

Reporting Diversity Manual (Extracts)

Extracts taken from:

David Tuller, *Reporting Diversity Manual*

(Media Diversity Institute & Samizdat B92, 2002)



The Media Diversity Institute

MDI: 43-51 Great Titchfield Street, UK
Tel: + +44 (0) 207 2552 473, Fax: +44 (0) 207 5808 597

www.media-diversity.org
info@media-diversity.org



Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| General Tips on Reporting Diversity | 3 |
| Tips on reporting on Ethnicity | 6 |
| Tips on reporting on Gender | 8 |
| Tips on reporting on Religion | 10 |
| Tips on reporting on People with Disabilities | 12 |
| Tips on reporting on Socially Disadvantaged Groups | 14 |
| Tips on reporting on Political Opposition & Dissidents | 16 |



The Media Diversity Institute

General Tips on Reporting Diversity

One of the most important tasks that journalists face is to write about people who are unlike themselves in fundamental ways. Whether a source is of another ethnicity, religious faith, sexual orientation, social class, or economic status, the role of the journalist is often to convey accurately that person's perspective, ideas or worldview—even when the differences are profound.

In areas like South East Europe, where social and ethnic divisions have ripped apart the fabric of numerous communities, achieving that goal can be particularly elusive. It is not, however, impossible. And if journalists wish to facilitate healing and reconciliation within their societies, it is essential that they do their utmost to promote understanding and tolerance—rather than fear and distrust—of difference.

Tips for finding sources

Some strategies relate mainly to specific groups or types of difference. But the following suggestions apply across the board:

- When you write a story about an ethnic, social, religious or other minority, it is extremely important to interview representatives of that group and include their perspectives in the piece. Otherwise, they are the 'objects' of the article rather than the 'subjects'. No article should criticise an entire group of people without offering members of that group an opportunity to present its own point of view and respond to accusations.
- Be careful in your use of words and expressions. Words have a great power to hurt as well as to heal. Careless use of language can increase ethnic and social tensions, even if that is not what you mean to do. Be aware of how members of a minority prefer to be called in the language in which you are writing. Albanians refer to themselves as "Shiptars", for example, but when used in Slavic languages this is considered a derogatory word.
- As you gather material, try to recognise any biases or prejudices you may have. Of course you will have your own opinions, but part of the role of journalism is to question your own and society's preconceived ideas. Many of the beliefs held by one group about another are based not on facts but on stereotypes, although often the stereotypes include an element of truth. For example, some gay men are effeminate (as are some straight men) but most are not.
- Be careful when you use phrases like "as everyone knows" or "it is evident that." This sort of expression is usually the way journalists introduce their own biases or those of their own social group, and whatever it is that "everyone knows" is as likely to be false or based on prejudice as it is to reflect a real understanding of the facts of a particular situation.
- Most situations involving conflicts between social groups are complicated. Both sides generally have legitimate complaints and perspectives, and presenting those perspectives fairly and accurately is an important part of the journalist's role. Try not to present difficult social questions in black-and-white terms.
- Including people of different backgrounds is not just a question of fairness and balance it is important for the media from a business perspective as well. Many media outlets limit their potential audience by presenting only the perspective of a single group. If they make an effort to expand coverage to highlight other communities, they can also expand their audience at the same time.

- Take care to provide some context for the events you are covering. Ethic, religious and other social struggles do not arise out of nothing. Usually there is a long history of conflict, with each side differing widely in its interpretations of the past. Before you can fairly present the material, you must understand what has come before and then you must decide how much of the past you need to include for readers to grasp the essential points.
- Find unusual ways to write about the issues. Spend a whole day with a homeless person, a lesbian or a refugee to understand what their lives are really like. What are their hopes and fears? Do they conform to your stereotypes or not? If a social group objects to the use of a particular word to describe its members, explore the history of that word. What associations and ideas does it communicate when it is used? Why do people object to it? Why do members of another social group continue to use it?
- Cultivate sources in other communities. Find people who are willing to keep you informed about what members of their social groups are thinking about, talking about, worrying about. Make contact with non-governmental organisations that represent these communities and ask them what aspects of their lives have not yet been covered. Ask them to keep in touch with you about political, social, economic and other developments that you might not otherwise hear about.
- Be sceptical. Check facts. You should not accept at face value everything that you hear, whether it comes from a member of your own or another community. Remember that everybody you talk to or interview has a point of view and a particular interest. You need to take their perspective into consideration, but you need to balance it with what you hear from others and what you can observe on your own.
- Do not treat ethnic and other minorities as monolithic. Even though it may look from the outside as if all members of a community have a single perspective, life is never so simple. When one group views another as acting as a solid entity, it can greatly exacerbate tensions by feeding the perception that others are to be feared. Talk to as many people as possible within other social groups and present a range of views in as nuanced and clear a manner as possible.
- Many people have strong negative feelings about different social groups. Just because some authorities, politicians, clerics, and others may use offensive terms and expressions when discussing minorities, this does not mean you are required, as a journalist, to include this sort of insulting language in your material. If necessary, paraphrase their words. If you decide to quote them directly, you should mention that members of the minority being discussed consider such language to be insulting and inflammatory.

Tips on interviewing people from other groups

- Be sensitive and thoughtful. Understand that people who are different from you may be scared about talking to a journalist, even if it is not the first time they have done so. To put them at ease, you might start off the conversation with “small talk”—about their families, their work life, hobbies, and so on. This will help them feel comfortable. It will let them know that you view them as more than just a representative of a minority, that you recognise that they have other aspects of their lives.
- Make sure you understand any conditions they may have placed on the interview. Clarify whether or not they mind having their name used. Or perhaps they do not mind using a first name, but would prefer that you not mention their last name, their town, or other details that might identify them. Accept their requests and do not try to persuade them otherwise.
- If you have a choice of where to interview them, decide on a place where they feel comfortable. It is often best to interview people in their own environment—their apartment or office, for example—

because that is where they feel most relaxed. It also helps you to understand their perspective because you can experience them in their normal surroundings, and they may reveal things they would not in a more formal or unfamiliar setting.

- Let them tell you their story in their own way. If they want to start with what happened five or 10 years ago, let them, even if it seems to you that it is not exactly relevant to what you want to know. Try to schedule enough time with them so you do not have to pressure them to get quickly to the point. People often feel more relaxed about discussing something close to their hearts when they have the freedom to speak at length.
- Write up a list of questions beforehand, but use it as a general guide rather than something you have to stick to strictly. As you ask your questions, you should listen carefully to what they say, so that you are open to other approaches. Be flexible. If you are too attached to your own ideas of what the interview should be about, you may not recognise those moments when your sources mention important but subtle aspects of the problem that you have not been aware of previously.
- No matter how different they are from you, do not preach to them about how they should live their lives. If you approach them with a judgmental attitude, they are likely to sense that immediately and will probably not feel comfortable talking to you or trust you to use the information sensitively. They understand their situation much better than you do – which is why you are interested in interviewing them.
- Try to acknowledge to yourself any biases or prejudices you have about the minority they belong to— and then try to put those ideas aside when interviewing people and preparing your story. If you have a stereotyped perspective of the people you are writing about but do not recognise it, you are likely to demonstrate that bias in both your questions and your writing.
- Remember that your sources are experts. An expert is not just a doctor or scientist. Your sources are experts on their own lives. Do not assume that you know what they will tell you, because then you won't be open for any surprises. You want them to describe their lives and experience to you – and your job is to convey that to your audience.
- At the end of the conversation, ask if they know any other people who might be willing to be interviewed. This can be an important method of finding other sources for this or future articles. Of course, the more sensitive you are while interviewing them, the more likely they are to feel comfortable referring you to someone else.
- Above all, be careful how you use the information. When someone agrees to talk to you, they are doing you a great favour. When you write about them, do so with care and compassion. It is easy to frighten members of your audience when you report about people from a different background by using stereotypes, inflammatory or derogatory language, unverified information, and other biased material. Your role, however, is to help your audience understand other people and empathise with rather than fear them.



Tips on reporting on Ethnicity

Ethnic divisions clearly played a highly destructive role in recent wars and conflicts in Africa, South East Europe and former Soviet countries. While religion and other factors also fuelled tensions, it was the perception of people as “other” due to their ethnicity that generated the most violent and aggressive passions—which, in turn, led to the devastating tragedies of the 1990s.

Unfortunately, journalists and their media organisations have frequently found themselves placed in an extremely delicate and sometimes impossible position. As members of a particular ethnic community, they have found it difficult to maintain a stance of journalistic objectivity, often because of overwhelming political and social pressures. Instead, they have often viewed their role as defenders of the interests of their specific ethnic group rather than as observers seeking to understand the full complexities of the situation at hand.

The coverage has often reflected this bias by painting rival ethnic groups as uniformly bloodthirsty, evil, and completely to blame for the conflict. Journalists have routinely perpetuated negative stereotypes, ignored root social and political causes of the conflicts, made no efforts to interview anyone who does not share the majority point of view, and failed to place events in a context that would encourage a broader understanding.

To help journalists hope to play a role in fostering reconciliation and respect for ethnic differences, here are some critical suggestions:

- Never write a story without interviewing people who have a range of positions on the debate. Any material developed solely from one perspective is inherently biased. If your sources criticise an entire ethnic group, representatives of that group should be offered an opportunity to respond to the charges. Otherwise, the journalist simply becomes a propaganda mouthpiece for one side.
- Pay close attention to your choice of words and expressions. Avoid derogatory phrases commonly used to refer to people of other ethnicities. If you quote people who use such expressions, consider paraphrasing them instead of citing them directly. This can be a sensitive area, because some words may be offensive in one language but not in another, so it is part of your job as a journalist to understand the nuances. If you are not sure whether an expression is considered derogatory, ask the people being talked about how they feel about it.
- Develop sources in ethnic communities other than your own. Call up NGOs (non-governmental organisations) representing their interests and ask to meet with them. Ask them about their concerns, hopes, traditions, and fears. Spend time at cultural and social institutions where they gather—community centres, schools, theatres, wherever—and talk to as many people as you can. Immersing yourself in their milieu, however uncomfortable it may be at first, is the best way to develop a real understanding of their perspective.
- Look inside yourself so you can recognise any prejudices you yourself may have. Everyone has preconceived notions, whether conscious or not, about members of other social groups. While this is completely understandable, the most effective and accurate reporting depends upon the ability to acknowledge these biases and put them aside. That is the only way to really hear what people are telling you about their lives and feelings.
- Make sure you place events and situations in context rather than just focusing on who attacked whom yesterday. Nothing happens out of the blue. When ethnic disputes and conflicts erupt, journalists frequently treat each incident as if it has taken place in isolation. But both sides usually have their own

interpretations of how matters have arrived at the current moment. In order to present material fairly, you should understand this history and include enough background so that the audience recognises the real complexities.

- Talk to people on both sides other than those who present themselves as leaders. Often, men, women and children on the ground have a far different view of what is going on than those who presume to speak or act for the entire group. What is it they really want? Ask them if the strategies being pursued in their name are, in their view, the most effective ways to achieve their goals.
- Focus not just on the visible and obvious effects of ethnic fighting but on the less apparent consequences as well. What kind of long-lasting psychological traumas are taking place? What is the consequence of the conflict in the social and economic spheres? What are the implications for the future of what is taking place today?
- In your reporting from both sides, try to determine where there is common ground—and then highlight those elements. It is easy to find people willing to demonise those from another ethnic group. But a reporter who digs a little more deeply and asks probing questions may find that, in fact, the goals professed by those on both sides of the divide may not be as different as the people themselves believe.
- Try focusing on the emotions of non-combatants as well as the actual events on the ground. We are all human, after all, and it is often easier for members of one social group to empathise with the fears and pain of civilians on the other side than with the inflammatory or aggressive statements of generals and politicians. Most people can empathise with the death of a child or parent, with the loss of a home or of a sense of hope.
- Do not assume that each side has a monolithic reality and that everybody is of one mind. Every community will have dissenters from the majority position. Some people may be afraid to express themselves for fear of reprisals from neighbours, politicians or others. But you should always be aware that other factions exist even in seemingly cohesive societies—and you should make a concerted effort to find them and present their perspective.
- Try to describe events accurately and cite the sources of your information instead of relying on inflammatory adjectives like “brutal”, “inhuman”, and “barbaric”. Journalists often fall back on such expressions as a way of demonising one side and, whether intentionally or not, goading the other side to perpetuate the cycle of violence. In doing so, they are generally fulfilling the goals and disseminating the views of just one party to the conflict.
- Remember to be sceptical. Do not let yourself be used or manipulated by those on either side of the conflict. Check every fact to the fullest extent possible. If you cannot be totally sure whether something is accurate, either do not include the information or attribute it to your source rather than presenting it as the truth. When evaluating what you hear, take into account the source’s reliability in the past. Provide the audience with as much detail as possible about your informants and their motivations so that people can judge for themselves how reliable they might be.
- Ignore appeals from authorities and others demanding that you demonstrate what they deem sufficient “loyalty” or “ethnic solidarity.” Your role should not be to perpetuate racist stereotypes, act as a cheerleader for one side, or disseminate unconfirmed rumours that could promote extremist actions. Your loyalty and solidarity belong to your audience, for whom you are supposed to be gathering the most thorough and accurate information possible.
- Many people have strong negative feelings about those from other ethnic groups just because some authorities, politicians, clerics, and others may use offensive terms and expressions when discussing them does not mean you are required, as a journalist, to include this sort of insulting language in your material. If necessary, paraphrase their words. If you decide to quote them directly, you should mention that members of the group being discussed consider such language to be insulting and inflammatory.



Tips on reporting on Gender

As societies have changed in the past 10 years, so have the roles of women. But to judge from some of the recent magazines and other publications targeting women, you would think their only interests have to do with clothes, cosmetics, decorating and cooking. Certainly after the deprivations they – and everyone else – suffered until the past decade, it is understandable that the availability of a range of goods to choose from should be appealing, but many women undoubtedly have a much broader range of interests.

If a woman is not portrayed as a goddess of domesticity and fashion, she is most likely to appear in the media as a prostitute or a victim in some other way. Again, while prostitution and trafficking in women are serious problems, it is important to cover women's lives in all their diversity, the way men's lives are. Here are some tips to help you do that:

- Women should not appear only in stories specifically about women's problems or issues. Make sure to include women as sources whenever possible. If you are writing about an artistic trend, find a woman artist or two to comment on it. If you are writing about a political debate in your city or region, try to find a woman politician to quote. The point is not to include women in an artificial way but to at least be aware of the value of offering them an opportunity to voice their perspective on a broad range of issues.
- Review the list of regular sources and contacts that you routinely call when developing ideas and writing stories. If the list is completely or predominantly comprised of men, take conscious steps to broaden it. Although men tend to be over-represented in many areas of academia, business, politics and cultural life, it may be easier than you think to identify women who can serve your needs just as well.
- When you include women, describe them the same way you would describe men. If you do not generally describe the clothes or hairstyle of a businessman, do not discuss the clothes and hairstyle of a businesswoman, unless it is somehow relevant to the story. Avoid vague words like 'feminine,' which carry a lot of associations and can be interpreted differently by everyone. Use specific details to explain what you mean. Does she walk gracefully? Speak softly?
- Be careful not to make assumptions in your stories about women's proper role. Journalists often share society's stereotypes about women and men and reinforce them even without meaning to. Not all women are interested in fashion and cooking. Many women are deeply involved in a society's most pressing political and social problems. Some women start and run highly successful businesses. Seek out women whose lives run counter to the common perception of who women are and should be.
- Meet with members of women's organisations and ask them about their concerns. There may be issues they consider important that neither you nor your editors are aware of. Encourage them to call you when they think they have something newsworthy to discuss. But do not take what they say as the final word, and do not assume that all women's organisations will tell you the same things. Others are likely to have different opinions, and your material should take those ideas into account as well.
- Consider writing stories about issues – such as domestic violence and sexual harassment – that have been widely covered in the West but have not received a lot of attention in post-Communist societies. These are both extremely serious problems that have generally been ignored or downplayed by the legal system as well as the media. Domestic violence is often considered a private family matter rather

than a crime, even when it results in serious injuries. Explore how it is treated in your city or region. Does the law protect women from being beaten by their husbands or spouses? How do the police and other authorities respond? Are there shelters where women and children can seek help?

- Sexual harassment in the workplace is another issue that has received a great deal of attention in the West. While some people trivialise the issue, the fact is that women in all societies are sometimes confronted with demands for sexual favours from male co-workers and supervisors in exchange for promotions and pay-rises or under the threat of being dismissed. Sometimes the harassment takes the form not of a direct request for sex but of vulgar, derogatory, or taunting sexual language being directed toward the woman, a situation that can make the workplace a highly unpleasant place to be. Again, find out what the laws are in your region. How big a problem is it? How are women fighting it?
- The issue of prostitution is a major one when it comes to media portrayals of women. It is obviously important to cover the topic, but in doing so it is also critical to try to suspend judgement of women for whom this may be the only way to make a living. Even if a woman has chosen prostitution and not been forced into it, try to understand the world from her perspective. And make an effort to look beyond the stereotypes. Not all prostitutes are drug addicts. Not all are terrible mothers.
- In some countries, prostitutes have adopted the term 'sex worker' as a less derogatory way of referring to themselves. Ask them why they prefer that phrase and write an article about what the change means. Are prostitutes, or sex workers, trying to create their own organisations and associations? Are they advocating for better health care for themselves or seeking to disseminate information about how to protect themselves from HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases?
- Trafficking of women has also become a major issue in recent years. Explore the situation in your region. Where are the women coming from? How are they being lured from their home countries, and how are they being forced to stay? Talk to non-governmental organisations working on the issue and ask them to connect you with women who find themselves in that kind of situation.



The Media Diversity Institute

Tips on reporting on People with Disabilities

People with disabilities—whether physical or mental—are frequently ignored by the media. When they are not ignored, they are usually written about as people to be either mocked or pitied. Reporters often discuss their problems and issues with doctors, government authorities and others without ever talking to disabled people themselves, so they have little idea what those affected are feeling and thinking about their own situation.

This may have something to do with the fact that it can be hard to find people with disabilities to interview. People with schizophrenia, retardation and other mental and emotional difficulties have long been hidden away, either at home or in institutions, because their families have been ashamed of them or have wanted to protect them from social discrimination. The same is true for people missing limbs or suffering from cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis and other physical handicaps, especially since society has made little effort to accommodate their needs in education, the workplace and the physical infrastructure, such as streets and public buildings.

Another difficulty is that people with some forms of disability are frequently also members of other social groups viewed negatively by the larger society. Although anyone can become infected with HIV and AIDS, drug addicts, prostitutes and homosexuals—who generally are not accepted as valuable members of society—are frequently viewed as having the greatest risk.

Here are some things to keep in mind when covering people with disabilities:

- First, make sure to cover them. And when you cover them, make sure to actually talk to them. What others tell you about them—even if they speak of them sympathetically—should be just the starting point for your material. You should make contact with disabled people themselves and ask them if what other people have told you corresponds to how they themselves view their situation. If there is a contradiction in what you hear, you can go back to the doctors or others who perceive themselves as experts and question them again.
- Do not cover disabled people only in the context of their disabilities. Disabled people have interests, careers, and families like everyone else. If you come across people who have attained success as artists, politicians, or professionals in spite of having a disability, that might make a good story. Spend some time with them to find out how they overcame any difficulties on the path to success. Ask them what advice they might have for others in similar situations.
- Be careful with language. Every language has its own set of words—some insulting, some not—to describe people with disabilities. You may think that a particular word or expression is not hurtful, but you are not the best judge. If people with that disability tells you that they prefer to be referred to in some other way, you should seriously consider their request.
- One important aspect of journalistic coverage of people with disabilities is the issue of access. Write a story about whether or not society is making an effort to allow people with disabilities to participate in important social activities. If it is not, why not? Is it a question of money, lack of political will, deeply entrenched prejudice, or some other reason? What kind of education and professional opportunities are open—or closed—to disabled people?

- Explore the issue of whether, and how, people with disabilities are forming groups or working with other non-governmental organisations to promote their rights. In many countries in Eastern Europe, for example, people with HIV and AIDS have created their own associations, both to find a way to support one another and to pressure the government and society to acknowledge their needs. In some areas, people with mental and physical disabilities, and their families, are demanding greater access to effective treatment. Find out what is going on in your region.
- Make sure you know what you are talking about. If you are writing about people with HIV, for example, make sure you understand the difference between being infected with HIV and having AIDS. Make sure you understand how HIV is transmitted—and how it is not transmitted. Journalists have a wonderful opportunity to inform people, but they also have a great responsibility not to misinform them.
- There is a difference, for a journalist, between feeling empathy for people with disabilities and pitying them. If you feel empathy, it means you respect them as individuals because you have spoken with them, spent time with them, observed their lives firsthand. Pity is often tinged with a condescending attitude that you, or others, know better than they do what they need. If you have formed opinions about the people with disabilities based on what people other than the disabled say about them, you are more likely to feel pity and are not yet prepared to write about their issues.
- Because the disabled people are often hidden from society, it can be difficult to find people to talk to. The best approach to start is to contact groups and NGOs that represent them. Talk to the organisers to develop a general understanding of their concerns, and ask them to put you in touch with some of their members. You should also make sure to talk to others not involved with the group, who may have a different perspective or may offer more forthright or straightforward thoughts and opinions.
- It is often true that stereotypes have an element of truth. There may be many beggars or homeless people among those without limbs—but that is most likely because society does not offer them any other choices. Drug addicts may have a higher rate of HIV—but that may be because they do not understand how to protect themselves from infection or do not have access to clean needles. The reasons for the association often have deep roots in society's problems, and blaming the people themselves is not the role of the journalist.



Tips on reporting on Socially Disadvantaged Groups

In many societies, particularly those lacking in transparency, socially disadvantaged groups such as drug addicts, prisoners, the homeless, and the unemployed either do not officially exist or are viewed as enemies of the state. As a result, their lives, concerns and problems are not considered of interest and remain unexplored by the media – as if coverage would somehow have endowed them with legitimacy and generated unwarranted sympathy for their plight.

Ignoring the presence of such groups does a disservice to society. Every society that previously believed itself immune to the social ills associated with capitalism has discovered that wilful ignorance does little to make complex problems disappear. In fact, the presence of vast and growing numbers of disadvantaged citizens has suggested just the opposite: that to pretend something does not exist only makes matters worse in the end.

Here are some ways to improve coverage of socially disadvantaged groups:

- Identify which disadvantaged groups are common in your city or region. Do you have a particular problem with unemployment because of factory closings nearby? Is there an especially large number of homeless people because of conflict-related destruction of property or some other reason? How about veterans of regional wars? Drug addicts? Then examine how – or even whether – your media outlet has covered these groups, evaluate the material, and determine what gaps remain.
- Make sure to interview unemployed people, drug addicts, war participants and others about whom you are writing. Members of disadvantaged groups tend to appear in the media, if they do at all, in connection with crime and, more often than not, are not even interviewed. Generally, law enforcement officials and other ‘experts’ are allowed to present their perspective without challenge. And because journalists often share these stereotypes, they may simply transmit them to the readers without qualification.
- Make contact with non-governmental organisations whose mission is to help the unemployed, drug addicts, the homeless and other members of socially disadvantaged groups. Develop these people as reliable sources. Encourage them to call you with story ideas. Ask them what are the most important issues they are working on. Request that they arrange for you to spend time with members of the groups for whom they are advocating.
- When you interview the unemployed, drug addicts and others; do not limit your questions to those topics. Try to gain a full understanding of their lives, to find something they feel passionately about. Ask them about interests, hobbies, family members, pets – anything that might allow you to empathise with their situation and not view them solely through the prism of their shortcomings or disadvantages. Make an effort to convey who they are as real people, with rich histories and complex inner lives, rather than simply as a representative of a socially deprived group.
- Place social troubles in context. If drug addiction has become a major problem recently, explore the factors that have led to that. Economic collapse? Greater availability of narcotics? If unemployment is on the rise, try to figure out why. Are local factories closing? Has there been a drop in exports? If you are writing about ex-convicts who commit crimes again, explore how easy or difficult it is for former prisoners to find jobs. It always helps readers understand other people’s situation if they are presented with a complete picture of events.

- Profile a member of one of these groups who has done something difficult or extraordinary. Has someone who has not been able to find employment in one field managed to switch gears completely and become a success in another area? Has someone kicked drug addiction and gone on to create an organisation to help others in the same situation? Has a former prisoner fully reformed and achieved recognition as an artist?
- While it is critical to spend time with the people you are writing about, that does not mean you need to accept everything they say at face value. You will undoubtedly hear lots of depressing stories from them, but unless you confirm the truth of each one you should make it clear in your story that you are attributing the information to your sources. For example, if a drug addict tells you he only shoots up once a week, you should report that he says he shoots up only once a week, since you cannot know for sure whether or not that is true. If an unemployed person says she has been rejected for 10 jobs, you should report that she says she has been rejected for 10 jobs, not that she actually has been.