African-American Photo Coverage in Four U.S. Newspapers, 1937−1990
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What is This?

AFRICAN-AMERICAN PHOTO COVERAGE
IN FOUR U.S. NEWSPAPERS, 1937-1990

By Paul Martin Lester

In a study that analyzed more than 250,000 photographs, among the findings was that coverage of African-Americans had increased, but that the price for added visibility was an increase in stereotypical (crime, sports, and entertainment) content categories. This finding supported a previous study of magazines for a similar time period. It is concluded that journalists need to be sensitive to the needs of all members of a community and not merely those who subscribe.

After the Watts riots in Los Angeles in 1965, political and religious leaders pointed an accusatory finger at the nation's media organizations for their stereotypical portrayals of African-Americans. Many critics thought that presenting African-Americans only as train porters, sports heroes, entertainers, or criminals contributed to the frustration that led to the violence. Much of the criticism stated that the media had failed to responsibly report on the social inequalities faced by African-Americans. In a University of Washington seminar report, for example, Lawrence Schneider remarked that "although charged with the responsibility of keeping a close check on government, of rooting out injustice and of protecting the weak, the American press... had not discovered the problems of the Black man in America, nor had it led in the struggle to solve the problems."[1] The Kerner Commission's report on civil disorders in 1968 used more emphatic language when it simply stated that "it is the responsibility of the news media to tell the story of race relations in America."[2]

Typical of the views at the time were those of Urban League Director Whitney Young. He commented that African-American pictorial coverage in newspapers and magazines "... was awful, is better, and has to get better."[3]

Twenty-seven years after the Watts neighborhood violence, South Central Los Angeles was once again in the center of a tragic firestorm. Much has been written about the causes for the riots following the verdict of the four Los Angeles policemen involved in the arrest of Rodney King. Political and religious leaders, as in the earlier era, have spoken eloquently on the causes and possible solutions to the man-made catastrophe. Once again the media's coverage of African-Americans was being analyzed and criticized.

Is African-American pictorial coverage getting better? Looking at studies concerned with African-American pictorial coverage in magazines and newspapers produces mixed conclusions. In a 1964 study of *Look*

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magazine, Verdelle Lambert found that in pictures and text "dealing with the American Negro," there was an increase in non-racial references to African-Americans. Lambert concluded that such a finding was evidence that the editors of *Look* were treating African-Americans not as racial stereotypes but as members of society without regard to race.[4] Carolyn Martindale in her 1986 book, *The White Press and Black America*, looked at African-American portrayals in stories, columns, letters to the editor, and pictures within the pages of 245 total issues for *The New York Times*, the *Boston Globe*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *Atlanta Constitution*. She concluded that editors have shown "an increased awareness of blacks, and, perhaps, a desire to cover them more extensively and realistically than ... in the past."[5] Paul Lester and Ron Smith, in a study of the images within the pages of *Life*, *Newsweek*, and *Time* magazines from 1937 until 1988, concluded that percentages of African-American visibility have increased over the years and that the increase can be attributed to dramatic rises in everyday life, prominent person, and advertisement subject categories rather than the racial stereotypes of crime, sports, and entertainment subject categories.[6] Yet Alice Sentman looked at African-American pictorial coverage in *Life* magazine from 1937 until 1972 and concluded that African-Americans were sparsely represented within the pages of the magazine. Such a finding led Sentman to conclude that *Life* was not providing "its mass audience an opportunity for exposure to the everyday life of black America."[7]

Recent studies of African-American pictorial coverage within the pages of U.S. magazines and newspapers conclude that the number of images has increased over time. Researcher John Wheatley has noted that African-American percentages should mimic the population figure if one is to conclude that image selections were not a result of racial selection.[8] In some studies the percentages exceed the overall population percentage while in others the figure is much lower. For example, Lester and Smith found that the percentage of African-American photographs in *Life* magazine exceeded the 11 percent of African-Americans in the U.S. population, but in *Newsweek* and *Time* they did not. It seems reasonable to conclude that overall pictorial coverage of African-Americans should at least match the U.S. population figure. Furthermore, within larger urban areas, the African-American population may be as high as 60 percent. When a publication is restricted to a specific urban area, the overall picture percentage should be higher than the general population percentage. The questions remain whether percentages have risen high enough to be representative of the African-American population and, more important, whether the content of those images continue the trend toward non-racial references or further reinforce age-old stereotypes. There is no advantage in publishing a large percentage of African-Americans if those images are mostly crime, sports, and entertainment subjects.

Martindale and Lester and Smith divided their analyses into three distinct time periods: the pre-civil rights era, the civil rights era, and the modern era. Stereotypical images were most present during the pre-civil rights era when African-Americans were most often portrayed as "either musical, primitive, amusing, or religious, or as violent and criminal; occupationally, they were pictured as either servants, athletes, or entertainers, or as unemployed."[9] If African-Americans were included as models in advertisements, for example, they were always portrayed as servants fetching a bottle of expensive liquor or porters ready to stow baggage for a long train trip. This period is also marked by low overall percentages. A dramatic shift in

pictorial coverage occurred during the civil rights era. Although many more African-Americans were pictured, more often the images were related to criminal activities and social problems as a result of the protests and riots in the streets in several U.S. urban areas. During this same period, advertising use of African-Americans, as noted by Lester and Smith, dramatically decreased, perhaps because advertisers did not want their products associated with the activism of the time. After the worst rioting, the Kerner Commission's report concluded with African-American leaders' complaints that the media were generally ignoring their everyday concerns.[10] The post-civil rights era brought advances in African-American political aspirations and a rise in the coverage of everyday life activities not guided by racial backgrounds. However, stock portrayals of African-Americans as sports and entertainment personalities were on the rise compared with previous eras.

Although African-Americans are more regularly seen within the pages of magazines and newspapers, an important consideration is the content of that coverage. Lester and Smith found in their magazine study that the subject categories of crime, sports, and entertainment have increased to percentages higher than the population percentage. Such a result, the researchers concluded, indicated a reliance on stereotypical coverage. What has not been addressed by recent studies is whether large, urban-based newspapers over a long period of time have shown the same trends as indicated by Lester and Smith's study.

This research attempts to address five hypotheses about the African-American pictorial coverage within the pages of four major U.S. newspapers:

> H1: Coverage of African-Americans will increase over time in all four newspapers.

> H2: Content categories for African-American coverage will show similar, general patterns for all four newspapers.

> H3: Stereotypical images will decrease throughout the years studied.

> H4: Race-blind images, special interest pictures, and advertising visuals will increase for the years studied.

> H5: The four newspapers will show trends in content categories similar to those of the magazines studied by Lester and Smith.

Method

A content analysis of the pictorial treatment of African-Americans was performed for all Monday to Friday issues for March, June, September, and December, for 1937, 1942, 1947, 1952, 1957, 1962, 1967, 1972, 1978, 1983 and 1990, of*The New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The four newspapers were selected because of their national and regional prominence; their large circulations;[11] and their location within cities with large, yet varying, percentages of African-American populations.[12] The years studied were chosen to coincide with the Lester and Smith study on the pictorial coverage of African-Americans in three U.S. magazines. Results from 1990 were added for each

newspaper in order to look at more recent conditions.

From a preliminary analysis it was concluded that a small sample of issues would result in an unfair representation of African-American coverage. Throughout the year, pictures of African-Americans are distributed in various proportions. Clustering of images occurs during significant news or sporting events. If a random sample were taken, the risk of missing important instances of African-American coverage would be high. Therefore, hundreds of newspaper issues had to be sampled. The Monday through Friday issues were chosen in order to isolate the everyday coverage of African-Americans as seen by the average reader.

Pictorial evidence of the visibility of African-Americans within the pages of U.S. newspapers is best studied using content analysis.[13] In separate studies Woodburn, Miller, and Blackwood have demonstrated that readers often obtain their first impressions about a story by looking first at the photograph on the page.[14] If African-Americans have been under-represented or used in stereotypical portrayals, the pictorial evidence will show those facts clearly. Pictures show, according to Stempel, "the most clear-cut evidence of visibility or lack of it."[15]

The unit of analysis for this study was the picture. Lester and Smith showed in their study that isolating the human figure photographs, eliminating still-lifes and scenics without people, is a much more accurate means for measuring African-American percentages. All human figure photographs were counted, and pictures with African-Americans were divided into specific subject categories. Human figure photographs are defined as having people within the frame of the image. Still-lifes or scenics without people were not included in the analysis. Graphic illustrations were not included in the picture count. Pictures that only showed a subject's hands or feet were not included. Coverage of foreign persons of African descent was not included. If a newspaper printed several zoned editions, particularly prevalent with the *Times-Picayune*, the metro or city-wide edition was used in the analysis.

The subject categories were crime, accident, sports, war-related images, social news, human interest, politics, business, social problems, science, education, health, entertainment, religion, and advertisements.[16] The fifteen categories were defined as follows:

(1) *Crime*. Any police coverage, the accused, or victims within a crime-related picture.

(2) *Accident*. Either man-made or a natural disaster.

(3) *Sports*. Any sports-related feature or action picture.

(4) *War-Related Images*. Any picture where the violent acts of war are depicted or where persons are preparing for or engaged in a war-related activity.

(5) *Social News*. Any image that details the events of high society. May also include wedding and anniversary pictures.

(6) *Human Interest*. A photograph where everyday life activities are featured that show no regard to racial considerations. Fashion photography and obituaries also fit in this category.

(7) *Politics.* Any politician or a person running for office.

(8) *Business.* Money matters and business activities.

(9) *Social Problems.* Social issues that affect African-Americans directly.

(10) *Science.* Scientific breakthroughs, information, or news about a scientist.

(11) *Education.* Any school-related picture.

(12) *Health.* Pictorial coverage related to individual or environmental health.

(13) *Entertainment.* Any celebrity featured in a photograph.

(14) *Religion.* A picture that gives details about a religious service or individual.

(15) *Advertisement.* Any non-editorial picture used to sell a product or service.

To coincide with the Martindale and Lester and Smith studies, the fifteen subject categories were combined into four main subject areas and for three main time periods. The four main subject areas included stereotypical images (crime, sports, and entertainment), race-blind images (accident, war, human interest, science, and religion), special interest to African-Americans (society news, politics, business, social problems, education, and health), and advertising images. The "race-blind" subject area refers to a picture being published because of the story-telling quality of the image and not because the subjects in the image happen to be African-American. It is as if an editor gave no consideration to race as a factor in determining whether to publish the image. On the other hand, the "special interest to African-Americans" subject area with its six content categories, did feature specific information about African-Americans in the caption or story. The images in this subject area all were published by editors who wanted African-Americans in the photograph in order to illustrated the story more completely.

For purposes of making comparisons with the previous studies, the three time periods isolated in this study were the pre-civil rights era (1937 – 1952), the civil rights era (1957 – 1972), and the modern era (1978 – 1990).

Four graduate student coders were each assigned a newspaper.[17] The author also performed some of the coding. Following the coding, an assistant coded a subset of the same images (25 percent of the total) using the same categories as a measure of intercoder reliability. Intercoder reliability based on the Holsti formula was .87 for all human figure images and .74 for the African-American subject categories.

Findings

Content coders examined 3,292 issues and found 282,536 human figure pictures and 16,008 African-American images. The analysis yielded mixed results for the hypotheses: (See Tables 1 - 5).

TABLE 1
Percentage Totals for All Newspapers and Each Newspaper
Combined and Three Magazines

	All Newspapers Combined 1937 - 1990	New York Combined 1937 - 1990	Chicago Combined 1937 - 1990	New Orleans Combined 1937 - 1990	San Francisco Combined 1937 - 1990
All Pictures	282,536	73,807	85,126	65,922	57,681
African-Amer Pics	16,008	3,374	5,289	3,483	3,862
African-Amer %	5.7(3.7)^	4.6	6.2	5.3	6.7
Number of Issues	3,726	937	906*	935	936
A-A Pics per Issue	4.3	3.6	5.8	3.7	4.1
Issues w/o A-As	1,198	260	260	440	238
Stereotypical Images					
Crime	4.1 (7.5)	5.2	3.7	4.6	3.4
Sports	38.6 (16.5)	29.5	47.3	31.4	41.3
Entertainment	7.2 (13.8)	4.8	4.6	8.4	11.6
Subtotal	**49.9**	**39.5**	**55.6**	**44.4**	**56.3**
Race-Blind Images					
Accident	0.7	0.4	0.5	1.4	0.7
War	0.5	0.9	0.3	0.6	0.4
Human Interest	11.2(12.3)	9.2	13.5	9.9	10.8
Science	0.2	0.02	0.2	0.0	0.4
Religion	0.6	0.2	0.7	0.9	0.4
Subtotal	**13.2**	**10.7**	**15.2**	**12.8**	**12.7**
Special Interest Images					
Social News	1.0	0.2	0.3	3.6	0.4
Politics	3.4	3.9	4.0	2.5	2.8
Business	1.0	1.3	1.1	0.6	0.8
Social Problems	3.1(24.1)	4.9	1.6	3.0	3.8
Education	3.2	5.2	2.8	3.0	2.2
Health	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.6	0.3
Subtotal	**12.1**	**16.0**	**10.1**	**13.3**	**10.3**
Advertising Images	24.4(29.5)	**33.6**	**18.4**	**29.1**	**20.3**

March, 1942 and December, 1978 were not available.
Total percentages may add to more or less than 100 due to rounding.
^Figures in parentheses represent combined percentages for Life, News-week and Time magazines as represented by Lester and Smith's study.
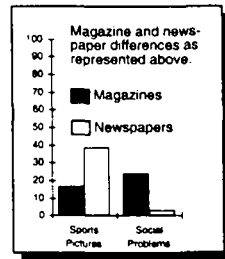

Graphic representation of the above subtotals

New York   Chicago   New Orleans   San Francisco

■ Stereotype   □ Race-Blind   ■ Special   ■ Advertising

Magazine and news-paper differences as represented above.

■ Magazines
□ Newspapers
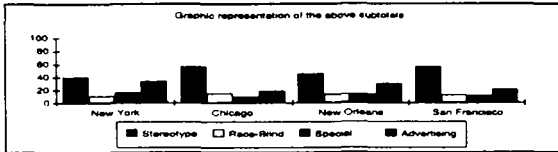
Sports Pictures   Social Problems

TABLE 2

TABLE 2
Percentage Totals for The New York Times

	Pre-Civil Rights Era 1937 - 1952	Civil Rights Era 1957 - 1972	Modern Era 1978 - 1990
All Pictures	21,973	28,708	23,126
African-Amer Pics	238	1,294	1,837
African-Amer %	**1.1**	**4.5**	**7.9**
Number of Issues	3 5 9	3 3 9	2 3 9 *
A-A Pics per Issue	0.6	3.8	7.7
Issues w/o A-As	203	57	0
Stereotypical Images			
Crime	1.3	3.6	6.8
Sports	28.6	22.3	34.8
Entertainment	0.8	2.8	6.7
Subtotal	**30.7**	**28.7**	**48.3**
Race-Blind Images			
Accident	0	0.2	0.6
War	3.8	0.2	1.0
Human Interest	15.5	7.4	9.6
Science	0	0	0.1
Religion	0.4	0.1	0.3
Subtotal	**19.7**	**7.9**	**11.6**
Special Interest Images			
Social News	0	0.4	0.1
Politics	0.8	2.8	5.1
Business	0.8	0.9	1.7
Social Problems	0.8	7.8	3.3
Education	2.1	7.8	3.8
Health	1.3	0.2	0.5
Subtotal	**5.8**	**19.9**	**14.5**
Advertising Images	43.7	43.7	25.4

September, 1978 was not available because of a press strike.
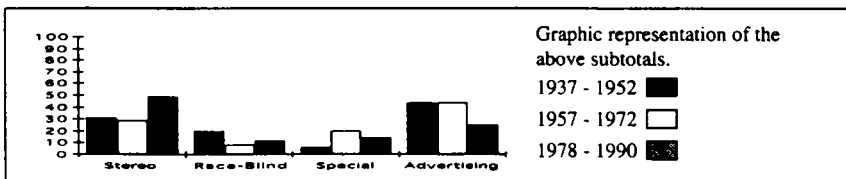*Total percentages may add to more or less than 100 due to rounding.*

Graphic representation of the above subtotals.
1937 - 1952 ■
1957 - 1972 □
1978 - 1990 ▨

TABLE 3

TABLE 3
Percentage Totals for the Chicago Tribune

	Pre-Civil Rights Era 1937 - 1952	Civil Rights Era 1957 - 1972	Modern Era 1978 - 1990
All Pictures	23,247	39,957	21,922
African-Amer Pics	251	2,179	2,825
African-Amer %	1.1	5.5	12.9
Number of Issues	329*	340	237*
A-A Pics per Issue	0.8	6.4	11.9
Issues w/o A-As	213	47	0
Stereotypical Images			
Crime	5.2	4.0	3.4
Sports	65.3	40.4	51.6
Entertainment	4.4	3.8	5.3
Subtotal	**74.9**	**48.2**	**60.3**
Race-Blind Images			
Accident	0	0	1.0
War	0	0	0.5
Human Interest	12.4	21.1	7.9
Science	0	0	0.4
Religion	0.4	1.3	0.2
Subtotal	**12.8**	**22.4**	**10.0**
Special Interest Images			
Social News	0.4	0.7	0
Politics	1.2	3.5	4.7
Business	1.6	0.1	1.8
Social Problems	0	1.3	1.9
Education	0.4	4.1	2.1
Health	0	0	0.5
Subtotal	**3.6**	**9.7**	**11.0**
Advertising Images	**8.8**	**19.7**	**18.5**

March, 1942 and December, 1978 were not available.
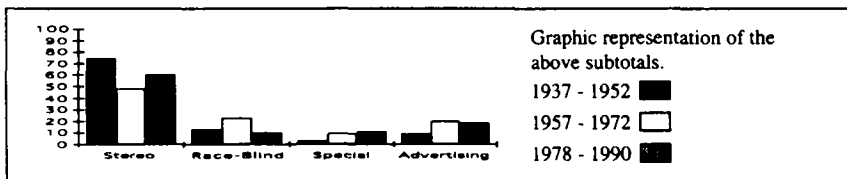*Total percentages may add to more or less than 100 due to rounding.*

Graphic representation of the above subtotals.
1937 - 1952 ■
1957 - 1972 □
1978 - 1990 ▨

TABLE 4
Percentage Totals for the Times-Picayune

	Pre-Civil Rights Era 1937 - 1952	**Civil Rights Era** 1957 - 1972	**Modem Era** 1978 - 1990
All Pictures	16,958	26,721	22,243
African-Amer Pics	23	891	2,554
African-Amer %	0.1	3.3	11.6
Number of Issues	345	341	249
A-A Pics per Issue	0.06	2.6	10.3
Issues w/o A-As	324	116	0
Stereotypical Images			
Crime	0	4.3	4.8
Sports	4.3	36.0	30.2
Entertainment	8.7	2.3	10.5
Subtotal	**13.0**	**42.6**	**45.5**
Race-Blind Images			
Accident	8.7	1.7	1.3
War	4.3	1.5	0.3
Human Interest	8.7	9.7	10.1
Science	0	0	0
Religion	4.3	1.7	0.7
Subtotal	**26.0**	**14.6**	**12.4**
Special Interest Images			
Social News	0	2.1	4.1
Politics	0	2.2	2.6
Business	17.4	0.7	0.5
Social Problems	8.7	3.5	2.8
Education	0	3.8	2.6
Health	0	0.9	0.6
Subtotal	**26.1**	**13.2**	**13.2**
Advertising Images	**34.8**	**29.4**	**29.0**

Total percentages may add to more or less than 100 due to rounding.

Graphic representation of the above subtotals.
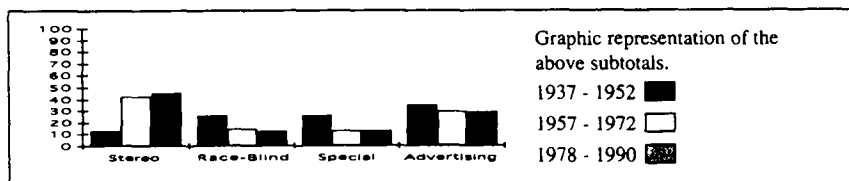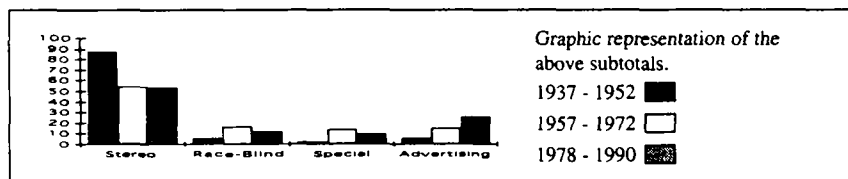1937 - 1952 ■
1957 - 1972 □
1978 - 1990 ▨

TABLE 5
Percentage Totals for the San Francisco Chronicle

	Pre-Civil Rights Era 1937 - 1952	Civil Rights Era 1957 - 1972	Modern Era 1978 - 1990
All Pictures	12,693	24,051	20,937
African-Amer Pics	236	1,445	2,172
African-Amer %	1.9	6.0	10.4
Number of Issues	351	338	259
A-A Pics per Issue	0.6	4.2	8.3
Issues w/o A-As	211	25	2
Stereotypical Images			
Crime	2.1	3.3	2.7
Sports	78.8	38.1	39.5
Entertainment	5.9	12.9	11.4
Subtotal	**86.8**	**54.3**	**53.6**
Race-Blind Images			
Accident	0.4	0.6	0.8
War	0.4	0.3	0.6
Human Interest	4.2	14.3	9.3
Science	0.4	0.2	0.5
Religion	0	0.6	0.4
Subtotal	**5.4**	**16.0**	**11.6**
Special Interest Images			
Social News	0	0.8	0.3
Politics	0	2.9	3.1
Business	0	0.6	1.0
Social Problems	1.3	5.4	2.9
Education	0.8	3.3	1.7
Health	0	0.3	0.3
Subtotal	**2.1**	**13.3**	**9.3**
Advertising Images	**5.5**	**15.0**	**25.5**

Total percentages may add to more or less than 100 due to rounding.

Graphic representation of the above subtotals.

1937 - 1952 ■
1957 - 1972 ☐
1978 - 1990 ▨

H1: Overall, the African-American coverage will increase
over time for all four newspapers.

African-American picture coverage did indeed rise over the years studied. The New Orleans *Times-Picayune* showed the most dramatic increase with only twenty-three pictures containing African-American content published from 1937 to 1952, and 2,554 published in the modern era. Martindale claimed that until the early 1950s, the *Picayune* had a rule that African-Americans were not to appear in any published photograph. "Photos of street scenes were scrupulously scanned by picture editors and every perceivably black face was either excised by scissors or erased by air brush," reported a writer for the paper.[18] To the editors' credit, the modern era showed the second highest overall African-American percentage. Nevertheless, the overall percentages are still lower than the national and state-wide population percentages.

H2: Content categories for African-American coverage will
show similar, general patterns in all four newspapers.

Despite some spot aberrations, the four newspapers generally emphasized the same content categories. The *Chicago Tribune*, however, emphasized sports coverage much more than the other newspapers. The *Times-Picayune*, with debutante and Mardi Gras functions, showed a dramatic rise in society news photographs. The Chicago and San Francisco newspapers, however, showed low percentages for advertising images when compared with the other two newspapers. They also had lower than average special interest image percentages and much higher than average stereotypical pictures. The four newspapers showed similar patterns in all other content categories.

H3: Stereotypical images will decrease throughout the years
studied.

The trend has been for all four newspapers to show more, not fewer, stereotypical images. Because of their emphasis on sports coverage, Chicago and San Francisco had higher stereotypical image percentages than the other two newspapers. However, as crime-related images have slowed or decreased for the other newspapers, *The New York Times* has steadily increased its coverage.

H4: Race-blind images, special interest pictures, and adver-
tising visuals will increase for the years studied.

Race-blind images – those pictures that are not about African-Americans and only happen to have their images in the photographic frame – generally showed peaks during the civil rights era and a level during the modern era that often was below the pre-civil rights era. Human interest pictures, sometimes referred to as feature pictures, particularly for Chicago and San Francisco, followed that pattern. Human interest images increased slightly in New York and New Orleans newspapers after 1957. Images devoted to the issues and concerns that are special to African-Americans have generally increased for all newspapers over the years, reaching the high mark during the civil rights era. When isolating the social problems category, New York and San Francisco increased their coverage during the 1957 to 1972 time period. New Orleans and Chicago have remained low with Chicago consistently showing percentages much below the other newspapers. Generally, African-Americans used as models in advertising images have in-

creased over the years studied for the four newspapers. San Francisco has shown the most dramatic and continued rise in African-American advertising pictures. *The New York Times* demonstrated a dramatic decrease during the modern era while Chicago has consistently maintained lower percentages. Unlike the magazines studied by Lester and Smith, there was not a dip in advertising percentages during the turbulent civil rights era.

> *H5: The four newspapers will show trends in content categories similar to those of the magazines used in the Lester and Smith study.*

Finally, when compared with the three magazines in Lester and Smith's study (Table 1), two glaring differences are seen. Newspapers focus more extensively than magazines on sports, and magazines focus much more than newspapers on social problems.

Results

Numbers never tell the whole story. After looking at the newspapers, it is encouraging to notice a remarkable shift in the content of many of the images. During the pre-civil rights era, a time when racism probably factored into editorial decisions, human interest pictures were usually high. But that high percentage represented images of African-Americans as background servants and lazy or silly simpletons. Advertising images never showed African-Americans using the products – they were actors cast as servants and porters for Euro-American product users. Political, business, social problems, educational, and health issues received little if any treatment. Sporting events were featured but only to highlight an upcoming fight or to give details of a previous match. Given the low overall percentage for this era, African-Americans were effectively segregated from the pages of all four newspapers.

African-Americans learned to make noise and to be heard during the civil rights era and press coverage of their news events and social conditions dramatically increased. To its credit, the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* had a high social problems percentage. As might be expected, criminal news stories rose during this period, but so did social news, politics, business, educational, and health issues. Although many of the old stereotypes were still used for advertising images, more often African-Americans were seen using products – a clear indication that agencies and publishers were recognizing the economic resources of African-Americans and their more equal role in society.

The modern era is marked by a further rise in the overall African-American percentage with the number of African-American pictures increasing for each subject category. Gone are the negative racial stereotypes promoted by human interest and advertising images. African-Americans, when seen in most subject categories, are equal, productive members of society. However, the emphasis on sports, particularly in Chicago and San Francisco, communicates the hidden message that African-Americans are primarily valued for agility and strength during sporting events.

Overall, then, the number of African-American pictures has increased dramatically over the years. Yet stereotypical images are high and news of special interest to African-Americans is low.

Results for Each Newspaper

The New York Times – *Table 2.* Out of the four newspapers during the modern era, *The New York Times* has the lowest African-American overall percentage. However, those 1,837 pictures are distributed between the fifteen subject categories at a rate that is similar to the combined percentages

for all four newspapers. Given the attention sports and entertainment personalities get from the public, it is probably unrealistic to expect that the stereotypical category be less than 50 percent. Therefore, *The Times*, with its reputation for fair and objective reporting, perhaps serves as a model for the other newspapers in its story coverage. A disturbing trend seen in the modern era category, however, is an increased reliance on sports coverage of African-American athletes at the cost of a much lower advertising percentage. Athletic heroes, therefore, are filling the pages of the *Times'* sports section while the opportunity to show African-Americans within everyday situations using products and services in an advertising context is being dramatically reduced.

The **Chicago Tribune** – *Table 3*. Because the *Chicago Tribune* emphasizes sports activities so heavily, the other categories have reduced percentages. Race-blind, special interest, and advertising images are the lowest out of the four newspapers, as is the percentage given to social problems. Although the *Tribune* had the highest overall percentage (12.9) of African-American pictures, most of those pictures are stereotypical. Indeed, the 1990 statistics are much lower than the modern era's combined percentages as sports subjects alone get 65% and advertising images only represent 6.1% of the total.

The **Times-Picayune** – *Table 4*. From a dismal performance with African-Americans purposely excluded from the pages of the newspaper,[19] the editors of the *Picayune* have established a record in the modern era that exceeds that of the *New York Times*. In fact, the 1990 figures are consistent with the modern era's combined percentages. With a higher percentage of African-Americans living in New Orleans than in the other urban areas studied, coverage of African-Americans should exceed that of the other newspapers. However, the *Picayune*, as do all the newspapers in this study, rarely show images of African-Americans involved in scientific issues or breakthroughs. Political and business subjects should probably be higher, given the large African-American population in New Orleans. Nevertheless, the *Times-Picayune* serves as an example of a newspaper that has left its racist past behind.

The **San Francisco Chronicle** – *Table 5*. The results from San Francisco are mixed. Although race-blind, special interest, and advertising images are fairly well represented, there is a high emphasis on stereotypical images in both sports and entertainment categories. For 1990, the figures are not encouraging. Images of crime, sports, and entertainment subjects make up 58.6% of the total. With a slight shift away from sports, however, San Francisco would be more in line with the other newspapers. One bright side of the newspaper's coverage is that the modern era's overall percentage of African-American pictures is higher than for the state's overall African-American population. Unfortunately, the *Chronicle* is the only newspaper out of the four with such a showing.

Conclusions

Using Whitney Young's 1968 statement as a benchmark, it is clear that African-American pictorial coverage in the four U.S. daily newspapers used in this study is slightly better. Much progress to be made.

Crime, sports, and entertainment still remain the primary categories in which African-American pictures are used. Editors need to consider philosophies other than those based on always using the most dramatic, the finest technically, or the best composed photograph. Editors should make sure that the moment captured on film by a photographer during a breaking

news story is an accurate representation. A photograph of a news event, like its word counterpart, should always be truthful, set within a broader context and not stereotypical.

Percentages of photographs representing African-Americans should reflect the regional populations the newspapers serve. Clifford Christians of the University of Illinois talks eloquently about communitarianism – the idea of educating, informing, and helping those in a newspaper's community.[20] A newspaper does not only serve its readers or advertisers. A newspaper does not only serve its journalists. A newspaper serves its community. Part of the challenge to produce a daily document is to make sure that the entire community is served – regardless of whether some segments of the community subscribe to the newspaper or not.

Further recommendations include:

• Similar research should be conducted on medium-sized and small-town newspapers to see if subject percentages are similar to the large dailies in this study,

• Researchers should continue to monitor the coverage of these large newspapers to evaluate continued progress,

• Newspaper personnel directors should hire more minorities in their newsrooms to become sensitive to racial stereotypes and stories that shed light on African-American social problems, and

• Universities should continue to be sensitive to making minority appointments, promoting intercultural awareness and fairness, and recruiting students from minority high schools.

Although the number of African-American pictures has dramatically increased since the Watts riots, the newspapers featured in this study, for the most part, still concentrate their pictorial coverage of African-Americans on stereotypical portrayals. Perhaps the recent riots in Los Angeles can help to focus attention on solutions to this serious inequality.

NOTES

1. Carolyn Martindale, *The White Press and Black America* (NY: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 3.

2. Martindale, *White Press and Black America*.

3. "Commercials Crossing the Color Line," *Time*, 25 October 1968, 83.

4. Verdelle Lambert, "Negro Exposure in Look's Editorial Content," *Journalism Quarterly* 42 (Autumn 1964): 657-659.

5. Martindale, *White Press and Black America*, 1-4, 82.

6. Paul Lester and Ron Smith, "African-American Photo Coverage in *Life, Newsweek*, and *Time*, 1937-1988," *Journalism Quarterly* 67 (Spring 1990): 136.

7. Alice Sentman, "Black and White: Disparity in Coverage by *Life* Magazine from 1937 to 1972," *Journalism Quarterly* 60 (Autumn 1983): 501-508.

8. John Wheatley, "The Use of Black Models in Advertising," *Journal of Marketing Research* 8 (August 1971): 391.

9. Thomas Pettigrew, "Complexity and Change in American Racial Patterns: A Social Psychological View," *Daedalus* 94 (Fall 1965): 998.

10. *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (NY: Bantam, 1968), 383.

11. For the four newspapers studied, the Monday circulations are: *Times*

– 1,110,562; *Tribune* – 723,178; *Times-Picayune* – 265,080; and *Chronicle* – 553,433. *Editor & Publisher International Yearbook* (NY: The Editor & Publisher Company, 1992).

12. In New York, the African-American population percentage is 13.7; for Illinois the number is 14.7; for Louisiana the percentage is 29.4; and for California the figure is 7.7. *Population Profile of the United States: 1981.* U.S. Department of Commerce, ser. P-20, no. 374, 22.

13. See Michael D. Sherer, "Vietnam War Photos and Public Opinion," *Journalism Quarterly* 66 (Summer 1989): 391-392, for bibliographies on the informational and/or emotional power of pictures and studies using content analysis to answer questions about news photography.

14. Bert Woodburn, "Reader Interest in Newspaper Pictures," *Journalism Quarterly* 24 (Autumn 1947): 197; Susan Miller, "The Content of News Photos: Women's and Men's Roles," *Journalism Quarterly* 52 (Spring 1975): 72; and Roy Blackwood, "The Content of News Photos: Roles Portrayed by Men and Women," *Journalism Quarterly* 60 (Winter 1983): 711.

15. Guido Stempel, "Visibility of Blacks in News and News-Picture Magazines," *Journalism Quarterly* 48 (Summer 1971): 338-339.

16. Many of the content categories and descriptions were originally obtained from Alice Sentman's study.

17. The author thanks Linda Combs, John Gendall, Mary Ann Clayton, Matina Vourakis, and Leslie Snyder for their help in coding images.

18. Martindale, *White Press and Black America*, 55.

19. With only twenty-three pictures for the whole pre-civil rights era, percentage figures for that time period are misleading and not useful.

20. Clifford Christians, "Applying Social Philosophy to Journalism and Mass Communication Ethics: A Communitarian Perspective," University of Missouri/Freedom Forum 8th National Seminar on the Teaching of Ethics in Journalism, (June 4, 1992).