

Racial Exclusion, Economics or Something Else Entirely?

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Abstract

Newspapers have been a part of our society dating back to the 1800's and as such, play a large role in how our society receives and interprets the news and important cultural information. (Phil Barber)As a country the United States is young and our population is forever changing and evolving both social, culturally, economically and racially. This article focuses on the racial differences and changes that are having a profound affect not only on everyday life but, also politically and economically. The purpose of my thesis was to see if the current changes taking place would be reflected in our cultural media and exclusively for the purposes of this research the New York Times. With minority members increasing in our society not only numerically but, also in terms of power and authority, I wondered would the paper reflect this change. What I found after looking at 3 months of papers was that the New York Times in fact did not reflect the change evident in our society however, not for many of the reasons I believed at the onset of my research. Rather economic forces were most likely to blame for the lack of representation evident in the New York Times.

Introduction

Whether it is to check the movie listings or the weather report newspapers have globally been the primary source of current events. Newspapers have been and continue to play an integral part in American history. In addition to informing the American public of the most current and important events taking place within the United States newspapers also provide insight into what is taking place around the globe. (Phil Barber) Of course today, in the digital age we currently live in, newspapers have fallen to the third most used way in which Americans receive their news followed by television and the internet. (NAA) To keep up with the times many newspaper have added online editions of and in some cases such as New Weekly have done away with paper editions altogether. (NBC News) Despite the change in our culture and the way we receive news, newspaper are at par with television as a source of news in terms of daily exposure. (NAA) Sixty seven percent of the adult public watches at least some television and reads at least one newspaper on any given day. (NAA) Additionally newspapers are read in 75 percent of all U.S households and are in the hands of over 110 million adults on any given weekday. (NAA)

In addition to the changes we currently see in newspapers our country is also experiencing a change in the racial and ethnic makeup that exists. America has long been referred to as a "melting pot" or a "salad bowl"- made up of a diverse group of individuals that in sum represent America as a whole. (Hoover Institution) Our "melting pot" is changing, and at a fast rate according to the 2012 census. By the year 2043 Caucasian Americans will no longer make up the majority in American society according to the census bureau. (Census) This change occurring within the United States does not just revolve around the long held black/ white dichotomy but, also includes those Americans that are multiracial. (Saulny, Susan) By 2060 this group of Americans is projected to more than triple from 7.5 million to 26.7 million. (Census)

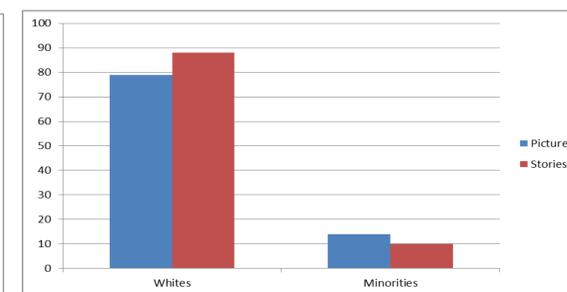
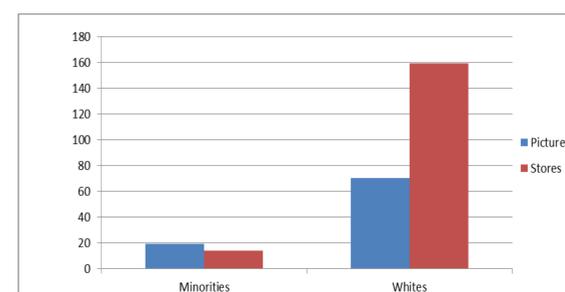
Methods

In order to try and answer my research question I first had to subscribe to the Times, something that I discuss further as having an effect on the lack of representativeness later on. I subscribed to the Times for a total of three months August, September, and October of 2012. This totaled 96 news editions that I looked at for the purpose of this research. In order to get to the question at hand I looked at the first page of each New York Times. Only those articles that made the front cover were a part of my research. For each front page I looked at several different variables to try to determine if it was representative or not. I looked at the feature story for each cover and noted the topic of the story and the photo if one was one attached. I also did the same for each story noted on the cover. The articles on the front page were separated into five different categories those that involved minorities those that did not, and those that were positive negative or neutral. Every story on each of the editions front page was put into one of those five categories.

Economics

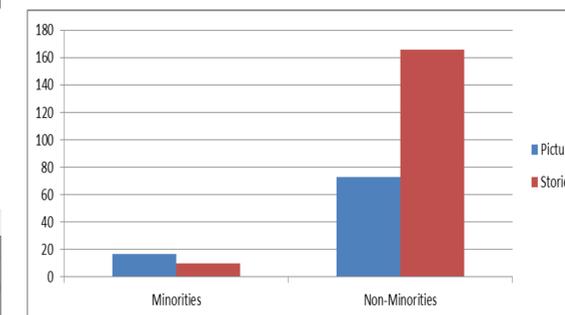
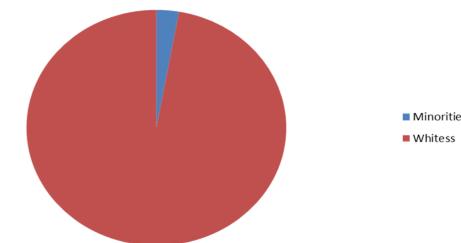
After looking at over 90 editions of The New York Times it is obvious that the newspaper does not reflect even the current state of the racial and ethnic make-up of the United States, and I found no indication that the number to which minorities were spoken about were increasing or going to increase. As mentioned above the times motto of "All the News that's fit to Sell" seems to ring true.

Results



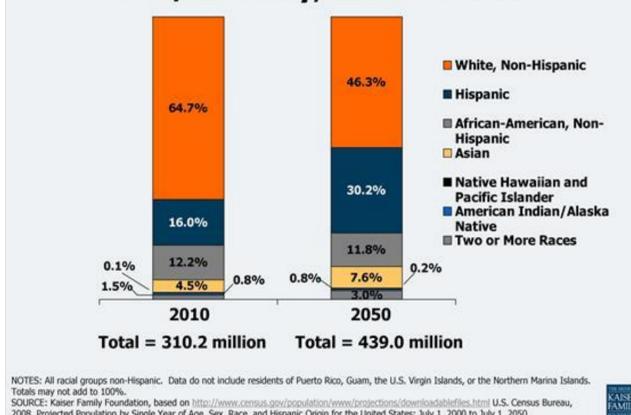
In the graph above you can see that for the month of September 2012 whites outnumbered racial minorities in representation by an 8 to 1 ratio. As stated above, the number of pictures and stories featuring minorities is more pronounced than normal since the research took place during the presidential election of Barack Obama. Of those pictures depicted on the front page of the Times 13 of the 19 were pictures of President Barack Obama.

Representation in the NYT



We know that looking at the larger US population African Americans represent thirteen percent of the population while Hispanics represent seventeen percent of the population for a total of twenty-nine percent of the population. However, their representation through The New York Times over the course of 3 months only amounted to .028. Depicted in the graph below we can see the comparison of what the stories should have looked like if the Times were truly representative compared to what I found.

Distribution of U.S. Population by Race/Ethnicity, 2010 and 2050



	Base Total Adults	Men	Women	Adults 18 - 34	Adults 35 or older	Adults 55 or older
Base Total Adults 18+	236,610,692	114,775,845	121,834,847	70,234,396	166,376,296	79,878,186
Target %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Newspaper Print/E-Edtion/Website - Avg. Issue/Yesterday	101,439,080	51,730,414	49,708,666	20,831,799	80,607,281	44,697,404
Target %	42.9%	45.1%	40.8%	29.7%	48.4%	56.0%
Sunday-Print or E-edtion	104,109,136	49,092,419	55,016,717	21,571,629	82,537,507	45,773,688
Target %	44.0%	42.8%	45.2%	30.7%	49.6%	57.3%
Newspaper-Print/E-Edtion 5 Weekday Cume	128,448,217	64,075,079	64,373,138	30,542,018	97,906,199	53,081,884
Target %	54.3%	55.8%	52.8%	43.3%	58.3%	66.5%
Past Week Newspaper Print	147,118,528	71,492,924	75,625,604	36,099,501	111,019,027	58,639,343
Target %	62.2%	62.3%	62.1%	51.4%	66.7%	73.4%
Past Week Newspaper Print or E-edtion	148,089,873	72,027,481	76,062,392	36,455,953	111,633,920	58,810,916
Target %	62.6%	62.8%	62.4%	51.9%	67.1%	73.6%
Past 7 Days: Print/E-edtion/Website	160,238,898	78,446,339	81,792,559	40,849,063	119,389,835	60,862,810
Target %	67.7%	68.3%	67.1%	58.2%	71.8%	76.2%
Newspaper Website or Newspaper Mobile source Used in Past 30 Days combined with Newspaper Past Week Print/E-Edtion	168,610,455	82,459,155	86,151,300	45,197,380	123,413,075	61,740,880
Target %	71.3%	71.8%	70.7%	64.4%	74.2%	77.3%

	Base Total Adults	HHI - Less than \$50K	HHI \$50K - \$99K	HHI \$100K - \$249K	\$250,000 or more
Base Total Adults 18+	236,610,692	116,736,558	73,493,207	40,592,872	5,787,955
Target %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Newspaper Print/E-Edtion/Website - Avg. Issue/Yesterday	101,439,080	42,379,097	24,517,373	21,257,112	3,285,499
Target %	42.9%	36.3%	47.0%	52.4%	56.8%
Sunday-Print or E-edtion	104,109,136	45,595,544	25,064,205	20,443,193	3,006,194
Target %	44.0%	39.1%	47.7%	50.4%	51.9%
Newspaper-Print/E-Edtion 5 Weekday Cume	128,448,217	58,477,025	41,823,768	24,439,970	3,707,454
Target %	54.3%	50.1%	56.9%	60.2%	64.1%
Past Week Newspaper Print	147,118,528	67,607,041	48,120,022	27,432,893	3,947,572
Target %	62.2%	57.9%	65.5%	67.4%	68.2%
Past Week Newspaper Print or E-edtion	148,089,873	67,860,860	48,433,560	27,757,446	4,038,007
Target %	62.6%	58.1%	65.9%	68.4%	69.8%
Past 7 Days: Print/E-edtion/Website	160,238,898	71,711,477	53,078,592	31,009,273	4,439,556
Target %	67.7%	61.4%	72.2%	76.4%	76.7%
Newspaper Website or Newspaper Mobile source Used in Past 30 Days combined with Newspaper Past Week Print/E-Edtion	168,610,455	75,069,912	56,047,048	32,763,557	4,729,938



Conclusion

Economic forces play a major role in all of society and the newspaper industry is not the exception. In fact one of the most important aspects to remember about the newspaper industry is that it is just that an industry. The bottom line is to make a profit.

I can only assume that with racial and ethnic minorities gaining both numerically and in terms of their wealth and power newspapers and other news source outlets will increase their representation of minorities. As the economic needs of newspapers come into alignment with being able to represent racial minorities, I hope that newspapers will embrace their economic freedom and do the right thing.