FRAMING THE BLACK COMMUNITY: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE PLAIN DEALER, AKRON BEACON JOURNAL AND THE VINDICATOR

A thesis submitted to the College of Communication and Information of Kent State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE ........................................................................................................... i
  Title page ........................................................................................................ i
  Signature page .................................................................................................. ii
  Table of Contents ............................................................................................ iii
  List of Tables ................................................................................................... v
  Abstract
  Acknowledgements ........................................................................................... vi

INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................... 1
  Purpose of the Study ......................................................................................... 3

LITERATURE REVIEW ......................................................................................... 5
  Representation ................................................................................................... 5
  African-Americans in the News ........................................................................ 11
  Framing Theory ................................................................................................ 16
  Agenda Setting and News Use .......................................................................... 23
  Research Questions ............................................................................................ 25

METHODOLOGY ................................................................................................. 26
  Content Analysis ............................................................................................... 26
  Sample ............................................................................................................... 27
  Unit of Analysis ................................................................................................ 27
  Reliability and Validity ..................................................................................... 29
  Intercoder Reliability ......................................................................................... 29
  Data Analysis .................................................................................................... 30

RESULTS ............................................................................................................ 32
  Representation in The Plain Dealer ................................................................. 33
  Representation in the Akron Beacon Journal ................................................. 36
  Representation in The Vindicator ..................................................................... 39
  Framing in The Plain Dealer ............................................................................ 42
  Framing in the Akron Beacon Journal .............................................................. 44
  Framing in the Vindicator ................................................................................ 46
  Comparison of Newspapers ............................................................................ 49
  Summary ........................................................................................................... 50

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS ...................................................................... 52
  Research Question # 1 ..................................................................................... 53
  Research Question # 2 ..................................................................................... 55
  Interesting Findings ........................................................................................... 58
  Conclusion ......................................................................................................... 59
  Limitations ........................................................................................................ 61
  Suggestions for Future Research ................................................................. 62
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Total Number of Stories featuring African-Americans in Plain Dealer</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Non-Black Representation in Plain Dealer</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Total Number of Stories featuring African-Americans in Akron Beacon Journal</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Non-Black Representation in Akron Beacon Journal</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Total of Stories featuring African-Americans in The Vindicator</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Total of Non-Black Stories in Vindicator</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Frames in Plain Dealer</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Frames in Non-Black Stories in Plain Dealer</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Frames in the Akron Beacon Journal</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Frames in Non-Black Stories in Akron Beacon Journal</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Frames in Vindicator for African-Americans</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Frames in Non-Black Stories in Vindicator</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Total of Frames found in all three Newspapers</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Representation of Blacks and Non-Blacks</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

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FRAMING THE BLACK COMMUNITY: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE PLAIN DEALER, AKRON BEACON JOURNAL, AND THE VINDICATOR (77 pp.)

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Historically, representation of African-Americans in the media has been negative and reflected a certain pathology (the storyline that routinely portrays blacks as drug lords, crack victims, the underclass, the homeless and the subway muggers) (Drummond, 1995). Representation deals with image and what messages one can take away from certain images. The purpose of this study was to analyze how African-Americans are framed and what messages are being communicated about the black community when they are represented in newspapers. The researcher conducted a descriptive content analysis of The Plain Dealer, Akron Beacon Journal and The Vindicator over a three-week time period in 2006. The weeks were randomly selected and coded for the frequency of African-Americans in the centerpiece story.

Framing stories is a part of the reporting process. Columnist Thomas Huang of the Poynter Institute said that “framing a story is akin to composing a photograph. If you’re a reasonably good photographer, you deliberately point your viewfinder to capture certain things…” In relation to diversity stories (stories about people of color), he named some basic frames that are often used: conflict, bridge-building, disorientation, identity, creation, and the mainstreaming frame. These frames were used as a guide in this study.
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I made the decision to go to graduate school because I viewed it as an opportunity to strengthen my journalism skills and provide more career options for myself. Pardon the cliché: it was truly easier said than done. While it was a difficult transition, the support of my family and friends helped me to persevere. My mother, Leiza Spencer was my strongest source of support and always told me “You can do it!” even when I stopped believing. I thank her so much for her encouragement and countless pep-talks as I worked to complete my research. I must also thank my father (Papa) and my sister Beverly (the bearers of tough love) whose faith in me never faltered.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The media are considered to be a socializing agent. Many people rely on the media as a source of information and education about society. Agenda setting theory states that the media do not tell us what to think, but tell us what to think about. This is possible through selection of images, articles, advertisements, and entertainment news. This can be problematic as influence can be both positive and negative. Sometimes, the coverage of race reflects stereotypes, hence sending a negative message. According to John Miller (2001), crime and race are often gratuitously linked to the media. He explained that when it comes to a crime committed by a white person, it is seen as or treated as an “aberrant individual act” (Miller, 2001 p. 43). However, when criminal behavior is perpetrated by blacks or Asians it is often seen as “a form of ‘group crime’ for which an entire minority group is held responsible” (Miller, 2001, p. 43). This is evident in the frames used to represent African-Americans as a whole in the media.

Walter Lippmann was the first to acknowledge that journalists have the tendency to generalize and create stereotypes (Biagi, 2007). In Lippmann’s (1922) book Public Opinion (1922), he discussed how journalists can avoid the creation and reinforcement of stereotypes. According to Lippmann,

When we speak of the mind of a group of people, of the French mind, the militarist mind, the bolshevik mind, we are liable to serious confusion unless we agree to separate the instinctive equipment from the stereotypes, the patterns, the formulae which play so decisive a part in building up the mental world to which the native character is adapted and responds… (p.268)
Here, we see the importance of not lumping people together into one category. People think differently, and there is no universal way of acting for a particular group. There is diversity within groups and it is not until the media realize this that negative stereotypes can be broken.

Media do more than inform. They shape the images of celebrities and, racial groups and educate the public on political issues. The media re-present reality to the public (Croteau & Hoynes), and a major element that is represented in the news is race. Those who do not live in a neighborhood where they interact with people from a different race, only come face to face with different ethnicities through the media.

Since the news presents itself as a kind of sample survey of the world’s events, white audience members, especially those having limited personal contact or hostile predispositions toward blacks, may assume those blacks who appear in TV news are representative and thus generalize from them (Entman, 1994, p. 517).

Images of people of color (mainly African-Americans) that are projected in the media are seldom positive. Crime and poverty appear to be the main themes of stories about African-Americans (Wolseley, 1971).

It is said that the media have a social responsibility to keep the public informed on issues that may harm or benefit them. The media in turn take on the role of an expert and news stories are considered “what is real.” This becomes problematic when reporting is unbalanced and projects negative images of a particular race, because this can send the message that all members of that particular group are the same.

Another important issue when it comes to representation is the lack of representation. Generally, what messages are portrayed in the media are seldom positive, but in some cases the
African-American community is not covered at all by mainstream media. As the world becomes more diverse, so should media coverage. However, this has not always been the case. For example, media scholar Carolyn Martindale found while doing a content analysis of *The New York Times* from 1934 to 1994 that most nonwhite groups were visible ‘only in glimpses’ (Biagi, 2007, p. 270). Considering this observation, it is important that these glimpses reflect the reality of life in the black community.

According to Martindale (1995), “the mainstream press in the U.S. has presented minorities as outside, rather than a part of, American Society” (Martindale, 1995, p. 10). The key word here is *outside* which shows that people of color are not included in mainstream news. Nevertheless, when people of color are in the news, the visibility and voices of African-Americans in news is scarce and silenced (Roberts, 1975). This exclusion was also noted in a 56-page *News Watch* report (based on a comprehensive analysis of the nation’s newspapers) issued at a convention of the nation’s African-American, Native-American, and Hispanic journalists (Biagi, 2007). The report concluded that “the mainstream media’ coverage of people of color was riddled with old stereotypes, offensive terminology, biased reporting and a myopic interpretation of American society” (as cited by Biagi, 2007, p. 270). Likewise, the researcher in this study examined the representation of African-Americans in newspapers and how these messages are framed.

**Purpose of the Study**

In this study, the researcher examined the issues of representation and framing theory as they relate to African-Americans in the news. Media representations *re-present* reality or parts of reality for the audience. *Representation* is considered problematic in a race-conscious culture and however implicitly, news messages over time construct comparisons of whites and blacks
(Entman, 1994, p. 509). Reality is problematic because over time “specific realities depicted in single stories may accumulate to form a summary message that distorts social reality,” (Entman, 1994, p. 509). Framing is a tool used by the media to present stories. Frames help to create meaning (Lind & Salo, 2003). Robert Hicks (2005) explained that media or message framing refers to both the process of selecting and the manner in which information is presented (p. 333). While previous studies have focused on representation of people of color on television (i.e. roles), the focus of this study is on local newspaper coverage of African-Americans.

This thesis is structured by chapters. Chapter one is an introduction to the research topic and the purpose of the research. Chapter two is a review of literature that discusses previous research related to this study. Chapter three outlines the methodology used to conduct the study. Chapter four is a discussion of the results, and Chapter five provides a summary and conclusions of the study.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

This study examined the framing of African-Americans in the news. The following is a discussion about the issues of representation of African-Americans in the media and framing theory. Agenda setting theory is also briefly discussed as it relates to news use.

Representation

Representation is linked to image and what images are being presented to the public. Images are what people view and use to identify with and from which they can draw conclusions. In regard to representation, “imagery conveys in media as in the arts the intentional aesthetic modeling of a human (or non-human) reality…” (Downing & Husband, 2005, p. 32).

There are many ways of viewing the issue of representation. One approach is to look at it on two levels. The first level is the linguistic level where words denote things and the second is the societal and relativist level, which debates whether representations mirror reality (Hall, 1996).

Representation is an important issue when it comes to the media. It involves the social construction of reality. The key word here is construction, which implies that the reality does not just exist; it is made and framed in a certain way before it is re-presented to the public. Society relies on the media to keep informed about their surroundings. What is seen in the media is considered credible because there is a dependency relationship between the media and society. Newspapers and television stations cannot exist without readers, and viewers and readers look to the media as sources of information, entertainment and news. There is a reciprocal relationship between the two.

The representation of African-Americans in the media usually reflects that of crime and poverty (Wolseley, 1971).
Television News,” Travis L. Dixon (2003) looked at the roles that Blacks, Latinos and Whites have on local television. He conducted a content analysis to see whether they were presented in a positive (news reporter or anchor) or negative (criminal) light (Dixon, 2003, p. 132). The beginning of the chapter talks about the misrepresentation of blacks as criminals and the concern that this misrepresentation promotes stereotyping of African-Americans as lawbreakers (Dixon, 2003). Looking at the overrepresentation as well as the underrepresentation of people of color in the news, he compared the roles with “real world statistics and reports,” (Dixon, 2003, p.134). He found that “Blacks were 24 percent of those arrested but 38 percent of those who appeared as criminals on television” (Dixon, 2003, p. 137). This indicated that they were overrepresented as perpetrators by 14 percentage points (Dixon, 2003). Yes, there were some instances when blacks were presented in positive roles as reporters and anchors, but they were “more often relegated to the role of perpetrator” (Dixon, 2003, p. 137).

Television provides a glimpse of the way things are in the world to the public. Advertising is a big part of this presentation as commercials sometimes dominate television. According to the study “Minority Presence and Portrayal in Mainstream Magazine Advertising: An Update” by Lawrence Bowen and Jill Schmid (1997), diverse advertising is increasing and was heavily advocated by the CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) and the NAACP. These organizations were the first to charge advertising for “its racial myopia and to challenge the media to provide ‘wider representation of Negroes in conventional middle-class settings… (such representation) will do much to erase the undesirable stereotypes of the Negro that exist in the white community’” (Bowen & Schmid 1997, 134).

When it comes to media representation, it is important not to solely focus on the finished product (the actual newscast or printed article). The process behind news selection is important
as well. Previously and currently, black life was reported by white male reporters and depicted by white male producers. The view projected is skewed by what these men know rather than reality. Camilla Grant and John Dimmick (2000) looked at this in their study, “Making Local News: A Holistic Analysis of Sources, Selection Criteria, and Topics.”

Specifically, their study analyzed the sources, topics, and selection criteria that frame the perceptions viewers get from one local station. Traditional news selection criteria were good predictors of which news story would make it to the small screen and a new criterion—affiliation was critical in the filtering process (Gant & Dimmick, 2000). Enduring topics in Gant and Dimmick’s study were crime, disaster/accident, and government/politics. These topics were followed by business/economy, education, and environment/ecology news stories. What stands out here is the fact that the number one topic reported was crime.

Lack of representation is another issue. Sometimes African-American life is not included at all in the mainstream media. Newsworthiness is important to any publication or media outlet. What media organizations decide to include and exclude is important and sends a message to the public. The 1968 Report on the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders argued,

Negro reporters and performers should appear more frequently…in news broadcasts, on weather shows, in documentaries and in advertisements…If what the white American reads in newspapers or sees on television conditions his expectations of what is ordinary and normal in the larger society, he will neither understand nor accept the black American (as cited by Lawrence & Schmid, 1997, 135).

This is an important point because if people believe what they see on television and ignore what they do not regarding the black community, then they will not have a real sense of people of color or their lives. From a local perspective, this is even more vital.
Local media coverage can be said to be the most important as people pay attention to what is going on in their communities. When it comes to politics local news is ever more visible and coverage of the politicians in communities is vital (Drummond, 1995). The same can be said about the black community as a whole, because stories that feature the black community do not always reflect the truth. Two 1990 surveys (one of 247 black mayors and the other of 342 black state legislators conducted by Don Sneed, Dan Riffe, and Roger Van Ommeren) found negative views of local newspaper coverage. The authors said that from their point of view,

Black mayors see a local press that does a poor job covering the black community; does not recognize the important black-oriented stories; does not understand black issues; and is led by black publishers who do not care about black issues (Drummond, 1990, p. 25).

Drummond (1990) explained that it is hard for blacks to maintain their identity because of the constant reminder that they fit into black pathology. It (black pathology) is the storyline that routinely portrays blacks as drug lords, crack victims, the underclass, the homeless, and the subway muggers (Drummond, 1990). This pathology is what the media has forged and won’t let go (Drummond, 1990).

Media representations reflect the world we live in, putting a spin on what is new and what is familiar. When looking at the way something is represented, the focus is usually on the content and the overall message. When the factor of race comes into play, it is important that a fair and balanced view is projected. A question that would force the media as well as the public to look closely at how people of color are presented is: “How do media representations of the social world compare to the real world?” (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003, p. 194).

The issue of representation dates back to the 1950s and 60s when African-
Americans were often portrayed in submissive, menial, and servant roles. They were cast as entertainers (like comedians or big and boisterous characters), swindlers, and catering to some white employer. This is seen when one looks at television sitcoms like *Julia*, *Beulah*, and *Amos & Andy* (Riggs, 1989). The messages sent are negative and stereotypical. When presented to the public, it makes it easy to associate the implied qualities to an entire race. Not everyone believes what he or she sees, but if someone is exposed to something for too long, they can begin to believe it.

It is important to note that representations are not reality. They merely frame the world, re-present it, and give meaning for the viewer. It is crucial that the presentation is not biased or stereotypical as it sends the wrong message about a particular group. In the movie, *Color Adjustment* by Marlon Riggs (1989), one of the commentators said, “you can’t homogenize one group.” Some programming does this and in turn, presents a false image. Stereotypes can be both positive and negative; however the negative is usually what is projected to society when it comes to African-Americans on television and in the news. The stereotype is a narrative device used to divert reality (Riggs, 1989).

A study dealing with the representation of African-Americans was done by Christopher Beaudin and Esther Thorson. Specifically, this study incorporated the credibility of the news publication in its presentation of race. They examined the roles that race and news use play in predicting perceived credibility of news coverage of ethnic groups (Beaudin & Thorson, 2005). The media outlets they used were the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, and *WCCO-TV* news. They found that race played an important role in predicting credibility perceptions, but news use did not.
Whether or not the audience member was black or white had more of an impact in predicting credibility perceptions of news coverage of blacks and credibility perceptions of news coverage of whites (Beaudin & Thorson 2005). This could be because most of the coverage blacks receive is negative and sources are not ones that reflect a positive image of the black community. Overall, the study found that “blacks viewed news coverage of blacks as being less credible than did non-blacks, and blacks viewed news coverage of whites as being more credible than did non-blacks” (Beaudin & Thorson, 2005, p. 33).

In the article, “Representation and Reality in the Portrayal of Blacks on Network Television News,” Robert Entman (1994) probed images of African-Americans in taped news programs on ABC, CBS and NBC. Network news appeared to convey more stereotyped impressions – a narrower range of positive roles – for blacks than whites (Entman, 1994, p. 509). He found that representations of whites in network news are more varied and more positive than of blacks. He explained that this is due to “the way conventional journalistic norms and practices interact with political and social reality” (Entman, 1994, p. 509). The key in this study is the argument that images of blacks in the news should be more varied beyond the criminal and victim frame often used. “A deliberate choice to introduce more complexity and variety in images of African-Americans could, on balance, make TV news more positive, less likely to arouse white antagonism, and more representative of the reality of black America” (Entman, 1994, p. 518).

The argument can be made that coverage of people of color is plagued by negativity. For example, in the study “African Americans in Television News: From Description to Explanation” Camilla Grant and John Dimmick (2000) found that “African-American
television newsmakers appeared more often as criminals and private figures and less often as expert/professionals and law figures compared with White Americans” (Gant & Dimmick, 2000. p. 202). The next section will further discuss the role of African-Americans in the news.

African-Americans in the News

Race and the media is a combination that is often discussed. Society and the media sustain a fundamental, unidimensional view of blacks (Spigner 1994). While this image is consistently reinforced in television and motion picture programming, it is also recognizable in print media. Just like television, news publications portray race. Stories about African-Americans sometimes tend to have a certain tone. For example, associate editor, Phillip Morris of The Plain Dealer wrote a story about nine African-American teenage men who are successful athletes and plan to attend college (2005). His story appeared on the front page of the Plain Dealer when just about every newspaper on this day featured news about national natural disasters. Why did the paper do this, and why did he push for this? He said that when young African-American men are in the news it is because they did something wrong and it was time to show that there is some positivity in the black community in Cleveland (Morris, 2006).

Most of the news coverage that includes African Americans involves some type of crime, scandal, poverty, and or sports accomplishments. The study, “Blacks in the News: Television, Modern Racism and Cultural Change” by Robert Entman (1992) looked at the difference between news coverage of blacks and whites on television and analyzed how influential local television was on whites’ attitudes toward blacks. Entman conducted a content analysis of local news in Chicago finding that when it comes to balanced reporting, television may help to discourage traditional racist attitudes among white audiences (1992).
The study focused on three hypotheses. The first one looked at differences in the portrayal of blacks and whites in crime stories and the relation to the hostility factor of modern racism (Entman, 1992). Some of the examples referenced the fact that most of the news stories on crime featured black people. Also, when reporting crimes committed by a black person, the accused was not named, shown being held by the police, and was unable to speak for themselves (in sound bites) (Entman, 1992). The study found that not naming the person or allowing him to speak for himself (was usually an officer of a different race) is not fair when this is not the case universally. It “suggests the visual representation can be assimilated to a larger undifferentiated group, in this case the stereotype of a dangerous black male” (Entman, 1992, p. 356).

The second hypothesis focused on the portrayal of blacks and whites in the political arena. This belief coincides with the third type of social relationship regarding structure and agency: the relationship between the institutions and the public (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003). In this case, it was shown that blacks use speech that incites emotion and tend to speak on behalf of their own community versus the white politician who is depicted as a spokesperson of the government and the public interest. Both racial groups were heard discussing public policy but the presentations displayed “black interests [being defended] 115 times, white ethnic interests 43 times and other ethnic group interests 22 times” (Entman, 1992, p. 356). From this presentation, the audience could begin to think that the black community demands too much from the government (Entman, 1992).

The third question the study observed was the belief that racial discrimination no
longer exists due to the visibility of the black journalist. While the increase of African-Americans at TV stations is a sign of progress, it does not constitute the argument that discrimination is dead. “The hypothesis is that these journalists stand as symbolic affirmations…thereby contributing to a stereotyped understanding of black progress” (Entman, 1992, p. 347). The presence of African-Americans also begins to break the barrier of racism. This is also a non-threatening view of the African-American compared to the negative images of them often presented.

In the Chicago study, what was communicated by the news (on TV) served as the basis for how white audiences saw blacks socially and politically. What the audience saw on television helped shape their perception. This indicates that the media do indeed influence our lives and more importantly, the way that we see others. From a sociological perspective, it is important to view the media with two things in mind: consideration of the role of the media in our individual lives and consideration of the relationships between media and the social world (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003). People have different means of interpretation and a different definition of reality that can be attributed to the social construction of reality (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003). When applied to the images the local TV station (in the study) presented, a stereotypical reality that all black males are violent and dangerous was introduced. However, it is up to viewers to interpret this and construct their own reality.

Gray (1989) discussed the issue of false representations of African-Americans on television and the negative messages those representations send. Specifically, Gray looked at the relationships between fictional and non-fictional presentations of black life on television. Using an ideological lens, Gray evaluated the meanings of these relationships. The two television
programs he used were the 1986 CBS News documentary, *The Crisis of Black America: The Vanishing Family* and the *Cosby Show*, which reflected upper middle class black affluence (Gray, 1989).

According to Gray (1989), “media representations of black life are routinely fractured, selectively assembled, and subsequently become a part of the storehouse of American racial memory” (p. 377). This implies that the presentation of black life is chosen in a certain way and framed to project a certain point of view. This particular approach invokes the belief that the processing of the fractured social and racial meanings is given rather than socially constructed (Gray, 1989). The presentation of black life should be thought of with the same consideration as any other programming that features a non-black cast. Gray (1989) attributed this structure to “ideological hegemony.”

In the report, *The Crisis in Black America: The Vanishing Family* (1986), different families were interviewed to see how they lived and interacted with one another. In some, there was one parent; the male was not active in the life of the child, and couples were shown arguing about their relationships. These images were centered on three themes that left the audience with the dominant message: “self help, individual responsibility and community accountability are required to survive the crisis” (Gray, 1989, p. 379). Another factor that stood out to Gray was the title of the program. The use of terms like “vanishing family” and “crisis” suggest a normalcy of everyday life for African-Americans when defined by nuclear families (Gray, 1989, p. 379). What was missing from the presentation was the acknowledgement that communities and families go through transformative stages.
In addition to the struggle and poverty presented in the documentary, Gray (1989) also talked about the utopia of black affluence for middle class African-Americans. To illustrate this, he used *The Cosby Show*. *The Cosby Show* is an alternative view to the single parent home with parents barely able to support their children. While it is always good to see the image of success for minorities, it is not always true for them. Gray stated that society saw this show as a breakthrough for people of color, not realizing that most black people cannot achieve this dream of education and financial stability. The structure of the show is strategic as certain lessons are taught and the characters are rarely put in situations where their racial identity is important. This could send and has in some instances, sent the message that ‘race doesn’t matter anymore.’

Overall, the message of “Television, Black Americans and the American Dream” (Gray, 1989) was one that causes the reader to think about the impact television has on its audiences and how it presents racial points of view. Though representations are judged as reality, it is important to remember that they “re-present the social world in ways that are both incomplete and narrow” (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003, p. 194). Nevertheless, people still believe what is presented by the media and as the fictional and non-fictional television representations indicated, television also has the power to shape our understandings about racial (in)equality in America (Gray, 1989).

Among the studies used previously, audience reaction has not been incorporated. While content is important, it is not the sole issue that relates to representation. African-Americans and other people of color are not always pleased with news coverage that pertains to them. A Gallup poll taken by *USA Today* and *CNN* showed that 66 percent of African-Americans say that newspapers ‘do not pay attention’ to comments or criticisms about how news of interest to blacks is covered (Fitzgerald, 1994, p.15). The poll also included information from all forms of
media, but blacks were most dissatisfied with their local newspapers, believing it was the “most racially inflammatory medium,” (Fitzgerald, 1994, p. 15).

When we think of the news, emphasis is often given to the words used—the story. Pictures are just as important. “Because pictures affect a viewer emotionally more than words alone do, pictorial stereotypes often become misinformed perceptions that have the weight of established facts. These pictures can remain in a person’s mind throughout a lifetime,” (Lester, 1995, p. 103). This observation demonstrates the impact that pictures as well as stories have on the reader.

A newspaper can be considered a reflection of the community it serves. In the study, “African American Pictorial Coverage in Four U.S. Newspapers, 1995,” by Paul Lester and Randy Miller (1995) explained that it is a challenge to produce a daily document that serves the entire community. It is important to acknowledge the multi-level role of newspapers in regard to serving readers, advertisers, journalists and the community (Lester, 1994). Specifically, the researchers conducted a content analysis of the pictorial treatment of African-Americans in The New York Times, the Chicago Tribune, the New Orleans Times Picayune and the San Francisco Chronicle (Lester & Miller, 1995). Overall, the study found that although stereotypical coverage is the mainstay of African-Americans in the four newspapers, the general trend was that this type of coverage has decreased (Lester & Miller, 1995). While this study shows a decline in negative stereotypes, it is important to evaluate the frames used in their presentation. The next section discusses frames and framing theory.

Framing Theory

The term “frame” refers to the relational definition of meaning (Goffman, 1974). It is also linked to what Goffman called the definition of the situation. He explains that this
definition is “almost always to be found, but those who are in the situation ordinarily do not create this definition, even though their society often can be said to do so…” (Goffman, 1974, p. 1). This applies to the media as they define the situations that they report on for the reader and the image of the subject is created (framed). Goffman (1974) also said that experiences are organized through the use of frames. Frame analysis refers to the “organization of experience” (Goffman, 1974, p. 11).

In the article, “Framing Feminism” by Rebecca Ann Lind and Colleen Salo (2003), the act of framing is explained as it relates to applying meaning. “To ‘frame’ something is to make sense of it” (Lind & Salo, 2003, p. 161). Frames are used to understand and describe things. In regard to the media, many frames are used to tell a story. “Facts have no intrinsic meaning. They take on their meaning by being embedded in a frame or story line that organizes them and gives them coherence, selecting certain ones to emphasize while ignoring others,” (Gamson, 1992, p. 29) (as qtd. In Lind & Salo, 2003).

Framing theory uses frames to analyze social issues. According to Susan Nall Bales (2004), founder of FrameWorks Institute, “framing refers to the construct of a communication-its language, visuals and messengers- and the way it signals to the listener or observer how to interpret and classify new information” (Kirkpatrick, 2004, p.1). She explained that in practice, “framing recognizes that messages can be encoded with meaning associated with existing beliefs or ideas to allow for easier public comprehension of new information or ideas” (p. 1). Framing is a tool that the media use to present stories and, when certain frames are used to depict African-American life, the result can be critical to public perception.
Frames are “packages of associated ideas that help to guide attention, comprehension, storage, and retrieval of information” (Price, Nir & Cappella, 2005, p. 180). A way to look at frames of images in the media is to view them as lenses. In “Media Images and the Social Construction of Reality” by William Gamson, David Croteau, et. al, 1992) it is explained that:

We walk around with media-generated images of the world, using them to construct meaning about political and social issues. The lens through which we receive these images is not neutral…the special genius of this system is to make the whole process seem normal and natural that the very art of social construction is invisible (p. 374).

There are different definitions of frames. The overall concept of framing has been credited to sociologist Erving Goffman and anthropologist Gregory Bateson (Zoch & Molleda, 2006). Goffman views a frame as “a ‘schemata of interpretation’ through which individuals organize and make sense of information or an occurrence” (as cited by Zoch & Molleda, 2006). In the context of communication, sociologist Robert Entman identifies three locations where frames reside. They include the receiver, the text, and the cultural framework (Zoch & Molleda, 2006). These locations relate to the media as they have to consider these things during the reporting process. However, the text is what stands out because according to Entman (1993), “the text [italics in original] contains frames, which are manifested by the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments” ( p. 52).

Some argue that framing is a deliberate process and others argue the opposite. According to Entman (1993), in regard to the impact of framing and the media, “to frame is to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way
as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (1993, p.52). This description applies to the media as what they project is often interpreted as “what is” and frames tailor these messages. The media is in charge of what they print, frames merely add to the selection of news and how it will be presented. Based on this literature, the research questions that guide this study are “How are blacks framed in the newspapers and what messages are projected?”

Some would argue that the media have a difficult job. It is one that requires balance. Selectivity is another part of their job as they have to decide what makes it into the news and what does not. Media also determine how a certain story is framed and or presented to the public. The key word here is “framed” because it implies that a story is shaped to project a certain message.

How messages are framed is important as the elimination of information or any type of “tweaking” can be misleading to the audience. It is important to note that frames are socially constructed. Media set their own agenda (what stories run) and the agenda of the public. Framing is a major part of the media business and when it comes to news stories that feature African-Americans, the message is critical as it is often bogged down with stories about crime (Wolseley, 1971).

In their study, “Media Salience and the Process of Framing: Coverage of the Columbine School Shootings” by Hsiang Iris Chyi and Maxwell McCombs (2004), the practice of framing is described as a dynamic process over time. They explained that during the life span of any news event, the media reframe the event by emphasizing different attributes of the event—consciously or unconsciously—in order to keep the story alive. What stands out here is the idea that this process can be conscious which means the media know that zooming in on the scar on a
The criminal’s face may make him look scarier than usual. Heightening the negative aspect of a story to make it seem more fresh only benefits the media organization. What about the overall image being projected?

The researchers referred to this emphasizing of attributes as reframing or ‘frame-changing.’ Specifically, the study examined how media organizations change frames to build up the salience of objects on the media agenda (Chyi & McCombs, 2004). A content analysis of the coverage of the Columbine school shootings by the New York Times was done. The evolution of agenda setting was another topic discussed in this study.

According to Chyi and McCombs (2004), agenda setting theory has expanded as it includes another level of influence. While it deals with the media telling the public what to think about, there is more to the agenda setting function. At this level, “the unit of analysis shifts from an object, for example, an issue to aspects or attributes of the object” (Chyi & McCombs, 2004, p. 22). The second level deals with “attribute salience in the media and its impact on both object salience and attribute salience among the public” (Chyi & McCombs, 2004, p. 22).

Another way to view frames is to view them as attributes. When this is done, the link between agenda-setting and framing research can be observed (Chyi & McCombs, 2004). According to James W. Tankard, a media frame is defined as “a central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration” (as cited in Chyi & McCombs, 2004). This definition is a strong reflection of the role (the actions) of the media when it comes to framing.

It is important to note that there are different dimensions of media framing. Salma Ghanem identified four:

1. the topic of news item (what content is included in the frame)
2. presentation (size and placement)
3. cognitive attributes (details of what is included in the frame)
4. affective attributes (tone)
   (as cited by Chyi & McCombs, 2004)

With the acknowledgement of these four dimensions, Ghanem pointed out that the attributes of one object cannot be generalized for others (Chyi & McCombs, 2004). This says that there is no universal approach to all stories. This makes sense because stories and their content vary. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that these are elements media organizations consider when deciding and presenting news.

Thomas Huang (2005) is a columnist for the Poynter Institute. He is also a manager for The Dallas Morning News newspaper. In a 2006 column on diversity stories, he outlined frames that are frequently used in diversity stories involving people of color. They are conflict, bridge-building, disorientation, mainstreaming, creation and identity frames. The researcher used these six frames for this study to code the front page local sections. As a media practitioner and researcher, Huang discussed the frames and how they can be identified in a story. Huang also cautioned reporters to be aware of the frames they use in their stories. A description of the frames is below:

*The conflict frame:* a classic frame of journalism often used in diversity stories usually involving a dispute. He warns that telling diversity stories through the prism of conflict is not being accurate journalistically as the consequences of diversity are more complex and nuanced (2005, ¶9). (Example: The dispute between the Sunnis, Shiites and the Kurds)

*The bridge-building frame:* this frame involves identifying diverse groups that are making an effort to understand one another. (Example: a citywide initiative where people from different races sit down to break bread.)

*The disorientation frame:* with this frame, a minority group is portrayed as disoriented in the mainstream culture. The challenge for journalists is to describe the disorientation of the majority. (Example: When refugees are relocated from their homeland to a different city, and their loneliness and isolation is what is reported)
The identity frame: this frame is the most psychological and focuses on the interior rather than the exterior (i.e. how does the collision of cultures change?)

The creation frame: with this frame, journalists allow themselves to be hopeful and find examples of fusion, where different cultural traditions blend and become something new. (Example: the cultural blending of food, music, art, politics, dance and literature).

The mainstreaming frame: This is the frame that doesn’t appear to be a frame at first for readers. However, journalists must have an intention to use it. “We ‘mainstream’ diversity into all of our stories” Huang wrote but it does not always happen naturally. He encourages that journalists seek new voices for stories that may not reflect their experiences and cultural backgrounds. (Example: Having a diverse source pool in stories intentionally) (Huang, 2005, ¶9.)

Huang (2005) has written many articles on diversity in news stories and framing. Since he not only works in the media industry (The Dallas Morning News) but observes the growth/decline of diversity in newsrooms, the researcher thought his frames best suited the study. Huang’s frames were also fitting as the frames were specifically applicable to diversity stories. The researcher was looking for representation of people of color (African-Americans) so there was a link between the study and the frames.

In addition to the link between the research topic and the relevance of the frames, the researcher found that other framing studies did not reference Huang. Researchers either identified other frames or created their own based on observation. Generally, research should be new and seek to discover something that hasn’t been done before or possibly expand on previous research. In this study, the researcher wanted to be unique—hence, the use of Thomas Huang’s frames.

As Huang (2005) writes about framing and the role of the reporter when it comes to framing stories, he also discussed the editor. He explains that “editors need to be cognizant of these frames, as well. They might have a bias that favors one frame over another. By giving priority to one kind of story, these editors risk producing monotonous, formulaic front pages.”
(Huang, 2005 ¶ 7). This ties into the focus of this study as the frequency of African-Americans on the front page is what the researcher observed. Specifically, the researcher looked at the front pages of the Local and Metro sections to view the framing of African-Americans. The next section ties into the organization of news and discusses agenda setting and news use.

Agenda Setting and News Use.

It is often said that the media play a vital role in telling the public what to think about. This agenda setting function is what makes it crucial for there to be balanced and equal coverage of people of color (mainly African-Americans). The study, “No Cure for What Ails Us: The Media-Constructed Disconnect between Societal Problems and Possible Solutions” by Linda Kensicki (2004) looks at how social problems (pollution, poverty, and incarceration) are covered in 300 news articles from 1995 to 2000. She found that “coverage overwhelmingly indicated no specific cause, effect or responsible agent for each problem…” (2004, p.53). She also found that the articles did not include terms such as environmentalist, activist, or advocate in content or solutions to these social problems. The question is why? Without these things presented it is nothing more than a negative projection.

Kensicki (2004) also pointed out that knowledge of social problems comes from what is presented in the media. They are a huge source of information. “Knowledge of social problems is often not the result of visible or identifiable conditions directly surrounding an individual or society at large. Consequently, public understanding of social issues derives from a construction provided by media over time” (Kensicki, 2004, 54). This is important to note as some of the main social problems like crime and poverty are stereotypically linked to African-Americans. Kensicki reported that African-Americans make up less than one-third of the poor, but one out of
every three poor persons in the media is African-American. This is why these social issues are seen as a black problem.

From issues of black representation to how African-Americans view the media as a whole, race and media are constantly analyzed. Teresa Mastin (2000) studied media use and the level of civic participation within the African-American community. Mastin surveyed both African-American professionals and nonprofessionals. The study looked at local as well as national and international news media use. There were two findings: (1) local news and media do not serve the civic information needs of African-Americans and (2) when compared with local news media, interpersonal networks more strongly influence African-Americans’ civic participation (Mastin, 2000).

Specifically, the study sought to see if there was a relationship between local news media use, community integration, and political participation for the general population. According to Mastin, empirical research has previously reflected this relationship in a positive way; however, she examined if the media serve the above functions for African-American professionals and nonprofessionals. Working with these two different groups allowed for a study of “intra-race differences as they relate to professionalism and civic participation” (Mastin, 2000, p. 115). The distinctions made between the two groups were interesting as Mastin explained that the professionals have more access to resources and are more highly regarded in the mainstream media. On the other hand, nonprofessionals lack access to resources and are rarely a part of mainstream media.

History has shown us that the inclusion of African-Americans in the media was slow to come. This prompted blacks to create their own newspapers and magazines to provide
representation for and of themselves. We see today that African-Americans are a part of the mainstream news, but it is limited in terms of content.

In some cases, the audience identifies with what they see in the media. This is because “common identification is shaped by mediated messages…” (Entman & Rojecki, 2000 p. 205). The term representation is often used to “signal presence or absence of people of color from media or constructive vs. unconstructive portrayal” (Downing & Husband, 2005, p. 43). These are just two reasons the researcher chose to look at representation in this study as they relate to what the audience can take away from the representation of African-Americans. The researcher focused on the following research questions:

[1] How are African-Americans framed in newspapers?

[2] What messages are being communicated about the black community in newspapers?

The next chapter is a discussion of the research method used for the study. Units of analysis, sampling, data analysis, and a definition of the type of research used—content analysis is included. In this study, the researcher conducted a descriptive content analysis of The Plain Dealer, the Akron Beacon Journal, and The Vindicator.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researcher examined the framing, or mental models, of African-Americans in newspapers. The following is a discussion of the research method used to observe the representation of African-Americans and how they are framed in local news stories.

Content Analysis

For this study, the researcher conducted a content analysis of *The Plain Dealer* (Cleveland), the *Akron Beacon Journal* (Akron), and *The Vindicator* (Youngstown). The researcher examined how African-Americans are framed in the local and metro sections of these publications. This was achieved through close observation of content because “one cannot study mass communication without studying content,” (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 1998, p. 32). This method also was chosen because it is unobtrusive which leaves no effect on the social behavior being studied (Babbie, 2007).

With this research method, two types of content have to be considered—manifest content and latent content. Earl Babbie (2007) referred to manifest content as the “visible surface content (concrete terms).” Latent content is the underlying meaning of communication. The researcher evaluated both forms of content.

There are different approaches to content analysis. The research can be qualitative or quantitative. This study included both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Emphasis was on the qualitative. Specifically, the researcher conducted a descriptive content analysis of the three newspapers. This type of analysis is “attractive in clarity and parsimony” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 52).
Sample

The researcher examined the front page or covers of the local sections of *The Plain Dealer*, the *Akron Beacon Journal*, and *The Vindicator* (Youngstown). These sections are called either the *Local* section or the *Metro* section. The stories that make it into these sections have community appeal and also come from an editorial decision. While an editor approves the final product, the story is “edited” by several persons. How African-Americans are framed in local stories allowed the researcher to observe what types of frames are used when African-Americans are presented to the community.

The three weeks that were analyzed were randomly selected. Each month was written on a piece of paper and put into a bowl. Then a month was selected. The selected months were replaced in the bowl and then another selection was made. The same was done during the selection of the week number. Pieces of paper numbered 1 through 5 were also placed in a bowl and then a number was selected to determine the week number. The researcher focused on the second week of March, the third week of November, and the fourth week of May 2006.

Unit of Analysis

The researcher evaluated the content of three Ohio daily newspapers. The cities of Cleveland (51% African-Americans), Akron (28.5% African-American) and Youngstown (43.8% African-American) have high populations of African-Americans. This was considered in the selection of the newspapers. The unit of analysis was the centerpiece story on the front page of the section. The headline, the tone, and the language used in the story were considered in the analysis. Looking at the different parts of the story: placement, photos, and the ethnicity of the subject, helped to identify the frames used as well as help to formulate frames based on observation.
Columnist Thomas Huang (2005) of the Poynter Institute said, “framing a story is akin to composing a photograph. If you’re a reasonably good photographer, you deliberately point your viewfinder to capture certain things…” (2005, ¶3). He also cautioned that reporters need to be more aware of the frames they choose for their stories—and consider using multiple frames over a series of stories. In relation to diversity, he named some basic frames: conflict, bridge-building frame, disorientation frame, identity, creation (change in population will define race), and the mainstreaming frame. These frames were considered throughout the analysis:

*The conflict frame:* a classic frame of journalism often used in diversity stories usually involving a dispute. He warns that telling diversity stories through the prism of conflict is not being accurate journalistically as the consequences of diversity are more complex and nuanced (2005, ¶9). (Example: The dispute between the Sunnis, Shiites and the Kurds)

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study. Huang’s frames were also fitting as the frames were specifically applicable to diversity
stories. The researcher was looking for representation of people of color (African-Americans) so
there was a link between the study and the frames.

Reliability and validity.

Reliability refers to whether or not research can be replicated and produces the same
results. “In content analysis, reliability is paramount” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 12). Validity
answers the question of “Are we really measuring what we want to measure?” (Neuendorf,
2002, p. 12). In this study, emphasis was on face validity as observation of the “face of things”
will allow the researcher to “take a step back, so to speak, and examine the measures freshly and

Intercoder Reliability

Intercoder reliability speaks to the level of agreement between one or more coders using
the same coding instrument. It is also described as an indicator of a “widely accepted rule of
thumb” (Ellis, 1994, p. 91). To determine the reliability of the coding sheet for this study, the
researcher had two students in addition to herself code one week of the Plain Dealer and the
Akron Beacon Journal (each observed the same week). There was also diversity among the
coders as each coder was of a different ethnicity. This was taken into consideration as the nature
of the study focused on the representation of African-Americans.

The students who assisted in the study were trained by the researcher. They were given a
description of Huang’s frames and a sample of a front page section of one of the newspapers so
they could specifically see what the researcher was looking for before coding. To determine the
level of agreement between the coders, the researcher referenced the equation for popular agreement coefficients used to determine percent agreement:

\[ PA_o = \frac{Total \ A's}{n} \]

\( n \) - the total of stories/photos on which the coders agree and disagree

\( A \) - the number of stories/photos in agreement

After reviewing the results of the pilot study from the additional coders, the following percent agreement was calculated for the stories:

\[ PA_o = \frac{12}{13} = .92 \text{ (92\% agreement)} \]

The following is the percent agreement for the photos:

\[ PA_o = \frac{13}{14} = .92 \text{ (92\% agreement)} \]

Researchers advise that the amount of agreement in a study or the correlation have a 70 to 80\% agreement to be reliable (Frey, Botan and Kreps, 2000). In this study, there were two additional coders that assisted the researcher. The percent agreement listed above exceeds this amount which reflects a high level of reliability for the coding instrument.

**Data Analysis**

The data were evaluated to see what types of stories are being reported on African-Americans. The researcher used three of the four dimensions (topic, detail, and tone) (placement was slightly considered) of media framing that Salma Ghanem (1997) identified when examining the stories:

1. the topic of news item (what content is included in the frame),
2. presentation (size and placement),
3. cognitive attributes (details of what is included in the frame)
4. affective attributes (tone) (p. 4).
The theme (negative vs. positive stories), the wording of headlines, and the overall message of the story were included in the analysis. The term *positive* was operationalized as a story that did not have an element of crime, poverty, or legal proceeding. The term *negative* was operationalized as a story including themes of crime, legal proceedings or tragedy. In addition, the researcher determined the percentage of negative versus positive stories in each publication. This process also was done for the positive stories. The next chapter is a discussion of the researcher’s findings and results of the study.
Chapter IV

RESULTS

This study examined the issues of representation and framing theory as they relate to African-Americans in the news. Media representations *re-present* reality or parts of reality for the audience (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003). Framing is a tool used by the media to present stories. Frames help to create meaning (Lind & Salo, 2003). The focus of this research was on local newspaper coverage of African-Americans (framing of members of this ethnic group) and the frequency of their appearance in the centerpiece story.

The research method for the study was a descriptive content analysis of the front page of the local section of the selected publications. The unit of analysis was the centerpiece story. Three randomly selected weeks provided the sample. They were the second week of March, the third week of November and the fourth week of May 2006. While emphasis was on the centerpiece story, the other stories on the page were also coded for frequency of African-American representation.

The researcher examined 313 stories (18 weekdays per paper) and 227 photos among the three publications. Of those 313 stories, 30 featured or related to African-Americans. A total of five stories about Africans appeared as the centerpiece story. Of the 227 photos analyzed, 40 photos featured African-Americans. A total of 54 front page covers of the *Local* and *Metro* sections were analyzed.

Representation of the black community was present in all three publications. However, results varied. Following is a breakdown and discussion of how African-Americans were represented in each individual publication.
Representation

The Plain Dealer

The researcher examined 18 front covers of the Metro section of the Plain Dealer—a total of 99 stories were coded. Specifically, the frequency of African-Americans in the centerpiece story was the study’s focus. Among the 99 stories reviewed, 11 featured or involved African-Americans. Thus, 11% (11/99) of the stories on the front page of the Metro section had some relation to African-Americans.

Of the 11 stories about African-Americans, one (1/99) story was the centerpiece. The centerpiece story dominates the front page of newspaper sections. Like those stories “above the fold,” the centerpiece story is one strategically placed on the page so that readers will pay attention to it. The single centerpiece in the sample was about a gunman who killed himself after a standoff in Euclid, Ohio. In this case, an African-American was linked to crime, and the tone (representation) was negative.

In regard to visual representation, African-Americans were featured in 13 out of 61 photos. Photos varied in type. Feature photos of groups with multiple subjects as well as headshots were prevalent among the covers.

Placement of the other articles on the front page was also considered in this study. Some 20% of the stories on the front page pertaining to African-Americans appeared above the fold. Two of the three stories were related as they concerned the selection of the new Cleveland Public Schools Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The primary candidate was Eugene Sanders, an African-American (Kleinerman, 2006). The overarching theme for these stories is education. However, the conflict theme was also present since Sanders was not going to make the same amount of money as his predecessor and had no opportunity for bonuses. The final story that
appeared above the fold had elements of both conflict and crime. It was about a Cleveland man forcing two 16-year-olds to work as prostitutes in Florida (Guevara, 2006).

Of the 11 stories that related to African-Americans, one story appeared on the side of the front page. It was an announcement of the public memorial service for African-American singer Gerald Levert (Public memorial for Gerald Levert, 2006). A full 33% of the stories found on the front page appear below the fold. The topics of these stories consisted of the hiring practices of Mayor Frank Jackson (an African-American) and his tendency to appoint white men to his top positions (Fullwood, 2006). In this particular story, political, conflict, and racial themes are present.

Additional topics that appeared in stories relating to the black community represented themes of education, smoking awareness, community outreach, and more. Specifically, the stories are about an After School program at the Michael J. Zone Recreation Center, the Cleveland Public Schools CEO reaching out to the community (Kleinerman, 2006), minorities speaking for an indoor smoking ban for low-wage workers, and the quest for the new Cleveland Public Schools CEO. See Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total # of stories reviewed (including the Centerpiece story)</th>
<th>99</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total # of stories featuring African-Americans</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of photos reviewed (including the Centerpiece story)</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of photos featuring African-Americans</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of Centerpieces featuring African-Americans</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Non-black stories in Plain Dealer

Like those stories about African-Americans, there were both positive and negative stories presented in The Plain Dealer in non-black stories. Non-black stories were those stories that did not feature an African-American in the photo or a story on an issue that did relate to the black community. From stories on the selection of city officials and illegal immigrant legislation to stories on road construction and news on smoking bans, there was a variety among the non-black stories reviewed. Many stories were general in nature and appealed to the community (public) as a whole as opposed to a specific person(s). Most of the coverage in the Metro section included stories on crime, education and politics.

Interestingly, there were six (6/99) stories in each of the above categories (e.g., crime, education and politics). Story topics ranged from a standoff at a Euclid School and the death of a shooting victim to high school graduation requirements becoming stricter in Northeast Ohio and aspirations of a local businessman to fill a Senate seat. In addition to topics relating to crime, education and politics there were stories on health, safety, business and transportation. There were few stories in these categories (between one and two).

In regard to tone, there were more negative than positive stories about non-blacks. Specifically, there were 29 negative stories and 15 positive stories within the sample. Of the 11 stories that related to the black community, there were four positive and four negative stories. Based on the results, there was more representation of non-blacks than African-Americans in the news content. Of the 99 stories reviewed in The Plain Dealer, 11 featured or related to the black community. Eighty-eight stories related to the non-black community majority. Seventeen of the 88 non-black stories were centerpiece stories. There was one centerpiece that related to the black community.
Visually, representation of other ethnicities was higher than African-American representation in *The Plain Dealer*. Of the 61 photos reviewed in the newspaper, 48 photos were of non-blacks compared to the 13 photos that feature African-Americans. Seventeen (17/61) of these photos appeared as the centerpiece. One of the 18 centerpiece photos featured African-Americans. This single photo featured people responding to a gunman killing himself after a standoff in Euclid, Ohio. See Table 2.

**Table 2: Non-Black Representation in PD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total # of stories reviewed (including the Centerpiece story)</th>
<th>99</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total # of stories featuring Non-Blacks</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of photos reviewed (including the centerpiece)</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of photos featuring Non-Blacks</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of centerpieces featuring Non-Blacks</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Akron Beacon Journal*

There were 109 stories found in the *Akron Beacon Journal* for the 18 days. Within the 109 stories, six stories relate to or feature African-Americans. Of the stories that are about or involved African-Americans in the *Akron Beacon Journal*, there is one more negative story (4) than positive story (3). A total of 105 photos were analyzed in this publication. Thirteen photos featured African-Americans and most were stand-alone photos as opposed to accompanying the centerpiece story.

Of the six stories that involved African-Americans, none are centerpiece stories. While there are no centerpiece stories that related to the black community, two (13 %) stories were found above the fold. Of the two, one dealt with a fire in Copley Township that sparked a new interest in Copley by the police. Generally, bank robberies, shootings and fatal fires have a
tendency to appear “above the fold.” The other story dealt with Hurricane Katrina and volunteer efforts from Kent State University students.

Based on the results found in the Akron Beacon Journal, 33 % (6/18) of the cover stories in the newspaper related to African-Americans. Stories emphasized crime and conflict in this publication. African-Americans had a higher negative representation in this newspaper. See Table 3.

Table 3: Total of Stories featuring African-Americans in Akron Beacon Journal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total # of stories reviewed (including the Centerpiece story)</th>
<th>109</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total # of stories featuring African-Americans</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of photos reviewed (including centerpiece)</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of photos featuring African-Americans</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of centerpieces featuring African-Americans.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ABJ Representation on Non-Blacks

Non-black stories in the Akron Beacon Journal were both positive and negative among the 109 non-black stories found. Specifically, there were 38 positive stories and 25 negative stories. Stories about other ethnicities varied in topic. From drug offenders getting a chance at education and churches helping Hurricane Katrina victims to voting system failures and city budget changes, there was variety among the covers.

Consistent themes found in stories were politics, education and crime. While there are many stories reflecting these topics, political stories frequently appear in non-black stories. A total of nine stories (9/103) have some political element. Education stories also had a presence in the Local sections through stories on tuition increases, speakers at the University of Akron and
low science proficiency scores. Seven of the 103 stories reviewed relate to education. No black story (stories relating to the black community) focused on education.

As mentioned previously, crime-related stories were also present among the non-black story results. Through the presentation of stories on a murder trial, animal cruelty and an assault conviction, crime was a consistent topic in the sample. Of the 103 non-black stories reviewed, nine represent some element of crime. Thirty-three % (2/6) of the stories that related to the black community represented some element of crime. Compared to the 4.8 % of non-black stories presented, readers saw African-Americans in more crime stories than non-blacks.

Based on the results, there was more representation of non-blacks than African-Americans in the *Akron Beacon Journal*. Of the 109 stories reviewed, six stories relate to the black community compared to the 103 stories that relate to the majority (non-blacks). Visual representation of non-blacks also was higher as there were 69 photos of non-blacks and 13 photos that featured African-Americans. Thirteen of the 69 photos were centerpieces. According to the sample, no centerpiece featured an African-American or related to the black community. See Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total # of stories reviewed (including the Centerpiece story)</th>
<th>109</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total # of stories featuring Non-Blacks</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of photos reviewed (including the centerpiece story)</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of photos featuring Non-Blacks</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of Centerpieces featuring Non-Blacks</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next section is a discussion of the representation results in *The Vindicator* newspaper. It includes story examples and total for the publication.
The Vindicator

There was a range of stories in The Vindicator. For the 18 days, a total of 105 stories were examined. Thirteen of the 105 stories featured/related to African-Americans. From community leaders being honored by notable organizations and programs to uplift youth to teachers saving the life of a first grader, representation of the black community was high compared to the six stories found in the Akron Beacon Journal. However, of the 13 stories relating to the black community, only four dominated the pages as centerpieces. All four of the stories in this position were positive. A total of 61 photos (in The Vindicator) were examined, including 18 centerpiece photos. Of the 61 photos, 14 featured African-Americans.

Visually, an African-American presence was strong on the front pages. For example, the front page of the March 11, 2006 edition of the newspaper had three stories on the page featuring African-Americans. One story dealt with the mayor’s budget plans. Another story featured three teachers saving the life of a first grader who severed his arm at lunch (one of the teachers was African-American). The final story on the man charged with the first homicide of the year was African-American and the standard mug shot appeared. Of the five stories on the cover for this day, 60 % (3/5) of the editorial content included African-Americans.

In this publication, there was a lot of diversity. Positive stories outnumber the negative stories by two stories. There were seven positive stories and five negative stories. Based on the results, The Vindicator reflects the greatest representation of African-Americans. As aforementioned, placement was also considered in the study. Twenty-two percent (4/18) of the stories found were centerpiece stories. In addition to the four centerpiece stories discussed previously in the newspaper, 30 % (4/13) of the stories relating to African-Americans appear above the fold. See Table 5.
Table 5: Total of Stories featuring African-Americans in The Vindicator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total # of stories reviewed (including the Centerpiece story)</th>
<th>105</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total # of stories featuring African-Americans</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of photos reviewed (including the centerpiece)</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of photos featuring African-Americans</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of centerpieces featuring African-Americans</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Non-Black Representation in The Vindicator

Stories about other ethnicities (non-blacks) varied in topic. Like those stories about African-Americans, there were both positive and negative stories in The Vindicator. From city renovations and budget changes to political debates and court trials, there was variety among the stories that did not focus on or relate to African-Americans. Coverage was heavily geared toward politics and financial decisions of the city council. Thirteen (13/92) stories featured some political element. Building and renovation plans frequently served as news of the day among the front pages.

Another consistent theme among the non-black related stories is crime and legal proceedings. From the former deputy sheriff of Mahoning County found guilty of shoplifting to suspects charged in sexual abuse cases and murder, the element of crime is present among the front pages. Of the 92 non-black stories reviewed, 10 stories were linked to crime. The remaining stories were general in nature and related to communities as a whole and not specific people such as stories on council meetings, historical landmarks and research (i.e., a study on members of the Board of Trustees at Youngstown State University) (Trustees meet at YSU, 2006).
In regard to tone, there were more positive than negative stories about other ethnicities (non-blacks). Specifically, there were 28 positive stories and 26 negative stories based on the sample. Based on the results, there was more representation of non-black stories compared to the 13 stories that feature or relate to African-Americans. Of the 105 stories reviewed in The Vindicator, 92 stories related to or focused on the non-black community.

Visually, representation of other ethnicities was higher than African-American representation in The Vindicator. Of the 61 photos reviewed, 21 featured a non-black compared to the 14 photos found that feature an African-American. There were 26 photos that make up the total. These photos were in an ‘other’ category or ‘non-race’ category. Race could not be coded as a frame when the centerpiece story dealt with building renovations or trustee meetings with which there was not an accompanying photo.

Within the 26 photos were photos of objects (i.e. buildings, flowers) and animals. According to the results, all of centerpiece photos were not of people but of animals and objects. The photos varied in placement along the side of the page, above the fold and below the fold. However, 50 of the photos appeared in the centerpiece position. African-Americans were featured in four centerpiece stories. See Table 6.

Table 6: Total of Non-Black Stories in Vindicator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total # of stories reviewed (including the Centerpiece story)</th>
<th>105</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total # of stories featuring Non-Blacks</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of photos reviewed (including the centerpiece)</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of photos featuring Non-Blacks</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of centerpieces featuring Non-Blacks</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Framing

Frames create meaning and aid in the interpretation of news content. The researcher examined the sample newspaper stories for the frames used and their frequencies. A breakdown of the frames found in the newspapers follows.

Framing in The Plain Dealer

The researcher used the frames Poynter columnist Thomas Huang (2005) identified as being used in diversity stories. They are: conflict, bridge-building, identity, creation, disorientation, and mainstreaming. Refer to chapter three for a definition of each frame. Of the six frames, the conflict frame appeared more frequently in The Plain Dealer. The identity and creation frames were not found in the Plain Dealer stories. The disorientation and mainstreaming frame appear once among the covers.

Based on the results, the second most frequent frame used was bridge-building. Stories about city officials reaching out to the community were just a few of the stories that fit this category. Though the researcher coded for Huang’s (2005) frames, general frames (e.g. politics, sports, education) dominated the front pages. Thirty % (3/11) of the stories reflected a general frame. See Table 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7: Frames in the Plain Dealer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge-building frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorientation frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstreaming frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/General (ex. education, politics)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Frames in Non-black stories in Plain Dealer

Consistent with results in the other two newspapers, general frames dominated non-black stories in The Plain Dealer. This was also the case for stories relating to the black community. Stories on new laws and U.S. Senate seat openings, churches helping victims of sexual abuse through donations and a murder trial were just some of the stories displaying the frames, of crime, education, and politics. All three frames appeared in the same number of stories. The total was six for each frame. The remaining stories were general interest stories targeting the community as a whole and neutral in tone.

Of the specific frames that the researcher used as a guide (Huang 2005), the conflict frame was the most frequent frame among non-black stories. According to the results for The Plain Dealer, 24 of the 88 non-black stories reviewed reflect the conflict frame. In regard to stories relating to the black community, three of the 11 stories found reflect use of the conflict frame. After analysis of the 54 front-pages of the Metro section, no story shows use of the mainstream, bridge-building, identity or creation frame. There were three (3/88) stories in which the disorientation frame is used. For example, one story was about a church donating $1 million dollars to start a fund that will support victims of sexual abuse.

There were different types of stories in which Huang’s (2005) frames appeared in the newspaper. For example, in non-black stories the conflict frame appeared more frequently. In stories that related to the black community, three reflected this frame. However, the bridge-building frame (e.g. building relationships between communities) was found in two of the black stories and in none of the non-black stories. Another difference was the number of stories in which the disorientation frame is found. The disorientation frame was used in more non-black stories than black stories. While the researcher coded for six specific frames, general frames
appeared in 42% of the non-black stories and in 33% of stories relating to the black community. See Table 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8: Frames in Non-Black stories in PD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge-building frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorientation frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstreaming frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/General (ex. education, politics)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Akron Beacon Journal_

There was a range in the types of stories that appeared in the sample. From house fires, police recruiting campaigns and helping the community during Thanksgiving, there was a variety present. However, the weekdays were similar in some aspects of coverage. For example, during the second week (May), two stories covered the trial of Gloria James, mother of NBA star Lebron James. James was in the news for alleged drunken driving and the newspaper followed the trial. This was an example of a general/other frame category as it was a story with a crime theme. The conflict frame was also present as James was in conflict with the law. In this case, the conflict frame was used in its literal sense as opposed to conflict between cultures as Thomas Huang (2005) describes (see chapter three).

Thirty-three % (6/18) of the front covers featured African-Americans. One example of a two-tone (positive and negative) story reflecting African-Americans was a story on Kent State volunteers traveling to Biloxi, Mississippi, to help with the Hurricane Katrina relief effort. Both the disorientation and conflict frames were present as survivors of the tragedy were presented as victims (disorientation frame) still in need of aid from the government after months of promises
(conflict frame). While it was a positive that people went there to help, the news story had a negative undertone in regard to the lack of help.

In addition to the disorientation frame and conflict frame, the creation and bridge-building frames were present among the covers. Specifically, there was one story in each of these frame categories. This showed variety among the content presented. However, general frames such as crime, sports and education (e.g., selection of Cleveland Public Schools CEO) were dominant frames in the cover stories. See Table 9.

Table 9: Frames in the *Akron Beacon Journal*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict frame</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity frame</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation frame</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge-building frame</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorientation frame</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstreaming frame</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/General (ex. education, politics)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compared to stories relating to the black community, non-black stories were no different when it came to the use of general frames. General themes such as community, health, sports, politics and safety were consistently used in the non-black stories reviewed. Stories about the Salvation Army opening a new store and people coming together to participate in a race sponsored by a non-profit organization to raise money for the homeless were two out of the many stories in which no specific frame was used. According to the results, 64 stories reflect a general frame.

As aforementioned, the researcher looked for the presence of Huang’s (2005) frames. Of Huang’s six frames used in diversity stories, the conflict frame appeared the most frequently among non-black stories in the *Akron Beacon Journal*. From the misappropriation of city funds
and election problems (e.g., unsigned absentee ballots in Summit County) to employees suing for wrongful dismissal and a murder trial, the conflict frame was present among the front pages of the *Local and State* section. Based on the results, the conflict frame was present in 19 (19/99) stories. This frame was present once (1/6) among stories relating to the black community.

While the conflict frame appeared most frequently throughout the sample, there was also representation of other frames in the non-black stories. For example, the bridge-building frame appeared in a story about students spending the day with residents of a nursing home. In this case the “bridge” or link was between young and old people as the story emphasized learning from one another. There also was one (1/99) story in which the reporter may have unconsciously or consciously used the disorientation frame. The story was about a church (Celebration Church) raising money to help victims of Hurricane Katrina (Caldwell, 2006). Here is an example of a positive story in which the subjects were in need. See Table 10 for the total of frames used in non-black stories.

Table 10: Frames used in Non-Black Stories in ABJ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict frame</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity frame</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation frame</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge-building frame</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorientation frame</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstreaming frame</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (General)</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The *Vindicator*

There were a variety of frames found among *The Vindicator* covers. General frames, coded as “other” dominated the pages through stories about crime, education, politics, safety and sports. Eight of the 14 stories relating to the black community had a general frame. Most of the positive stories were in this category. For example, there was a story about students enjoying
spring weather in the midst of unpredictable Ohio weather. The African-American students in the accompanying photo were playing basketball. Thus, a general weather story featuring people of color participating in a sport. Another positive story was about a school being renovated after years of planning.

Stories in this publication did not have single frames. There was a story that used two, and it appeared above the fold warranting the attention of the reader. The story featured two African-American men in the photo. While it was a positive story overall, there was an underlying projection of a stereotype of troubled black youth. The story was about a program that pairs at risk youth with mentors to build their self-esteem. In this case, the disorientation frame was used as youth are portrayed as victims of the streets and broken homes. On the other hand, the identity frame was present as the reader sees that once these youth find self-esteem, they can achieve.

Of the six frames used to code the covers, the bridge-building frame was the most frequent in this publication. From local volunteers reaching out and building a relationship with the children’s hospital, to Youngstown’s mayor attempting to keep “bridges” open with existing businesses while welcoming new businesses financially in the city budget, this particular frame proved to be consistent.

There were no stories in which the reporter used the conflict frame and only one that incorporated the mainstreaming frame through which the reporter finds a diverse group of sources (Huang, 2005). The story featuring the mainstream frame was about an organization (the 20/30 club) honoring the city’s top leaders. There was racial diversity within the group of honorees. Overall, general frames accounted for 44 % of the stories about or relating to African-Americans in The Vindicator. Refer to Table 11.
Table 11: Frames in The Vindicator for African-Americans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict frame</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity frame</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation frame</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge-building frame</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorientation frame</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstreaming frame</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/general (education/politics)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Framing of Non-Blacks in Vindicator

General frames also dominated local news stories that did not relate to African-Americans. Political stories regarding the shifting of positions and budget plans to reconstruct downtown Youngstown were common story topics among the covers. A total of 51 stories had a general frame. Eight of the 13 stories that featured or related to African-Americans also displayed a general frame.

There was a strong presence of general frames in both black and non-black stories. However, results varied when it came to Huang’s (2005) frames. In stories about African-Americans, the bridge-building frame was more frequent than the other five frames. Based on the results, the most frequently used frame in non-black stories was the conflict frame.

Examples of stories reflective of conflict were about politicians misusing funds, former community leaders being charged with shoplifting and people scamming the elderly and robbing them. The conflict frame appeared in 19 stories (19/92).

In addition to the similarity among the presence of general frames was the presence of frames that only appeared in non-black stories. For example, no story relating to the black community used the creation frame. In two non-black stories, the reporter used the creation frame. Creation was viewed in its literal sense as one of the stories was about Habitat for
Humanity creating a home for a single mother who lost her home. For a total of frames used in non-black stories see Table 12.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict frame</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity frame</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation frame</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge-building frame</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorientation frame</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstreaming frame</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/General (ex. education, politics)</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comparison of Newspapers**

After analysis of all three newspapers, each publication proved to be unique. People of color graced the front pages of all three newspapers. Though some more frequent than others, representation was visible in the selected publications. Based on the results, *The Vindicator* reflected the highest amount of representation of African-Americans (14 stories) compared to *The Plain Dealer* (11 stories) and the *Akron Beacon Journal* (6 stories). Thirteen stories featured African-Americans in this newspaper (*The Vindicator*). *The Plain Dealer* came in second in regard to the representation of African-Americans as 11 stories appeared among the front covers. Six (6/109) stories relating to African-Americans appeared in the *Akron Beacon Journal*. In this particular publication, there were more photos of African-Americans than stories about them (See Table 3).

In regard to specific frames used in the stories, the conflict frame was present only in the *Akron Beacon Journal* and *The Plain Dealer*. However, the identity frame appeared only in *The Vindicator*. The creation frame appeared only once among the publications (in the *Akron Beacon Journal*). The mainstreaming frame appeared only in *The Plain Dealer* and *The
Vindicator. However, the disorientation and the bridge-building frame were present in all three of the publications.

Among Huang’s (2005) six frames used in diversity stories, there also was an “other” category that proved dominant in the results. Reflected in each newspaper was the frequency of general frames. In regard to positive and negative representation, both were found in the study. However, positive stories outnumbered the negative stories in each newspaper (differences are between one and two stories). See Tables 13 and 14.

Table 13: Total of Frames found in all three Newspapers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publication</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Creation</th>
<th>Bridge-building</th>
<th>Disorientation</th>
<th>Mainstreaming</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Plain Dealer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Akron Beacon Journal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vindicator</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: Representation of blacks and non-blacks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publications</th>
<th>Plain Dealer</th>
<th>ABJ</th>
<th>Vindicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Stories</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Black Stories</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Non-Black Stories</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Photos</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Black Photos</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Non-Black Photos</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black centerpieces</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-black centerpieces</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

The researcher observed a total of 313 stories (18 days per publication), 227 photos and 54 centerpieces among the three newspapers. Fifty-four centerpieces were coded in the study.
Based on the combined results, nine % of the stories featuring African-Americans appeared in the centerpiece position. African-Americans were represented both positively and negatively in the newspapers. The conflict frame was used the most in stories including the black community. The bridge-building frame was second.

The next chapter provides a summary of the research study and discusses conclusions based on the results.
V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter is devoted to a summary of the study and the researcher’s conclusions. In addition to an explanation of the study, the researcher discusses suggestions for future research as well as limitations of this research. The following is an overview of results and answers to the study’s research questions.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to see how African-Americans are represented in newspapers and what messages are communicated about African-Americans through framing. Frames are considered “principles of selection, emphasis and presentation” (Gitlin, 1980, p. 6). Research has shown that they can be both conscious and unconscious. But, the use of them can shape the tone of the story and how the subject is perceived by the audience. Stereotypically, African-Americans are perceived in threatening ways; (Drummond, 1990) framing can promote this as well as break this projection, hence their importance.

This study involved a content analysis of three publications, The Plain Dealer, Akron Beacon Journal and The Vindicator. Three weeks were randomly selected: the second week of March, fourth week of May and third week of November 2006. The researcher examined the frequency of African-Americans in the centerpiece story and what frames were used when featured in news stories. The centerpiece story was the unit of analysis. A total of 313 stories were analyzed and 227 photos were observed. Eighteen front page covers of the Local and Metro sections of each newspaper were analyzed creating a sample of 54 front covers. Of the 313 stories, 30 related to or featured African-Americans. Based on the results, out of 227 photos, 40 featured African-Americans.
Six frames (conflict, creation, mainstream, identity, bridge-building and disorientation) that Poynter columnist Thomas Huang (2005) identified as being used in diversity stories about people of color were coded in this study. The researcher found that even though emphasis was on the six frames, general frames such as education, crime, safety and sports dominated the front covers of the local news sections. Of Huang’s frames, the conflict frame was present the most and in all three publications. The bridge-building frame was the second most dominant frame found in the newspapers.

Research Questions

RQ 1: How are African-Americans framed in newspapers?

The researcher used the frames columnist Huang (2005) identifies as being used in diversity stories. They are: conflict, identity, creation, disorientation, mainstream and the bridge-building frame. Huang gave descriptions of these frames as they relate to how people of color are presented in stories. In this study, the researcher found that the frames appeared in stories on a literal level compared to the specific definitions described by Huang. For example, looking at “conflict” from a literal perspective, there was a Plain Dealer story about the hiring practices of Mayor Frank Jackson and how it was in conflict with the community as it seemed that he only appointed Caucasians to his top positions (Fullwood, 2006). Though the dispute was not religious or political, the conflict frame was indeed present.

A variety of frames were used to describe African-Americans in the selected publications. Their representations ranged from sports figures and pillars of the community to criminals, victims, and the average parent. General frames such as education and politics also were used on stories about African-Americans as there were stories about the mayors of Cleveland and Youngstown found among the covers (both officials are African-American).
In this study, people of color were presented positively and negatively—A change from what used to be only the latter (Entman, 1994). African-Americans were presented more positively than negatively overall. Each publication was different. The frames used in stories about African-Americans varied but some stood out. The disorientation frame which portrays people of color as victims was present in all three publications. Surprisingly, it was used in both positive and negative stories simultaneously. The conflict frame was used seldom and in stories about individual African-Americans as opposed to the black community as a whole. This was also the case for non-black stories. The conflict frame was expected to be seen more among the covers given the nature of the publications.

General frames had a high presence in the local news sections. Stories about education, sports, safety and business led in regard to the presence of stories on African-Americans. This showed more variety as a study by Paul Lester and Randy Miller (1995) found that stories on African-Americans tend to fall in certain content categories (e.g. sports, entertainment and crime) (Lester & Miller, 1995). It also surprised the researcher that the creation and mainstream frames were non-existent among the covers in black stories.

Overall, African-Americans were framed in both a positive and negative light in this study. Just as often as they appeared as criminals and fugitives, they were also presented as humanitarians and heroes. In addition to the 30% of black stories that related to crime, 20% of the black stories represented African-Americans as humanitarians and heroes. The researcher expected to see more representation of African-Americans in the newspapers. According to the results of the study, 9.5% of the stories featured or related to African-Americans. News relating to the non-black community made up 91 percent of the content on the front covers. There was
one story (relating to the black community) in which the frame was race. There were none found among the non-black story results.

In regards to framing of non-blacks, there were similarities between the results for the black and non-black communities. General frames such as crime, education, politics and sports dominated the results for the non-black community—53 % of the frames used in non-black stories were general. This also was the case for African-Americans as 46% of the black stories reviewed displayed a general frame. When it came to the presence of Huang’s (2005) frames, the conflict frame was the most frequently used in non-black stories in all three newspapers. The conflict frame was used in 24 of the 88 non-black stories in The Plain Dealer, 19 of the 103 non-black stories in the Akron Beacon Journal and 19/92 in The Vindicator.

The second most frequent frame among the non-black stories was the disorientation frame (a story in which there is a victim). While this frame was used in black stories as well (10 %), the bridge-building frame was the most dominant frame used after the conflict frame in stories about African-Americans. An example of a story reflecting the conflict frame was one on employees being wrongfully dismissed and their fight to be rehired (Hagelberg, 2006).

RQ 2: What messages are being communicated about the black community in newspapers?

Historically, African-Americans have not been included in mainstream news. News about this ethnic group was considered unimportant and only worthy of covering when a crime was committed or an increase in the poverty level occurred (Wolsley, 1961). In this study, feature stories that graced the front page of the Metro and Local sections seldom, if ever, were about a member of the black community. Stories about the black community made up only 9.5 % of the coverage over a three-week time period. This was non-reflective of the principle of
newspapers covering the communities they serve (all of it) (Lehrman, 2005). However, times have improved.

After conducting this study, the researcher found that media messages both support and negate stereotypes of African-Americans. The stereotypical belief that all African-American males are aggressive and threatening was communicated through and reinforced by the presence of the mug shots and stories on crime that graced some of the covers. Thirty % (9/30) of the stories about African-Americans were crime-related stories. While it was the news of the day, for those that look to newspapers and other media for news about their community and allow it to shape their views, this can create fear. Media scholar Carolyn Martindale (1995) conducted a study on the representation of African-Americans in newspapers and found that blacks appear “only in glimpses.” It is important that those glimpses be more than crime reports.

In addition to messages highlighting crime, there were some that showed African-Americans as educators and leaders. Specifically, 36 % (11/30) of the content reviewed regarding blacks reflected these topics. City officials (mayor) and top businessmen and women of color were present in the publications. Stories featuring these men communicate that black men were more than what was portrayed in the media. Also among the covers were volunteer efforts. There were messages of communities coming together to help sick children in Youngstown by making blankets for the children’s hospital. One of the main volunteers for the initiative was an African-American woman (Milliken, 2006). This showed another side to the black community as they are often portrayed as those in need. In this case the roles were reversed. Six % of the black stories found displayed this role reversal.

All three publications (The Plain Dealer, Akron Beacon Journal, and The Vindicator) had some representation of African-Americans in the Local and Metro section news hole. While
stories about African-Americans rarely made it to the centerpiece position (5/54), the mere presence of them on the front pages of these sections signifies progress within the media industry. The researcher believes that a true emergence of positive, balanced, and racially-inclusive coverage will come one story at a time.

Generally, news presented about the black community tends to be negative (Entman, 1994). Themes of crime, poverty, and lack of opportunity were a few of the topics reflected in the results of this study. While these topics, could also and do apply to non-blacks, African-Americans are represented more in these categories than other ethnicities (Entman, 1994). For example, among the three publications, crime stories were present in each newspaper. However, in the Akron Beacon Journal, African-Americans were featured in more crime stories than non-blacks. Thirty-three % of the stories that blacks appeared in related to crime compared to the 4.8 % of non-black crime stories. Results varied for The Plain Dealer (6.8 % of non-black stories were crime-related) and The Vindicator (8.5 %) as non-blacks were in more crime stories than African-Americans.

Overall, there was more representation of non-blacks than African-Americans in all three newspapers. Based on the results, there were 286 (91 % of the content reviewed) stories relating to the non-black community compared to the 30 (9.5 %) that related to or featured an African-American. There were a variety of topics covered when it came to these stories. The population and racial demographics of the newspaper cities were considered in this study. Considering the percentage of African-Americans in Cleveland (51%), Akron (28.5%) and Youngstown (43.8%), the researcher expected to see more coverage of African-Americans. The results of the study reflected this fact as 91 % of stories related to the non-black community.
In *The Plain Dealer*, 11% of the stories on the front covers related to African-Americans. This is low coverage compared to the 51% of Cleveland’s population that is African-American. In the city of Akron, the percentage of African-Americans is 28.5% compared to the 66.7% of the population that is non-black. This was reflected in the *Akron Beacon Journal*’s coverage as 5.5% of the stories in the publication related to the black community. Among the three newspapers, *The Vindicator* had the highest representation of African-Americans. In relation to the percentage of the black population in Youngstown (43.8%), 12.3% of the stories observed in the newspaper had a relation to African-Americans.

Like stories about the African-American community, there were both positive and negative stories in coverage of the non-black community. In some instances there were more negative than positive stories. This was actually the case for *The Plain Dealer* as there were 29 negative stories and 15 positive stories. But, in the *Akron Beacon Journal* and *The Vindicator*, there were more positive than negative stories relating to the non-black community. Specifically, there were 28 positive and 26 negative non-black stories in *The Vindicator*. In the *Akron Beacon Journal*, there were 38 positive and 25 negative non-black stories. However, there was still more negative representation of African-Americans in the *Akron Beacon Journal*.

*Interesting Findings.* The researcher selected the three publications based on the racial demographics of the cities in which the newspapers are housed. The city of Cleveland (51%) and the city of Youngstown (43.8%) had high percentages of African-Americans living there (www.citydata.com). In Akron, there’s a low percentage of blacks (28.5%) compared to the other cities (www.citydata.com). The correlation between the city’s population and coverage was reflected in the results as the *Akron Beacon Journal* had the least African-American representation.
Out of the 54 centerpieces observed, five featured African-Americans compared to the 49 centerpiece stories that related to non-blacks. Four of the five centerpieces found appeared in The Vindicator, and one in The Plain Dealer. The content in the publications also warranted some interesting results for the researcher—content in the centerpiece position did not always cover humans. In The Vindicator several centerpiece stories focused on animals (Ex. Stories on geese invading a local park) (“In preseason action, goose takes a walk…” 2006).

In addition to stories not always involving humans, the researcher also found similarity between The Plain Dealer and The Vindicator in the results. When it came to coverage of the mayors of these cities, race was a factor as both men are African-American. Stories about these two men displayed not only the political frame but a ‘public figure’ or ‘city official’ frame. One could consider that if these two men were not of color, then the results for the publications may have been smaller. This also applies to stories on the CEO of Cleveland Public Schools as he is African-American. Since these city officials were African-American, stories about them were coded as relating to the black community—because of this, one could see race as a frame.

**Conclusion**

Overall, the researcher expected to see more representation of African-Americans in the newspapers. Generally, with newsrooms attempting to diversify their staffs as well as their coverage, more stories featuring African-Americans should be present in local newspapers. Specifically, more representation in the centerpiece position was expected as this particular position implies importance. Because the researcher coded more than the 18 centerpiece stories in each publication, a larger percentage of African-American representation in stories was expected overall.
As aforementioned, the racial demographics of the newspaper cities were considered in this study. This, in addition to the amount of coverage African-Americans received was the focus. However, it is also important to look at the connection of the newspapers to their specific coverage areas. For example, *The Plain Dealer* newspaper is located in Cleveland, Ohio but its main readership is Cuyahoga County. In the city of Akron (*Akron Beacon Journal*), Summit County is the main area of coverage and in Youngstown (*The Vindicator*), it is Mahoning County.

In Cuyahoga County, 29.2% of the residents are African-American ([http://quickfacts.census.gov](http://quickfacts.census.gov)). Sixty-seven percent are White/Caucasian. Interestingly, the black population of Cleveland as a whole is higher than the dominant county The *Plain Dealer* serves. Nevertheless, the results of the study that 11% of the stories reviewed related to or featured African-Americans. This figure is low when compared to the population percentages of African-Americans in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County.

*The Akron Beacon Journal* covers Summit County. While the publication may cover other neighboring counties, Summit is the largest. As aforementioned, representation of African-Americans was the lowest in the *Akron Beacon Journal* compared to the other two newspapers. The population of African-Americans living in the city of Akron was also lower compared to Cleveland and Youngstown (28.5%). This was also the case in Summit County as 14% of the residents are African-American ([http://quickfacts.census.gov](http://quickfacts.census.gov)). Based on the results, the city and county population percentages were connected—both were low in terms of their black population.

Of the newspapers, *The Vindicator* had the highest representation of African-Americans (13 stories). The city of Youngstown has a high percentage of African-American residents (43.8
Yet, this is not the case for the main county *The Vindicator* serves: Mahoning County. Sixteen percent of the residents that live in this county are African-American. When it is considered that 12.3% of the stories in *The Vindicator* related to the black community and 16% of the main county is African-American, the gap in diverse coverage narrows for this publication.

Though the researcher looked at the population of the newspaper cities, it is interesting to see coverage of African-Americans and the connection to county racial demographics. In some instances, from a county perspective, coverage of the non-black community was not that much higher (e.g. The Vindicator). In other cases, the results were the same and there was a deficit when it came to coverage of African-Americans. Surprisingly, county populations of African-Americans were lower than city populations—the researcher thought the demographics would have a closer range.

Given the racial demographics of the newspaper cities, news about African-Americans should have been more than the 9.5% that was found. While there was more positive than negative stories about African-Americans, there were still instances when African-Americans were represented to the reader more negatively than non-blacks (e.g. the *Akron Beacon Journal*). This was especially the case when it came to crime stories. The question of “Why?” should come to mind for media and consumers of media. Low and or poor coverage of people of color is not unrecognized by the public. “As America changes, members of a more diverse public will notice coverage that leaves them out” (Lehram, 2005, p. 62).

*Limitations*

With any type of research there are limitations. A major limitation was that reader interpretation was not known throughout the study. Another limitation was the lack of photos
accompanying other stories on the front page of the local sections. While the researcher read the other stories on the page in addition to the centerpiece, other stories on the page that may have related to the black community were without a photo and made it hard to code them as such.

Suggestions for Future Research

After conducting this study, the researcher believes that future research should look at the connection between newsroom diversity and coverage of the black community. Research has suggested that if more people of color were in the newsroom covering people to which they can relate, then a more realistic view of this ethnic group might be projected. When it comes down to it, reporters approach stories differently. One news organization aware of this is the Maynard Institute for Journalism in Oakland, California. They address this issue in the training of journalists. Founded by the late Robert C. Maynard, this organization encourages journalists to learn about the regions that they will be covering when they join a newsroom and urges them to look beyond race and better understand themselves. Maynard believed “only if you know yourself…can you really know enough to find the sources who will help you tell the whole story” (Lehrman, 2005, p. 65).
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Sample Codebook

Headline of Centerpiece: ________________________________________________

Publication Name: ______________________________________________________

Date: __________________

1. Are there multiple subjects (person in the story)?  Y    N    (Circle one)

2. How many? ________

3. Is the subject(s) African-American?  Y    N    (Circle one)

4. Gender of Subject(s)
   1) Male            How many? ________
   2) Female           How many? ________
   3) N/A

5. Is there a photo with the story?  Y    N    (Circle One)

6. Is the subject in the photo?      Y    N    (Circle One)

7. What is the topic of the story? _______________________________________

8. What frame is used in the story?
   1) conflict frame
   2) bridge-building frame
   3) identity frame
   4) disorientation frame
   5) creation frame
   6) mainstreaming frame
   7) Other

9. Overall tone of Story (as reflected about African-Americans)
   1) Positive (no sign of non-crime element/victimization, recovery)
   2) Negative
   3) Neutral
   4) Can’t Tell
   5) Other
Other Stories

10) Are there any other stories on the front page that involve African-Americans? Y or N (If yes, go to the next question) (If no, skip to question 13)

11) What is the topic of the story? ___________________________________________________________.

12) What is the placement of the story?
    1) Above the Fold
    2) Below the Fold
    3) Side

13) Are there any other photos on the front page that involve African-Americans? Y or N

How many? _______
## APPENDIX B

*The Plain Dealer (Stories about African-Americans)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Placement of Article</th>
<th>Week 1 (March 6-10)</th>
<th>Week 2 (May 22-26)</th>
<th>Week 3 (November 13-18)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below the Fold</td>
<td>Story about the hiring practices of Mayor Frank Jackson and his appointing of white men in his top positions.</td>
<td>Eugene Sanders’ quest for CPS CEO looks good</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below the Fold</td>
<td>Story on the After school program at Michael J. Zone Recreation Center in Cleveland</td>
<td>Minorities speak out together for indoor smoking ban in workplace where low-wage workers are.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above the Fold</td>
<td>Story on the race for CEO of Cleveland Public Schools. One of the candidates was African-Americans.</td>
<td>The financial benefits of CPS. New CEO makes less than predecessor.</td>
<td>A Cleveland man forced two girls (age 16) to Florida to work as prostitutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centerpiece</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gunman kills self after standoff in Euclid (CP)*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below the Fold</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cleveland Public Schools CEO reaches out to community.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center</td>
<td></td>
<td>Spending limit for public schools in Cleveland.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side</td>
<td></td>
<td>Public memorial service for Gerald Levert. Legacy of singer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
Photos in *The Plain Dealer* (featuring African-Americans) =13

Tone of Stories in *Plain Dealer*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Frames in PD

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Frames</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge-building</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorientation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstreaming</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Akron Beacon Journal (Stories about African-Americans)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Placement of Article</th>
<th>Week 1 (March 6-10)</th>
<th>Week 2 (May 22-26)</th>
<th>Week 3 (November 13-18)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Above the fold</td>
<td>Volunteers from Kent State University travel to Biloxi, Miss. To help Hurricane Katrina survivors.</td>
<td>Akron unveils police campaign to recruit new officers.</td>
<td>NBA All-star LeBron James gives back to the community through his foundation (James Family Foundation) by giving food to needy families for Thanksgiving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below the fold</td>
<td>The mother of LeBron James agreed to plea in DUI case</td>
<td>A fire in a home in Copley Township that killed tiger cubs renewed police interest in hometown.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below the fold</td>
<td>Gloria James gets community service.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above the fold</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Photos in *Akron Beacon Journal* (featuring African-Americans) = 13

Tone of Stories (*Akron Beacon Journal*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<td>Positive</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Frames *(Akron Beacon Journal)*

<table>
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<th>Frames</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bridge-building</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disorientation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstreaming</td>
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<td>Other/General</td>
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### Placement of Article

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Placement of Article</th>
<th>Week 1 (March 6-10)</th>
<th>Week 2 (May 22-26)</th>
<th>Week 3 (November 13-18)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centerpiece</td>
<td>Local volunteers, including Johnnie Provitt made 1, 200 blankets to donate hospitalized children.</td>
<td>Lincoln school students enjoy last annual carnival before renovations.</td>
<td>PTA Dance at Frank Ohl Middle School for new building was a success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centerpiece</td>
<td>Students from Harding Elementary School enjoy spring weather through basketball.</td>
<td>Community engaged in local clean-up initiatives.</td>
<td>Community engagement in local community events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side</td>
<td>Mayor Jay Williams focuses on existing business in proposed city budget.</td>
<td>Homicide shooting suspect Devron Pinkard, 18 went to Rayen School.</td>
<td>The 20/30 Club honors city’s top leaders. (Below Fold).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above the Fold</td>
<td>Man (Jason Carter) was arrested in the city’s first homicide of the year (black male)</td>
<td>Rape suspect Ronald Henderson was caught and arrested at Cleveland hospital.</td>
<td>Above the Fold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above the Fold</td>
<td>Three teachers at Mary Haddow Elementary School saved the life of a first grader who cut his arm. One teacher was African-American.</td>
<td>Former NFL player and founder of the Amer-i-Can program, Jim Brown spoke with at-risk youth about self-esteem program.</td>
<td>Above the Fold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below the Fold</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fugitive of the Week: Jesse Anderson (Mug/info)</td>
<td>Below the Fold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below the Fold</td>
<td>Two men are charged in murder case linked to freeway shooting. Both are African-American.</td>
<td>Below the Fold</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

Photos in *The Vindicator* (featuring African-Americans) = 14
Tone of Stories in *The Vindicator*:

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<td>Neutral</td>
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Frames

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<td>Bridge-building</td>
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<td>Disorientation</td>
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<td>Mainstreaming</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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The Vindicator Newspaper


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