understanding of what journalists do and offered a positive interaction with the news media to start to shift their overall perceptions of journalism. This has the power to push back against "fake news" accusations and anti-media rhetoric.

Tips for creating your own teaching moments with potential sources: Create a "script" you can mentally refer to that overviews the reporting process. Mention that you need their name and basic info; if you're recording video/audio, you may only use a small portion of the interview; you may need to contact them later to fact-check or follow-up. If the story angle is still developing, tell them so they're not surprised when they see the final product. Rehearse this script by role-playing with colleagues or friends.

4

By leaning on their professional networks

Many participants said turning to their friends and family wasn't helpful because they didn't understand the nuances of journalism. Colleagues who could offer specific strategies for dealing with hostility, based on their own experiences, were most helpful.



Women and journalists of color sometimes had to turn to gender and race-specific groups for adequate professional support, such as online Facebook groups and organizations like NABJ.

5

By performing emotional labor

Often, when confronted with microaggressions and even sources who crossed boundaries, journalists had to mask their true emotions and remain cordial with sources to protect their professional identity.

This emotional labor was performed most by women and journalists of color, as they experienced microaggressions more frequently.

6

By disengaging from work

Some sources said that salient hostile interactions caused them to disengage from their work. Usually, this was a temporary form of disengagement. The journalists switched off their work phones and email for a night, procrastinated on a story, or took a personal day to re-group. This was helpful and allowed the journalists to create a necessary separation between their professional and personal lives.

But particularly for journalists who experienced safety-violating hostility, disengagement could result in a long-term decrease in effort at work. Some journalists even chose to leave the profession.

Since women and journalists of color were most likely to experience safety-violating hostility, they were also most likely to disengage. Although leaving the profession was ultimately the right choice for those journalists, who were prioritizing their mental and physical health, this strategy is problematic for journalism as a whole, which has historically had trouble recruiting and retaining women and journalists of color.

**So now what?**

- Journalists should recognize the difference between productive ways of coping with hostility (like creating teaching moments and turning to your professional networks) and problematic forms of coping (only selecting safe sources).
- Editors should realize the potential danger in sending reporters (especially younger women) on man-on-the-street type assignments and send a photographer/second reporter if those situations are necessary.
- Editors should also be mindful of reporters' racial identity when sending them on solo reporting assignments to cover sensitive topics. For example, one participant experienced hostility because she was a young brown woman sent to ask random people on the street about their stances on immigration in response to problems at the border. Ask the reporter about their comfort level if the reporter seems unmatched for the story.
- Listen to reporters' safety concerns and follow up on them, rather than simply empathizing. Many participants said they wished their editors would have defended them or took other actions when they asked for help, but they were largely ignored.
- Journalism students and interns need to know what to expect when they enter the professional world. Many newer journalists said they felt unprepared for the hostility they faced on a regular basis. This information should be worked into journalism programs and orientations for new journalists.

Want to know more or talk about this project? Contact Kelley at kellye.meister@wayne.edu

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ABSTRACT**UNDERSTANDING THE RESILIENT PRACTICES OF WOMEN AND BIPOC JOURNALISTS IN THE FACE OF HOSTILE SOURCES: AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH**

by

KELSEY R. MESMER**August 2021****Advisor:** Dr. Fred Vultee**Major:** Communication**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

After former President Trump began calling the news media “the enemy of the American people,” many scholars and journalism practitioners worried about such anti-media’s trickle-down effect and how it would complicate work for local reporters. Given a growing need to pay attention to hostility toward journalists, this project sought to better understand the ways journalists experience the trickle-down effects of anti-media rhetoric in the form of hostile interactions with sources who vilify journalists; how women and journalists of color experience these effects to different, possibly heightened degrees; and how journalists are resilient in spite of these challenges. Drawing on 38 in-depth interviews with local journalists from across the United States, this project used the Communication Theory of Resilience (CTR) and the feminist theory of intersectionality to understand how journalists worked through hostility.

Participants described five forms of hostility from sources and discussed their strategies for mitigating hostility. This project helps identify proactive, transformative resilience processes for working through hostility, such as the creations of journalistic teaching moments when journalists are confronted with hostile sources who buy-in to anti-media rhetoric and have a

fundamental misunderstanding of the news. It also helps identify problematic, adaptive processes of resilience, such as the avoidance of potentially hostile sources who would utilize anti-media rhetoric, which perpetuates bias in the news. Many resilience processes are enabled or constrained by facets of the journalists' identity, such that gender, race and age intersect to influence both the forms of hostility experienced by journalists and the ways they are able to be resilient in response to that hostility. Implications are discussed for journalists in both reporting and editor roles, and for journalism instructors.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Kelsey R. Mesmer (PhD, Wayne State University) is an Assistant Professor of Journalism in the Communication Department at Saint Louis University. Her research lies at the intersection of journalism and organizational communication, where she focuses on gender, resilience, identity, and social justice issues through a feminist lens. Kelsey's work has been published in *Journalism Practice*, *Journalism Studies*, *Media Report to Women* and *Western Journal of Communication*, with additional work published as book chapters. Notably, she was recently awarded the 2020 Mary Gardner Award for Graduate Student Research from AEJMC's Commission on the Status of Women for her dissertation's potential contribution to the field at the intersection of journalism and gender.

Kelsey received her MA in Communication, an MBA, and her undergraduate degree in news from Kent State University, in Ohio. She is a former journalist, having freelanced for *Ohio Magazine* and other regional magazines around Northeast Ohio, and worked for *The Columbus Dispatch*, *The Chautauquan Daily*, *Valley Magazine*, and *Cleveland Magazine*. Her work in the industry inspired her dissertation topic, as she experienced sexism, ageism, and sources alluded to her being unprofessional because of her visible tattoos while working on the business news desk.