



# Examining portrayals of minority groups in African American focused news media

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## Introduction

### African Americans in News

- o The media commonly stereotype women and people of color (Dixon, 2019; Frisby & Aubrey, 2012)
- o News often negatively depicts African Americans and associates Black people with criminal behavior (Dixon, 2019; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000)
- o Compared to crime statistics, news programs overrepresent African Americans (Dixon, Azocar, & Casas, 2003; Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b)
- o News media over represent African Americans as welfare recipients (Gilens, 1999; van Doorn, 2015)
- o 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

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

## Methods

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

## Results

### Hypothesis 1: Black characters will be over-represented on Black Oriented news SUPPORTED

Far more Black characters on Black oriented sites than on Latinx- oriented media,  $\chi^2(2, N=667) = 455.15 P < .01$   
Blacks overrepresented when compared to US Population

Race	US Census	Media Outlet	Proportional Difference	Z-Value	P-Value
Black	37682000	609	0.52	49.1	<.001

### Hypothesis 2: Identity Focused News will feature more favorable portrayals — SUPPORTED

Stories featuring a Black characters were significantly more positive than those featuring White characters ( $F(2,1644) = 78.82 p < .01$ ) – Scale (1) Very Positive to (5) Very Negative.  
Whites  $M = 3.59$ ,  $SD = .85$  ( $N = 667$ )  
Blacks  $M = 3.19$ ,  $SD = 1.1$  ( $N = 430$ )

**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.

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

### Emerging Questions: Good but not perfect?

- o African American focused news media underrepresented Asian Americans significantly
- o Arab and Native American representations reached population parity, but we would hope for overrepresentation and more favorable portrayals
- o Portrayal of these groups is most important because most Americans lack interpersonal relationships with these groups

Character Race	Black Oriented	Percentage of total
Black	609	54.47%
Latino	21	1.88%
White	280	25.04%
Asian	21	1.88%
Arab	11	0.98%
Native American	2	0.18%
Unable to Determine Race	174	15.56%
Total	1118	100%

## Discussion

### Implications

- o 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.
- o 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 stereotypical 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.
- o 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.

### Next Steps

- o Currently on our 2<sup>nd</sup> round of data collection
- o 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the project next Fall where we will look at the effects of coverage on minority audiences
- o Content will be collected and archived for at least 4 years

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