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REWRITING MEDIA NARRATIVES ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Diversity management in media

Professional Learning Suite
For Journalists and Communication Professionals

Section: MEDIA

Module No.11

by: Novi Sad School of Journalism

Table of Contents

01 Why this subject matters

02 Learning Outcomes

03 Definitions

04 How newsroom composition shapes GBV coverage

05 Commonmedia mistakes

06 How to apply inclusive practices in the newsroom

07 What good practice looks like

08 Case study

09 Practical exercises and Checklist

10 Resources

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1. Why this subject matter

Diversity management inside a newsroom represents an important aspect of reporting on GBV. A newsroom's internal composition directly shapes how credible and well-informed its external GBV coverage of different communities can be.
Even when diversity is present inside the newsroom, editorial decisions are the crucial step that will translate the diversity into professional and inclusive reporting.

This module will show how newsroom composition, leadership, task distribution, and internal bias could shape the GBV coverage.

2. Learning Outcomes



01

Identify how the composition of a newsroom, recruitment practices, and informal editorial networks shape which GBV stories get covered and how;

02

Apply **inclusive practices** to editorial leadership and the assignment of GBV stories;

03

Recognize **forms** of **internal bias** in hiring, story assignment, and editorial evaluation that affect GBV coverage.

3. Definitions

Diversity management in the newsroom represents a set of practices, through which media organizations ensure that people from diverse backgrounds, with different abilities, sexual orientation, age and gender have equal possibilities for journalistic work, editorial influence and professional advancement. In the context of GBV reporting, it determines whether the newsroom has, among its own staff, the range of knowledge and lived experience needed to cover GBV across different communities.

Inclusion in editorial practice describes the extent to which journalists from different backgrounds can shape coverage. This includes respect to their story proposals and framings, as well as selection of sources.

Internal bias (sometimes called unconscious or implicit bias) refers to the automatic assumptions colleagues make about each other's competence, judgment or "objectivity".

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4. How newsroom composition shapes GBV coverage

Newsrooms with a wider range of backgrounds among reporters and editors tend to identify a wider range of GBV stories worth covering, because story ideas often originate from a journalist's own networks, experiences, and sense of what is newsworthy.

A 2021 World Economic Forum paper on diversity and inclusion in the newsroom argues that without a diverse and inclusive team, a news organization will inevitably miss important angles and perspectives, and that the deliberative process by which stories are chosen and created suffers when those views are absent. The same paper points to research showing that even in local news, the sources journalists contact tend to be wealthier, older, whiter, and more educated than the community at large.

This pattern has direct relevance to GBV reporting, where survivors from outside this profile risk being underrepresented as sources.



5. Common media mistakes

News organizations commonly seek candidates who can quickly adapt to existing newsroom routines, require limited training, and contribute to editorial output from the beginning of their employment. Although this approach can improve efficiency, it may also encourage recruitment patterns that favor familiarity and established professional networks over diversity of backgrounds and experiences.

At the same time, these practices can contribute to the underrepresentation of certain communities and perspectives within the newsroom. Research by the International Women's Media Foundation found that women often approach parity in entry- and mid-level newsroom positions while remaining underrepresented in senior management and decision-making roles.

The Reuters Institute's 2025 analysis similarly found that leadership positions in major news organizations remain substantially less diverse than the societies those organizations serve. This newsroom composition is affecting which issues receive attention and how stories are framed, which could reduce overall quality of reporting.

The most common recruitment and team-building practices that contribute to these outcomes include:

Recruitment criteria often favour candidates from established media outlets and universities, which can disadvantage qualified journalists whose experience comes from community media, freelance work or other less noticeable forms of journalism.

Recruitment processes that rely heavily on professional networks and staff referrals tend to reproduce the existing composition of the newsroom, limiting opportunities for candidates from different social and cultural backgrounds.

Hiring and entry pathways may create barriers for underrepresented groups when selection panels lack diversity or when internships and entry-level positions are unpaid (or poorly paid), reducing access for candidates without independent financial resources.

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6. How to apply inclusive practices in the newsroom

Inclusive editorial leadership presumes making decisions about story selection and assignments according to professional journalistic standards. One way to achieve this is by making editorial processes more transparent.

Reporters should understand how GBV stories are evaluated, what criteria are used when assigning major investigations, and what is required to lead sensitive reporting projects. Journalists with professional or personal familiarity with a particular community can provide valuable context, identify overlooked angles, and help avoid stereotypes.

At the same time, responsibility for reporting on a specific community should not fall exclusively on the few journalists who belong to that group. Editors should periodically review how these opportunities are distributed and whether the same individuals are repeatedly selected for leadership roles.

News organizations that examine whose voices appear in their coverage are often better able to identify recurring gaps and blind spots. As research on newsroom diversity has shown, inclusive editorial practices improve not only internal workplace culture but also the quality, accuracy, and public relevance of journalism.

7.What good practice looks like

Professional news organizations use a range of approaches to strengthen diversity and inclusion within their newsrooms. These efforts may include leadership reforms, transparency measures, editorial policies, workforce monitoring, and accountability mechanisms. While the specific practices vary from one organization to another, they share a common understanding that inclusion requires continuous effort.

The New York Times provides an example of an organization that has approached diversity and inclusion through measurement and accountability. Since 2017, the company has published annual reports on workforce and leadership diversity, allowing both employees and the public to track progress over time.

Following an internal review in 2021, the organization also acknowledged barriers faced by many journalists from underrepresented backgrounds and introduced measures aimed at improving promotion pathways, leadership representation, and workplace culture. This case shows us the importance of regularly assessing whether diversity goals achieve meaningful influence and advancement opportunities.





8. Case study

“The Global Misogyny News Coverage Tracker examined more than one billion online news articles published between 2017 and 2025 and found that coverage of violence against women and girls had fallen to its lowest level in recent years. According to the study, stories on violence against women and girls accounted for only a small proportion of overall news output despite the scale, persistence, and societal impact of the problem.

The finding is particularly striking given the increased public attention to gender-based violence following global movements such as #MeToo. As reported by The Guardian, the analysis suggests that even issues with profound social consequences do not automatically receive sustained journalistic attention simply because they affect large numbers of people (The Guardian, 2026).

Research on newsroom practices offers several explanations for this kind of gap. According to the Journalists for Gender Justice Handbook (2024), reporting on gender-based violence can be shaped by the underrepresentation of women among journalists and editors, which may limit gender-sensitive news judgement and influence how such issues are prioritized and framed. The handbook also notes that many forms of gender-based violence remain underreported because they are normalized, insufficiently recognized as newsworthy, or treated as individual incidents rather than broader social problems.

This demonstrates how editorial priorities influence what becomes visible in public debate. It also suggests that greater diversity in newsroom decision-making can contribute to broader definitions of newsworthiness and reduce the likelihood that issues affecting marginalized or underrepresented groups receive insufficient attention, especially when reporting on cases of violence that are gender related or gender based.

Discussion

- How might newsroom decision-making differ if editorial teams included a wider range of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives?
- What risks arise when news agendas are shaped by a relatively homogeneous group of decision-makers?
- Can you think of examples where greater diversity among journalists or editors might have changed the way a story was selected, framed, or prioritized?



9. Practical Exercises

01
GBV source audit

Object: Select a sample of GBV stories published by your newsroom over a defined period. For each, record the gender, approximate age, ethnicity or background, and role (survivor, expert, official, witness) of each person quoted or featured. Compare the resulting profile against the demographics of the communities affected by the type of GBV covered.

Expected outcome: Learners produce a concrete, evidence-based picture of whose voices currently shape GBV coverage, identify gaps, and discuss what changes to sourcing practices, assignment, or newsroom composition would be needed to address them.



9. Practical Exercises

02

Recruitment review

Object: Take a recent job posting or recruitment process for a reporting or editing role in your newsroom. Identify which qualifications were listed as required, how the vacancy was advertised, and the composition of the hiring panel and shortlist.

Expected outcome: Learners practice identifying points in the recruitment process where the pool of future GBV reporters may be unintentionally narrowed, and propose specific changes to sourcing, criteria, or panel composition.

03

Assignment audit

Object: Review the GBV stories your newsroom has published over the past year. For each, note who reported it, who edited it, and which communities the story concerned. Compare the backgrounds of reporters and editors against the range of communities covered.

Expected outcome: Learners identify whether GBV coverage of certain communities is concentrated among a small number of staff, whether those staff received appropriate credit, and whether any communities are absent both from coverage and from the newsroom itself.

Checklist time!

Before finalizing a hiring decision, story assignment, or editorial process, ask yourself:

- Does the hiring or pitch-evaluation process include people from more than one background or community?
- Who has been covering GBV stories involving specific communities?
- Is editorial feedback on GBV pitches and stories being given according to the same standard across reporters from different backgrounds?
- If a reporter's framing of a story involving their own community is being questioned, is the concern about sourcing and verification, or about an unfamiliar framing?
- When assigning a major GBV investigation, did I consider reporters beyond those who have led similar stories before?

If you answered “no” or “unsure” to any of these, revise the decision or process before finalizing it.

Resources

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