Media coverage of alleged police brutality, the shooting deaths of unarmed African-American men and women by police, and the subsequent protests in response to those actions again in 2014 and 2015 brought to the forefront the failures of mainstream journalism to report critically on issues concerning race in America. Mainly relying on episodic rather than thematic perspective in their reporting, most journalists still seem to lack the ability to provide appropriate context to explain the complexities surrounding issues of race in this country. Quill, a magazine published by the Society of Professional Journalists, in 2015 observed:

> We live in what is supposed to be a post-racial era. As a result, many reporters seem to have accepted the ideology that the best way to be even-handed is to ignore race altogether. . . . Even as protestors continue to take to the streets, we still see relatively little reporting on documented racial gaps in education, health, employment and accumulated wealth. . . . Journalists have a responsibility to do more than report on the latest news developments, relying on whatever sources are handy. We should weave a web of information that ties people together across the demographic spectrum, supporting everyone’s involvement in the democratic process.

*(Lehrman 2015: 31)*

Mainstream news coverage of race-related events follows a pattern. In early 2012 Americans began to see reports about the fatal shooting of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida by neighborhood watchman George Zimmerman. As the coverage of this incident continued, so did the implication that Martin himself played a hand in his own demise and that his “threatening” attire and “questionable” background should play a role in the outcome of the case. The Martin tragedy set the stage for a larger moral discussion of how the media handles issues related to race, how victims are covered and portrayed in the media, and how the framing of this tragic event falls in line with journalists’ tendency to present stories as one-dimensional struggles between good and evil.

The overly simplistic coverage of the Martin incident as well as other racialized events helps to strengthen the argument that a more diverse news media, with viewpoints
that reflect the actual makeup of the communities being covered, would serve a true democracy better. As such, this chapter focuses on journalistic representations of African Americans as it examines the current efforts of the mainstream media industry to incorporate a more diverse workforce, the effects of limited diverse perspectives and voices on news content, and the influence of alternative news media on coverage of complex topics like race in the twenty-first century.

Efforts by the American mainstream media to recruit and hire more minority journalists have traditionally garnered minimal results, unfortunately. Although data show an increase in hiring numbers over the years, the fact is most newsrooms across the country do not reflect the demographic makeup of the communities they cover (Wilson, Gutierrez, and Chao 2003; Porter 2004; Fleming-Rife and Proffitt 2004; Dedman and Doig 2005). The Kerner Commission challenged the news media to “diversify their workforces, news agendas, and reporting” over 40 years ago. Released in March 1968, the Commission’s report, officially titled the Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, addressed the role of mass media in the violence that erupted in dozens of U.S. cities the previous year. The commission recommended in its extensive report that the news media should “take a leadership role” in helping to reverse the lack of understanding in the general public about the plight of black America during the late 1960s. This, according to the commission, could be accomplished by “news organizations engaging in voluntary self-studies of their own news content, developing sources within the black community, and by assigning regular beat reporting within African American neighborhoods” (Byerly and Wilson 2009: 212).

The results and ultimate fallout from the commission’s report affected the broadcast industry as well. According to Hollifield and Kimbro (2010), following the release of the Kerner report, the Federal Communication Commission adopted Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) rules as part of broadcast-station regulation on the argument that stations discriminating in employment did not serve their audiences. The FCC stated:

\[
\text{Beginning in 1971, stations with more than five employees were required to file an annual employment form (Form 395-B) reporting the race and gender of all employees in each of nine job categories, with station employment practices evaluated during license renewal. In the decade following, employment of minorities in U.S. commercial television stations rose from 9 percent to 16 percent of all jobs, and from 6 percent to 14 percent of “Top 4” positions. Research suggested, however, that much of the change was “window dressing,” with minorities and women reclassified into Top 4 positions but without real decision-making authority. (Hollifield and Kimbro 2010: 231)}
\]

Newspaper hiring data published in a study by the Pew Research Center in 2013 stated that, overall, minority journalists accounted for 12 percent of the total newspaper newsroom workforce in 2012. Smaller newspapers were less likely to employ minority journalists and women were often underrepresented in newspaper newsrooms. The study concluded that in the past two decades, there has been little overall change in the percentage of minorities in the newsroom. Subsequently, on a positive note, the number of minority journalists in daily newspaper newsrooms increased by a couple of hundred in 2013 even as newsroom employment declined by 3.2 percent, according to the annual census released in 2014 by the American Society of News Editors and the Center for Advanced Social Research.
ASNE’s 2014 census also found that 63 percent of the news organizations surveyed have at least one woman among their top three editors. The percentage of minority leaders is lower, with 15 percent of participating organizations saying at least one of their top three editors was a person of color. This was the first year the questions about women and minorities in leadership were asked. Overall, the survey found that there were about 36,700 full-time daily newspaper journalists at nearly 1,400 newspapers in the United States. That’s a 1,300-person decrease from 38,000 in 2012. Of those employees, about 4,900, or 13.34 percent, are racial and ethnic minorities. That’s up about 200 people, or one percentage point, from the previous year’s 4,700 and 12.37 percent. It is nearly as high as the record of 13.73 percent in 2006. The percentage of minority journalists has remained between 12 and 14 percent for more than a decade. In 1978, when ASNE launched its Newsroom Employment Census of professional full-time journalists, only 3.95 percent were minorities (Minorities in newsrooms increase, 2014).

The table below illustrates the divide between white and minority workers in the newspaper industry by job category in 2014.

The table below shows the racial makeup of newspaper workers in 2013. As noted, supervisory or leadership positions decreased between 2013 and 2014.

The vast divide between the numbers of whites compared to minorities in the newsroom has been a point of contention for media scholars and practitioners for years.

### Table 12.1 Whites and minorities by job category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2014</th>
<th>Total Work Force</th>
<th>Minorities</th>
<th>Whites</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors</td>
<td>8,991</td>
<td>1,015</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7,976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporters/Writers/Bloggers</td>
<td>16,743</td>
<td>2,231</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy Editors</td>
<td>4,722</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4,144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producers/Designers</td>
<td>3,043</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographers/Artists/Videographers</td>
<td>3,223</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2,673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>36,722</td>
<td>4,887</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31,835</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table 12.2 Whites and minorities by job category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2013</th>
<th>Total Work Force</th>
<th>Minorities</th>
<th>Whites</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors</td>
<td>9,087</td>
<td>943</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8,144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporters/Writers/Bloggers</td>
<td>17,422</td>
<td>2,199</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15,223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy Editors</td>
<td>4,778</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4,272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producers/Designers</td>
<td>3,202</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2,709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographers/Artists/Videographers</td>
<td>3,493</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2,920</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>37,982</td>
<td>4,715</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33,267</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2010, Dori J. Maynard, president of the Robert C. Maynard Institute for Journalism Education and an expert on the subject of newsroom diversity, stated in *Editor and Publisher*:

> At this point the industry and the country are going in two different directions. The industry is getting whiter while the country is getting browner. As legacy media struggles to remain relevant, it’s imperative that we step up our efforts to ensure that all news organizations have the staffing culturally competent to accurately and fairly reflect all segments of our society.

(12)

According to Jenkins (2012), the idea of diversifying newsrooms and covering complex issues with more diverse perspective and insight has been an objective of American media for almost half a century. This aspect of the news organization has a theoretical basis and implications. First, the notion of a more complex or inclusive media stems from this institution’s historical tendency to portray African Americans and other marginalized groups as either inferior to the dominant class in society or to not include their perspectives at all. Second, journalists determine the approach to the coverage of news events and issues in the media, and the way they frame their stories affects how readers and viewers comprehend those events and issues. Framing provides a way to make sense of relevant events and dramatically shapes the way issues are viewed. And, since “framing” can be influenced by a journalist’s personal values in addition to ideological constraints imposed on the medium (Kraeplin 2008), cultural background is a relevant predictor of news value judgment and source selection that journalists make each day.

Most industry leaders today acknowledge the media’s shortcomings in covering minority communities, issues of race and racism, and ideological and political divides between racial and ethnic groups. Research suggests that mass media can contribute to sustaining and even strengthening prejudicial attitudes through different forms of bias, stereotypes, and frames (Jenkins and Cole 2012). The obvious aspects of cultural influence and differences affect interpretations of media frames in a way that media scholars have highlighted in varying degrees. In particular, the treatment of race and issues of racism when covered by the media reveals intrinsic attitudes of media professionals that are inherent in societal ideologies. Journalists all have their own personal identities that can become a part of how or what they write. This can be troubling as research suggests that a person’s own ideology and previously held beliefs can be the strongest factor for negative racial attitudes (Gans 1979).

Moreover, racial identity is a frame that one uses to categorize another person, typically based on skin color; it seems most often to be a frame in which individuals identify consciously or unconsciously with those with whom they feel a common bond because of similar traditions, behaviors, values, and beliefs (Ott 1989). The subtle framing of news stories using racial cues can have a great impact on the representation of a given race. And, as racial framing found its way into media coverage of controversial stories like the Trayvon Martin tragedy, the 2014 shooting of Michael Brown by Officer Darrin Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri, and the 2015 death of Baltimore resident Freddie Gray at the hands of the Baltimore City Police, it becomes central in the argument for a more nuanced discussion about the inclusion of more minorities with views reflective of their own identities and cultures in mainstream newsrooms.

Dolan (2011) argues that American mainstream journalism “consistently serves white racial interests and the racial status quo despite its push for diversity and improvement
in the coverage of nonwhite communities” (31). The study reexamined the relationship
between white journalists’ self-identity and self-understanding and their journalistic iden-
tifications. The researcher interviewed 60 white mainstream journalists to evaluate how
the way they see themselves (as neutral, fair, and above politics) affects the stories they
choose to tell (or not), as well as the way those identifications keep them from seeing their
news choices as the result of their racial, class, sexual, or gender interests, among others.
This is a departure from other works in critical journalism studies that have focused more
on what journalists think of others and how that affects the journalism they produce

The majority of the respondents interviewed saw being white as inconsequential,
which led Dolan to theorize that they were unlikely to see themselves as members of
a “racial interest group.” The researcher considered this finding problematic in relation
to how the reporters covered news concerning race and other sensitive topics. Dolan’s
study found,

When asked how they try to be fair and avoid bias, many journalists said they do
their best to recognize their biases and then account for them or put them aside
while reporting and editing stories. But not knowing—and often never even
considering—what it means to be white can lead to white journalists believing
they are more neutral when evaluating whether race is an element of story—or
the degree to which it’s an element of a story—because they have no racial
interests to put aside. They may expect nonwhites to put their racial interests
aside—or at the very least not let them have an undue influence in making news
judgments—and may suspect nonwhite journalists of “having an agenda,” being
“ideological,” or being “overly sensitive” when arguing race is an element in a
story or raising concerns about news coverage.

Dolan concluded that the tendency of whites not to think about whiteness, or about
norms, behaviors, experiences, or perspectives that are white-specific, can lead to news
judgments that unintentionally reinforce white incumbency, such as missing or avoid-
ing racial aspects of various stories. Although journalists demonstrate a number of often
contradictory identifications and self-understandings about themselves and their work,
such as commitments to diversity and not taking sides, these conflicts are almost always
resolved in favor of the racial status quo. Further, it is not only important to study the
structures of journalistic conventions and practices, but also “the cultural factors (jour-
nalistic identifications, color-blind discourses, professionalism, Enlightenment ideals) that
maintain allegiances to those structures even as they are routinely criticized from all
directions and their usefulness and viability are questioned as the business models for
mainstream news media continue to collapse” (4).

This argument further illustrates the notion that personal beliefs and values are reflected
in the way stories are told by journalists and the types of stories that are actually being
told. It also substantiates the need not only for journalism with multiple points of view,
but also for journalism with structures and procedures that can adequately accommo-
date those views. According to Deggans (2012), greater diversity in the media equals
greater accuracy and fairness, and U.S. history is filled with stories journalists got wrong
because they excluded the perspectives of anyone who wasn’t a white male. Further, he
argues that a diverse newsroom better reflects the population, which enables fairer, more
accurate, or incisive reporting. These tenets of journalism have helped to maintain the integrity of this constitutionally protected estate and are integral components of the formal structure of journalism that are considered norms of the craft.

Most media scholars argue that a diversified newsroom will improve media coverage of minority communities and issues, but others think that the power of journalistic norms will constrain minority journalists so they will be unable or unwilling to enhance the news coverage of minorities. According to Nishikawa et al. (2009), through training, journalists are taught to adhere to universally recognized “newsgathering norms.” Scholars have identified and critiqued the norms of objectivity, accuracy, balance, and fairness because these norms limit what journalists deem as news and influence how that news is presented.

The Nishikawa study found that objective and fair reporting demands that journalists report two sides of an issue regardless of the nature or complexity of the issue. This can be problematic as research has shown that when the press covers complex topics that involve issues of race, ethnicity, and culture in general, taking an interpretive approach to news coverage can provide “a more truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day’s events in a context which gives them meaning” (Davies 2005: 208), compared to a more objective approach. The benefits of news being reported and interpreted for clarity, value, and cultural significance may be a more useful need of journalism than just repeating facts that have no intrinsic meaning or value to everyday citizens.

Further, mainstream journalists consistently rely on authoritative sources, particularly political and government leaders, rather than non-official or dissident voices. Nishikawa et al. (2009) concluded that “this dependency on official sources leads to the exclusion and marginalization of minority voices, hindering democracy as a result” (3).

As a result, mainstream news organizations may seek to hire minority journalists, but, through the routine use of journalistic norms, minority journalists are expected to “act” like traditional journalists, not like minorities. As the study observes:

Minority journalists are forced to back away from their racial identity and lived experiences and conform to the professional norms and values of the organization and the individuals who hired them. This results in an “illusion of inclusion” in the mainstream newsroom. That is, “true diversity” becomes an illusion as minority journalists find themselves marginalized in newsrooms, encouraged only to report stories that reinforce white stereotypes or further a one-sided political agenda. As a result, a diverse newsroom does not always equal better coverage of minorities and stronger readership from a multicultural community.

Deggans (2012) also argues that there are potential problems journalists may face when adhering to the traditional norms of journalism, especially when covering issues of race. He does suggest, however, that ethical decision-making be at the core of any successful strategy for media diversity and that “real success in covering race comes when perspectives are tempered by a clear strategy for preserving fairness and accuracy.” The issue, he says, is that the coverage of such sensitive topics often falls into four categories:

Reflex – We cover issues a certain way because we’ve always done it that way. Trusting police reports too much or failing to see the news in a teenager killed could be a result.
Fear – We fear being criticized for injecting race into a story, particularly if it isn’t the central issue.

Lack of history – We don’t understand the community we’re covering and their specific issues. Black resident in Sanford (Florida) had specific gripes about how police treated them that many national media outlets didn’t discuss (when covering the Trayvon Martin tragedy).

Avoidance – When a newsroom is diverse, sometimes staffers of color are expected to provide the bulk of coverage on issues relating to race. That’s not fair to the staffers or to the community, which deserves news outlets where every journalist is attentive to such stories and issues.

While traditional media continue to grapple with the complexities of creating a more diverse and inclusive media, particularly with questionable results when reporting on issues of race, many subjective and alternative sources of news continue to provide space for more critical reporting and dialogue. “Ethnic media” often fill that gap for people of color. For instance, many black Americans have often found issues that affect their community to be more prominently featured and critically reported and discussed in the black press. Jenkins (2011) says that, historically, black newspapers have filled in the gaps on discussions about race that need context and perspective to be useful in decision-making. And although some minority columnists at mainstream papers have attempted to tackle such a complex topic, particularly when mainstream America is directly affected, these newspapers have fared worse in covering the issues that affect minorities in this country and this is mainly because of the lack of diversity in newsrooms and the professional norms of the journalists themselves.

Moody et al. (2008) asserted that black and mainstream newspaper content normally differ due to the varied missions addressed by the two newspaper types: “Mainstream media aims to serve the general population, while the black press targets the black community. In addition, black press newspapers often cover specific issues important to the black community from a black perspective that is often overlooked by the mainstream media” (6). Additionally, Ratzlaff and Iorio (1994) found that while both newspaper types often focused on the same issues, they did not use the same frames. Their study also found that positions advocated by the black and mainstream newspapers tended to follow party lines, with the mission statements of the individual newspapers serving as a key factor that influenced how journalists framed those issues.

Deggans (2012) used the example of how the Trayvon Martin tragedy was covered by mainstream media to point out problems with the reporting of a story clouded with racial overtones. His analysis of the coverage suggests that initial mainstream news reports left out important aspects of the case that would have directly connected it to more racialized themes that ultimately affected the black community. Laying out his points chronologically, Deggans stated:

One of the first reports on the shooting, an 86-word piece printed in the Orlando Sentinel Feb. 27, noted simply that “two men were arguing before shots were fired.” The next day, the newspaper published another 152-word story naming Martin, citing his age and noting his Facebook page listed Miami as his hometown, quoting a local TV station’s report that there had been a fistfight before the shooting. But the newspaper didn’t name Zimmerman, it wrote, “because he has not been charged.”
By March 2, the Miami Herald had published a report noting erroneously that Martin was shot dead at a convenience store, quoting the teen’s uncle. It did name Zimmerman, but understated the 28-year-old’s age by three years. None of these stories, however, had the detail which would turn Martin’s case into an international media tsunami: Martin was black and the shooter who killed him was not.

Race was the engine which turned Trayvon Martin’s death into the first story to briefly eclipse the presidential race in coverage during 2012; sparking “million hoodie” marches across the country . . . and eventually costing Sanford police chief Bill Lee his job.

With the race difference, police reticence to arrest Zimmerman took on a new light, raising fears of a Southern town’s good ol’ boy network in action.

And journalists had an angle which could elevate the unfortunate shooting of a young boy into a story with implications about racial profiling, small town justice and the struggle for a working class, black family to get fair treatment from a mostly white police force and criminal justice system.

The black press in both online and print formats used the Martin tragedy to highlight systemic issues of racial profiling and the criminalization of young African Americans, particularly African-American men. The controversial story, as Tracy Powell (2012) pointed out in an article published on the Poynter Institute’s media wire, “galvanized the black press and its audience.” The story also ushered in new guards of black media, with online news sites and bloggers sprouting up to provide much-needed insight and perspective to coincide with the more traditional reporting of the mainstream media.

Jeff John Roberts (2012), a writer for the African-American news site theGrio, stated that the site helped drive major network NBC’s coverage of the Trayvon Martin tragedy. Roberts wrote,

Since its first piece on March 8 (2012), theGrio has published more than 250 stories on Martin and many of its videos have landed on shows like the “Today” show and “NBC Nightly News.” theGrio’s success reflects the rise of a new generation of African American news as well as a new symbiosis between niche and mainstream media outlets.

Powell (2012) says that the black press has the freedom to stay on top of stories like Trayvon Martin’s, even when other news happens, a freedom that may not exist at other types of publications. Powell’s piece quoted Nisa Muhammad, chairwoman of the National Association of Black Journalists’ Black Press Task Force and staff writer for The Final Call newspaper, who observed,

Black audiences, in particular, are not going to get everything they need to know about this story from the mainstream media. Passion and commitment to the story to the end is what readers get from the black press. We’re going to stay on this story until justice is done.

The limitations present in mainstream media to adequately serve communities of color have pushed more journalists from that community to create alternative modes of...
disseminating news information deemed significant to them. The black press has traditionally been known to take a more interpretive and sometimes subjective approach when reporting on events that affect African Americans; subsequently, the nuance that has been achieved from this type of journalism seems to transition well into the digital age in which the media now exists. A great lesson from the Trayvon Martin coverage is that black websites and bloggers helped bring attention to a story that almost never saw the front pages of the American mainstream press. Powell (2012) stated about the coverage:

While mainstream publications debate whether the hoodie Martin wore led to his death or whether racism played a role in his killing, black publications see an opportunity to fulfill a greater mission. They are also more focused on the specifics of Martin’s case than more mainstream news organizations. For the black press and its audience: They recognized this story as an opportunity to say that sometimes there is a suspicion that the institutions in society don’t work for people of color the way they work for white people. The central concern here was maybe the police and prosecutors who were initially involved didn’t do as thorough a job as they should have.

Washington Post editor Milton Coleman (2011) has observed that nearly half a century after rioters in Los Angeles took to the streets to protest racial and economic injustice in the US, the entire notion of newsroom diversity is up for grabs, starting with what the words mean in the digitized and fragmented environment that is journalism today. He argues that most mainstream media outlets see the issue of newsroom diversity close to, if not completely, settled. Coleman argues that this sentiment exists even though data show that the number of minority journalists who can help provide a more comprehensive account of the day’s news is still woefully low:

Diversity fatigue has been alive and well in America’s news industry for many years. Even before ASNE started to experience a steady decline in its membership, the diversity sessions at its annual convention were sparsely attended. In the minds of some people, diversity had gone far enough. They viewed it as an unaffordable luxury during a time of financial difficulties that signaled the need to hold on to high-value customers and newsroom employees, most of whom were white.

The measured steps mainstream journalism has taken to increase diversity in its newsrooms have not been lost upon young journalists who are completely comfortable with the online and digital platforms news outlets must now use. Many are taking advantage of the more autonomous method of media production to create their own mode of message dissemination.

According to Hayes (2012), reporters like Danielle C. Belton represent a new breed of journalists-turned-entrepreneurs who are carving out their own niches after working in the old paradigm of print media. Belton is a former newspaper reporter and columnist for the Bakersfield California and launched her own blog in 2007 after leaving the newspaper. She told Hayes:
Daily newspapers are struggling, so it’s not shocking that there is a decline. Whenever things get narrow, newspapers are not as open to diversity. The reality is that you don’t make a lot of money starting out in the middle of nowhere, in small towns and the rural South. It’s harder to be a minority uprooted from your community and thrust into a sink-or-swim situation.

Belton has proven that there are alternatives to a traditional career in print journalism. Hayes (2012) stated that with two million readers in less than two years, Belton’s satirical look at politics in her blog *The Black Snob* has earned recognition on CNN, *The Daily Beast*, ABC’s *Good Morning America* and *Nightline*, and in *Time* magazine, the *New York Times*, and the UK’s *The Observer*. She also appeared on NPR’s “Tell Me More” with Michel Martin and PBS’s “To The Contrary” with Bonnie Erbe. As Hayes writes,

As the new reality continues for newspapers, some minority reporters are re-emerging by creating their own voice and filling voids that have not been captured through traditional news media. They represent a paradigm shift that may not be easily captured in media surveys and they are deciding how and in what capacity they will participate in the news arena.

Roberts (2012) stated that the emergence of these outlets shows that African-American media is sharing a similar experience to news media overall—one in which “digital natives” are best poised to succeed and the new guards in black media are being made online.

**Concluding Thoughts**

Minority groups have historically found alternative ways to have their voices heard when faced with little to no inclusion in mainstream media outlets. And although those alternative methods have had major impacts on message dissemination in this country, they are still homogenous in nature and only serve to address the unique needs and concerns of one particular group. Media outlets that purport to serve an entire democratic society cannot afford such homogeneity. As columnist Riva Gold wrote in a 2013 article for *The Atlantic*, that standard “can lead to news coverage that is incomplete, tone-deaf, or biased.” The troubling trend in mainstream media is that it is less inclusive of voices outside of dominant power structures in society. With over 30,000 journalists covering the news in American mainstream media, the industry continues to fail in its efforts to diversify its newsrooms with fewer minorities getting the opportunity to work in news, and news organizations suffering in their ability to report on minority populations in their community.

Moreover, with the newspaper industry in particular losing thousands of positions over the past decade, the media business can no longer afford not to cater to the needs of the society it actually serves. As such, the industry must be more responsive to diverse audiences and advertisers. Additionally, the limitations are not specific to the coverage or inclusion of one particular ethnic or racial group in America. In addition to reports on diversity mentioned earlier from ASNE, data from the Radio Television Digital News Association (2014) show that minority groups only accounted for 22.4 percent of television journalists and 13 percent of radio journalists. African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans were the groups included in the overall count of minority workers.
That means the numbers are collectively low across minority groups who together make up 37.9 percent of the U.S. population, according to 2015 census data.

Finally, as noted in research conducted by Vercellotti and Brewer (2006), many minorities often combine their consumption of mainstream news with alternative forms of media to get a more thorough and inclusive view of important events in society. This is indicative of a subpar effort by mainstream media to incorporate more diverse perspectives and voices in its news content and may also influence the rise in the popularity of alternative news media in this country. The issue has not been lost on many industry leaders. After recent reports from ASNE indicated continued misses in newsroom diversity, Karen Magnuson, editor of the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle and co-chair of the ASNE Diversifying the News Committee, stated:

The fact that our industry isn’t making progress continues to be frustrating. As the makeup of our nation changes, our news reports must change, as well. Our newsrooms and coverage must be inclusive to tell the real story of what is really happening in our communities. How can we do that well if our newsrooms lack diverse voices and perspectives? We editors can and should do better.

(Quoted in Hebbard 2015)

References


Further Reading


