

SHADES OF GREY: COVERAGE BY THE BLACK AND WHITE PRESS IN FLORIDA

BY

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To my beloved parents and brother

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In response to the alienation, underrepresentation, and misrepresentations of Afro-Americans in mainstream newspapers, Afro-Americans started their own newspapers. Since the nation's first black newspaper---*Freedom's Journal*--- was published in 1827, the black press has served as information conduit and community representative for Afro-American community. Today, at least 278 black newspapers are printed across the U.S., with a circulation approaching 13 million. However, little scholarly attention has been paid to the black press in the United States.

The present study compared the coverage of two black newspapers and two white newspapers in Florida to find out the differences. It not only drew a picture of the content in the black press but also explored the extent to which the black press fulfills their commitment to better serve Afro-American community. Additionally, the study also examined how community diversity affects news content through comparing news coverage in the press in Miami and Jacksonville.

In total, 32 issues of newspapers were collected and 999 stories were coded. Content analysis was conducted to examine the differences of news coverage between the black press and the white press. Chi-square analysis was used to test how Afro-

Americans were portrayed in the black and white press, and the major story themes in the black press as well. Independent t-test was used to test source usage differences between the black and white press.

The findings on representations of Afro-Americans suggested that they appeared more frequently in sports stories but less frequently in crime and entertainment stories in the white press. However, they were represented more positively than negatively overall in the white press. In terms of major issues in the black press, the study found that more attention was addressed to stories of community affairs, politics, and religion in the black press than in the white press, which is consistent with communal and advocacy roles of the black press to serve the information needs of Afro-American community, and to fight for justice and proper rights for Afro-Americans. Differences were also found in source usage between the black and white press, which revealed that the black press used more non-official and Afro-American sources, while the white press mainly relied on male white official sources. Finally, the press in Miami used more Afro-American and female sources than that in Jacksonville, which suggested that the press in more racially diverse communities tends to represent more minorities and women in the coverage.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

News coverage is indispensable for people to know the outside world, to participate in civic activities, or to make decisions about their well-being. Ideally, a media system suitable for a democracy ought to provide its readers with some coherent sense of the broader social forces that affect the conditions of their everyday lives (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992). However, mainstream media coverage in reality report only a fraction of the massive events and activities happened around us. It not only simply mirrors the world but also filters its content, especially content important for minorities, through the values and views of non-minorities (Wilson II, Gutierrez, & Chao, 2003).

As early as the 1960s, the Kerner report (1968) said that the news media "reported and wrote from the standpoint of a white man's world...The ills of the ghetto, the difficulties of life there, and the Negro's burning sense of grievance were seldom conveyed" (p.366). It's been more than 40 years since the Kerner report was released. Although newspapers have devoted increasing attention to the coverage of Afro-Americans during the past decades, many argued that mainstream news coverage is still filtered through the eyes of the white majority (Martindale, 1989; Newkirk, 2000; Ramaprasad, 1996; Wilson, II, 1991). For example, Wilson & Gutierrez (1995) found that Afro-Americans are often stereotyped as lazy and prone to criminal activities and violence in mass media. They are underrepresented in almost all the sections of newspapers but are overrepresented in sports section (Grady, 2007).

When looking at the trends of media coverage of Afro-Americans in the past decades, the stereotypical coverage of Afro-Americans in mainstream media has risen

steadily since the 1950s, rather than decreasing along the time (Johnson, 1987). More importantly, those stereotypical ways of representing Afro-Americans in the media have changed from complete exclusion to symbolic tokens and cultural icons. Grady (2007) examined images of Afro-Americans in the advertisements of *Life* magazine dated from 1936 to 2000. The author found that Afro-American images changed from dark-skinned servants who anticipated and fulfilled the needs of whites to successful persons who were to exemplify that Afro-Americans can triumph over difficulty and adversity in the society (Grady, 2007). Additionally, Afro-American women are increasingly depicted as attractive and appealing exemplars since 1998 (Grady, 2007).

Wilson II, Gutierrez, and Chao (2003) generalized four developmental patterns of news coverage of minorities in mainstream news media. With the advent of the first mass medium--the penny press--in the 1830s, news media excluded people of color from their coverage due to their subordinate role in this society. The exclusion phase was followed by threatening issue phase, during which the fear for Afro-Americans was stirred up by media coverage of civil rights movement and emancipation. In the third phase, the confrontation phase, American news media generally approached coverage of race-related issues from the perspective of "us versus them" and encouraged conflict instead of conciliation. Finally, to restore social order after a period of confrontation between whites and non-whites, coverage in news media moved into the stereotypical news selection phase, which was designed to "neutralize white apprehension with regard to non-whites while accommodating the presence of people of color" (Wilson II et al., 2003, p.122). News media were replete with "success stories" that mainly reassured the whites that minorities are still subordinate and submissive as before and "those who

escaped their designated place are not a threat to society because they manifest the same values and ambitions of the dominant culture” (Wilson II et al., 2003, p.122).

The coverage of mainstream newspapers is often viewed among the Afro-American community with anger and resistance (Becker, Gerald, & Felicia, 1992). As Newkirk (2000) noted: "blacks are twice as likely as Hispanics, Asians, or whites to believe that the media are responsible for worsening race relations... and 62% of blacks are angry at least once a week over how the media cover racial issues" (NewKirk, 2000, p.18). Unsatisfied with the coverage of the mainstream press, Afro-Americans have responded to these misrepresentations by creating their own newspapers in many instances (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003).

Since the nation's first black newspaper, *Freedom's Journal* (1827) was published, black newspapers have not only provided news information for Afro-Americans, but also functioned as advocacy and educational tools for Afro-American community. Many Afro-American editors were also ministers and educators, seeking to provide hope and unity through their journalistic enterprises (Dann, 1971; Detweiler, 1922; Hutton, 1993; Washburn, 2006; Wolseley, 1971). As of the late 1990s, at least 278 black-owned and -operated newspapers are printed across the United States, with a circulation approaching 13 million (Owens, 1999).

While black-owned and -operated press may be more reflective of the Afro-American community, Croteau and Hoynes (2003) argued that the black press¹ ran the risk of losing a mass and broad audience by targeting only at the Afro-American

¹ In this study, the term “white press” refers to mainstream newspapers in the U.S., owned primarily by corporations. The term “black press” refers to the newspapers which are owned and operated independently by Afro-Americans.

community. Motamedi (1985) stated that, in order to survive in a dynamic unpredictable business climate, organizations must be adaptable, namely, be able to change their internal policies and procedures to meet the demands of the external environment, while at the same time maintaining their identity as they change (Motamedi, 1985). This suggests that, due to a relatively small readership compared to the white press, the dedication of the black press to serve the Afro-American community and their news quality is more likely to be moderated by the need to maintain economic success in a competitive media market. Others indicated that voices and perspectives from Afro-American journalists do not contribute to more support and trust of the press from Afro-Americans. For example, Cleary and Adams (2006) conducted a study comparing minority staffing levels with newspaper circulation and readers' trust in the press. The findings revealed that increased minority journalists in newsroom did not increase support for the newspaper from minorities by reading or subscribing to it. Nor did it demonstrate an increase in trust for the newspaper from minorities (Cleary & Adams, 2006).

The above perspectives about the black press lead to the essential questions: How does the coverage of Afro-Americans in the press that is owned and operated by Afro-Americans differ from that in the white press? To what extent does the black press fulfill its commitment to better serve Afro-Americans with realistic and objective coverage of the Afro-American community? To answer these questions, this comparative content analysis aimed to investigate the coverage of Afro-Americans in both mainstream and black newspapers. A small portion of previous studies have examined how the black and the white press differ in their coverage of certain issues,

such as coverage of crime, slavery reparations, and Hurricane Katrina (Dolan, Sonnett, & Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Dixon, 2008; Mastin, Campo, & Frazer, 2005). However, few systematically examined the overall coverage of Afro-Americans in the black press and how those portrayals compare to representations in the mainstream white press. In addition, a large number of previous studies on the black press are from Britain and Canada. Therefore, this study also adds to previous research on the coverage of the black press in the U. S.

The present study employs the theoretical perspective developed by Shoemaker and Reese (1996), which synthesizes various factors that affect news content into a five-level hierarchical model. The model includes micro-level factors, such as race and gender of journalist, and macro-level factors, including ownership and roles of media organizations, which are particularly relevant to the present study. With this focus, this study attempts to isolate the differences in the coverage between the black and the white press related to ownership.

The present study develops in the following way. Chapter 2 will discuss in detail the theoretical perspective and conceptualization of the main variables. In addition, previous literature that examined organizational differences between the black and the white press, the representations of Afro-Americans in the black and the white press, the most frequently covered issues in the black press, and the differences of source usage between the black and the white press will also be introduced. In chapter 3, research methods and specific procedures developed to examine hypotheses will be presented. Chapter 4 will illustrate tests and results for each hypothesis and research question.

Finally, chapter 5 will discuss the findings in chapter 4 and link the results to limitations and implications of present study.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Backgrounds

This study is built upon Shoemaker and Reese's (1996) theories of influences on mass media content. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) developed a five-level hierarchical model to describe how various factors influence news content. The five levels include individual level, media routines level, organizational level, extramedia level, and ideological level.

Individual level: According to the model, the lowest level of influence on news content comes from individual media workers. Because of the different backgrounds and values, reporters usually approached stories with predefined options that fit their view of what and how the story should be covered (Altheide, 1976). Among all the factors in the individual level, individual journalist's gender and race are closely related to the present study. A number of previous studies have examined how journalist's gender and race affect news content. Some argued that male and female reporters cover the same story differently. For example, Farley (1978) found that female magazine publishers covered the Equal Rights Amendment more favorably than their male counterparts. Others stated that female and minority journalists paid more attention to women and minorities in their coverage. Rodgers and Thorson (2003) analyzed the coverage by male and female reporters at three U.S. daily newspapers. Their study revealed that female used more diverse sources that included women and minorities. Another study suggested that minority journalists could communicate with and understand their groups better than white journalists (Greenberg, Burgoon,

Burgoon, & Korzenny, 1983; Lawrence, 1988). The finding indicates that minority journalists may produce better coverage of minorities because of familiarity.

Media routines level: Media routines also have an important influence on news content. News routines first provide a perspective that explains what is defined as news and then filter the content of the news coverage through the process of gatekeeping (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Since news routines certify the newsworthiness of the events that fall within them while ignoring others, they often distort news. As Altheide (1976) put it, “the organizational, practical, and other mundane features of newswork promote a way of looking at events which fundamentally distorts them” (Altheide, 1976, p.24). Shoemaker and Reese (1996) stated that most media routines are developed in response to practical and economic needs of media organizations. For example, objectivity is a ritual often served to defend the news product from charges of responsibility (Tuchman, 1977b). The present study incorporates two major media routines that affect news content.

The first one is audience-orientated routine. Since the size and demographic characteristics of the audience determine what kind of advertisers the media organization can attract, and ultimately lead to business success of the organization, both are valuable information to consider when creating news coverage. Schlesinger (1978) argued that news production routines embody assumptions about audiences:

When it comes to thinking about the kind of news most relevant to “the audience,” newsmen exercise their news judgment rather than going out and seeking specific information about the composition, wants or tastes of those who are being addressed (Schlesinger, 1978, pp.115-116).

The statement suggests that news decisions are made based on news producer's perception of the media's audience. Therefore, news coverage of the media might reflect the characteristics of its audience. This explains why media in racially diverse communities tends to use more minority sources (Hindman, Littlefield, Preston, & Neumann, 1999).

The second one is source-based routine. Media rely on external sources to create news. However, rather than including various sources available to journalists, they depend heavily on "routine channels", such as official proceedings (trials, legislative, and hearings), press conferences, and press releases (Sigal, 1973). The reason that journalists rely on official sources is that they could get a convenient and regular flow of authoritative information from the government rather than doing time-consuming research by themselves (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Another reason is that government officials and experts provide authoritative validation of the news product (Hallin, 1989). Interestingly, source-based routines at the same time strengthen the connection between journalists and official sources, which in turn reinforces the reliance on official sources and helps journalists obtain more exclusives (Sigal, 1973).

Organizational level: In terms of organizational level, media ownership, the roles media organizations perform, the way they are structured, the organizational policies, and the methods used to enforce those policies are the factors that exert influences on news content. Among them are the two most influential ones: media organization roles, which determine the organization structure, and ownership, which influences all other factors (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Media roles differ between mainstream media organizations and minority media organizations. For most mainstream media organizations, the primary goal is to make profits despite the fact that they are obligated to produce quality news (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Professional objectives of news media precede the economic goal only when there are sufficient revenues to ensure the organizational survival, otherwise, they are sacrificed for profit maximization (Sigal, 1973). Conversely, the major role of minority media is to serve as information conduits and community representative. As information conduits, minority media not only meet specific information needs of the community but also serve as bridge between the community and the rest of the society (Hardt, 1979; Ojo, 2006). In regards to community representative, minority media help build up the sense of community identity and preserve the community culture (Conboy, 2002; Hardt, 1979).

The ultimate power that affects news content lies in media ownership. Media owners involved in setting the goals of the organization, building up the organizational structure, enacting and implementing policies, appointing top executives, or even making final decisions on news under certain circumstances (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Thus, some argued that there is a direct relationship between the owner's attitude toward an issue and the treatment of the issue in the owner's press (Baistow, 1985; Donohew, 1967; Parenti, 1986). For example, Mann (1974) found that pro-war newspapers gave smaller crowd estimates than did antiwar newspapers in reporting anti-Vietnam War demonstrations. Besides media owners, the ever-increasing concentration of ownerships among media organizations leads to the homogenization of news content (Bagdikian, 1992).

Extramedia level: factors in extramedia level include a variety of influences on news content that operate outside of the media organization (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Two factors in this level that are pertinent to the present study are external sources and community characteristics. Influences from sources include the relationship between journalists and sources, and the process of source selection during news production (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). As far as community characteristics is concerned, the economy, culture, as well as its physical and social layout of the community where the media operate, all affect the way the media operate and how successful they are (Phillips, Boylan, & Yu, 1982). The relations between the media and the community also affect news content. Some newspaper publishers stated that it is important for the press to be “community boosters,” helping to promote economic development of the town (Case, 1993). The Gannett newspaper chain even required its publishers and editors to become more aware of community issues and to change newspaper content to better serve the reader, which is called “the reader-driven newspaper” (Underwood, 1993, p.42)

Ideological level: the widest level of the hierarchical model is the ideological level. According to Becker (1984), an ideology “is an integrated set of frames of reference through which each of us sees the world and to which all of us adjust our actions. It governs the way we perceive our world and ourselves; it controls what we see as ‘natural’ or ‘obvious’” (Becker, 1984, p.69). The influence of ideology on news content is reflected in the way that it serves the interest and reinforces the power of certain class, gender, or race group. They are not imposed directly, but are constituted by the institutional, occupational, and cultural practices of the mass media (Shoemaker

& Reese, 1996). The theory of hegemony is often used by cultural critics to explain the influence of ideology on the media. It posited that the culture's most powerful group---the whites---obtain consent for their leadership as well as maintain the social structures and their primary institutions through the use of ideological norms, but disadvantage women and racial minorities (Hardin, Dodd & Lauffer, 2006). Scholars also argued that mass media are key to the function of hegemony in the United States by sheer repetition of the power structures that privilege the whites (Hardin, Dodd & Lauffer, 2006).

The five levels of the model are not independent but interconnected in a way that the lower level is subjected to the influence of the upper levels. For example, although the journalists' backgrounds and values influence news content, the influence is mediated to a great degree by the media routines if journalists work for the media for a long time and if they want their stories to be used by the media. However, the media routines and policies are contingent on the roles and ownership of the media organization, which is ultimately affected by various external factors and the ideology of our society (Shoemaker & Stephen, 1996). The present study is mainly focused on the organizational level of the model, although it touches other levels more or less. The following section examines how the black press and the white press differ in the organizational level.

Ownership Differences between the Black and White Press

Adebayo, Adekoya, and Ayadi (2001) described a minority business as a "business enterprise that is owned and operated by one or more socially or economically disadvantage persons, where such disadvantage arise from cultural, racial, or severe economic circumstances" (Adebayo et al., 2001, p.167). In this sense,

the black press differs from the white press in the way that it is a minority business by and for Afro-Americans who are forced into a racial disadvantage position in this white-dominated society. How does the difference affect the press? According to Hall (1997), theories of enunciation suggest that although we speak, "in our own name, of ourselves and from our own experience, nevertheless who speaks, and the subject who is spoken of, are never identical, never exactly in the same place" (Hall, 1997, pp. 231-232). Similarly, Hodge (1979) argued that a newspaper "contains a version of the social world, but we can only understand the significance of this world if we can relate it to the world it claims to refer to, and if we know whose this version of the world is, and whom it is for" (Hodge, 1979, p. 235). Therefore, different from the white press, the black press attempts to write and speak "from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific" to Afro-Americans (Hall, 1997, p.232).

In terms of the impact of newspaper ownership on news content, research has been mixed. Some scholars suggest that there's no direct relationship between ownership and news content because owners' editorial power is constrained by multiple factors, such as the sheer size of the media (Negrine, 1989; Seaton & Pimlott, 1987). Others claim that owners maintain control of the daily operations of their media organizations so that they influence directly the news content (Baistow, 1985; Golding & Murdock, 1978; Parenti, 1986).

Some previous research studied the differences between group and independent-owned newspapers. For example, Coulson (1994) examined whether group- or independently- owned newspapers are perceived as producing better news quality. The results revealed that journalists at independent-owned newspapers more often rated

their papers' commitment to quality local coverage as excellent. They were also more likely to strongly agree that their newspapers provided an appropriate amount of local coverage.

As far as the coverage of race issues in the press is concerned, Johnson and Dixon (2008) believed the content of racial news is shaped more or less by the race of media owners. For example, Afro-Americans are frequently and consistently stereotyped in the white press because of the lasting racial perceptions of whites towards Afro-Americans (Johnson & Dixon, 2008). Although media representations of Afro-Americans have been changing along with time, the nature of those images as being racial and stereotypical never changed (Grady, 2007).

Organizational behavior theory suggested that the prospects for change in organizations are limited by two factors. One is "resistance in personality variables such as anxiety, insecurity, and selective perception (Watson, 1971). The other is "resistance in social structure," including hierarchy, systemic coherence, and conformity to norms (Watson, 1971). Both factors help to explain the racial representations of Afro-Americans in the white press. McConahay (1986) argued that personality variables such as anxiety, insecurity, and selective perception are classic components of modern forms of racism. People are more likely to show negative behaviors or thoughts on racial issues when they are in ambivalent situations or hold racial prejudice in their minds (McConahay, 1986). In addition, people with these characteristics often make it harder to change the situations of how Afro-Americans are treated in the media and the society, so the status quo is maintained. Therefore, journalists in mainstream media organizations where white culture dominates are more likely to reinforce prevailing

racial images of Afro-Americans. Similarly, the hierarchical nature of newswork with its formal editor-reporter relationships, the need to function as a coherent unit to produce news in a timely fashion according to exacting formats (Altheide, 1976), and the conformity-producing socialization of journalists (Breed, 1955), all contribute to Watson's (1971) notion of structural resistance to change.

From an audience perspective, the impact of media owners' race on news content is also embodied by the different news preference between Afro-American and white audience. Extensive evidence has shown that media preferences differ sharply by race. For example, the radio station formats collectively attracting two-thirds of Afro-American listening attracted less than 3 percent of white listening (Waldfoegel, 1999). Television programs that were top rated among whites tended to be bottom rated among Afro-Americans, and vice versa (Sterngold, 1998). Afro-Americans are more likely to purchase a daily newspaper in markets with a larger Afro-American population, and they are less likely to purchase a newspaper in markets with a larger white population (George & Waldfoegel, 2003). The findings suggest that it is necessary for the black press to produce different news content from the white press since their audiences have quite opposite preference for news.

Different Roles of the Black and White Press

It's well known that the major professional role of news media is to provide realistic and objective coverage. However, Wilson II, Gutierrez, & Chao (2003) argued that the U.S. media failed to achieve its professional objectives by treating members of racial and ethnic minority groups differently from the majority. The white press transmits meanings that are consistent with the racial perceptions of dominant institutions. By doing this, they make minorities marginalized and subjugated. Since the portrayals and

news coverage in media are the main sources for people to learn about the world and their society, they also contribute to spread and consolidate the racial images of minorities through racial media products (Wilson et al., 2003). In response, the black press appeals to readers who feel unsatisfied toward dominant institutions. It makes visible Afro-Americans who are underrepresented in the white press and offers the opportunity for the group to challenge those institutions responsible for the malfunctions of the mainstream media (Huspek, 2004, p.219).

The Roles of the White Press

In their longitudinal study on the American journalists' attitudes towards the journalistic roles of the press in the 21st century, Weaver et al. (2007) proposed four kinds of roles of the press, including interpretive, disseminator, adversarial, and populist mobilize, among which the interpretive role has been considered the most important among American journalists since the 1980s. Professor Jane Singer at the University of Iowa explained the reason for American journalists' favorable attitude towards the interpretive role of the press as the following: "as the explosion of information continues, there will be an increasing need for skilled journalists to sort through it, filter out what's important and help put it in perspective" (Cited in Weaver, 2007, p.142). It suggests that journalists' personal bias is intrinsic to the interpretive role of the press. Since whites still dominate the newsroom in the U.S., the news coverage of Afro-Americans in the white press is filtered through the lens of white journalists' personal bias. In addition, since the white press collaborates and relies on dominant institutions to tell stories, it is inevitable for them to convey those prevalent ideologies in dominant institutions, such as racism and sexism, to the readership and thus shape the perceptions of the readers.

In addition, the white newspapers, which are usually considered as mass media, claim a power to legitimate its status as representative of "the people", the majority, as opposed to the powerful, the elite, or the minority within the society (Conboy, 2002, p.7). Some argued that it is the change from class media to mass medium that harms the news coverage in the white press in terms of diversity. Mass media "shaped and reinforced the collective consciousness needed to attract large numbers of people in a heterogeneous society" (Wilson et al., 2003, p.44). At the same time, media that couldn't attract mass audience were consigned to a second-class status. Those minority groups "were either ignored by the media or portrayed in a way that made them palatable to the mass audience" (Wilson et al., 2003, p.42). People of color thus have been always portrayed through symbols and stereotypes in mass entertainment and news media in order to cater for the whites. As many media critics put, "what is happening today, unfortunately, is that the lowest form of popular culture - lack of information, misinformation, disinformation, and a contempt for the truth or the reality of most people's lives - has overrun real journalism" (Bernstein, 1992, Cited in Carter & Allan, 2000, p.132).

Finally, some have argued that the white press attached more importance to its economic goal of making profits, compared to the black press. For example, Hesmondhalgh (2002) stated that mainstream media owners' perception about the role of the media is that, "whatever the motivations among individuals and across different roles, cultural-industry companies release texts primarily in order to make money" (Hesmondhalgh, 2002, p.7).

The Roles of the Black Press

In contrast to the white press, the black press undertakes quite different media roles. While the white press collaborates with dominant institutions to define stories, represent facts, and construct the perception of audiences in accord with existing power arrangements, the black press aligns itself with the community (Huspek, 2004). This study examines three main functions of the black press: the communal role, the advocacy role and the dual role.

The Communal Role: Ethnic media, which are usually established by an individual or a group of individuals from diverse ethnic groups, contribute to a sense of community identity for the people that they serve by meeting the specific information needs of the community (Ojo, 2006). According to Conboy (2002), the black press claims a status as representative of the Afro-American community and fulfills the demands of the community (Conboy, 2002). They are the "communal voice" on issues of utmost importance to their audience or readership (Meadows et al., 2002, p.3). Moreover, the black press perceives itself as a significant bridge between the Afro-American community and the other communities for the purpose of "building society together; giving leadership to the public; helping to establish the public sphere; providing for the exchange of ideas between leaders and masses; satisfying needs for information; providing society with a mirror of itself; and acting as the conscience of society" (Hardt, 1979, Cited in McQuail, 2005, p.89).

Others argued that ethnic media represent the cultures of various ethnic groups and could facilitate cultural citizenship of that ethnic group through differentiating it from others (Meadows et al., 2002, p.3). Hall (1997) explored cultural identity as a shared culture "which people with shared history and ancestry hold in common" (Hall, 1997,

pp.232-233). Meadows (1995) stated that media are an important cultural resource that can be used to win consent for particular ideologies. Ethnic groups and individuals have adopted media to strengthen their identity, heritage and culture. In this sense, the black press owned and operated by Afro-Americans, offers a perfect forum to construct and share the Afro-American culture among the Afro-American community.

However, ethnic media could also become a center of cultural tensions within the ethnic community, if there are differences of political orientations and religious beliefs between the people in the community and the people who run the media (Ojo, 2006). For example, in a study of the Spanish-language media in New York during the 1980s, Downing (1992) found that the news stories in these media tend to reflect the political views and ideological positions of the elite members of the American Hispanic community who own these media, which is quite different from the larger community.

The Advocacy Role: If communal role refers to the function of the black press as cultural preserver and communicator within the Afro-American community, the advocacy role highlights the function of the black press as the challenger of the white press. Since the black press was established in response to the misrepresentation, underrepresentation and invisibility of visible minorities in the mainstream media (Ojo, 2006), it has served in an advocacy role, taking on the responsibility of challenging racial injustices from its inception (Lacy, Stephens, & Soffin, 1991; Wolseley, 1990). It provides a place where Afro-American voices and perspectives that are not represented in the mainstream media become visible (Wolseley, 1990). The black press, different from the white press, makes little pretense of objectivity, but instead stresses advocacy and presents news issues from an Afro-American perspective (Clawson, Strine, &

Waltenburg, 2003). As the media that are forced into a secondary place in our society, Ogunyemi (2007) suggested that the black press is hampered by financial responsibility and its vitality actually lies in providing a forum for readers to express ideas and challenging dominant views.

The Dual Role: Subervi-Velez (1986) suggested that ethnic media performs the "dual role", which refers to the fact that ethnic media are not only tools of cultural preservation, and also at the same time agents of assimilation of ethnic minority audiences to the dominant mainstream culture and values. A study by the Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ, 2006) found that Afro-Americans use the black press "more often as supplements to mainstream news outlets rather than replacements,"

Ogunyemi (2007) suggested that one could answer the question whether Afro-American readers use their press as replacement to the mainstream press through two ways. One is to match the circulation of the black press to the population of the Afro-American community. The other is to examine the content of the black press to determine to what extent it understands the information needs of its readers. Both ways will be used in this study to examine how the black press serves the Afro-American community and how its coverage differs from that in the white press.

Coverage in the Black and White Press

Media representations are significant to both the subjects and the audience of the media because "they provide ways of describing and at the same time of regarding and thinking about these groups and categories" (Pickering, 2001, p.xiii). Based on previous discussion of the differences of ownership and journalistic function, it could be expected that the black press and the white press provide different news coverage of Afro-Americans through different perspectives. There is indeed support from existing

literature. For example, in his study on the coverage of Afro-Americans in the black and the white newspapers and broadcasting outlets in Boston in 1986, Johnson (1987) found that in the white newspapers the dominant picture of the city's Afro-American neighborhoods was about crime and drugs. The black press, however, showed these neighborhoods as also involved in efforts to improve education, business, housing and community appearance. Similar to Johnson (1987), the majority of previous studies on the coverage in the black and the white press focused on how the two kinds of newspapers cover Afro-Americans on certain issues, such as crime and sports, especially, how the white press stereotyped the images of Afro-Americans in news coverage.

Stereotypes of Afro-Americans in the White Press

Media portrayals of Afro-Americans are largely negative (Martindale, 1990). For example, in crime stories, news media tend to depict Afro-Americans as more dangerous than whites accused of similar crimes (Entman, 1994). In political stories, news media make Afro-Americans appear more demanding of special government favoritism than whites (Entman, 1994). Moreover, news media not only dramatically exaggerate the proportion of Afro-Americans as poor but also portray the poor as more Afro-American than is really the case (Gilens, 1996). Other literature on media representations of Afro-Americans revealed deliberate racism in the mainstream media coverage of issues relating to this group of people (Ojo, 2006). The lifestyles and experiences of Afro-Americans, especially men, are still continually being "filtered through the fears and fantasies of a dominant white culture" (Fleras, 1995, p.407). According to Gilroy (1987), within the western culture, people of color have been represented as a series of problems, objects, and victims. Afro-Americans are often

stereotyped as "criminals," "villains or victims," or "buffoons and folky sitcom types" (Cuff, 1990). Henry and Tator (2003) conducted a critical analysis of two national daily newspapers in Canada. Their results have shown that Afro-Americans are depicted as the undesirable and dangerous "others," a threat to the social order, and a symbol of danger. Moreover, the studied newspapers ignored the diversity and the everyday life activities of the Afro-American community. The authors also argued that the most pervasive and persuasive rhetorical strategy to stereotype the images of Afro-Americans is through racialization of crime (Henry & Tator, 2003).

Other common stereotypical images of Afro-Americans in the white press include athletes and entertainers (Martindale, 1990). Hardin, Dodd, Chance, and Walsdorf (2004) examined newspaper coverage of Olympic athletes during the 2000 Olympic Games. They concluded that both Afro-American male and female were overrepresented in media during the Sydney Olympics compared to all the athletes, and Afro-American athletes were disproportionately represented in strength sports, especially boxing (Hardin, Dodd, Chance, & Walsdorf, 2004, p.212). Although some considered it the improvement of image representation of Afro-Americans in media, they argued that overrepresentation of Afro-Americans in sports coverage reinforces the stereotype of Afro-Americans as "brutes and savages" (Hardin et al., 2004, p.224). As entertainers, Afro-American women are increasingly depicted as attractive and appealing exemplars since 1998 (Grady, 2007). Martindale (1990) suggested that the press tends to represent Afro-Americans who fulfill these types of stereotypical images, while largely ignoring those who do not fit these images.

Although media attention to coverage of Afro-Americans has been increasing since the 1950s, stereotypical representations of Afro-Americans have never disappeared, despite the achievements of Afro-Americans in the society (Grady, 2007). Instead, they transformed into various forms in different time periods. Ogunyemi (2007) pointed out that media coverage of Afro-Americans changed from the association to prostitution and gambling in the 1950s to association with housing shortages and overcrowding in the 1960s, and finally to association with immigration, mugging, and urban rioting in the 1970s and 1980s. However, there are some positive changes. For example, Martindale (1990) found an increase in the proportion of coverage of everyday life activities of Afro-Americans in the white press. The greatest changes in coverage of everyday life activities of Afro-Americans were in the political activities and the arts.

Fleras (2001) argued that the stereotyping is intrinsic to the media operational dynamic because the industry is constructed "around simplifying information for audiences to consume by tapping into a collective portfolio of popular and unconscious images, both print and visual, each of which imposes a readily identifiable frame or narrative spin" (Fleras, 2001, p.318). This kind of simplified information then becomes common knowledge for the audience of the media to judge or depict people who are alike the images in the media. They gradually become stereotypes.

Apart from the institutional operational dynamic of the media, the monopoly of the media industry by white Americans is another factor that contributes to the unfair representations of Afro-Americans in the media. In fact, the world's media industry is dominated by nine U.S.-based transnational media corporations, the largest two of which are Time Warner and Disney whose sales exceed 20 billion (McChesney, 1997).

Since media corporations are mainly controlled by white Americans, there is a good chance that they produce news content that favors white Americans. More importantly, the control of the media by a handful of media giants has led to the homogenization of the media landscapes, which simply reinforces the racial stereotypes through repetition of the news in different media organizations. As Henry (1999) put it, the end product of this homogenization is “the production and enforcement of the cultural political ideologies and Eurocentric views of the elites” (Henry, 1999, p.347). Moreover, since whites account for more than 80% in both buying power and population share in the U.S., they are still the majority of the society and have more market (Humphreys, 2000). Media owners therefore could easily target them to maximize their profits and acquire a significant market share, at the expense of neglecting minority people or representing them in the media based on the whites’ interest (Ojo, 2006).

Finally, the lack of Afro-American editors and journalists in the newsrooms of major newspapers could also be partly responsible for the misrepresentations of Afro-Americans in the press. It is because many journalists in the newsrooms of the white press are "largely bound by the dominant cultures within which they operate, including embedded societal prejudices, stereotypes, and populist frames of thinking" (Mahtani, 2001, p.348).

Major Issues in the Black Press

The focus of the black press is in sharp contrast to the approach of the white press, which usually represents Afro-Americans in crime news or feature news stories that are exclusively about the cultural days or festivals of the ethnic group (Ojo, 2006). La Brie III (1979) conducted a survey among 75 prominent Afro-American journalists in 1971. The result revealed that society news and sports were the most frequently

covered issues in the black press. Three decades later, another survey that was conducted among Afro-American audience in UK found that six issues in the press are particularly concerned by the Afro-American community, including homeland and international news, political news, information about schools, information about religion, entertainment news such as sports, and indigenous films and film celebrity news. Among them, general politics is a prime subject of discussion, which takes up 40% of the news stories in the newspapers studied (Ogunyemi, 2006). Similarly, Ojo (2006) found that politics, together with employment, cultural identity, investment, parenting and social services, business entrepreneurship, and immigration affairs, received ample news coverage in Canadian Afro-American newspapers.

The emphasis on politics in the black press is not surprising when considering the history of black politics. The emergence of politics among Afro-American community, which is termed by scholars as black politics, can be traced back to colonial times when Africans suffered oppression and frustration forced upon them by the colonizers (Johnson, 1971). It sprouted out of the occasional outbreaks of rioting, murder, and insubordination, and finally grew to the form of political activities such as electing local officials or developing political organizations (Johnson, 1971). Black politics in the U.S. is deeply associated with and developed from civil rights movement as a force to challenge the white supremacy and racial discrimination.

The initial ferment of black politics in the U.S. was the practice of mass mobilization, including boycotts against segregation and disfranchisement, litigation, lobbying, and sustained protests (Lawson, 2008). Later, this protest politics transformed to the new black politics---electoral politics--- in which Afro-Americans transferred their

numerical potential into voting strength (Dawson, 1994). In order to secure this political power, election-oriented organizations were developed and efficient campaigns were conducted (Campbell & Feagin, 1975). Since Afro-Americans have suffered from white supremacy and racial discrimination till today, politics has become an important part in Afro-Americans' life as a way to gain fair treatment and proper rights. Therefore, this study assumes that politics will be one of the issues covered most frequently in the black press. However, politics in this study is not confined to black politics but general politics. Furthermore, with the election of president Obama as the first Afro-American president in the U.S., it could be expected that there will be an increase in the coverage of general politics in the black press.

Although politics plays a significant role in Afro-Americans' resistance to white supremacy, it is actually religion that unites the black community. Afro-Americans created their own unique and distinctive religious worldview "that is related both to their African heritage, which envisaged the whole universe as sacred, and to their conversion to Christianity during slavery and its aftermath" (Lincoln & Mamiya, 2003, p.2). They found resonance of the experience of oppression with the suffering humiliation, death, and eventual triumph of Jesus in the resurrection (Lincoln & Mamiya, 2003). The unique religion among Afro-American community is also embodied in the key religious elements of the black churches, which is "the preacher, the music, and the frenzy" (W.E.B. Du Bois, cited in Lincoln & Mamiya, 2003, p.5).

Lincoln and Mamiya (2003) stated the black church was the cultural womb of the Afro-American community. Not only did it nurture young talent for musical, dramatic, and artistic development, it also helped and supported the establishment of all the other

institutions in Afro-American community, such as schools, banks, insurance companies, the black college fraternities and sororities, and most importantly, the black press (Lincoln & Mamiya, 2003). This explains why Afro-American editors are often ministers served in churches (Dann, 1971; Detweiler, 1922; Hutton, 1993; Washburn, 2006; Wolseley, 1971). Given the special relationship between black churches and the black press, there is a good reason to predict that religion is another issue that might be most frequently covered in the black press. Religion in this study includes any religion activities, church activities, and activities or speeches of bishops and ministers.

Another thing that makes Afro-Americans different from the majority whites is the communal nature of the group, which refers to the linkage of every individual to the community in an intensely interconnected security system (Lincoln & Mamiya, 2003). This communal nature is also embodied in the black press. Previous studies revealed that the black press is more likely to provide news content that is unique to Afro-American communities. For example, a study on the black press in Britain revealed that news coverage in the black press reflects issues of common concerns to the African diasporas in UK, such as immigration, and race relations (Ogunyemi, 2007). In the United States, Mastin, Campo, & Frazer (2005) conducted a content analysis to examine slavery reparations coverage in four mainstream and four black newspapers for a 20-year period from 1982-2002. The study revealed that the majority of the coverage, almost 80 percent, was in the black press. Moreover, the black press provided almost exclusive pro-reparations coverage, while the majority of the coverage in the white press provided opposite views (Mastin, Campo, & Frazer, 2005).

The coverage of issues particular to the Afro-American community is consistent with the communal role of the black press, which is to provide Afro-Americans with community information, unite the community, and preserve the culture of the community. Therefore, this study assumes that the black press will attach more attention to community affairs than the white press. Community affairs in this study include not only news content unique to the Afro-American community, such as the history of civil rights movement and slavery, but all kinds of activities happened in the community around where the press is published.

Today, with the growing population and the enhanced socioeconomic status of Afro-Americans in the United States, more Afro-Americans are represented in the white press to appeal to this potential market. However, some stated that, compared to the white press targeting the majority whites in the society, the black press has the advantage of attracting advertising revenue from the Afro-American community because it builds its strength around local knowledge of the Afro-American community and around a deep understanding of what they want (Ogunyemi, 2007). Besides, as presented before, media coverage of Afro-Americans in the white press still keeps the residual of racial and biased perspectives. Although more Afro-Americans appear in the white press nowadays, the increasing number of Afro-Americans in the press doesn't translate into the enhanced significance and equity of Afro-Americans. Based on previous discussion, the following hypotheses are presented:

H1a: Afro-Americans will appear more frequently in crime news in the white press than in the black press.

H1b: Afro-Americans will appear more frequently in sports news in the white press than in the black press.

H1c: Afro-Americans will appear more frequently in entertainment news in the white press than in the black press

H2a: Political stories will be covered more frequently in the black press than in the white press.

H2b: Community affairs stories will be covered more frequently in the black press than in the white press.

H2c: Religion stories will be covered more frequently in the black press than in the white press.

Source Differences

Authority of Source: Authority of source in this study specifically refers to whether the source in the story is official or non-official. Research that looked at sources in news coverage found media tended to use official sources which come from institutional, elite, or official spheres of life (Wittebols, 1995). The most often cited official sources are government and business sources that provide authoritative and credible information (Lacy & Coulson, 2000). Later, media started to include non-official sources from other fields to avoid using only a narrow range of official sources in news coverage (Lacy & Coulson, 2000). Coverage in the white press and the black press also differs in the sources cited. Generally, the white press relies heavily upon official sources and thus benefits from it in terms of credibility (Huspek, 2004). This could be explained by the "continuity of institutions," in which reciprocal legitimation is produced through close working relations (Foucault, 1979, p.299). Because the white press is legitimized by the institutions of our society at first, they are granted easy access to

official sources for insider information. The more they rely on official sources, the more official sources they will attract. Miller (1993) argued that knowledge produced by official sources, such as professionals and other influential individuals, is regarded as credible and legitimate. Moreover, it undermines other ways of knowing, such as the knowledge from experience, which are often assigned little credibility. Since the white press tends to rely on official sources, therefore, it is considered as credible.

On the other hand, it has been noted that the black press, usually considered as an alternative press, commonly use non-official sources, such as non-governmental organizations, grassroots voices, activists, the public educators, and minority community leaders (Eyerman & Jaminson, 1991; Huspek, 2004). Smith (1987) suggested that non-official sources are not credible because they make their knowledge from experience, interests, and other peculiar ways of knowing the world of a marginalized group, which are not legitimized by the society. Huspek (2004) also pointed out that these non-official sources are usually considered less credible because they may offer claims that challenge the so-called officials on whom journalists depend to do their job. Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses are presented:

H3a: The white press will use significantly more official sources than the black press.

H3b: The black press will use significantly more non-official sources than the white press.

Race of Source: In general, white sources are overwhelmingly overrepresented in news media in the United States. Ziegler and White (1990) found that out of the 1,461 sources used by the media they studied, 81% were whites. A study of news articles and

photos in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* found the same result that male white sources dominated all sections of the newspaper (Rodger, Thorson, & Antecol, 2000). Even when Afro-American sources were cited, they were rarely presented as experts and were more likely presented as sports and entertainment figures (Entman & Rojecki, 2000). It is not surprising that whites dominate the press as sources. Gans (1979) stated that news sources are often the “knowns”, people who are already prominent. In this society, they are white males, the powerful "experts" who influence policy makers to impose policies that put marginalized groups at disadvantage (Hatty, 1991). However, differences were found in race of sources cited in the black and white press. Johnson & Dixon (2008) conducted a study to analyze crime news concerning Afro-Americans in both mainstream and black-owned media organizations in Boston during 30-day periods in 1986 and 2001. Their findings revealed that mainstream news media rarely featured commentary from persons of color, whereas news in the black media were nearly always using Afro-American sources (Johnson & Dixon, 2008). White sources in the media also differ from Afro-American sources in perspectives about an issue. The study on Los Angeles riot in 1968 found that whites perceived the purpose of the riot as changing white attitudes and bringing economic aid to the ghetto, while Afro-Americans interpreted it as a way of seeking white attention to the mistreatment and neglect of Afro-Americans, the outcome of which is more optimistic (Sears & Tomlinson, 1968).

The reason for the difference is that whites are the cultural "outsiders" to many problems in Afro-American community, and therefore, they could not understand well about those problems or they filter their interpretation through the lens of their own culture and beliefs (Hatty 1991). Another reason is that reporters often seek sources

based on familiarity and accessibility (Armstrong, 2004; Craft, Wanta, & Lee, 2003). The black press use more Afro-American sources because they are of the same backgrounds as the reporters and are easy to approach both physically and mentally. Zeldes and Fico (2005) found in their study that minority reporters use minority sources in their story almost twice as often as would white reporters. Finally, using more Afro-American sources with different perspectives from whites embodies the black press' role of challenging the white press and speaking for Afro-Americans. Therefore, the following hypotheses are presented:

H4a: The white press will use significantly more white sources than the black press.

H4b: The black press will use significantly more black sources than the white press.

Gender of Source: Many studies have found that women are underrepresented in news stories (Rodgers & Thorson, 2003), and news photographs (Blackwood, 1983; Miller, 1975; Rodgers & Thorson, 2000). In addition, Potter's study of newspapers from 1913, 1933, 1963, and 1983 found that the proportion of women portrayed in the press decreased over time (Len-Ríos, Rodgers, Thorson, & Yoon, 2005). Regarding the gender of source, Freedman, Fico, and Love (2007) found in their study on the newspaper coverage of male and female candidates in US senate races that male sources were cited 14 times more than female sources in newspaper coverage. As a matter of fact, male sources are not only represented more frequently in news coverage, but they also appear more as experts than female sources, who usually are shown as nonexperts or ordinary people (Liebler & Smith, 1997). The way how female

sources are cited in news coverage reflects the fact that they are not only symbolic annihilated but also placed to a lower public status than males in the press (Armstrong, 2004). However, according to Armstrong (2002), women are more likely to appear in newspapers in more ethnically diverse communities, specifically, women are given more attention and emphasis in those communities. The finding leads to the following hypothesis:

H5: The black press will use significantly more female sources than the white press.

Impact of Community Demographics on News Coverage

Previous research has also examined how community characteristics, such as community size and demographic diversity, affect newspaper goals and content (Jeffres, Cutietta, Sekerka, & Lee, 2000; Stone & Morrison, 1976). Stone and Morrison (1976) said that the goal of the smaller newspapers is to be the community's voice. Hindman, Littlefield, Preston, and Neumann (1999) argued that editors in a racially diverse community tend to give more coverage and focus to minorities and women. Similarly, Armstrong (2002) found that news media in communities in ethnically diverse areas give more attention and emphasis to women in news coverage. Further, Jeffres et al. (2000) found racial diversity within a community is positively associated with news editors' views of the importance of racial diversity within news content. The authors also found a positive correlation between racial diversity of the community and the importance of civic journalism and activity (Jeffres et al., 2000), which suggests that these publications may shift their content goals based in part on the demographic makeup of their circulation areas. Given these findings, it seems likely that the

demographic makeup of communities may influence news content. This study, then, proposes the following research question:

RQ: How does community diversity affect news coverage in both the black and white press?

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this study is content analysis, “a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables” (Kerlinger, 2000). Previous studies used content analysis mainly for one of the five purposes: describing communication content, testing hypotheses of message characteristics, comparing media content to the “real world,” assessing the image of particular groups in society, and establishing a starting point for studies of media effects (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003, p.150). For example, Mastro and Greenberg (2000) used content analysis to examine television portrayals of Afro-Americans and Latinos to assess the image of particular groups in society. Similarly, this study used content analysis for the same purpose---that is, to assess how Afro-Americans are covered in both the white and the black press.

Sample

According to a survey conducted by La Brie III in 1979, the black press clustered in five U.S. states, including Florida, California, Texas, New York, and Illinois, all of which contained almost 40 percent of the black press. Among them, Florida, which has 17 newspapers, has the largest number of black-owned newspapers. The most prominent is *The Miami Times* which was founded in 1923 (La Brie III, 1979). Therefore, Florida serves as an ideal area to compare coverage of the black and white press. Two newspapers were chosen in Miami and Jacksonville, respectively, with one white newspaper and one black newspaper in each city.

The two cities were selected not only because they were the two of the most populous cities in Florida, but the demographic makeup of the two cities suggests that

they are quite different in terms of racial diversity. Compared to Jacksonville which has 62.3 percent white population and 30.1 percent Afro-American population, Miami is a more diverse region, with only about 8 percent of the population labeled as white and 22 percent being Afro-American (the U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

In Miami, the selected white press is *The Miami Herald*. It is a daily newspaper founded in 1903, with a circulation of 191,873 in three counties in south Miami (Audit Bureau of Circulation, 2009). *The Miami Herald* is ranked 50th on the list of the nation's largest 100 newspapers based on circulation (Audit Bureau of Circulation, 2009). The chosen black press is *The Miami Times*, an 87-year old weekly published every Wednesday. *The Miami Times* is the largest minority-owned newspaper in the southeast U.S, with a circulation of 23,100 (Florida News Media Directory, 2010).

In Jacksonville, the white press is *The Florida Times-Union*, a daily newspaper founded in 1864 with a circulation of 109,476 (Audit Bureau of Circulation, 2009). As is *The Miami Herald*, *The Florida Times-Union* is also one of the largest newspapers in Florida. It is ranked 76th on the list of the nation's largest 100 newspapers based on circulation (Audit Bureau of Circulation, 2009). The selected black press in Jacksonville is *The Florida Star*, a weekly published every Friday since 1951. *The Florida Star* is the Northeast Florida's largest and oldest black-owned newspaper, with a circulation of 10,500 (Florida News Media Directory, 2010).

Sampling Method

Since the white newspapers are daily and the black newspapers are weekly, they were sampled in different ways. The study first randomly selected two months from the year of 2009 for both the black and white newspapers, excluding January (when Obama inaugurated as the first Afro-American president of the United States) and June (when

the world famous Afro-American star Michael Jackson died). It was because newspapers in January and June must have contained extensive coverage of these big events, which might bias the findings. As a result, February and August were selected. All the Wednesdays (4th, 11th, 18th, and 25th in February, and 5th, 12th, 19th, and 26th in August) and Fridays (6th, 13th, 20th, and 27th in February, and 7th, 14th, 21st, and 28th in August) in the selected two months were picked and black newspapers published on those days were coded. In order to balance the amount of samples between the black and the white press, the Sundays in February (1st, 8th, 15th, and 22nd) and the first four Sundays in August (2nd, 9th, 16th, and 23rd) were picked. Moreover, Sunday issues with their longer formats covering the whole week were the most similar to the black weekly in terms of news content. All Sunday issues of the two white newspapers published on the selected dates were coded. The reason why only the first four Sundays in August were chosen is that this study made sure that all the dates chosen for the white press were before those for the black press. In total, 32 issues of newspapers were chosen for this study, with eight for each of the four newspapers.

The unit of analysis for this study is each news article in the following sections of each selected newspaper: local or community section, sports section, entertainment section, and religion section. The local section was studied because only local news may reflect geographical differences in the two cities selected. The other sections were chosen because they were closely related to the hypotheses. Since both the white newspapers don't have religion section in their Sunday editions, only the news articles in the first three sections mentioned above were coded. Score boards, roundups of game information, briefs of game results in sports section, and news about books and

travels in entertainment section in the two white newspapers were not coded because of the lack of sources. Because sports news were scattered in local section and entertainment section in *The Miami Times* rather than gathered in a separate section, only local, entertainment, and religion sections were available for *The Miami Times* to code. *The Florida Star* only has a few pages and doesn't explicitly separate news in different sections, so all the articles in this newspaper were coded. Since February is Black History Month, there were special reports or supplements for it in all the newspapers. Those articles were excluded for this study². Editorials, columns, opinions, advertisements, and letters to the editor in all the newspapers were excluded in this study because they usually don't contain main characters or news sources in the texts.

This yielded 999 coded stories, among which 525 stories (285 from The Miami Herald; 240 from The Miami Times) were collected from the press in Miami, while 474 stories (254 from The Florida Times-Union; 220 from The Florida Star) were collected from the press in Jacksonville.

Coders and Intercoder Reliability

For the reliability test, two coders (the author and another graduate student) were trained before the coding and they independently coded 104 articles from the four newspapers, which is about 10 percent of the entire sample. Coding disagreements were discussed later and unanimity was achieved before the author proceeded to the final coding work. Scott's Pi was used to assess intercoder reliability in this study:

² Specific coverage on Black History Month was excluded because the purpose of this study is to examine general news content in the black and white press. In addition, such news content could bias test results by giving more attention or providing more positive representations of Afro-Americans than in other main news sections.

% observed agreement – % expected agreement

$$\text{Scott's pi} = \frac{\text{\% observed agreement} - \text{\% expected agreement}}{1 - \text{\% expected agreement}}$$

According to Neuendorf (2002), the minimum acceptable level of reliability for Scott's pi is .70 or above. Coefficients of .80 or greater is acceptable in most situations, and .90 or greater are nearly always acceptable. The test results indicated that the intercoder reliability of each variable is above the level of .74. Individual Scott's pi calculations were discussed below.

Variables

Major variables were discussed in this section, and the Scott's pi value and frequency of each variable were shown in Table 3-1:

Table 3-1. Scott's pi value and frequency of each variable

Variable	Scott's Pi	Percentage	M	SD
Story Theme	.89	See Table 2	4.71	2.93
Race of Main Character	.95	White: 33.7% Black: 53.5%	.97	1.12
Gender of Main Character	.91	Male: 79.2% Female: 20.4%	.62	.68
White Source	.97	41.2%	.75	1.17
Afro-American Source	.84	29.5%	.45	.89
Male Source	.98	62.3%	1.35	1.49
Female Source	.97	25.5%	.41	.86
Official Source	.97	45.5%	.17	1.02
Non-official Source	.95	52.9%	1.05	1.37
Valence	.89	Negative: 2.9% Neutral: 91.3% Positive: 5.8%	1.04	1.03

The Theme of the Story: Each selected news article was measured by the theme of the story. The categories of story theme include politics, crime, sports, entertainment, religion, cultural activity, education, business, health, community life, and others.

“Politics” refers to general political issues, including administration, government related activities, governor or politician related activities, laws, and wars. For example, the article “Mayor Reelected by One Vote” talked about Miami’s mayor Jack MacDonald won the election against Governor Gerry Goldsmith by only one vote (*The Miami Herald*, Feb 22, 2009). The category of “crime” includes any news about courts, crime, civil disputes, and the police. An example for crime news is “Fernandina Beach man charged with burglary of business and vehicles” (*The Florida Times-Union*, Feb 3, 2010). “Sports” includes all the coverage related to sports games, teams, coaches, and players. The article “Meyer to return for spring practice” is an example of sports news (*The Miami Herald*, Feb 3, 2010).

“Entertainment” refers to all the coverage about arts, TV programs, music, entertainment events like Oscar, celebrities, lifestyle, and fashion. The article “Beyonce takes 6 Grammys, makes history” serves an example of entertainment story (*The Miami Herald*, Feb 3, 2010). The category of “religion” includes any news about churches, religion activities, the Bible, speeches of church leaders, and news about bishops or minister. The article “Spiritually speaking: There can be no excuse not to find time for the Lord” is an example for religion coverage (*The Miami Times*, Feb 11, 2009).

“Cultural activity” specifically refers to the events, festivals, and celebrations of the traditions of a culture or the history of the ethnic group. For example, the article “Is black history month no longer needed?” belongs to this category (*The Miami Times*, Feb 11, 2009).

The category of “education” refers to all the coverage on educational policies, colleges and schools, the promotion or inauguration of school staff, and rewards or

punishment of students. The article “Duval county public schools offers FCAT resources for parents and students” serves a good example (*The Florida Star*, Feb 20, 2009). The category of “business” includes news about companies and corporations, economic situations of business entities or the whole country, tax information, and economic policies, while all the coverage on hospitals, doctors, personal health situations, prevention of AIDS, and health care policies belong to the category of “health”. Finally, the coverage of “community life” includes the events or activities occurred in the local community or sponsored by local groups, daily life of community members, and obituaries of community members. For example, the article “Pine Forest School of the Arts turns North Pole into a rocking' place” belong to the category of “community life” (*The Florida Times-Union*, Nov 25, 2009). For data analysis, “cultural activity” and “community life” were merged into one variable as “community affairs.”

The Main Character of the Story: The study aimed to explore how Afro-Americans are covered in the press, so the main character of the story and the sources cited in the story were measured to determine whether they are Afro-Americans and how they are covered in the story. The main character of the story is the person whom the story mainly talks about or the person who takes the major responsibility of the events or activities covered in the news story. Both race and gender of the main character were coded for this study.

Usually, the main character of the story as well as its race and gender were determined from either the title or the content of the news. For example, the main character in this story was known as Afro-American from the title of the article “Black Leaders Launch Grassroots Campaign for Health Care” (*The Florida Star*, Sep 26,

2009). However, most of the time race of the character was not mentioned at all. In this case, it was determined from the picture of the character, if one was available. For example, in the article “She helps empower women and children of Haitian descent,” *she* referred to the girl Cassandra Theramene, who was also the main character of the story (*The Miami Herald*, Jan 24, 2010). Although the article didn’t mention the race of the girl Cassandra Theramene, it was inferred from her picture accompanying the article that she was an Afro-American woman because of her dark skin color.

If no picture of the main character appeared in the story, additional online sources were used to identify race and gender of the character. For example, the race and gender of a governor or other politicians were found in his/her biography or picture posted on the state’s official website. Similarly, the race and gender of a coach, sports team manager, or athlete were found in his/her biography or picture presented on the sports game’s official website, such as PGATOUR.com, NFL.com, and NASCAR.com. Other online references that were used to determine race and gender of the main character included pictures and follow-up reports of the character from the official websites of the studied newspapers, pictures and related coverage from the websites of other media (e.g. ESPN, or other media in Florida), information of the main character on Wikipedia, and pictures on Google images.

Generally, race and gender of the main character were determined through the photos accompanying the story, the captions attached to the photos, the contextual factors in the story, and any other picture or textual information of the main character from the Internet.

Sources in the Story: A source is defined in this study as any individual who is quoted or paraphrased in the story (e.g., Weber said). Therefore, if the main character is quoted in the story, she/he is also a source. Sources like “a St. Augustine man”, “spokesman” or “spokeswoman” also count in this study even if the person is not specifically named. Generic labels such as “legislators”, “the report”, or “staff member” do not count as a source because race and gender cannot be determined from a group label. Sources were coded based on their race, gender, and authority.

As noted above, race and gender of the source was inferred from the picture attached to the article (if it has a picture of the source), the captions attached to the photos, the contextual factors in the story, and any other picture or textual information of the main character from the Internet when it’s hard to tell them directly. With gender, the name of the source also served as a gender cue.

The authority of the source refers to whether the source is official or non-official. Official sources include elected, appointed or former government officials, experts or those with an argued expert opinion (such as doctors, attorneys, school principals, coaches, sports team managers, boat captains, directors or producers, and museum curators), police or law enforcement officials, school heads, and business officials. Non-official sources include public figures such as professional athletes and celebrities, agents, analysts, community leaders, activists, sources under the age of 18, person with stated religious affiliation, and grassroots voices.

Valence: Valence describes the way the main character is portrayed in the story. A main character was represented in the story as negative, such as being criticized and getting involved in scandals. The valence of positive was coded when a main character

was being praised or awarded for excellent performance in the article. Valence could also be neutral, where the main character was not portrayed in either light.

Community Diversity: As mentioned before, community diversity has an impact on news content. In this study, community diversity refers to racial diversity of the community. A community is racially diverse if its population is made up of various ethnic groups, any of which doesn't overwhelmingly surpass the others. Conversely, a community is considered racially homogenous when its population is dominated by one ethnic group. The city of Miami represents a racially diverse community in this study (8% white population, 22% Afro-American population, and the majority of others Hispanic and Latino). Jacksonville is a relatively homogeneous community, with 62.3% white population and 30.1% Afro-American population, according to the U.S. Census. Thus, the racial makeup of these communities are quite different, despite their locations within the same state. As a result, an examination of these communities allows an examination of both ends of the diversity-homogeneity continuum, providing the potential for a large variance in the community diversity concept.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

All statistical analysis was conducted using the SPSS statistical program. The first two hypotheses mainly involved the variable of story theme. Results in Table 4-1 provided a general distribution of various themes in the black and white press. As shown in the Table, sports (35.5%), community affairs (17.7%), and entertainment (12.4%) were the three most frequently covered themes in all four newspapers. Similarly, the three themes also appeared most frequently in the white press, with 54.7 percent sports news, 14.7 percent community affairs news, and 12.2 percent entertainment news. However, in the black press, the most frequently covered story themes were community affairs (21.3%), crime (13.3%), sports (13%), and politics (11.5%).

Table 4-1. Frequency of topics in the black and white press

Story Theme	N	Percentage (n=999)	White Press (n = 539)	Black Press (n = 460)
Sports	355	35.5%	54.7%	13%
Community Affairs	177	17.7%	14.7%	21.3%
Entertainment	124	12.4%	12.2%	12.6%
Crime	93	9.3%	5.9%	13.3%
Politics	81	8.1%	5.2%	11.5%
Education	50	5.0%	2.0%	8.5%
Business	49	4.9%	2.4%	7.8%
Religion	39	3.9%	0.7%	7.6%
Health	22	2.20%	1.5%	3.0%

H1 dealt with the different representations of Afro-Americans in crime, sports, and entertainment news between the black and the white press. A statistically significant difference of representations of Afro-Americans between the black and the white press was found in all three story themes. As seen in Table 4-2, 35.5 percent of Afro-Americans covered as main characters of the story in crime news were represented in

black press, while only 7.5 percent appeared in the white press ($X^2(1, N = 97) = 8.89$, $p < .01$). Similarly, the percentage of Afro-American main characters represented in entertainment news (33.1%) in the black press was significant higher than the percentage (4.0%) in the white press ($X^2(1, N = 124) = 52.70$, $p < .01$). Although a significant difference between representation of Afro-Americans in the black and the white press was found here, it turned out to be the opposite of what H1a and H1c predicted. Therefore, H1a and H1c, which predicted that Afro-Americans will appear more frequently in crime news and entertainment news in the white press rather than in the black press, were not supported. In sports news, however, only 8.5 percent of Afro-American main characters were represented in the black press, while the percentage was almost twice (15.5%) in the white press ($X^2(1, N = 355) = 26.92$, $p < .01$). The statistical significance supported H1b, which posited that Afro-Americans will appear more frequently in sports news in the white press rather than in the black press.

Table 4-2. Representations of Afro-Americans by news topics

Story Theme	N	White Press	Black Press	$X^2(p < .01)$
Crime	93	7.5% (7)	35.5% (33)	8.89
Sports	355	15.5% (55)	8.5% (30)	26.92
Entertainment	124	4.0% (5)	33.1% (41)	52.70

The study also examined whether Afro-American main characters were represented positively or negatively in the black and white press. As Table 4-3 shows, the overwhelming majority of the stories in both the black and white press portrayed Afro-Americans in a neutral tone. Additionally, more Afro-Americans were portrayed positively rather than negatively in both the black and white press. Due to the small cells

of the valence of negative and positive found in this study, no statistical test was conducted.

Table 4-3. Valence of representations of Afro-Americans

Valence	White Press (<i>n</i> = 75)	Black Press (<i>n</i> = 200)
Negative	4.0% (3)	2.5% (5)
Neutral	86.7% (65)	93.0% (186)
Positive	9.3% (7)	4.5% (9)

H2 examined major issues more frequently covered in the black press than in the white press. The Chi-Square analysis found a statistically significant difference of the frequency of all the three issues studied between the black and the white press. As shown in Table 4-4, 11.5 percent of all the stories in the black press were political stories, compared to 5.2 percent in the white press ($X^2(1, N = 81) = 13.33, p < .01$). Of all the coverage in the black press, 21.3 percent were community affairs stories, compared to 14.7 percent in the white press ($X^2(1, N = 177) = 7.52, p < .01$). A stark difference was found in religion stories between the black and the white press ($X^2(1, N = 39) = 31.19, p < .01$). However, since there were only four pieces of religion news in the

Table 4-4. Cross tab of major issues in the black and white press

Story Theme	White Press (<i>n</i> = 539)	Black Press (<i>n</i> = 460)	$X^2(p < .01)$
Politics	5.2% (28)	11.5% (53)	13.33
Community Affairs	14.7% (79)	21.3% (98)	7.52
Religion	0.7% (4)	7.6% (35)	31.19

white press, the result should be used with caution. As a result, H2a, H2b, and H2c which posited that politics, community affairs, and religion are the topics more frequently covered in the black press than in the white press were supported.

H3, H4, and H5 looked at the differences of source usage between the black and the white press. An independent T-test was conducted to test these hypotheses. The results were reported in Table 4-5. A statistically significant difference was found on both the authority and race of sources in the white and the black press. More official sources were found in the white press than in the black press ($t(455)= 4.84, p<0.01$), and more non-official sources were also found in the white press than the black press ($t(528)= 11.85, p<0.01$). Therefore, H3a, which stated that the white press will use significantly more official sources than the black press, was supported, while H3b, which stated that the black press will use significantly more non-official sources than the black press, was not supported.

In regards to race of the source, more white sources were used in the white press than in the black press ($t(412)= 13.10, p<0.01$), while the amount of black source in the black press barely surpassed that in the white press ($t(295)= -2.57, p<0.01$). Therefore, H4a, which posited that the white press will use significantly more white sources than the black press, and H4b, which posited that the black press will use significantly more black sources than the white press, were both supported.

Although a significant difference was also found in the usage of female sources between the black and the white press ($t(255)= 2.08, p<0.05$), it appeared to be the opposite to H5. As a result, H5 which predicted that the black press will use significantly more female sources than the white press was not supported.

Table 4-5. T-test of source usage in the black and white press

Source Category	White Press		Black Press		<i>F</i>	<i>t</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Official Source	.85	1.09	.55	.89	6.99	4.84**
Non-official Source	1.48	1.49	.54	1.01	70.67	11.85**
White Source	1.14	1.35	.28	.66	140.34	13.10**
Black Source	.39	.83	.53	.95	3.33	-2.57**
Female Source	.46	.93	.35	.76	14.42	2.08*

Note: ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Finally, to test whether there are differences in the coverage of newspapers in Miami and Jacksonville, a Chi-Square analysis and an independent T-test were conducted. The Chi-Square analysis found no significant difference in the representations of Afro-Americans in all the topics between the press in Miami and the press in Jacksonville. The results suggested that Afro-Americans were not overrepresented in any news topic in the press of both places. However, the results of the independent T-test signified that there were differences of source usage between the press in Miami and the press in Jacksonville (see Table 4-6). In general, the sources cited in the press in Miami were more diverse than in the press in Jacksonville in terms of race and gender. The press in Miami was found to use more black sources ($t(999) = 3.79$, $p < 0.01$) and more female sources ($t(999) = 4.72$, $p < 0.01$) than the press in Jacksonville. More specifically, the press in Miami used more female black sources than the press in Jacksonville ($t(999) = 3.29$, $p < 0.01$). A statistical significance was also found in the usage of official sources in the press in Miami and Jacksonville. The press in Miami tended to use more official sources than that in Jacksonville ($t(999) = 5.32$, $p < 0.01$). In addition, more female official sources ($t(999) = 4.05$, $p < 0.01$) and black official sources ($t(999) = 2.57$, $p < 0.01$) were found in the press in Miami than in Jacksonville.

Table 4-6. T-test of source usage in the press in Miami and Jacksonville

Source Category	Miami		Jacksonville		<i>F</i>	<i>t</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Official Source	.87	1.08	.54	.91	4.04	5.32**
Female Official Source	.20	.50	.09	.35	60.09	4.05**
Black Official Source	.18	.47	.11	.36	24.81	2.57**
Black Source	.55	.96	.34	.79	21.95	3.79**
Female Source	.52	.95	.27	.72	53.46	4.72**
Female Black Source	.16	.47	.07	.41	37.97	3.29**

Note: ** $p < .01$

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

The present study compared the coverage in the black and white press to examine how they differ in story themes and representations of Afro-Americans. In addition, the study probed into the impact of community diversity on news content. There are four main findings in this research: First, Afro-Americans appeared more frequently in sports stories but less frequently in crime and entertainment stories, in the white press than in the black press. Specifically, 15.5% of the Afro-American main characters in the white press were represented in sports news, which is nearly almost twice as many as in the black press. However, Afro-Americans were depicted as main characters in crime news in the black press almost five times more than that in the white press, and they were represented in entertainment news in the black press almost eight times more than that in the white press.

Second, the black press attached more attention to coverage of community affairs, politics, and religion than the white press did. The results revealed that the major story theme covered in the white press was sports, which counted for more than half of all the coverage in the white press, while community affairs appeared more frequently in the black press. Third, the black press used more diverse sources than the white press did. While the white press relied mainly on white male officials as news sources, the black press included more black sources in the news coverage. Finally, the press in Miami used more black and female sources than that in Jacksonville, which indicates that community diversity may also influence news content in terms of source selection. Each of the findings will be addressed below.

Representations of Afro-Americans in the Black and White Press

The finding that Afro-American main characters appeared more frequently in sports news in the white press than in the black press is consistent with previous findings that Afro-American athletes were overrepresented in the mainstream media (Hardin et al., 2004; Martindale, 1990). It seems that media representations of Afro-Americans have been improved since they were covered more frequently in sports news in the white press. However, scholars argued that the attention given to Afro-American athletes by the white press just reinforces the "brute" stereotype of Afro-Americans, which characterized the African Americans as primitive, over-reactive, and violent (Hardin et al., 2004; Lombardo, 1978; Sailes, 1998).

In terms of specific sports in the white press in the present study, Afro-Americans dominated football and basketball news, but almost disappeared in all other sports. Not a single race car driver or jockey was found to be Afro-American in the white press, and the only Afro-American golfer in the white press was Tiger Woods. However, in the black press, Afro-Americans were represented in various kinds of sports games, including basketball, football, car racing, golf, track and field, and wrestling. The dominance of Afro-Americans in only some sports in the white press is not baseless. In fact there are much more Afro-American players in football, basketball, and baseball games but very few in other sports. For example, there's no Afro-Americans playing regularly in NASCAR series, and the only Afro-American golfers who play regularly on the PGA Tour are Tiger Woods and Vijay Singh. Ironically, the reality is shaped based on the stereotype that Afro-American athletes are physically superior but mentally inferior to white athletes, which enables them to dominate only in football, basketball, baseball, track and field, and boxing (Coakley, 1994; Leonard, 1993).

Importantly, although more Afro-Americans appeared in sports news in the white press in this study, very few were represented in higher positions, such as coaches or sports team managers. Take football and basketball news for example: in this study, almost all the players were Afro-Americans, while the coaches and the managers were often whites. Even within players, Afro-Americans were portrayed differently from white players. For instance, all the quarterbacks coded in the football news in the white press were white. On the contrary, results in this study found representations of Afro-Americans were much more balanced among various roles in the black press, and almost all the coaches in the black press were Afro-Americans. In fact, Vance (2008) conducted a research on Afro-American quarterbacks in NFL and found 96 (13%) Afro-American quarterbacks out of a total number of 719. Although the percentage is small, the statistics indicates that Afro-American quarterbacks were underrepresented in the white press. This could also be explained by the “brute” stereotype of Afro-Americans. Sailes (1998) stated that the “brute” stereotype intentionally separated Afro-Americans from intellectualism and mental control by emphasizing their primitive physical attributes. The belief that Afro-Americans are less intellectual keeps them from higher or more skillful positions, such as coach, manager, and quarterbacks.

Scholars have argued that stereotypes of Afro-Americans were developed from the fear of whites to maintain their status quo in society and to denigrate African American, keeping them subordinate (Davis, 1991; Lombardo, 1978). The stereotype and underrepresentation of Afro-Americans in the white press in this study reinforces the argument that the increasing number of minorities appeared in mainstream media doesn't automatically translate into more power and higher status (Wilson II et al.,

2003). It also demonstrates how Afro-Americans are treated unfairly in the white press as subordinate and submissive.

Despite the fact that Afro-Americans were stereotyped and underrepresented in some sports in the white press, they were actually depicted more positively than negatively in the white press in the present study, although the overwhelming majority of the coverage was neutral, which is in line with the self-imposed mission of news media to provide fair and objective information to the mass audience. The finding could be considered as improvement of media coverage on Afro-Americans from explicit discrimination and negative valence decades ago to straightforward approval and praise in the present day.

It's interesting that Afro-Americans appeared more frequently in crime news in the black press rather than in the white press in this study, which is opposite to the findings of previous research that Afro-Americans dominated crime news in mainstream media (Gilroy, 1987; Henry & Tator, 2003). Instead of demonizing Afro-Americans as problem makers or social threats as did the white press, the black press approached crimes news in different ways that embodied its communal and advocacy roles. First, through placing crime news in the front page and opening special section for crime news (e.g. "Wheel of Justice" and "From Actual Police Reports" in *The Florida Star*), the black press displays profound concern about high crime rates and group members' safety in the community.

Second, crime news in the black press not only merely reports the fact but also tries to educate and inspire people to think out of ways to improve the bad situation. In the story "Thunder Collins, former Nebraska RB, convicted of 1st degree murder; other

sports figures in trouble,” the reporter cried out that “there is so much shooting and killings in the black community and most of us are worried about when is it going to stop and what can we do to stop it” (*The Florida Star*, Aug 21, 2009).

Finally, the black press bravely challenges the white authority through defying the mischarge of Afro-Americans as criminals. In the front-page story “Charges Questioned,” the Afro-American Timothy Brown was finally arrested for using profanity after hours of searching for suspicious moves by the police but in vain. The story questioned the charges many times, stating that “Brown feels that he was stopped because it was after midnight and he was driving on the northside, ‘while black’.” The story also quoted Brown that, after finding out nothing was wrong with him, “he even heard one police officer apologize to another that he was sorry but he thought there was something” (*The Florida Star*, Feb 6, 2009).

Major Story Themes in the Black and White Press

The study also found that stories of community affairs, politics, and religion were covered more frequently in the black press, while sports stories appeared most frequently in the white press. The focus on community affairs in the black press could be explained by its communal role of serving the information needs of the community and building the community together through strengthening its identity, heritage, and culture (Conboy, 2002; Hardt, 1979; Meadows et al., 2002; Ojo, 2006). The community affairs stories covered in the black press included a variety of issues, most of which are particularly important for the community, such as self-promoted AIDS campaign by community members, and discussion about the significance of celebrating the black history month. The finding indicates that the black press adheres to its commitment of

better serving the community through providing the information it needs and addressing the most urgent problems in the community.

Both the communal and the advocacy roles of the black press may account for the extraordinary attention it gives to politics. On one hand, a great number of political stories in the black press were closely related to Afro-Americans' daily life and community interests, which reflects its dedication to care and serve the community. For example, government bills and policies on education and economy were among the most popular political topics in the black press. Furthermore, the coverage on political figures in the black press was mainly involved with visits to the community or attendance at community activities. On the other hand, the emphasis on politics in the black press, especially the election of and achievements of Afro-American politicians, implies Afro-Americans' needs not only for the affirmation of their capability as leaders but also the political authority in the society, through which they could achieve equal rights and fair treatment. This echoes what previous research found that politics has been a tool for Afro-American community to fight for justices and rights (Campbell & Feagin, 1975; Dawson, 1994; Lawson, 2008).

The finding that religion stories appeared more frequently in the black press than in the white press lends supports to the fact that religion is the mainstay of Afro-American community (Lincoln & Mamiya, 2003). Both black newspapers studied have individual section for religion (e.g. "Faith and Family" in *The Miami Times* and "Church" in *The Florida Star*), while little information about religion was found in the white press. The results indicate that religion appears frequently in the black press either in quotations or in the coverage as a major theme. It's interesting that the only information

about religion coded in *The Miami Herald* is the quotation by the father of an Afro-American football player. It said:

“The fasting makes you more sensitive and isolates you from everyday things. When you spend time with God in his world, you’re letting yourself be guided by the spiritual nature and asking the Holy Spirit to help reveal the decision,” Arthur, Bryce Brown’s father (The Miami Herald, Feb 1, 2009).

It’s noteworthy that compared to other story themes, religion is still an uncovered field in the white press. One possible reason is that religion is purposefully shunned in the white press because of its subjectivity and intangibility, which is hard to be covered objectively with facts. Even if the black press has individual religion section, there’s little real coverage but abundance of advertisements and notifications about church activities. Religion stories in the black press mainly focused on the activities and public speeches of spiritual leaders.

Source Usage in the Black and White Press

Another important finding of the present study is that the white press used more white and official sources while the black press used more Afro-American sources. In terms of source usage in media coverage, not all the sources available to reporters are included in news coverage. Even if several sources are used in the same story, they are generally not cited with equal importance. According to Shoemaker and Reese (1996), source selection and source preference in news coverage reflects the impacts of individual journalists’ characteristics, media routines, and external factors on news content. Their argument is demonstrated in the different source usage between the black and the white press.

First, findings of this study indicate that the white press uses more official sources because they abide by the source-based routines that prefer government officials and experts who are considered to be able to provide exclusive and authoritative information. Since the major institutions in society and newsroom in the white press are dominated by white Americans, it could also be that the white press attempts to exert the authority of white sources within coverage due to its longtime and close reciprocal relationship with authoritative institutions. Noteworthy is the fact that reliance on official sources is actually a double-edged sword. The white press benefits from official sources in terms of credibility but could also lose autonomy of deciding what the news is and how the news should be reported. In this sense, the more the white press relies on official sources, the more likely its news content is distorted by their values and beliefs.

On the contrary, the black press is less influenced by media routines because it is often not as professional as are the white press. Although both the black newspapers in the present study are large and prominent ethnic newspapers, their coverage is not comparable to that in the white press in terms of quantity or quality. Take *The Florida Star* for example, the whole paper has only 16 pages and a large number of the stories contain no more than 100 characters without a single source in it. Sometimes the story is made of only one sentence. Without the restraints of professional routines adopted by most of the white press, the black press tends to use sources in a more random and freely way, which results in less official sources in its coverage.

It's not surprising that the white press used more white sources while the black press tended to use more Afro-American sources. The finding supports the argument that reporters are more likely to select sources that are familiar and accessible to them

(Armstrong, 2004; Zeldes & Fico, 2005). It also coincides with previous findings that minority journalists covered more minorities and cited more minority sources in their coverage (Zeldes, Fico, & Diddi, 2007). Clearly, the finding suggests that journalists' race affects source selection process and ultimately influence news coverage. Seeking sources based on familiarity helps the reporter approach and communicate with the sources easily. However, the news coverage could possibly be biased by one-sided information when it lacks source diversity. Given the white press targets a large and diverse audience, it not only provides a false picture of the demographical composition of the society but also reinforces the ideology of the society that favors only whites if the white press uses mainly white sources. Since the black press mainly serves the Afro-American community, it's understandable that they used more Afro-American sources in their coverage in this study.

Also noteworthy is that, although the black press didn't use more female sources than did the white press, as H5 predicted, it portrayed female sources with more diversity—in terms of genre—than did the white press. In this study, women were represented in the black press in various roles, from governors, business leaders, artists, school heads, athletes, to ordinary people, while their roles in the white press concentrated on artists, curators, and local residents. However, male white Americans dominated in the white press as political and business leaders, and other decision-makers. This suggests that Afro-American women enjoy broader and more realistic coverage and higher public status in the press than do white women.

Impact of Community Diversity on Source Usage

To answer the research question how community diversity affects news coverage, the study found that community demographics have some influence on source usage in

news coverage. In the present study, Miami represents an ethnically diverse community where whites take up only 8 percent of the whole population, with the rest being other ethnicities, primarily Hispanics. In contrast, Jacksonville is a relatively more homogeneous community, with 62.3 percent of the whole population being white, and 30.1 percent being Afro-American.

Findings of the present study revealed that newspapers in Miami used significantly more Afro-American sources and female sources than in Jacksonville. It's also noteworthy that although the study primarily focused on Afro-Americans, qualitative data from the coding process indicated that Hispanic main characters and sources appeared frequently in newspapers in Miami. The results lends support to previous findings that news media in racially diverse community attached more attention to ethnic groups and women in news coverage (Armstrong, 2002; Hindman, Littlefield, Preston, & Neumann, 1999; Jeffres et al., 2000). It suggests that the more racially diverse a community, the more likely minorities and women are represented in the media. Future research may want to expand these findings.

According to Conboy (2002), the economic success of the press lies in its ability to establish a responsible relationship with its readership through including them and addressing their problems in the coverage. Therefore, it's possible that newspapers in more racially diverse communities use more ethnic sources for economic consideration. However, Jeffres et al. (2000) stated that in racially diverse communities, news editors perceive that power resides more in ethnic groups than financial interests. In this sense, it could be that minorities are included in news coverage because they are perceived by editors with more power and higher social status in racially diverse communities than in

homogeneous communities. The findings of this study that newspapers in Miami used more official Afro-American sources and official female sources than in Jacksonville reinforce the latter explanation.

It could also be inferred from the findings that power distribution in racially diverse communities is more decentralized among various minority groups. If power is controlled by elite white males in mainstream society, it is distributed more equally among gender and race in racially diverse community. This is reflected in the coverage of the black press which represented Afro-American sources and female sources with more attention, higher social status and more diverse roles.

Finally, more official sources were found in the press in Miami than in Jacksonville. It's probably because that both the newspapers in Miami are larger and more prestigious than the newspapers in Jacksonville. In particular, the difference in quality is stark between the two black newspapers. *The Miami Times* is more like mainstream newspapers, with more than 30 pages divided by individual sections based on story theme. However, *The Florida Star* has merely 10 pages with real news coverage. In regards to the quality of news, coverage in *The Miami Times* seems to be much more professional than in *The Florida Star* in terms of the layout, news length, and writing styles. Since large newspapers usually are matured organizations with well-established relationships to official sources and standardized rules, there is a good reason for them to use more official sources than smaller community newspapers.

Limitations and Future Research

Although the present study aimed to examine how Afro-Americans are represented differently in the black and white press, it approached the question mainly in a quantitative way, the focus of which lies in the appearance frequency of Afro-

Americans in certain sections of the press. Even with the analysis of valence of the stories with Afro-American main characters, it lacks profundity compared to a qualitative content analysis which studies the semantics or specific wording of the coverage on Afro-Americans.

It's also noteworthy that the white press and the black press are not comparable in the following ways. First, the white newspapers in this study are daily publications while the black newspapers are weekly. The study used Sunday issues of the white press in order to compare with the black press, which definitely slanted the results by excluding much information in the white press. This analysis is not a side-by-side comparison. Second, both the white newspapers are large newspapers with sufficient revenue, news staff, and other sources, which result in high quality news content in the press. However, the black newspapers suffer from less professional staff and scarce sources, and therefore display less quality in their news coverage.

In addition, the results of the study could possibly be biased by including February in its sample, although special reports on Black History Month were excluded. Despite these efforts, it is possible that news producers were more mindful of the importance of Afro-African sources and issues; thus, content in the main sections of the newspapers may still reflect that overall philosophy. Finally, the finding of the coverage on religion stories in the black and white press was limited by the small number of religion stories coded in the white press. Since there were only four religion stories in the white press, the small sample size could probably produce a false positive result, where a significant difference that does not exist was found in the test.

The limitations highlight several directions for future research on media representations of Afro-Americans and the black press. As mentioned above, a qualitative research on how Afro-Americans are depicted differently in the black and white press could be conducted. Given that little attention has been given to the black press in the United States, it's also meaningful to conduct more research on how the black newspapers operate and what kind of coverage they produce in future. Additionally, the relationship between ethnic newspapers and the preference for female sources needs further examination. More interestingly, future research could study how women are depicted in the black press and find out whether they are represented differently in the black and white press.

Conclusion

In the same way that Afro-Americans have been underrepresented in media coverage, black newspapers themselves have been given little attention in previous literature despite of the myriads of studies on the press in the United States. This comparative content analysis not only described a general picture of the coverage in the black press but also compared it with the white press to find the differences in news coverage and representations of Afro-Americans. In this study, Afro-Americans were stereotyped in some sports and underrepresented in others, and they were misrepresented with lower public status and less diverse roles in all sections studied in the white press. The distorted representations of Afro-Americans in the white press could be explained by factors in the micro-level, such as journalists' race, gender, and personal prejudice, and factors in the macro-level, specifically the ideology of racism and sexism in our society.

Despite the stereotypical portrayals of Afro-Americans in sports stories in the white press, positive changes and efforts to improve the representations of Afro-Americans were revealed in this study. There are two major changes in the representations of Afro-Americans in the white press. First, Afro-Americans were no longer appeared more frequently in entertainment news and crime news in the white press in this study. Second, more Afro-American main characters in the white press were represented positively rather than negatively. In terms of efforts to improve distorted representations of Afro-Americans, the black press only cited slightly more Afro-American sources than the white press in the study. It could be inferred from the finding that the white press is making efforts to include more Afro-American sources in its coverage. The effort is also shown in *The Florida Times-Union*, which even called for stories of Afro-Americans for the black history month in its front page.

Findings on news coverage in the black press have shown that community affairs is the most frequently covered theme in the black press, followed by crime, sports, and politics. The extraordinary attention given to stories of community affairs, crime, and politics in the black press embodies its efforts to serve the community and to address the most urgent issues in the community. It is also consistent with the black press's communal role to build the community together, reflect the diverse life of community members, as well as preserve Afro-American cultures. The space and emphasis given to religion in the black press signify the significant role religion plays in Afro-American community. More importantly, the white authority was challenged and questioned in several news stories coded in the black press, which reflects the black press's advocacy role to pursuit justice and fair treatment for the community members.

According to Ogunyemi (2007), whether the black press better serves Afro-American community is determined by whether its news content really understands the information needs of the community. The above findings provide a positive answer to the question that the black press in the study did a good job serving Afro-American community through providing the community with essential information it needs.

The black press not only used more Afro-American sources and female sources but also represented them in diverse roles. The findings suggest that representations of Afro-Americans and women in the black press are closer to reality than in the white press. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) argued that whether news content mirrors the demographics of its audience reflects how well a media organization serves its community. In this sense, the findings lead to the same conclusion that the black press serves its community well through providing more real picture of its audience.

APPENDIX A
NEWSPAPER ARTICLE CODE SHEET

Story qualifications:

- All the news articles in local or community section, sports section, entertainment section, and religion section (if it is available) of each of the four newspapers.
- Excluding editorials, opinion columns, advertisements, and letters to the editor.
- Excluding book reviews, information about new books, travel information, roundups and briefs of sports games, schedule of TV programs, and introduction of new entertainments.
- Excluding special reports for Black History Month and articles in supplements for black history month.

1. Coder ID: (1) Qian Wang (2) Jin Ying

2. Name of newspaper:

(1) The Miami Herald

(2) Florida Times-Union

(3) Miami Times

(4) Florida Star

3. Case number: (1, 2)

4. Story Section:

(1) Local / community section (2) Sports

(3) Entertainment (4) religion section

5. Date of article: year/month/day (3digits - e.g. 201)

6. What is the story origin? (Please code any story whose origin could not be determined as "Others")

(1) National sources: e.g. AP, Scripps Howard News Service

(2) Staff writer

(3) Local contributor

(4) Others

7. What is the theme of the story? Choose the main theme (to avoid overlap):

(1) Politics (2) Crime (3) Sports (4) Entertainment (5) Religion

(6) Cultural Activity (7) Education (8) Business (9) Health

(10) Community life (11)Others

8. How many main characters are in the story? _____

- The main character of the story is the person whom the story mainly talks about or the person who takes the major responsibility of the events or activities covered in the news story. If there is no main character in the story or the main character cannot be determined, please code it as 0.

9. What is the race of the first main character?

- Race of the source can be known from the article if it is manifested directly (e.g. an Afro-American, or an Asian American), or they can be inferred from the picture attached to the article (if it is available) when it's hard to tell them directly. Otherwise, it can be determined by any related source available on the Internet.

0. N/A 1.White 2.Black 3. Others 4. Unknown

10. What is the gender of the first main character?

- Gender of the main character can be known from the article if it is manifested directly (e.g. a man, he, or his), or it can be inferred from the picture attached

to the article (if it is available) when it's hard to tell them directly. Otherwise, it can be determined by any related source available on the Internet.

0. N/A 1. Male 2. Female 3. Others 4. Unknown

11. Is the first main character present in pictures?

0. N/A 1. Yes 2. No

12. How is the first main character depicted in the article?

- A valence describes the way the main character is portrayed in the story. A main character can be represented in the story as negative, such as being criticized and getting involved in scandals. An example of a negative valence is "this man has brought disgrace to the badge." The valence of positive is coded when a main character is being praised or awarded for excellent performance in the article. For example, "there's a long, long list of his doing good. He was ambitious and had a good work ethic." Valence can also be neutral, where the main character is not portrayed in either light.

0. N/A 1. Negative 2. Neutral 3. Positive

13. What is the race of the second main character?

0. N/A 1. White 2. Black 3. Others 4. Unknown

14. What is the gender of the second main character?

0. N/A 1. Male 2. Female 3. Others 4. Unknown

15. Is the second main character present in pictures?

0. N/A 1. Yes 2. No

16. How is the second main character depicted in the article?

0. N/A 1. Negative 2. Neutral 3. Positive

17. How many different sources are mentioned total in the story? _____

- A source is defined in this study as an individual who is quoted or paraphrased in the story (e.g. Weber said). Sources like “a St. Augustine man”, “spokesman” or “spokeswoman” also count in this study even if it is not specifically named. Generic labels, such as “legislators,” do not count as a source.

18. How many different sources are identified as official sources in the story?

- Official sources: including the following
 - (1) Elected or appointed government officials (Including Former officials)
 - (2) Experts or those with an argued expert opinion (such as doctors, attorneys, school principals, coaches, sports team managers, boat captains, directors or producers, and museum curators)
 - (3) Police or law enforcement officials, school heads, and business officials

19. How many different sources are non-official sources in the story? _____

- Non-official sources: including the following
 - (1) Public figures such as professional athletes, celebrities, public educators, or minority community leaders
 - (2) Agents, analysts, community leaders, and activists
 - (3) Sources or subjects under the age of 18
 - (4) Person with stated religious affiliation
 - (5) Grassroots voice

20. How many different sources in the story are male? _____

- Gender of the source can be known from the article if it is manifested directly

(e.g. a man, he, or his), or it can be inferred from the picture attached to the article (if it is available) when it's hard to tell them directly. Otherwise, it can be determined by any related source available on the Internet. Do not code the source if gender cannot be determined.

21. How many of the male sources are identified as official sources? _____

22. How many different sources in the story are female? _____

23. How many of the female sources are identified as official sources? _____

24. How many different sources in the story are white? _____

- Race of the source can be known from the article if it is manifested directly (e.g. an Afro-American, or an Asian American), or they can be inferred from the picture attached to the article (if it is available) when it's hard to tell them directly.

Otherwise, it can be determined by any related source available on the Internet.

Do not code the source whose race cannot be determined.

25. How many of the white sources in the story are identified as official sources?

26. How many of the white sources in the story are male? _____

27. How many of the white sources in the story are female? _____

28. How many different sources in the story are Afro-American? _____

29. How many of the Afro-American sources are identified as official sources?

30. How many of the Afro-American sources in the story are male? _____

31. How many of the Afro-American sources in the story are female? _____

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Qian Wang was born in China. She received her Bachelor of Arts in journalism and mass communication from Renmin University of China in 2007. During her college time, she was a reporter for the school newspaper, and was working as intern in two most famous China radio stations. Prior to her graduate study, Wang worked in China's Xinhua News Agency for one year. She graduated from University of Florida in December 2010 with a Master of Arts in Mass Communication.