



# Minority News: Examining the portrayals of race within African American focused news outlets

Brandon Ford, Rachel Henderson, Sadie Lea, Kionte Lewis,  
Christopher Josey PhD, and Andrea Figueroa-Caballero PhD



## Introduction

### African Americans in News

- The media commonly stereotype women and people of color (Dixon, 2019; Frisby & Aubrey, 2012)
- News often negatively depicts African Americans and associates Black people with criminal behavior (Dixon, 2019; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000)
- Compared to crime statistics, news programs overrepresent African Americans (Dixon, Azocar, & Casas, 2003; Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b)
- News media over represent African Americans as welfare recipients (Gilens, 1999; van Doorn, 2015)
- People of color (most often African Americans) are disproportionately represented in crime stories, and they are more likely to be presented as the perpetrator rather than the victim (Dixon & Josey, 2013).

### Theory and Rationale

- People of color are presented in highly stereotypic ways within traditional news outlets, as a result mainstream media outlets have created an inhospitable environment for minority groups (Dixon, 2019)
- The effects of this environment have shown to have deleterious consequences on perceptions of African Americans in society (Dixon & Josey, 2013; Ramasubramanian, 2010)
- Representation of these groups in social identity focused news (SIFN) outlets has rarely been studied.
- Alternative media sources could provide a locus of empowerment for people of color.

## Method

- Usage of a digital coding mechanism to code over 600 articles from four different African American-focused media outlets
- Articles picked and coded from 1 years' worth of archived news
- Total number of articles was divided up so that each student could have 150 articles to code.
- 10% of the sample was exclusively used to establish inter-coder reliability

## Results

### Overall Trends

- More Black characters in both headlines and stories than traditional new (based on prior analyses).
- More Black characters than one would expect based on us census data.
- Black news stories present more positive portrayals. ( $M=3.5$ )
  - Scale was 1 (Negative) to 5 (Positive)
- Black news headlines present balanced portrayals (e.g., non-stereotypic).

### Black Characters Mentioned in Headlines

Of the 38 headlines where race was mentioned, 28 featured Black characters. Results of the z-test comparing this to population data, indicates that significantly more blacks featured in headlines than one would expect based on census data ( $z = 11.12, p < .001$ ).

**Trailblazing Politician Shirley Chisholm Is Getting A Statue In NYC**  
It's coming in 2020. She deserves it!

**In Historic First, Three Black Women Have Been Elected Circuit Court Judges In Hinds County, Mississippi**  
Every circuit judge in the county is now Black.

### Black Characters Featured within the Body of Story

Race	Number Identified	Percent (of the total)
Arab	2	2.4%
Asian	4	4.8%
Black	55	66.3%
Latinx	0	0%
Native	0	0%
White	22	26.5%

- Chi-squared value reveals significant differences  $\chi^2(3)=101.07, p<.001$ .
- Z-test conducted for blacks resulted in  $Z=14.43, p<.001$ , meaning that based on the population data, a significantly larger number of blacks were featured than expected.
- IMI calculations reveal that a neutral and non-stereotypic portrayal of Blacks within SIFN sites IMI = 21.01.

## Discussion

### Implications

- African American centered news sites featured significantly more Black characters in headlines and stories than traditional news sites and would be expected based on US Census data. It seems the focus of the news sites on African Americans as an audience translates directly into increased representation of African Americans in the headlines and stories.
- African American centered news sites present far more positive and less stereotyped portrayals of Black characters than traditional news sites. African American centered news sites may be skewed towards positive and less stereotypic portrayals as a means to counteract the negative and stereotyped portrayals of Black characters in traditional news sites. More positive portrayals may also be the result of African American centered news sites appealing to a majority Black audience.
- Despite offering more positive portrayals of Black characters, African American centered news sites were more negative than Latino centered news sites. The discrepancy between Latino and African American focused news sites could be the subject of further research.

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