Research Article

Black Broadcast Journalists: Implications of Mentorship and Race in the Newsroom

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Abstract

In this study, 23 African American broadcast journalists, who graduated from college between 1994 and 2014, were interviewed about their experiences working in network television news, specifically the role their mentor played to help their professional success. Mentors largely provided both vocational and psychosocial support, but were overwhelmingly not seen as role models. The majority of mentees also believed race was a factor in their careers. The findings led to recommendations on how mentors can guide their mentees toward career progression, such as verbal encouragement, guiding mentees to position themselves so "Others" see the value they bring to the newsroom, and networking opportunities.

About 50 years ago, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, also known as the Kerner Commission, released its report addressing the civil unrest that swept the United States in the 1960s. The observations and recommendations within it clearly pointed to the need to improve the media industry, because the images on television consumed by U.S. citizens contributed to the unrest.[1] The Kerner Commission issued constructive steps to address the problems between journalists and the Black community. The Kerner Commission stressed the importance of increasing Black programming and the frequency in which Blacks were seen reporting news and weather.

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Furthermore, to have true, fair, and balanced reporting of Black issues, it was necessary to find, hire, train, and promote Black journalists.

As stated in the report,

> Fewer than 5 percent of the people employed by the news business in editorial jobs in the United States today are Negroes. Fewer than 1 percent of editors and supervisors are Negroes, and most of them work for Negro-owned organizations. (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968, p. 211)

The Kerner Commission called for not just a widespread hiring of Blacks as reporters, shunning the practice of tokenism, but it called for more Black editors, writers, commentators, and news editors who make more critical decisions on which stories to use and cover (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968).

Over the years, television newsrooms have begun to show more diversity, hiring Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and women. A study by the Radio and Television Digital News Association noted, "People of color are best represented in the top 25 markets" (Papper, 2019, p. 1). In 2019, the racial minority workforce in television news rose to 25.9%, which is an increase from 17.8% in 1990. As noted in the study, African Americans totaled 12% of television newsroom staffs in 2019, which is up from 11.7% in 2018 (Papper, 2019).[2] Among the White staff in television newsrooms, 57.6% were White men and 42.4% were White women (Papper, 2019). Although, television newsrooms are less White than the general population in the United States,[3] the racial diversity problem still exists in newsrooms. The problem stems from racial minorities generally not being in decision-making roles or positions of authority to affect the final content on television.

Many racial minorities feel alone and isolated in newsrooms, because they may have a different perspective on how to cover a news story. They also might feel their voice is not being heard, because they are fewer in number. However, racial minorities, just like others, want to be heard in the workplace, and want to gain professional advancement like their colleagues (Wilson et al., 2013). Some Black broadcast journalists have found mentors in and outside the workplace invaluable for professional growth, which is why there is a need for this study. This study focuses on Black broadcast journalists, because they are the largest racial minority group represented in newsrooms (Papper, 2019). The researchers in this study wanted to focus on how mentorship played a role in sustaining the positions of African Americans in network television.

A mentor is defined as someone senior to the individual in age and experience (Hunt & Michael, 1983; Ragins, 1989). Many African American broadcast journalists (and members of other ethnic groups) have mentors for professional guidance and advice, which can lead to being recognized and even promoted. In addition to having mentors, some broadcast journalists also rely on role models in the newsroom, reminding them of what they can achieve with the proper direction and encouragement.

According to Gibson (2004), role modeling is different from mentoring, because it does not require a close and personal relationship between the individuals. Furthermore, according to Catherine Filstad (2004), newcomers use their colleagues as role models

within the workplace to help with organizational socialization, which is "learning content and process by which an individual adjusts to a specific role in an organization" (Chao et al., 1994, p. 730). Role models are also described in literature "as having a variety of functions, as living evidence that certain achievements are possible, and as models for emulation in achieving and maintaining certain social position" (Filstad, 2004, p. 3). In essence, a role model is an individual someone chooses as a model (Fisher, 1990).

Taking into the consideration the need for individuals to adjust to their workplaces and how often others (i.e., mentors and role models) are important to this process, the goal of this study was to investigate if Black broadcast journalists had role models as well as to uncover the types of mentoring relationships that existed between Black broadcast journalists and their mentors, including the specific activities within those relationships. For this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with 23 African American broadcast journalists who worked at network television either behind the scenes or in front of the camera. Network television newsrooms are large and produce programming for a national audience, as opposed to local affiliate television stations that focus on local stories. For this study, those interviewed, represented several networks, which were ABC (American Broadcasting Corporation), CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System), NBC (National Broadcasting Company), Fox (Fox News Group), and CNN (Cable News Network), and they were located in New York, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, and Los Angeles.

Racial and Social Identity

Understanding Racial Identity Development Theory and Social Identity Theory are critical to comprehend how Blacks navigate mentoring relationships in broadcast newsrooms. When it comes to mentoring minorities, race matters (Thomas, 2001). While race is a social construct used to maintain social hierarchies and not based in biological determinations, it still has an incredible impact in not only how individuals see themselves, but how others see those same individuals. Individuals are placed in racial categories solely based on physical characteristics and other generalizations (Bakanic, 2008), and an individual's social identity is related to "those aspects of an individual's self-image that derive from the social categories to which he perceives himself as belonging" (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 16). Social identity is a dynamic and interconnected set of meanings that connect an individual to others in racial and ethnic groups (Tajfel, 1981). Race then provides one of several categories by which an individual creates their identity, and not all individuals of a special racial group may place the same importance on the identity category (Cross et al., 1999). As Black broadcast journalists in this study maintain the same minority status as they do in the United States in their workplaces, it is important to understand identity development and how it explains how they experience race and whom they select to help them navigate this social space.

Network television newsrooms are unique workplaces for Blacks to navigate. Straddling the lines between entertainment, corporate America and public knowledge, these private, independently operated businesses, encompass their own distinct

workplace organizational and cultural practices (Somani & Hopkinson, 2018). Diversity has been a top priority in U.S. corporations, but intentions to achieve a racially diverse workforce at top levels has been met with several issues, including the challenges of mentoring across racial lines, negative stereotypes, peer resentment, role modeling, and public scrutiny (Thomas, 2001).

Helms (1990) defines racial identity as a sense of group or collective identity a person has related to their perceptions of a shared racial heritage with a particular racial group. Racial Identity Development Theory is concerned with the "psychological implications of racial-group membership, that is belief systems that evolve in reaction to perceived differential racial-group membership" (p. 3). Those responsible for developing the foundational principals of Black Identity Development Theory, especially Bailey Jackson, William Cross, and Janet Helms, were concerned with understanding how Blacks responded to the Civil Rights Movement and the subsequent ways their thinking and behavior were influenced as well as how their Black identity evolved and developed (Jackson, 2012).

Living in a society like the United States where an individual's racial-group membership is critical, racial identity development occurs in some form in every individual (Tatum, 1992), and many Black identity development theorists' framework introduces this development in levels or stages (Jackson, 1976.) Central to this work is William E. Cross's model of Black Racial Identity Development, which identifies the following five stages of the process: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion/emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment. More specifically, in Cross' (1971, 1978, 1991) model of Black racial identity development, the stages are defined as: (a) pre-encounter is the absorption of many of the beliefs and values of the dominant White culture; (b) encounter is when individuals are forced by certain events to then recognize the impact race has on their lives; (c) immersion/emersion is the active avoidance and shedding of White culture with the simultaneous move to surround oneself with symbols of their own racial identity; (d) internalization sees individuals gain a sense of security and comfortability in their outward expressions of their Blackness as well as willingness to connect with Whites who acknowledge who they are; and (e) internalization-commitment is reflective in individuals' abilities to be concerned about their race and then create long-term plans of action to assist members. It is important to note this foundational theory has been revised and expanded since its inception in the early 1970s. One of its primary changes is that it moved from a developmental-stage theory to a theory that focuses on attitudes or social identities (Worrell, Vandiver, Schaefer, Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2006). It now focuses on what are recurring psychological themes within Black people's social history (Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1998). The change recognizes that not all Blacks experience the development of their racial identity in the same way. In fact, there are multiple Black identity attitudes (Cross & Vandiver, 2001), and these racial identity attitudes are not in lockstep in this rigid, staged process, instead they change and are influenced by the various events and contexts across a person's life (Worrell et al., 2006).

If racial identity describes how individuals internalize their racial socializations (Helms, 2007), then when someone deemphasizes their own view of their racial-group

membership, it may allow them to think race has not or will not be a relevant factor in their own achievement, instead leaning on the idea of U.S. meritocracy, which is often a part of a pre-encounter worldview (Tatum, 1992). Thus, understanding one's identity through the lens of Social Identity Theory is important to this work. Social Identity Theory is a social psychological theory focused on intergroup relations, group processes and the social self (Hogg et al., 1995), and it has origins in similar issues related to racial identity development theory, including the cognitive and social beliefs related to racism, prejudice, and discrimination (Tajfel, 1963, 1969, 1970). Essentially, the theory's premise is that the social categories in which one falls, or believes one belongs, provide descriptions of defining characteristics and, thus, allows one to self-define who they are as an individual.

Mentoring and mentorship relates to social identity groups. These groups relate to role models, as upwardly mobile employees will mirror the behaviors of their role models to develop an appropriate social identity at work (Ibarra, 1999). Furthermore, as noted by Welch (1996), "individuals tend to identify with persons who are like themselves on salient group characteristics" (p. 10). In addition, mentoring may "feel more natural," (Patton, 2009) when the mentor and mentee share cultural experiences, language or similar interests (Athey et al., 2000). Social identities are descriptive, prescriptive and evaluative, and because they are the latter, "groups and their members are strongly motivated to adopt behavioral strategies for achieving or maintaining in-group/out-group comparisons that favor the in-group, and thus of course the self" (Hogg et al., 1995, p. 260). In-group/out-group designations often provide spaces for conflict and negativity (Goar, 2007). Furthermore, Brewer (1999) argues many forms of bias and discrimination develop because of positive emotions, such as admiration, sympathy, and trust reserved for the in-group and withheld from the out-group. Therefore, workplaces populated by diverse individuals representing various social categories, including different races, are likely to have relationships impacted by their social and racial identities.

Literature Review

From the late 1950s to the early 1980s, most television viewers had only three channel choices: ABC, CBS, or NBC. In the early 1970s, the Federal Communications Commission pushed for networks to hire more Blacks and women, but the political pressure did not have much of an impact (Gomery, 2008). By the mid-1970s, early cable television channels, such as WTBS and HBO, had started. In 1980, CNN was created. Eventually more cable channels, such as ESPN, Fox, and Nickelodeon debuted, but there was still criticism that the increase in channels did not equate to an increase in Blacks on television. However, on January 25, 1980, Black Entertainment Television (BET) was launched by Robert Johnson, a Black man, and carried by White-owned cable systems (Gomery, 2008). Cable systems thought by carrying BET, "they had diversity and the public interest covered" (Gomery, 2008, p. 308). However, BET's programming was often controversial and criticized for continuing the proliferation of images labeled as problematic and offensive by many within Black

communities (Smith-Shomade, 2012), and it did not change how major network (ABC, CBS, and NBC) news was run. The people in the decision-making roles regarding the content of news programs and newscasts, also known as gatekeepers, were still primarily White men.

News gatekeepers are people who let information pass through the system or stop its progress. In television news, gatekeepers are producers, associate producers, assistant producers, and even assignment editors. The result of the gatekeeping function is called "agenda setting" (Shaw & McCombs, 1977). Historically, non-Whites and women have not been gatekeepers in U.S. news media organizations. As a result, the news coverage of people of color and women has been a reflection of the attitudes held by gatekeepers. Therefore, the perspectives of U.S. values and attitudes brought to society through media resulted in a racially and culturally flawed process (Shaw & McCombs, 1977).

Mainstream media doors have generally been closed to Blacks. During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, newsroom managers were forced "to find reporters who could access minority neighborhoods without being perceived as outsiders" (Wilson et al., 2013, p. 128), such as Black reporters. However, this turbulent time in the United States did not create a drastic change in the hiring practices of broadcast newsrooms, despite the suggestions made by the Kerner Commission. While Black people were hired to cover the civil unrest in U.S. society, the gatekeepers remained the same, White men. However, the overall mistreatment of Blacks from society, in many ways explained why they were excluded from news media coverage. Television viewers are influenced by what they see, and the consumption of media does shape individuals' perceptions (Bandura, 2002). Thus, the nonacceptance subsequently explains the treatment of non-Whites in the news and newsrooms (Wilson et al., 2013).

News coverage of people of color often resulted in perpetuating stereotypes of their ethnicity. Oversimplifying news coverage contributed to "racial polarization," because it made groups like Blacks "scapegoats for the nation's problems . . . fueling White fears and hatred of other racial groups and lifestyles" (Wilson et al., 2013, p. 131). Lind's (2001) study placed African Americans, European Americans, and Latin Americans (divided by race and gender) into the role of news producers and investigated the relevance of cultural identity when deciding what stories should go into a newscast. Women, African Americans, and Latin Americans all complained about how their groups were stereotyped in the news and were dissatisfied with how women or people of color were portrayed.

A White Perspective

The Kerner Commission provided insight into the values applied to news judgment, mainly news being provided through "a White perspective." The importance of stories was based on what appealed to the White majority. This philosophy was instilled in journalists in the early stages of training in colleges and universities. In the late 1990s and 2000s, journalism programs "increased efforts to make students aware of the importance of racial and cultural diversity in reporting" (Wilson et al., 2013, p. 148).

However, news sources usually represented "White ideals" that were in common with the gatekeepers. Since non-White sources were not used, those who were not represented began to distrust the news media. For news coverage to improve for non-Whites, prejudice and racism needed to be removed from the gatekeeper ranks.

While the Kerner Commission offered insights into how people of color were negatively portrayed in the media, news organizations did not necessarily comply with their recommendations because of the already "said" culture of their newsrooms. Sociologist Warren Breed's (1955) study called "Social Control in the newsroom" explained why it was important to understand the inner-workings of institutional newsrooms, since the policies were unwritten. For example, people new to the staff learned how the newsroom worked by observing the content of the news broadcasts and noted what parts of stories had been edited. In addition, reporters and producers were expected to converse with staff members to find out what their superiors preferred, as well as take note of the news story ideas that were given priority in the news meetings.

Women of color as role models or mentors are few and far between, and as a result, many women journalists of color sense a degree of hostility in their newsrooms (Lind, 2010). In 1969, the Federal Communications Commission installed Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) rules, which required radio and television stations to report special efforts to recruit minorities (Lind, 2010). In 1971, the rules were extended to include women (Lind, 2010). Stations, which had few or no minorities, found themselves on recruiting binges in search of women and minorities (Lind, 2010). By the 1980s, one could find women in every position except top newsroom and station management. By the late 1980s, women made up 33% of the television news workforce. By the end of the 1990s, women were 39% of the television news workforce. In 2010, women were nearly two thirds (65.9%) of all television news producers (Lind, 2010). According to a recent study by the Radio Television Digital News Association, African American women made up 53.6% of all Blacks in television news (46.4% made up of men) (Papper, 2019).

Formal and Informal Mentoring

As noted by the Kerner Commission, it is important to have additional Black journalists in news organizations. Many former journalists note that mentoring programs as well as coaching and training would have helped them remain in the field of journalism (Pease, 1991). Mentoring plays a key role in organizational workplace relationships and comes in two forms (formal and informal), but regardless of the type, both have benefits. Formal mentoring relationships are those developed with organizational assistance or intervention (Ragins & Cotton, 1999), and informal mentoring relationships develop through mutual identification, potential of mutual career needs and interpersonal comfort (Allen et al., 2005; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Research concerning the benefits of both informal and formal mentoring is diverse, complex, and often contradictory.

Both types of mentoring relationships provide benefits to the organization's structure. For example, formal mentoring is the most beneficial for people of color and women who were often marginalized in corporate spaces (Chao et al., 1992). Other

scholars said it was a way in which organizations could ensure the development of diverse talent. Not cultivating diverse talent could result in negative consequences for the individual, institution, and society (Dreher & Cox, 1996; Noe, 1988; Tillman, 2001). In contrast, informal mentoring brings forth more long-term benefits to organizations as a social system (Singh et al., 2002). Mentees in informal relationships report more positive job attitudes (Dreher & Ash, 1990; Koberg et al., 1994; Scandura, 1992) and psychosocial support from their mentors (Fagenson-Eland et al., 1997).

Mentoring is key to individuals in the workplace, and many of those who have mentors do experience positive career outcomes. For example, they receive more promotions (Scandura, 1992), have higher incomes and upward mobility (Chao et al., 1992; Dreher & Cox, 1996; Scandura, 1992) as well as career satisfaction (Fagenson, 1989). Those researching mentoring relationships have identified three major types of support mentors provide to their mentees, which are: (a) vocational and instrumental support that works to assist with work-related tasks (Gibb & Megginson, 1993; Kram, 1985; Noe, 1988); (b) psychosocial support, often including counseling, friendship, and other socially supportive activities (Kram, 1985; Scandura, 1992); and (c) role modeling by demonstrating through their own behavior appropriate workplace conduct (Scandura, 1992). Since there is usually a lack of racial minority role models in many organizations, role modeling becomes critical for racial minority mentees. Given the lack of African-American role models present in many organizations, role modeling is a particularly important function for African-American mentees (Ragins, 1997).

As identification and interpersonal similarities increase the comfort of communication in relationships (Lincoln & Miller, 1979), mentees in mentoring relationships with those outside of their in-group may experience less interpersonal comfort (Ragins, 1997). Furthermore, social identity has critical connections to behavioral and perceptual implications, and those in diverse mentoring relationships may have less identifying connections with their mentee or mentor, which can cause social distance and decreases motivation to stay in the mentoring relationship (Ragins, 1997). In addition, women often find it more difficult than men to gain informal mentors, because of possible misinterpretations of their approaches to senior males. Formal mentoring programs are often designed to enable females to have equal access to mentors (Singh et al., 2002).

For example, in a 1996 study concerning race, gender, and opportunities in the workplace, it was found that African American and Hispanic individuals with an MBA (Master's in Business Administration) were less likely than Whites who possess the same degree to create mentoring relationships with White men (Dreher & Cox, 1996). In another study, it was noted that double standards existed surrounding race and gender that drove many talented individuals out of the newspaper newsroom, including preferential treatment White editors gave to other Whites related to training programs, mentoring, and work assignments (Pease, 1991).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the value of mentors among Black broadcast journalists and whether or not relationships with mentors may help

professionals succeed at network television stations. The primary researcher, who teaches courses like television reporting and television producing at a historically Black college, uncovered research on the experiences of ABC's Carole Simpson and the late Max Robinson and found those experiences were dated. She was interested in providing updated information to African-American broadcast journalism students to help them professionally excel in network television newsrooms after graduation. Furthermore, the study sought to gain insights into the types of issues contemporary Black television journalists face within network television newsrooms.

More specifically, this study sought to: (a) identify the type of mentors Black broadcast journalists have; (b) identify the types of mentoring support Black broadcast journalists receive from mentors; (c) understand whether Black broadcast journalists believe their race plays a role in their newsroom experiences, and if so, how; and (d) offer recommendations to assist future journalists and educators, based on the experiences of Black broadcast journalists. Overall, this research adds value by investigating relationships of Black broadcast journalists and their mentors and how mentors help professionals succeed at network television stations," which is much-needed scholarship that fills a gap in journalism education research focused on connections between race and newsroom culture.

Method

A qualitative research approach was used for this study, and as noted by Denzin and Lincoln (2003), this is a beneficial approach to studying phenomenon. More specifically, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Qualitative researchers seek to answer questions that "stress how social experience is created and given meaning" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 13). In-depth interviews have certain strengths for researchers, as interviews are a useful way to quickly obtain large amounts of data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 108). Lindlof and Taylor (2011) suggested that everything becomes data in a qualitative study.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews "enable researchers to maintain some consistency over the concepts that are covered in each interview" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 39). Poroli and Huang (2018) used semi-structured interviews when studying the spillover effects of a university crisis. They found that "interviewing was deemed as a promising way to understand this phenomenon more holistically, given the prospect to collect and analyze more inclusive data" (p. 1134). They also found in-depth interviews provided "the tools to better explore people's reactions to a crisis and to go more in depth with the study of communication among members of situational publics when reflecting upon crisis spillover" (Poroli & Huang, 2018, p. 1134).

Several other researchers have used in-depth interviews to investigate journalists. For example, Aeron Davis (2009) conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews of both journalists and politicians to determine how those relationships influenced politicians' behavior. In 2007, Wallington, Blake, Taylor-Clark and Viswanath conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews of 18 journalists in Massachusetts to uncover the challenges of reporting health disparities in local news. Those interviews helped them

learn that journalists consider different angles when developing health stories, which include personal behavior and public impact. In a study about the challenges and dangers of reporting on the border of El Paso and Ciudad Juarez, Carter and Kodrich (2013) conducted in-depth interviews of the journalists at the *El Paso Times*. The authors of that study tried to understand how the journalists perceived their role in covering the border. Their study made use of an accepted standard of qualitative research, based on a study by Breed (1955), who interviewed journalists to understand newsroom operations. The interview questions asked of the participants were inspired by the authors' research on mentorship, Racial Identity Development Theory, Social Identity Theory, and the primary author's own professional experience working in television newsrooms (see Appendix).

The first author (primary researcher/author) of this study is a former television producer. Before transitioning into academia, she was a newscast producer for 10 years. Therefore, her professional knowledge of the television industry and experience may have influenced interpretations and informed the research (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Sandelowski, 1993). "Though experience can blind researchers' perception, it can also enable researchers to understand the significance of some things more quickly" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 78). Although her industry experience did not help gain access to interviewees, her affiliation to an Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) helped her gain access to the subjects.

In this study, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted in-person by the first author of this study with 23 participants, who graduated from college between 1994 and 2014. Each participant worked in editorial positions either behind the scenes, such as a producer, or on air, such as a correspondent or anchor. All were affiliated with network television newsrooms of ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, and Fox at the network headquarters or major bureaus. None of the participants came from local affiliate television stations. There were 13 women and 10 men; all ranged in age from 23 to 42 years (see Table 1 for additional details of interviewees). In this study, some of the journalists asked not to be identified in connection to their corresponding news program. The participants said more than once that they were the only Black person reporting or producing for that news program or within a specific bureau. To ensure they could not be easily identified, pseudonyms were assigned to all participants in the study.

Based on personal connections, preliminary emails were sent out to potential subjects asking for their participation in the study. From that point, snowball sampling was used to gain additional participants. Snowball sampling is a way to "locate subjects with certain attributes or characteristics necessary in the study" (Berg, 2007, p. 44). The strategy behind snowball sampling "involves identifying several people with relevant characteristics and interviewing them" (Berg, 2007, p. 44). Once those individuals are interviewed, the researcher would then ask them for names of other people who may have the same attributes, creating "a *chain* of subjects driven by the referral of one respondent of another" (Berg, 2007, p. 44).

Once an individual agreed to be interviewed, the interview was conducted at a place that was both convenient and offered privacy. Before the interview began, each participant completed a questionnaire about their education level, job title, years

Table 1. Demographic Information of Participants.

Pseudonym	Age (years)	Title	Region	Gender	Years at network	Salary range
Beverly	23	Assistant Producer	Middle Atlantic	F	1	US$50K–US$100K
Carolyn	38	WH Correspondent	South Atlantic	F	15	Above US$200K
Chantel	33	Senior Editor/Producer	South Atlantic	F	9	US$100K–US$200K
Aubrey	30	Associate Producer	Middle Atlantic	F	8	US$50K–US$100K
Morgan	33	Senior Producer	Middle Atlantic	F	18	US$100K–US$200K
Keith	35	Correspondent/Anchor	Middle Atlantic	M	14	Above US$200K
Janice	23	Desk Assistant	South Atlantic	F	1	US$50K–US$100K
Edward	28	Assignment Editor	Middle Atlantic	M	6	US$50K–US$100K
Martha	34	Correspondent	Middle Atlantic	F	12	Above US$200K
Katrina	25	Associate Producer	Middle Atlantic	F	3	US$50K–US$100K
Edna	34	Associate Producer	Middle Atlantic	F	3+	US$50–US$100K
Jerome	31	Producer	Middle Atlantic	M	7	US$100K–US$200K
Theodore	30	Correspondent	South Atlantic	M	8	US$100K–US$200K
Tasha	31	Producer	South Atlantic	M	8	US$50–US$100K
Zelda	26	Associate Producer	Middle Atlantic	F	5	US$50K–US$100K
Aaron	25	Associate Producer	Middle Atlantic	M	3	US$50K–US$100K
Ella	36	Associate Producer	Middle Atlantic	F	14	US$50K–US$100K
Dominique	26	Associate Producer	Middle Atlantic	M	2.5	US$50K–US$100K
Keisha	42	Producer	South Atlantic	F	19	US$100K–US$200K
Michelle	39	Anchor/Correspondent	Middle Atlantic	F	16	Above US$200K
Vance	32	Anchor/Correspondent	South Atlantic	M	12	Above US$200K
Sean	27	Producer	Middle Atlantic	M	7	US$50K–US$100K
Stephen	35	Anchor	Pacific Coast	M	13	Above US$200K

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working in network television, age, salary, gender and other demographic information. Once the interview began, each was audio recorded to ensure accuracy. Furthermore, handwritten notes were taken to help make notations of key issues being discussed by the participants.

The interviews were conducted from June to August in 2014. Each interview averaged about 45 min. The same 11 questions were asked of each interviewee. However, follow-up questions were asked, if needed, to clarify answers to the previous question. All the interviews were transcribed (which were outsourced to a transcription service), and then the data were analyzed for meaning. In total, the interviews resulted in 248 single-spaced pages of raw data.

The coding sheet contained: specific demographic information about each participant; demographics about his or her mentor(s); characteristics of the mentoring relationship; characteristics of the role model; and types of support by the mentor. Coding and analysis are often used interchangeably in research. In this study, themes were extracted from the data coded. Analysis refers "to both the concept and the thought processes that go behind assigning meaning to data" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 58).

A thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. A thematic analysis focuses on identifying themes and patterns present in behavior (Aronson, 1995). According to Arson (1994), themes can emerge by piecing together respondents' stories to form a comprehensive picture of their collective experience. Furthermore, themes can be identified by "bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which often are meaningless when viewed alone" (Leininger, 1985, p. 60). To identify patterns within the participants' answers, the transcripts were read 3 times each to help locate connections in responses that came from "conversation topics, vocabulary, recurring activities, meanings, feelings" and other rhetoric (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 131). More specifically, the researchers utilized the process outlined by Jodi Aronson (1995), which was to collect the data; identify the data relating to the classified patterns; combine and catalog the patterns into subthemes and create a valid argument for the selection of the chosen themes.

Findings and Discussion

All except one participant in the sample had a mentor. Most participants, 82% ($N = 19$), had more than one mentor and used terms like "several" and "multiple" to denote the number of mentors they had. Sixteen of the 23 (70%) mentees largely had both Black women and men as mentors. Seldom did a Black mentee only have a White man as their primary mentor, which supports Ibarra's (1999) assertion that members of a racial group are more likely to connect with others in the same racial group. For those participants who did have White male mentors (43%) ($N = 10$), they were not their sole mentors, but were accompanied by Black mentors. There were no Asian mentors noted by participants, and one mentee listed a Latino mentor. Race also played a slight role in the selection of mentors. In terms of the race of the mentor and the mentee, it was noted that 17% ($N = 4$) of the participants specifically picked their mentor based on his or her race, which underscores Patton (2009) and Athey et al.'s (2000)

description of how mentees may feel more comfortable with their mentor if they share cultural experiences, language or similar interests. However, men who said they were gay in the sample gravitated toward women as mentors.

Most mentor and mentee relationships (20 of 23, or 87%) were informal; only three (13%) were from formal programs or colleges.[4] Most mentees formed the relationship organically through conversations or interactions at work, through connections in undergraduate school or by meeting the mentor in a nonformal setting, such as shopping. None noted formally asking to be mentored. In this study, mentors seemed to naturally take an interest in the mentees and saw "potential" in them, and then took them under their "wing." In the absence of an official mentoring program to connect them, mentors and mentees individually set up meetings to discuss issues and primarily used email as their source of communication. None expressed any consistent scheduling of meetings or times to connect via email. Instead, communication was largely prompted by mentees who were looking for advice or guidance, and mentees who were looking to connect with mentors for career updates.

Most mentors were employed in the news industry. Those few mentors outside of the field were usually connected to their mentee during their undergraduate experience; a few were their parents. Parents and individuals with past collegiate connections can be effective mentors, as T. Brown's (1990) stance on mentors is that there should be distance between the mentee and mentor, not a supervisory relationship, but a direct vested interest in the mentee's success, plus experience and perspective to help the mentee.

Types of Mentoring Support in the Newsroom

Mentees received all three basic types of support: psychosocial support, vocational support, and support as a role model. Mentors largely provided vocational and psychosocial support. More specifically, 70% received vocational support and 91% received psychosocial support. However, only about half ($N = 13$) of the mentors were seen as role models or providing role modeling behavior. This finding showed that supervisors could have been key role models, because their positions in the workplace hierarchy made them attractive to others, because they had status and power (M. Brown & Treviño, 2014). Furthermore, since modeling contributes to identity construction (Shapiro et al., 1978), observing a role model's behaviors for guidance can help an individual determine what is appropriate for a particular organization and relevant for the particular culture from which the individual is attempting to build their identity (Burke et al., 2006).

Psychosocial support. Mentees said they could discuss issues with mentors without "judgement," and they could have "frank" and "honest" conversations if they were of the same race. Through their interactions, mentors took on the role of a psychological cheerleader, who was responsible for "troubleshooting" many problems for the mentee, including those related to how to actually complete work-related tasks and those about navigating workplace relationships and social situations. These tasks support

Crawford and Smith's (2005) definition of mentoring, which suggests the essence of mentoring is both professional and personal. For example, 30-year-old Theodore, a correspondent, said, "My mentor instills a lot of confidence in me, telling me: know that you are good, know that you have ability, sell yourself and always demand that you're given opportunities." Another mentee, 42-year-old Keisha, a producer, was told by her mentor, "Have more confidence in yourself, because you're smart and you need to speak up. Don't sit in meetings and think that you don't have something to contribute because you do." For another mentee, 38-year-old Carolyn, a correspondent, said her mentor "wasn't going to let me sink" in the newsroom. As minorities in the newsroom, mentees often felt like outsiders, which is state they felt many of the same feelings of being in the out-group within the workplace, as they did being in the out-group in the United States. There connection of all being within the same organization, sharing a similar goal and being of the same profession did not matter. The encouragement they received from their mentors helped them gain trust in themselves and their decisions. Theodore, Keisha, and Carolyn were already immersed in their newsroom culture, trying to figure out how to navigate it with the help of their mentors, regardless of their race.

Furthermore, mentors helped mentees gain perspective regarding how others (i.e., Whites) saw them in the workplace and provided advice on how they could be better understood from the point of view of their coworkers. For example, Michelle, a 39-year-old correspondent, was told by her mentor,

> You can never let the way you look trump what you can do. Because it is easy for women, and people will label you, they think you are a pretty girl or what not, and they will not take you as seriously.

Beverly, a 23-year-old assistant producer, said her mentor

> told me over and over and over again to be very, very mindful of who I tell my business to . . . And I think as a Black woman a lot of times White men at my office took to me as a source of gossip. . .And I'm like, I do not know . . . I cannot help you.

Michelle, Beverly and other mentees struggled with employers seeing their professional value beyond their race, until their mentors advised them on how to position themselves to advance their careers. Mentors suggested volunteering to cover stories that were not connected to their race, suggested pitching original ideas not related to their race as well as seeking employment at other entities, such as other networks, shows or markets, where there might be different staff members and opportunities.

Mentor conversations often centered around ensuring the mentee had the "soft skills" needed to survive in the workplace, including a combination of social skills, communications skills and proper situational attitude. For example, 32-year-old Vance, a correspondent, said he was advised that "if you want this team to work for you, they have to like you, they have to want to see you do well and care for them." Theodore, a 30-year-old correspondent said, "I had an instance where there was a very important get-together that I was not invited to and this person [the mentor] went out

of his way to make sure that I got on the list before this get-together." The mentee may not feel like he or she fits into the workplace and, therefore, may not engage with their coworkers, socially. These examples of "soft skills" showed Blacks' racial identity played a role in how they perceived their acceptance in the workplace and connections to their in-group—Whites. However, mentors advise otherwise, because these social settings allow the coworkers to become "friends" with their Black colleagues, which can lead to greater survival in that workplace setting.

Vocational support. Mentees heavily relied upon mentors for advice in creating new career paths, acquiring new or better editorial or professional opportunities in their workplaces. For example, one overnight assignment editor, 28-year-old Edward, noted his mentor intentionally put him on the weekend assignment desk, which turned out to be "pivotal" to his career, because it gave him more responsibility, decision-making authority, and local news experience. Darren, a 26-year-old associate producer, said, "They [the mentors] were both giving me exactly the same advice, like you need to run full speed at [the] evening news. You got to get off that overnight. You got to be more visible." Sean, a 27-year-old producer, said, "My mentor has encouraged me to definitely focus on my future and start to look for job opportunities that will position me for more of what I want to do." These quotes specifically support Chao et al. (1992) as well as Scandura's (1992) research that mentors were key to helping mentees gain upward mobility in their careers. As a result, these mentees directly credited the mentors with their positive career progression, being directly responsible for helping them get new positions, including full-time jobs and internships.

Role model. Mentors were largely not the mentees' role model. Beverly, a 23-year-old assistant producer, was one of the few mentees who saw her mentor as a role model. She noted,

> My boss obviously is more than a mentor, definitely a role model in how she has navigated in this company and how she has had that longevity in her career. I am very interested not so much in what she had to give up, but what she had to gain to get there.

The majority of mentees had role models outside of the newsroom who were high-profile journalists. Furthermore, many role models shared the same career path or background as the mentee (e.g., grew up with a single parent, is a Black woman in a field with few Black women).

Role models, too, were often of the same gender and race of the mentee, especially Black women. Again, this supported Ibarra's observations that social identity is tied to mentoring and mentorship relationships and based on many of the mentees' stories, there was confirmation their shared cultural experiences were a point of connections, too (Athey et al., 2000). Mentees selected role models who, along with having the same experiences, had career longevity and excellent journalism skills. For example, Aaron, a 25-year-old associate producer, said,

Ed Bradley, he is one of the reasons why I first got interested to work at CBS. He is also a fraternity brother. . . So for me, as a role model, I look at him as someone that shows, as I have said before, that you can be yourself and do this job.

Morgan, a 33-year-old senior producer, said,

I think as far as the GMA anchor [Robin Roberts], I look up to her because of how poised she has been through everything she has been through. She broke barriers being one of the first females to commentate on ESPN. She battled cancer twice and has come out on top.

These mentees and others in the sample socially and racially identified with their role models.

Navigating race in the newsroom. As noted by Helms (1990), racial identity is concerned with the implications of racial-group membership. The dynamics of race in the newsroom were complex, and participants struggled with understanding how their race impacted their workplaces. Black journalists' sense of social identity as well as racial identity made many of them aware of how they were positioned and viewed in their workplaces. This awareness impacted how many of them, including Michelle and Beverly, navigated the newsroom. For example, mentees did not believe they were treated fairly in the workplace. Second, 78% ($N = 18$) of mentees believed race was a factor in their careers. Third, mentees believed racism existed in their workplace, but it was not "systemic." Instead, it was noted by several participants that it was the result of a few "culturally insensitive" individuals. Based on their social category, those "culturally insensitive" individuals likely internalized some of the negative defining categories believed to be associated with Blacks and provided some external confirmation of their belief system through their actions or comments.

However, taken as a whole sample, it was clear newsrooms were spaces of everyday discrimination, microaggressions, and micro-assaults. Microaggressions are defined as "the brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, and sexual orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group" (Sue, 2010, p. 5). One example was experienced by Vance, a 32-year-old correspondent. He described what he called an "inappropriate" conversation with his coworkers, stating:

. . . because I came from the inner city and I'm from Baltimore and I was raised by a single parent. And they [executives at CNN] also expect—I call it a "Ghetto Love Story." They [CNN executives] expect, so what are you going to do [with your high salary]? "You're going to buy your mom a house?" No, my mom owned two houses before I bought my first one.

Mentees consistently spoke of activities, issues, and experiences with or by their coworkers that could be categorized as having both implicit and explicit racist overtones. Despite participants struggling to openly pinpoint whether a comment was

racist, there were multiple instances of explicit comments that could be categorized as micro-assaults. Micro-assaults are defined as "an explicit racial derogation characterized primarily by a verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 274). Ella, a 36-year-old associate producer, recounted how her editorial job somehow "evolved into where I was the food coordinator." She felt uncomfortable with this activity, as it was outside of her job description, and she did not like how individuals spoke with her about getting the food, as coworkers were making "little comments, they [were] not nice." Edna, a 34-year-old associate producer, said, "Inappropriate comments have been made to me. I mean things like: Don't your people like chicken? Don't your people like watermelon?" Edna also said, "I remember when I had brought my kids in and they said they were jumping around like monkeys, and I had to say, 'You know that's not appropriate, right?'"

The types of language used by Whites in the newsroom can be explained by the research of Eduardo Bonilla-Silva. In his article titled "The Linguistics of Color Blind Racism: How to Talk Nasty about Blacks without Sounding "Racist," he argues the normative climate of what is appropriate to publicly say drastically changed from the Jim Crow era to the postcivil rights era, and "the language of color blindness is slippery, apparently contradictory, and often subtle" (Bonilla-Silva, 2002, p. 41). He observed that today's racial norms do not allow for open expressions of direct racial views and positions, which forces Whites to develop a concealed way of voicing them (i.e., when expressing their racial views, they avoid the use of direct racial language). This style of communication helps to explain the ways in which racially insensitive ideas and words were often used in the workplace. Furthermore, what seemed to complicate the workplace experiences of Black journalists is that some of their coworkers seemed to be unaware they were engaging in problematic communications, which is often the case when some perpetrators of microaggressions interact with racial or ethnic minorities (Sue et al., 2007).

Participants also acknowledged they were being stereotyped by their coworkers and often behaved in ways to either assimilate or counteract several stereotypes of Blacks, such as angry Black man, angry Black Woman, or "sassy" Black woman. This assimilation connects to the encounter stage of the Cross model, as many Black broadcast journalists recognized the workplace was an environment in which they were often forced to acknowledge race had an impact on their lives. For example, Martha discussed how she was "presenting" herself to the outside world, and she said,

> I don't want to come across the wrong way. It is not a distancing of my culture, it is an acknowledgement that life is much easier if people can forget that you are Black. So, it's an effort to help them to do that.

Another example was Katrina, who said,

> I think there's definitely the tempering. . . I wouldn't necessarily call myself a meek person. I'm pretty outspoken, but a lot of times, I feel like I have to temper that down because I don't want to be the sassy Black woman who always has an opinion or who always is speaking out.

Efforts to counteract the stereotypes included not speaking out in disagreement or not being aggressive to avoid being seen as angry or problematic. This type of "predicament" is known as stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995, p. 797). It is experienced when a member of any group is aware a negative stereotype about the group exists, and internally, the person believes he or she is at risk of possibly confirming it. When this occurs, an individual's behavior can change, including raising self-doubts that can weaken motivation and performance (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Most Black journalists in this study dealt with tokenism in their workplaces. Participants consistently acknowledged they were often the "only Black person in the newsroom" or even in the building in which they worked. Their desires to navigate the newsroom ran the complete spectrum from the goal to "assimilate" to there being no "compromise" to a desire to "play both sides." These extremes connect to the changing notion of the Cross model and reflect how all Blacks do not develop their racial identity in the same way or even go through all steps of the model. For example, Carolyn, recounted her coworker, who stated, "You've got the Black spot," because the person who held the position before her was also Black. Carolyn said this about what she called the "insensitive comment" made by her coworker:

> That was hard. That was probably my hardest moment in this career of feeling like in any way directly discriminated against. He didn't (sic) even understand the full weight of what he was saying and how much it hurt, but it made me feel very uncomfortable in the newsroom for quite some time. And, I think what can't be understated is the long journey that you have to take to get to the network.

Being the only Black person in a newsroom is problematic, because as noted by Lord and Saenz (1985), token status in a group can cause inadequacies of memory and cognitive functioning, possibly as an extension of the self-consciousness that occurs as a result of being the only minority in a homogeneous group.

What was described in their many experiences is what is often called "everyday discrimination" or the everyday workplace discrimination that occurs against Blacks (Deitch et al., 2003, p. 1299). It is better defined as the "subtle, pervasive discriminatory acts experienced by members of stigmatized groups on a daily basis," not the egregious discriminatory acts and blatantly racist attitudes often seen in the past. This concept brings into focus the need to address "modern racism" in today's workplace. Past research has defined "modern racism" as an "anti-Black" effect (Sears, 1988, p. 56) connected to an attachment to traditional, American individualist values, and the stance that racism does not exist (Entman, 1990).

While the "everyday discrimination" and "modern racism" existed, mentees did not share a single instance about working with mentors to combat the issues of racism or discrimination. Nor, in recalling significant examples of productive mentor discussions or advice, did they share how a mentor helped them navigate any blatant or subtle discriminatory experience. Ultimately, the lack of admitting and understanding of what is considered discriminatory or racist may have been clarified through

conversations with mentors, but mentees did not seem to use mentors as a resource to navigate racial problems or even discuss them.

Although these researchers cannot identify specifically why race was not discussed with mentors, it is not very uncommon for individuals to avoid conversations about race. To discuss race in the United States is a "highly emotional matter" (Bonilla-Silva, 2002, p. 62). Historically, U.S. racial climate forbids open expressions of race-based feelings, positions and views (Bonilla-Silva, 2002), and thus, it is common for individuals to minimize the role race plays in perceived racial events and choose not to discuss racial differences to ensure they appear nonbiased (Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Bonilla-Silva, 2002), a position that would likely be seen as more welcoming than problematic in the workplace. For example, 31-year-old Tasha, a producer, recounted a story about another producer at her network. Tasha said,

> She turns to me and she is like "(sic), you are the Whitest Black girl I know." And I take these things in stride. I did not correct her. I did not say anything to her about it. I did not let her know that I find things like that to be really offensive.

Conclusion

Overwhelmingly, Black broadcast journalists have mentors who help guide them, even if they are not within their newsrooms. Black broadcast journalists find success in informal mentoring relationships, and they often tap mentors for career advice and assistance in navigating interpersonal work-related problems. Through workplace conversations and emails, mentors help Black broadcast journalists by providing guidance in social situations, advice for career progression and vocational guidance to enhance professional skills. However, mentees often select individuals outside of their workplaces to be role models, especially those individuals whose backgrounds were similar to the mentees and had extraordinary career success.

Fifty years after the release of the Kerner Commission report, diversity in the newsroom is still an issue, and discrimination, while not as overt as decades ago, is still prevalent. This study's results show that some broadcast newsroom employees still hold "a White perspective" that causes discomfort and dissatisfaction among Black broadcast journalists who must work in those workspaces. Participants in this study recounted multiple stories of encounters with individuals they worked with every day or others who they meet while reporting that exhibited discriminatory or racist behaviors. Yet, Black broadcast journalists did not use mentors as counselors to help deal with everyday discrimination. There is a need and an opportunity to provide Black broadcast journalists with the tools to handle everyday discrimination and to equip those who they often trust with their careers—mentors—to be in positions to assist them.

Implications

These findings highlight key insights that punctuate both the importance of mentors to Black broadcast journalists and the opportunities to better support their workplace

needs. Black journalists dealt with microaggressions, micro-assaults, tokenism and racism, but they often struggled to discuss the issues with mentors and other coworkers. Mentors could be influential in helping Black journalists navigate their workplaces more easily by asking them more questions about their daily experiences, in addition to providing vocational and technical support.

Furthermore, since Black broadcast journalists are not the dominant race in the workplace, mentors can advise them on how to position themselves, so those outside of their racial group see the value they bring to the newsroom, and not just their race. This process could also start during the undergraduate process. Those in higher education could prepare young Black broadcast journalists before entering the newsroom by helping them understand the modern-day culture in newsrooms and creating opportunities for the acquisition of a mentor prior to entering the workforce.

Furthermore, in making connections to race and gender issues, it is important to note identification and interpersonal similarities increase the comfort of communication in relationships (Lincoln & Miller, 1979). Therefore, same race and gender pairings could pave the way for more interpersonal conversations to occur about the everyday racism that happens in the newsroom, for mentors and mentees might relate more easily to those experiences. However, with Black journalists often being the only ones of their race in the newsroom, they could benefit from more in-group mentors. As research has shown, when these mentees have mentors, they may experience less interpersonal discomfort (Ragins, 1997). These partnerships could occur by having universities or colleges create networking opportunities with trade organizations, such as the National Association of Black Journalists, National Association of Black Broadcasters, and the Association for Women in Sports Media or Association for Women in Communications that have specific foci on diverse broadcast journalists.

Limitations and Future Research

This research was not without its limitations. It did include a small sample size, and while this is acceptable for qualitative research, increasing its numbers and changing its scope to a quantitative inquiry would allow for the findings to be generalizable and bring in more perspectives and experiences. Furthermore, the sample did not include participants from every geographic region of the United States. It would be beneficial to understand whether geography plays a role in mentor-mentee relationships, as there might be variations in workplace pressure and culture at network bureaus in different parts of the country. In addition, it would be beneficial to conduct more research that analyzed how mentors see their relationships with mentees, as this research only focused on questioning Black journalists about their experience as mentees. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to see how mentoring varies with Black broadcast journalists in Black-owned media organizations.

Appendix

In-Depth Interview Questions

The following are the questions the researcher asked the participants:

1. Other than skin color, how do you identify yourself as African American?
2. What personal compromises did you have to make to sustain your job?
3. What hurdles did you cross to achieve your goals?
4. What do you do to gain high visibility assignments?
5. Have you (reporters and producers) compromised your identity (for example, straightened your hair to look more "White") to be taken more seriously in the newsroom? Another example?
6. Do you have a mentor in the newsroom?
7. What kinds of advice from your mentor helped you to excel in your field?
8. Do you have a role model of the same race/ethnic group in the newsroom?
9. Have you experienced discrimination in the workplace, if so, please elaborate?
10. Please share an example of a productive discussion you've had with a mentor.
11. How have you experienced your race on the job?

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Notes

1. During the 1960s, the continued support for Jim Crow and segregation laws led to protests where African Americans were violently injured at open lunchroom counters, buses, polling places, and local public areas. These images reflected on television, portrayed non-Whites as outside the American society (Villeneuve, 2014).
2. As of July 1, 2019, the number of African Americans in the United States were 13.4% of the total population (U.S. Census, 2019).
3. As of July 1, 2019, the number of White Americans in the United States were 76.5% of the total population (U.S. Census, 2019).
4. The following networks have formal mentoring programs. The ABC News Fellowship program is a year-long program to attack aspiring journalists from diverse backgrounds

(Levi, 2012). NBC offers the News Associates Program; a 1 year-long program where 80% of the aspiring journalists who've completed the Program move into various full-time producing positions with NBC News and MSNBC (NBCUniversal, 2020). The CBS News Associates Program is an entry-level program designed for recent college graduates to train future producers. The CBS News Development Program works with racial minority journalist organizations to identify candidates to work for 2 years at participating CBS affiliates, strong newsrooms with a commitment to "mentoring" for the project ("CBS News Associates Program," 2018). CNN offers the CNN News Associate program (S. Mizelle, personal communication, January 27, 2020). Fox News offers mentor programs, such as the FOX News Leadership Development Program and the FOX News Multimedia Reporter Program (C. Cronin, personal communication, January 20, 2020).

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