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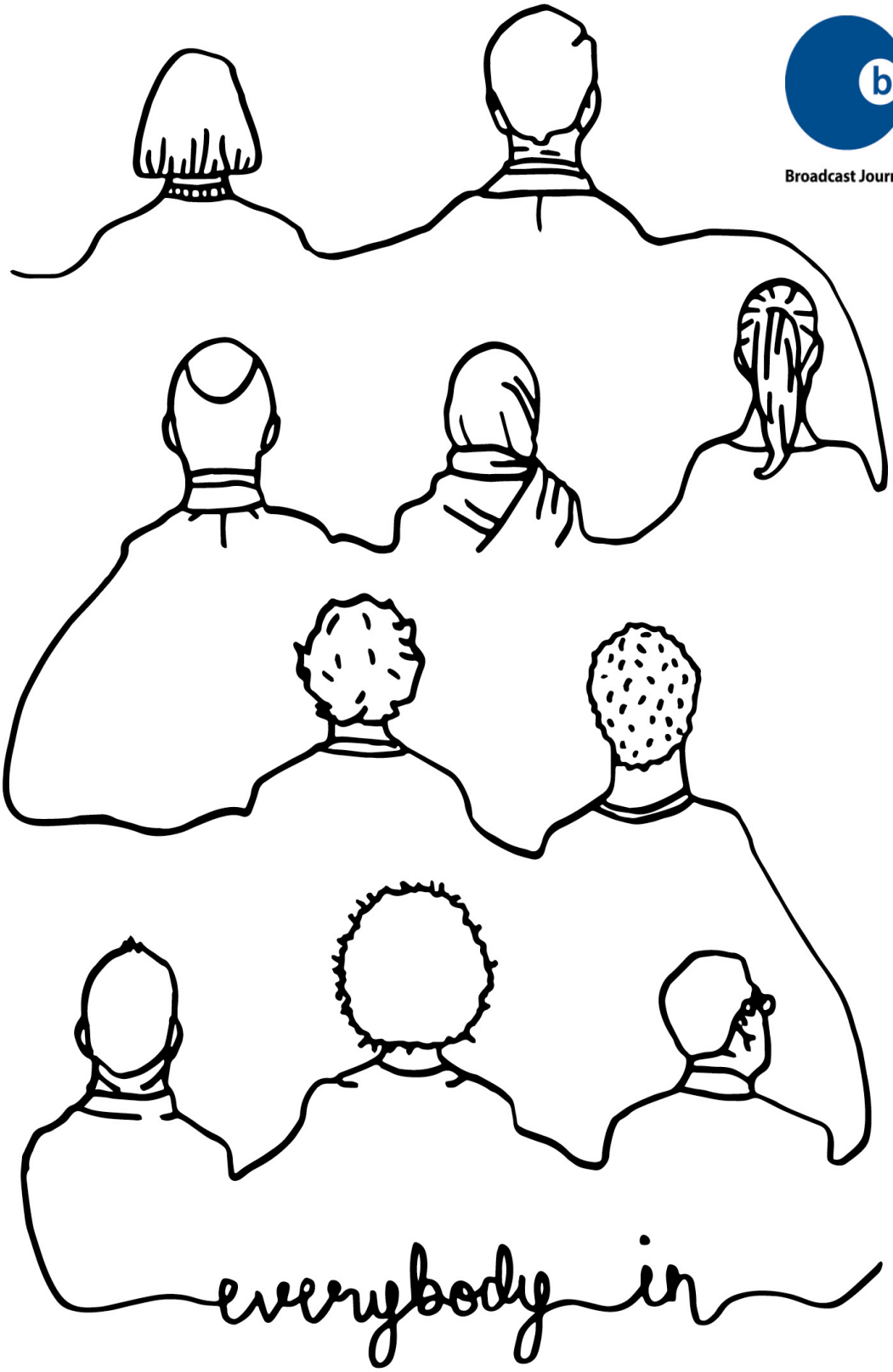

A journalist's guide to inclusive reporting for journalism students

Bob Calver, Professor Diane Kemp, Marcus Ryder

Everybody In: A Journalist's Guide To Inclusive Reporting For Journalism Students

Bob Calver, Diane Kemp, Marcus Ryder and supported by Birmingham City University School of Media

This book is for sale at http://leanpub.com/everybodyinbook

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Introduction

It is a dispiriting fact that our profession remains unrepresentative of the UK population. We're still overwhelmingly male, white and from mid to upper class backgrounds (1)

This is a real problem for us in terms of doing our job properly. With the best will in the world, it's hard seeing the relevance of some stories, getting particular contacts and avoiding unintended stereotypes if we work in monocultural newsrooms. It becomes unenviably easy to fall prey to 'group think' (2)

So this ebook is an attempt to help us, as student journalists and trainers, from falling into some of those traps.

If we just talk about diversity we can fall into 'doing diversity' stories. These, as any story, should be part of what we cover, but a better approach surely is to seek to be inclusive in all our news coverage: to reflect the interest and voices of our audience, wherever we are based. Any town, city or region offers us a diverse audience. That diversity might be in terms of social class, economic status, gender and age as much as religion, ethnicity or disability. So in this ebook we are looking to question our attitudes and assumptions about a range of issues and then offer some ideas for embedding a wider world view into that staple for BJTC courses, newsdays.

We wanted to make this a practical guide for our vocational students who're already packing a lot into each day on the course. So the sections are short and written by current and former journalists to show the relevance of these issues to their working lives. We asked them to write a short opinion piece on a topic which affects them, personally or through professional interest. These form the starting points for a discussion in class, to be followed up by working through some of the suggestions in the 'everybody in' section; developing contacts and doing newsdays from a different angle.

As some of our employers are keen to introduce their newsrooms to an understanding of 'unconscious bias' we've started this ebook with that topic, so individuals can do a quick audit to have a sense of where their, and our, own biases lie.

This isn't by any means being presented as a definitive publication. We are looking forward to updating and expanding the subject sections and we'd also like to include more ideas for greater inclusion in newsdays. So please get in touch and share your own practice and suggestions for supporting journalism to include 'everybody in'.

Bob Calver Diane Kemp Marcus Ryder

(1) www.suttontrust.com
www.theguardian.com

(2) Janis, Irving L. (1972). Victims of Groupthink. New York: Houghton Mifflin

Unconscious Bias

Robin Britton, Head of News at ITV News Meridian, made a presentation Unconscious Bias the main event of the **ITV News Diversity Conference** in 2015. He had seen the presentation at another diversity event and was so impressed with the message it conveyed that he took the decision to make it the keynote session of ITV News' annual conference.

"The ITV News Diversity Conference is attended by more than 80 senior colleagues from across ITV News, Good Morning Britain, our nations and regions newsrooms from around the country and our online ITV News team. The session grabbed the audience from the start. Most of the room hadn't heard of unconscious bias - but very quickly it gave everyone in the room an incredible insight into the behaviour we all adopt - unintentionally - as we grow up and from the range of influences around us, in the home and outside of it."

"All newsrooms know that if an effort isn't made to be consciously unbiased then those making the decisions that set the news agenda or are involved in recruitment, can fall into a pattern of behaviour that replicates what we have always done, meaning we interview the same people as experts or invite them to be contributors, and by doing so run the risk of not reflecting change across society - our audiences - so we can become less engaging and less relevant."

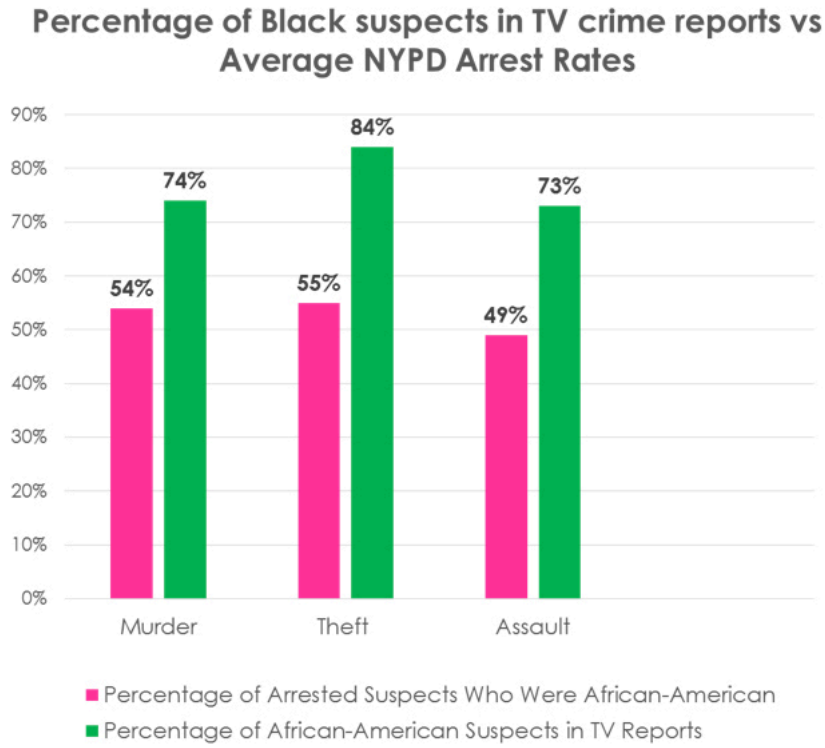
The presentation Robin referred to was by Femi Otitoju who's written this introduction to Unconscious Bias for 'Everybody In'.

Check your bias!

As a diversity consultant I have always worked to encourage people to dump phrases like, "I don't see skin colour; I just see people" or "I treat everyone the same." I know that most of us would like to believe these things about ourselves but the first statement is not true and the second, even if it were true is undesirable. Experiments have shown that the brain categorises people by race in less than 100 milliseconds, about 50 milliseconds before determining sex and once we have noticed the differences we often have a very real physiological response.

The fact is our unconscious biases affect all of us all the time. Unconscious biases are the default associations that we make about people on the basis of their individual attributes or circumstances. These associations are mostly shaped by our previous experiences with people like them or the messages we have received from all sorts of sources including – yes, broadcast news. They shape our thinking and affect which stories we choose to tell, who we decide to interview and even who we choose to work with.

The impact is often stark; research conducted by The Colour of Change 2015 found that there was a distorted representation of black people as perpetrators of crime when compared to NYPD statistics. The bias is evident, but I would bet large amounts of money that if you asked any of the journalists or editors responsible for writing or selecting those crime reports none of them would willingly admit that racial bias affected their decisions.



More recently, as demonstrated in reports following the horrific mass shooting of 50 LGBTQ revellers at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, the rush to name Islam by mainstream media as the motivation behind gunman Oman Madeen's killing spree has meant many journalists have missed one of the most reliable indicators of a propensity for mass murder – – a history of domestic abuse.

You can learn about your unconscious biases by taking an implicit association test at implicit.harvard.edu It was displeasure with my own implicit association test results that made me want to explore ways of minimising unconscious bias, in the hope of getting rid of some of mine altogether. It was also the beginning of my work on unconscious bias that I have been using in diversity training with a diverse range of organisations across the country to ensure that unconscious bias does not affect recruitment and …. while total eradication is unlikely, the evidence is for example, that working closely with people different from ourselves can help to override biases.

If you are resolving to check out your unconscious bias right now, allow me to offer two pieces of advice, 1. Do it on your own, when you have a bit of space as the test will not give you a result if you get distracted and take too long to complete it. 2. Don't tell anyone you are doing an unconscious bias test, then, if you don't like the results, you can start working on aspects which need some attention with no pressure.'

www.challcon.com (@challcon)

by Femi Otitoju

Femi Otitoju is the founder and Training Director of Challenge Consultancy. She and her team have designed and delivered unconscious bias training course for numerous broadcast media organisations including The BBC, ITN and ITV.

1. Class

The Journalist's view:

Class Act……

It was a depressingly all-too familiar scene. The same old do-gooders hunkered down in the trenches sparring about diversity in the media.

Then it suddenly got exciting. "What about class," piped up someone clearly bored. "Do you mean working class?" came the incredulous retort. "We don't talk about class anymore – it's social mobility", chipped in the smart one. "What the hell does that mean?" we all sneered.

And what the hell does it mean? That's the crux of the issue. What is class these days?

And even more perplexing how do you measure it?

Those same "right-on" diversity die-hards tried to determine how you would ascertain if someone was working class.

"Would they know how to use a knife and fork?" Stifled snigger…..

"Do they shop in Argos?" More of a chortle……

"Would they go up in flames because they wear too much crimplene (crimplene!) and man-made fibres." Unrestrained hysterics….

Now remember these were the flag-waving diversity champions. But it was ok to insult the working class in a way you wouldn't dream of ridiculing others.

That was about eight years ago. Sadly, I don't think we've progressed that far.

However, social mobility is mobile; it's higher up the agenda.

There have been some well-meaning attempts to measure the class or background of new entrants trying to break into our industry. They are asked questions such as "Did you have free school meals?" "Was your family on benefits?"

If you asked my proudly working class mum if she'd ever taken a penny in benefits or fed her children free school meals you'd get a working class earful!

My Dad was a builder and then retrained to be a social worker. My mum was a dinner lady and cleaner. And still is in her 70s. We holidayed at Pontins (maybe that would be a more accurate measure!) And we were brought up on a council estate. (But Mum, a single mother, worked hard enough to buy our house.)

I didn't go to uni. I was desperate to start work – I'd always wanted to be a journalist. I started in local newspapers with the three year NCTJ - I suppose the apprenticeship of its day. I got my break in TV working on That's Life with Esther on her major campaigns. I suspect I got the job because I was a "wonderful piece of rough" who could bluff her way undercover into the blue collar jobs. I was different. I celebrated and exploited my difference.

Problem is 30 years on, I'm still different. The only chav in the village!

But it's no joke. Breaking into our wonderful, vibrant industry has never been harder. It's **still** those with the contacts who make it. **Still** those who can blag the work experience. **Still** those with mates in London where there is always a spare room. **Still** those who can afford to pass their driving test. **And still** those who can go months living off the Bank of Mum and Dad doing unpaid internship after unpaid internship.

Why is class such an important part of the diversity debate? Because we are missing voices. Missing critical stories. Missing killer new shows.

We need all perspectives on our hospitals, immigration, consumer affairs.

We must open the invite to all.

Trust me the working classes do have bookshelves as well as mega TVs. We do know the difference between salad cream and mayo. And we won't go up in flames. Promise.

We don't need daft and offensive questions. We are immensely proud of our working class backgrounds. We love telling our stories. But maybe for some it doesn't feel safe to reveal our upbringing in case we don't get membership to the exclusive club.

So when you're casting, looking for stories, experts and contributors, cast your net wide. Challenge assumptions. You will reach the widest audience by listening and speaking to the widest audience. Diversity – in all its forms – is your day job. And it is your job. It's not optional and it's not an add-on.

Listen to the working class, seek them out – on air and in your teams. They will tell you their stories and they will work really hard. The clue is in the label.....

by Donna Taberer

Donna Taberer started in local print and spent more than 20 years at the BBC. She's been a commissioner at Sky and Channel 5 and worked with more than 100 indies. Donna rose up the ranks from researcher to Exec Producer and ran many key brands including Watchdog and Crimewatch, going on to hold senior managerial roles at the BBC.

Donna is now a Consultant and Training and Events Specialist.

‘Ordinary’ people

I don’t want to hear from press officers, spokespeople and MPs when covering a breaking news story. Yes they have their uses and can fill graphic scripts and give you a quick and easy soundbite. But what about the people involved? Who was there? Who saw the event? Why could it have happened? These answers won’t come from a press release. They will come from the people on the ground “Real people” and when scrambling with the pack to cover a news story, these people are often harder to find before the news bulletin and when people are too busy delivering live broadcasts with lines that everyone has – are not found at all. You will never find me with the press pack who descend en masse to cover breaking news stories. You will find me knocking every door on that street, getting information first hand and going on from there. I will leave the local spokesperson and the “community voice” to someone else. I want to speak to the subject of the story’s family, if that’s too raw, extended family, if that’s too raw, neighbours, colleagues, people who knew them, recently.

I worked for nearly 10 years at ITV News working from the newsdesk up to UK Producer, working on some of the highest profile stories of the last decade. From the hacking scandal, Woolwich terrorist attacks to the effect of ISIS in the UK I have witnessed journalists arriving at an “estate” or with hostile communities – and they stop dead in their tracks, or have to knock doors together which is the biggest turn off to people when they answer the door.

It’s the quiet conversation with the neighbour, or the person at the end of the street, or the next street over. Gleaning information in this way is so important and first hand information is key. This is where you get all of the background, pictures, video and so on that go beyond a police press release.

This is how I have beaten the opposition working on breaking news, during my time working on Home Affairs which is one of the most picture-challenged and difficult briefs where no one wants to talk to you – I have often won by being the person who goes back a few days later after the press pack has gone and the national media don’t care about the story until the next diarised update.

I have planned my door knocking strategically around when people might be in, when they are most likely not to be annoyed, I use local information to find out the sensitivities around my door knocks.

I have won 4 RTS awards and been part of a team who won a BAFTA for home news coverage, I sometimes look back on it and wonder how I got here, from being a girl from Cov, with Indian Heritage.

What I say to future generations is never be afraid of where you are from. If you have the qualities to communicate with people from all backgrounds, from any location in the UK, you will go far, not everyone in the journalism game can do that, and that in itself is depressing, but for people like me it has become my biggest power.

by Sandi Sidhu

Until March 2016, Sandi was a Producer for ITV News working with the UK Bureau on home affairs stories, having been a Desk Producer before that. In two years her team won three RTS awards and a BAFTA for Woolwich Coverage and Home News.

Sandi is currently freelancing as a TV News Field Producer based in Hong Kong.

Problem of privilege

It may already seem like distant political history, but it was one of the defining moments of modern British politics. In May 2010 the newly installed Prime Minister David Cameron and Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg stood side by side in the sun-lit rose garden of Number 10. The two politicians exuded all the effortless charm that their exclusive education had equipped them with. Their privileged upbringings (Eton, Oxford and Westminster, Cambridge respectively) however immediately prompted suggestions that their rise to power reflected the country's low social mobility levels and the failure of state schools to produce people who make it to the very top of society.

Yet for me the bigger problem was highlighted when the TV camera lenses momentarily swiveled around towards the audience greeting the leaders of the newly formed Coalition Government. Seated in neat rows were the country's elite ranks of newspaper and broadcast journalists. If you ever wanted a parade of alumni representing all the country's most exclusive private schools then this was it.

Forget fanciful past notions of being a 'trade'; news journalism is a profession of highly privileged elites, dominated by graduates from exclusive universities and prestigious public schools.

We know this because of several studies produced by the Sutton Trust. In 2006 when still a journalist, I authored a study on the educational backgrounds of news journalists. The findings were highly revealing. More than half the UK's top 100 journalists had been educated at private schools, despite these schools making up only 7 per cent of the country's school population. A further 33% went to grammar schools and just 14% to state comprehensives.

The proportion of privately educated journalists had risen since 1986 from 49% to 54%. More than half of those with degrees had been to Oxbridge. The report pointed to a systematic bias towards those from privileged backgrounds at the crucial entry stage into the industry. The problem was that those from richer backgrounds who are based in or near London are simply more likely to cope with the low pay and high insecurity endemic at junior levels. The informal nature of recruitment also led some to suggest that nepotism was often at play.

Tellingly, the report was ignored by many national newspapers: it seemed that journalists were reluctant to shine a light on their own workplace. Subsequent studies in 2012 and 2016 produced similar findings: just over half of today's journalists were privately educated.

Why should all this matter? Well for one it suggests that we are missing out on a huge pool of potential journalistic talent in the 93% of the population not fortunate enough to afford private school fees. It also means that newsrooms are dominated by those from a tiny slice of society: sharing the same backgrounds, experiences and preferences. The crucial decisions about what makes the news are made from this very narrow perspective.

Seven years later on from the rose garden love-in both Cameron and Clegg have been ejected from power, amid accusations that their political elite were increasingly detached from the people they were intended to serve. That's how democracy works. Yet there will be no such rude awakening for the privileged journalists who we entrust with providing us with news that is relevant to the majority of the population outside the Westminster bubble. If anything I fear that the profession will become even more privileged, not less so. And news journalism will be poorer for it.

by Lee Elliot Major

Dr Lee Elliot Major is Chief Executive of the Sutton Trust, the UK's leading foundation improving social mobility through education. He was a former journalist working for the Guardian and the Times Higher Education Supplement. He is currently writing a book on Britain's social mobility problem.

The Newsday – Bringing 'Everybody in'

Look at the demographics for your city/county. Get the facts about the proportion of the population you're considering. Also look at the information about where working people tend to live and work in your area. You could base a newsday in one of those areas, reporting bulletins and producing a current affairs programme for that audience.

If there's a community station or hyperlocal new site set up there already, offer to run a newsday for them.

Travel on public transport (particularly buses) and listen to what people are talking about/what concerns them. How is that reflected in the news prospects meeting? Talk to each other. Make good use of the diversity in your own newsroom/course. What contacts do you have which will broaden the news agenda?

Are all suggestions for news angles given equal weight in morning meetings? Are you making assumptions about what's important based on your background?

Spend a day working up your contacts book to reflect people with concerns, expertise and strong views who come from a different class to you.

Look at the day's news output online, radio or TV. Count the times you hear and see working class people (apart from during vox pops). Of course there are issues here about stereotyping, but begin to become aware of how often the same accents, assumptions etc take centre stage. Does that match with your demographics research?

Actively seek out different sources for news which broaden the range and possibly take you to unfamiliar places.

Double check your own assumptions when speaking to possible interviewees on the phone. Are you equating accent or manner with expertise?