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Citation: Rodgers, S., Kenix, L.J., Thorson, E. (2007) Stereotypical portrayals of emotionality in news photos. *Mass Communication and Society*, 10(1), pp. 119-138.

Source: <http://www.leaonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15205430701229824>

Stereotypical Portrayals of Emotionality in News Photos

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Manuscript submitted for first peer review to *Mass Communication & Society* June 18, 2004  
Revised and resubmitted for a second peer review November 30, 2004  
Revised and resubmitted for a third peer review March 6, 2006

## Stereotypical Portrayals of Emotionality in News Photos

### ABSTRACT

This research content analyzed the news photographs of a major US daily newspaper to examine the emotional portrayals of individuals in different gender, age and ethnic subgroups. A multi-dimensional measure of emotion (pleasure, arousal, dominance) was used. A total of 1,595 individuals were coded. The results demonstrate that emotionality was stereotyped to some degree, particularly in relation to females, ethnic minorities and senior citizens. Specifically, African Americans were depicted as excited whereas Asian Americans were seen as calm. Females were portrayed as happy and teens were shown as sad. The results support the social construction of emotion and suggest that the news media play a role in framing and constructing emotional meaning with regard to different subgroups in American society.

## Stereotypical Portrayals of Emotionality in News Photos

Research on visual stereotypes abounds but surprisingly few studies have examined emotionality and stereotypes in photographs. Pictures are emotional representations of reality that convey important information about gender, age and ethnic groups (Blackwood, 1983). Emotions refer to specific feelings conveyed by individuals who are photographed—whether happy or sad, excited or calm, or submissive or dominant.

Research has demonstrated that visual images can influence public knowledge (Iyengar, 1991) and enhance viewers' recall of news stories (Graber, 1990), suggesting that visual imagery plays an important role in helping news consumers make sense of the world around them (Matthews & Reuss, 1985). A clear benefit of visual communication is its ability to transcend textual limitations and convey emotions in addition to factual evidence (Lester, 2000). However, this field of research has not progressed past early constructions of emotionality (Wanta & Leggett, 1989). Because news photos are often scanned first (Miller, 1975) and can contain highly vivid images that can form long-lasting impressions on memory (Lester, 2000), it is important to examine the emotional content of photos to determine whether different subgroups in America are marginalized or stereotyped in relation to their emotions.

Our purpose is to extend the literature on stereotypes by drawing upon a long-standing multi-dimensional conceptualization of emotion used extensively in psychology. Known as PAD (pleasure, arousal, dominance), the idea was to examine how individuals of different genders, ages and ethnicities are framed in terms of their emotions. We argue that the expression of emotion is biological and cultural—biological in terms of gender, age and ethnicity and cultural in terms of newsroom decisions that translate to emotional depictions of individuals in different gender, age and ethnic groups. For instance, we expect that there will be different kinds of events

across the sections of the newspaper that will translate to emotions expressed by different genders, ages and ethnicities represented within those sections. Trends in the multi-dimensional levels of emotional representation may provide further insight into modes of associations that create and perpetuate media stereotypes. Hence, it is important to think of emotion broadly—both in terms of biology and culture—to gain a better sense of the social construction of emotion relative to the various subgroups examined. Such information could provide insights into societal norms to avoid or gaps to fill in relation to different genders, ages and ethnicities.

Our method was a content analysis. We coded 1,595 individuals who appeared in 790 photographs in a large US daily newspaper, selected for its prestige and Pulitzer prize-winning photography.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### **Framing and the Social Construction of Emotion**

Gamson et al. (1992) have described the social construction of reality as an “invisible” process that involves using media-generated images to form or construct meaning about political and social issues. They emphasize the production of images rather than facts or information because visual imagery provides a more subtle form of meaning that is embedded in a larger system or frame (Gamson et al., 1992). News has become an “authoritative version of reality, a way of knowing associated with high levels of cultural legitimacy” (Barker-Plummer, 1995, 3). The news offers a type of membership of knowledge within which participators engage, and news photographs are an important component of that participatory process (Miller, 1975).

While abundant research has analyzed the social construction of ideas, knowledge and rituals, there has been a lack of research on the social construction of emotion as a product of social practices (Illouz, 1991). Past studies have examined emotional portrayals in family

television series (Weiss & Wilson, 1996), suggesting that emotions can be measured as a social construction of reality. Emotional differences in the content of print newspapers and television news scripts have been found, again suggesting that emotions are used by reporters to construct reality, and the degree of emotionality appears to differ depending on the medium examined (Cho et al., 2003).

These studies illustrate how research has begun to move away from the mere presence of evidential visual imagery into the contextualization of photographs within their own ideological position and the larger story-level schematic. For example, Campbell (1991) suggested that camera angles provide varying levels of credibility for the subject and source. Other researchers have explored visual stereotyping of images focusing on physical appearance and style of dress (Entman, 1992; Beasley & Standley, 2002; Fink & Kensicki, 2002; Signorielli, McLeod & Healy, 1994), again illustrating a shift to more subtle forms of meaning construction in the production of images.

However, the distinction between conveying images and conveying factual information is not very useful unless the images are interpreted within some larger system or frame (Gamson et al., 1992). The frame examined here is that of emotionality. Framing analysis is frequently used as a means of determining whether mediated depictions are in line with reality. Although the definition of framing has been somewhat contested in the field of mass communication, frames are generally defined in terms of their ability to organize an idea or issue for the news consumer. Entman's (1993) definition of framing is relevant here because it highlights the media's role in the selection process of frames—manifested when certain keywords, phrases, sources, or facts are either present or absent from a media message.

We believe that the selection of photos of individuals who convey different emotions is part of this process as well. Devitt (1998) suggested that it is not the sources that dictate visual coverage, but the editorial selection process that creates visual imagery that accompanies a news story. Visual framing, a specific type of frame, refers to the salient imagery frameworks used to construct meaning. Gattegno (1969) noted that sight is simultaneous, comprehensive and synthetic in its analysis. Visual imagery affects how we perceive the message and the messenger and is central to how we “represent, make meaning, and communicate in the world around us” (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001, 1). Visual imagery reproduces informational cues that individuals use to construct their perception of social reality (Messaris, 1994). This is fundamentally important in a culture that has become increasingly visual (Fetviet, 1999; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001) and within modern media systems that rely heavily on the synergy between visual and textual messages (Dyson, 1997).

Visual frames can activate certain constructs at the expense of others, thereby directly influencing what enters the minds of news consumers. A photographer sent on assignment gathers tens, if not hundreds, of images that must be examined individually for inclusion in the news product. Rarely is this selection instantaneous. Rather, it is more often a deductive process undertaken by the photographer, journalist and editor.

This purposeful attention to photography has led many editors to attempt to balance visual with textual coverage (Moriarty & Popovich, 1991), suggesting that cultural norms and newsroom practices enter the decision-making process of photo decisions (Rodgers & Thorson, 2000). Empirical evidence also suggests that emotional differences can also result from biology—females tend to exhibit kind, caring, nurturing tendencies and males are more grimacing, fighting, etc. So there is a biological substraight that is operating but also a cultural

strand at work. In effect, the news emphasizes different things for different demographic groups. For instance, males in the news talk about success, power and influence, whereas women are often victims (Blackwood, 1983; Bridge, 1997; Finke & Kensicki, 2000; Rodgers, Thorson & Antecol, 2000). African Americans are often seen as sports athletes or entertainers, whereas Asian Americans are typically seen as the “smart” minority and Latinos are depicted as trouble makers or as underdogs (Carveth & Alverio, 1996; Entman, 1994).

While the preponderance of research has examined visual stereotypes strictly in limited dimensions, or solely through discourse analysis, a large field of study has been created around the study of minority representations, including females and various ethnic and age groups. Within the context of framing, we will review the vast literature on stereotypes. Rather than provide an exhaustive literature review, our purpose is to highlight studies that can be extended to emotion and stereotypical portrayals of individuals in different gender, ethnic and age groups. Our primary argument is that emotional differences among gender, age and ethnic groups are the result of biology as well as cultural norms in the newsroom.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Gender Stereotypes and Emotion**

Biologically speaking, women and men are assumed to differ. For instance, women value interdependent, nurturing relationships (Cook, 1993) with priorities that emphasize family values and roles (Kinnier, Katz & Berry, 1991), whereas men are presumed to value independent, assertive and goal-directed behavior (Cook, 1993) with priorities that relate to self-perception and self-promotion (Aven, Parker & McEvoy, 1993). Evidence from various disciplines suggests that men and women have different moral thinking (Grant, 1988), different gender-linked language (Mulac, Bradac & Gibbons, 2001), and different work interests and concerns (Betz &

O'Connell, 1989). Women also relate differently to people than men and advocate more democracy, less hierarchy and more cooperation than their male counterparts (Haugen & Brandth, 1994). Different gender orientations subsequently affect the manner in which males and females learn to behave and carry out their jobs (i.e., socialize) in the workplace (Aven et al., 1993), for instance.

Thus, we would expect that insofar as gender is concerned, females and males will likely differ with regard to the emotions they display in news photographs. This leads to our first research question:

RQ1: To what extent will photos portray females (versus males) as emotional?

However, in addition to biology, there are newsroom practices that may also help to determine the emotional differences of males and females; for instance, the practice of separating out the news hole into different sections.

Dozens of content analyses have examined gender stereotypes in the media. Framing theory suggests that practices for representing gender in the media have become standardized, thereby reinforcing stereotypes (Tuchman, 1978). Most content analyses have reached the same conclusion: males outnumber females and females are framed or stereotyped in relation to “female” topics (Brabant & Mooney, 1986; Bridge, 1997; Signorielli, 1985). For instance, research has shown that males are more likely than females to be associated with sports topics and sports photos (Adams & Tuggle, 2004), whereas females are more likely than males to be associated with stories and photos about homemaking and entertainment (Luebke, 1989; Miller, 1975; Rodgers, Thorson & Antecol, 2000).

Although these studies did not examine emotionality, it is logical to think that some occupations lend themselves to positive depictions of emotions more so than others. For

instance, entertainers, mothers, wives and socialites—occupations to which females are historically associated (Johnson & Christ, 1988)—may translate to photographs of women who show positive emotions, such as happiness. However, some studies have found that females are more likely than males to be represented as victims in news coverage of stories about crime and violence (see Van Zoonen, 1995) with some exception (see Elasmr, Hasegawa & Brain, 1999). Because news visuals closely illustrate the verbal stories presented by reporters and strengthen the story lines of reporters (Gans, 1979), it is reasonable to think that a negative story topic will translate to a negative photograph. Thus, photographs that accompany negative story topics may depict women as emotionally sad, depressed or submissive as compared to men.

In the absence of occupational or topical cues, we believe gender also will be stereotyped in relation to emotions *within different sections* of the newspaper. Goffman (1976) wrote that subtle aspects of self-presentation, such as pose, body language, and facial expression could demonstrate gender stereotyping. Although physical appearance has been the focus of content analyses over the past decade, particularly in relation to females and body image (Signorielli, McLeod & Healy, 1994), emotionality was not specifically addressed. However, at least one study suggests that emotionality may not differ between the sexes. Wanta and Leggett (1989) examined the emotionality of male and female tennis players in news wire photographs. Their findings revealed that male and female tennis players were equally emotional (or unemotional). However, sports content may translate visually to emotional reactions such as happiness (victory) or sadness (defeat) that may be difficult to detect within gender.

From these studies, it is clear that there may be instances when news photos show women as more emotionally negative or positive, and sometimes equally emotional (or unemotional), as compared to males. To sort through these findings, we suggest that one variable used in the

newsroom—newspaper section—may be useful for isolating emotional differences between the sexes. For instance, females who appear in the Front section tend to be associated with negative stories and often are seen as victims of crime or criminal acts (Dorfman, Thorson & Stevens, 2001). Given the mix of findings on this topic and the lack of research in this area, we proposed the following research question:

RQ1: To what extent will photos portray females (versus males) as emotional?

### **Ethnic Stereotypes and Emotion**

The mass media have long been accused of creating and perpetuating ethnic inequities and stereotypes (see Entman, 1992; Signorielli, 1985). This amassing body of research has typically characterized a white-dominated world, where other ethnicities are largely absent or are appointed to stereotypical, inferior roles. The preponderance of this research has examined modern depictions of stereotypes by relying on traditional constructions of negative representations (e.g., occupation and story topics) rather than subtle differences (e.g., emotion) that are not at first obvious to the media interpreter.

For example, Latinos have historically been represented in unflattering roles (Gutierrez, 1978) and have been associated with negative story topics such as crime or tragedy (Carveth & Alverio, 1996). Gutierrez (1978) noted that newspapers increased coverage about Hispanics during times of social unrest, and found that these stories became increasingly unfavorable as the conflict continued.

The presence of African Americans is increasing in the press (Lester & Smith, 1990) but those representations are often imbalanced (Martindale, 1990). For example, African Americans are depicted as sources of threat and burdens to society (Hartmann & Husband, 1974) who are poverty stricken (Gilens, 1996) and unsuccessful or substantially poorer than is really the case

(Entman, 1992; Entman, 1994). African Americans are also underrepresented in business and political news stories, and are over-represented in stories about sports, entertainment and crime (Lester, 1994; Lester & Smith, 1990).

Asians are also under- and mis-represented in news stories and photos (Rodgers & Yoon, 1999). Recent studies have shown that Asian Americans are more likely than Caucasians to be associated with negative story topics, such as a crime or tragedy (Rodgers & Thorson, 2000). However, the representation of Asians as the ‘model minority’ or ‘good native’ is far more common in mass media content (e.g., Cohen, 1992). In a content analysis of magazine advertisements, Taylor and Lee (1994) found that Asian Americans were stereotyped in terms of the products to which they were associated – products related to technology and science. Asian Americans were also found to be relegated to submissive, minor roles in the advertisements.

Although this review does not speak specifically to emotionality, it suggests that emotional stereotypes in relation to ethnicity will be present. For example, many of the ethnic groups were associated with negative topics and/or occupations (athlete, criminal, entertainer) that may lend themselves to emotionally arousing photographs. Some of these same groups were often relegated to inferior roles relative to Caucasians, which may translate to negative emotions when visually represented in news photos. However, it is unclear whether ethnic groups will be depicted as emotionally positive or negative, or whether these depictions will be evidenced across all ethnicities or only some ethnicities relative to Caucasians. Therefore, we proposed the research question:

RQ2: To what extent will photos portray ethnic minorities (versus Caucasians) as emotional?

### **Age Stereotypes and Emotion**

A number of studies have found that the young and the aged tend to be under-represented compared to their real-world numbers (Blackwood, 1993; Rodgers, Thorson & Antecol, 2000). Studies that have examined children and teenagers have also found their representation in the news disproportionately less than their national numbers (Rodgers & Thorson, 2000).

What is equally interesting and predominantly unexplored is the emotional state of these representations when they do occur. By relying only upon numbers of representation, research has overlooked an important emotional component of visual imagery. For example, the elderly may only comprise a small portion of the total media representation, but a divergent meaning can be traced from that conclusion if one finds that they are overwhelmingly represented as negative (see Bramlett-Solomon & Subramanian, 1998). By introducing visual levels of emotionality into an examination of news photographs, the implications for issues concerning stereotypes shift dramatically. Unfortunately, the literature does not provide an adequate account of what we might expect to find in terms of age and emotionality. We therefore proposed to extend the literature in this area by examining the following research question:

RQ3: To what extent will photos portray seniors, teens and children (versus non-senior adults) as emotional?

## METHOD

### **Sample**

The method was a content analysis. A large west coast U.S. daily newspaper was selected for its prestige and Pulitzer-prize winning photographs. The dates sampled were October 1998 to December 1999, a time during which the newspaper had won a Pulitzer Prize for its feature photography. A total of 21 issues were randomly selected in the manner described by Riffe, Lacy and Fico (1998) so that equal days of the week were represented (i.e., 3 Sundays, 3 Mondays, 3

Tuesdays, etc.), which enables generalizations of the findings over the time period examined (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 1998). Because the focus is visual stereotypes, only news photos with at least one individual (versus inanimate objects or landscapes) were coded. The unit of analysis was the individual. A total of 790 photographs were content analyzed and 1,595 individuals were coded within those photos.

### **Coding Categories**

There were six coding categories: three demographic and three emotional. The demographics were: gender (male/female), ethnicity (African American, Asian American, Caucasian, Latino American) and age (child, teen, adult, senior). Demographics were coded in the manner described by Rodgers, Thorson and Antecol (2000). For instance, gender was determined by examining facial features and body composition, as well as clothing. The individual's first name was used to verify gender (e.g., John = male and Sally = female) in cases when the name was present in the cut-line or story text and/or the visual cues could not determine gender. When gender could not be determined with any of these procedures, a "cannot tell" category was selected. A similar procedure was used to determine age and ethnicity.

Emotion was coded on three dimensions (PAD): pleasure (happy, sad, neutral), arousal (calm, excited, neutral) and dominance (dominant, submissive, neutral). We selected PAD, as it is known, because it is a popular and reliable scale used to measure emotion in psychological studies. Consistent with PAD, pleasure, also known as valence, was defined as an affective display of emotion that was either happy or sad (Mehrabian, 1995). Arousal was defined as physical activity and mental alertness, where a calm demeanor indicated a low level of physical activity or mental alertness and an excited demeanor indicated a high level of physical activity or mental alertness (Mehrabian, 1995). Dominance was defined in terms of an individual's control,

power or influence (Mehrabian, 1995). A dominant individual was one who had power and influence and a submissive individual was one who lacked power and influence. When PAD was not present a “neutral” category was selected (e.g., mug shots). Procedures for coding the dimensions of PAD are listed in the Appendix. Frequencies for all coding categories are shown in Table 1.

Psychologists have created a non-verbal pictorial assessment technique, called the Self-Assessment Manikin (SAM), which measures PAD (Bradley & Lang, 1994) associated with a person’s affective reaction to a wide variety of stimuli (Lang et al., 1993). For instance, along the pleasure dimension, a series of faces are shown that range from happy (an upward turned mouth—smiley face) to sad (a downward turned mouth—sad face). Along the arousal dimension, a series of boxy figures drawn to represent the human body range from calm (small mass in the middle of the body) to aroused (large mass in the middle of the body). Along the dominance dimension, the range is from small (submissive) to large (dominant). The strength of using pictorial representations of emotion was that they provided a visual cue for the coders.

Rather than ask raters to code *their* reactions to the visual images (as SAM is typically used), coders were instructed to look at each *discernable* individual in every photograph in the newspaper and, using the definitions above, match the individual’s emotions with one of the two extreme positions on each dimension of the PAD scale. For instance, a person with a big smile was matched with the happy face on the pleasure dimension and was coded as “happy.” An individual who was depicted in mid-shot during a sports event was matched with the active figure along the arousal dimension and was coded as “excited” and so on (see Appendix).

## **Coders**

Two graduate students (1 male, 1 female) coded the data. Intercoder reliabilities were calculated using Scott's pi index, which calculates reliabilities for *each* variable (Scott, 1955). We believe this was the first time PAD has been used in a content analysis so it was important to calculate intercoder agreement at the variable level to ensure that each variable achieved an acceptable level of interrater agreement. Each variable exceeded the minimum accepted reliability of 75 percent: gender (1.0), ethnicity (.89), age (.81), pleasure (.79), arousal (.82), and dominance (.85). The overall intercoder reliability was 86 percent.

## RESULTS

Research question 1 asked whether females would be disproportionately portrayed as emotional in news photographs as compared to males. Our findings revealed that significantly more females than males were depicted as happy, calm and submissive. In contrast, significantly more males than females were portrayed as sad, excited and dominant (see Table 2).

RQ2 explored the emotional portrayal of ethnic minorities relative to Caucasians. On the pleasure dimension, more African Americans and Caucasians were happy than Asian Americans and Latinos, and more Latinos were sad than any of the other ethnicity. The findings, however, were only marginally significant (see Table 3). On the arousal dimension, significantly more African Americans were depicted as excited as compared to every other ethnic group and significantly more Asian American and Latinos were seen as calm. As for dominance, African Americans and Caucasians were the most dominant and Asian Americans were the least dominant ethnicities.

Research question 3 compared the extent to which adults showed emotionality relative to other age groups. As shown in Table 4, teens and children were significantly happier than adults and seniors, who were significantly sadder. Seniors and children were significantly calmer, and

teens were significantly more excited, than adults. Teens and adults were more dominant than children or seniors, and children were the most submissive age group.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study examined emotionality and stereotypes in news photos. We examined the manner in which individuals of different genders, ages and ethnicities were visually framed relative to the emotions they conveyed in the photos. We argued that both biology and culture help to determine how individuals are visually represented in news photos. The results of the content analysis demonstrate rather convincingly that emotionality and gender, ethnicity and age stereotypes abound. For instance, if we were to use the findings to draw a picture of the average female in the photos of this newspaper she would have a smile on her face, a calm demeanor, and a submissive stance. In contrast, the average male had a frown on his face, an excited demeanor, and dominated the news photos.

Contrary to research that has shown that females are typically associated with negative topics such as crime and violence, our findings suggest that females' visual representations are generally positive, at least in terms of facial expressions. However, these findings could also be construed negatively. That is, appearance has historically been more important and more uniformly idealized for women as compared to men. A picture of a smiling woman may, at first glance, convey positive emotions; but within the broader framework of American culture, a smiling woman or girl may be considered a stereotype of females who are to act "lady-like" or well behaved.

Our findings also examined emotion and visual representations of different ethnicities. The average African American was visually portrayed as happy, excited and submissive relative to Caucasians. The average Latino was seen as sad, calm and submissive. Contrary to the "model

minority” stereotype, the average Asian American was visually portrayed as sad, although their emotional demeanor (calm) and stance (submissive) tended to coincide with previous studies. Because newspapers and, by virtue, news photographs can create a socially constructed reality of what it means to be an ethnic minority in America, such depictions may result in the underestimation or devaluation of minorities in the US. An implication is that American media still have a distance to go in accurately representing ethnic minorities relative to the topics and occupations to which they are associated. To the extent that minorities continue to be associated with a narrow range of these topics/occupations, stereotypes will continue to abound (Tuchman, 1978).

The results also paint a picture of individuals in different age groups. The average teen was depicted as happy, calm and dominant, and children and senior citizens were sad, calm and submissive relative to non-senior adults. For the most part, these findings parallel earlier studies that have examined age portrayals in the news media. For instance, when senior citizens were depicted in photos, they tended to be associated with negative topics and were submissive relative to other ages represented in the photo. However, our findings with regard to children seem to contradict the literature. For instance, when children were present in news photos, they tended to have smiling faces and were the dominant individual shown. An implication is that if senior citizens are continually depicted in negative terms, society may come to view this age group as less important than other age groups. Although children were represented in what appears to be non-stereotypical terms insofar as pleasure and dominance are concerned, they were, however, depicted predominantly as being calm. It is unclear to us what these findings mean. Perhaps they suggest that American media may be responding to social changes in age representations or, alternatively, the findings may mean that children are indeed doing “more

important” news worthy tasks that deserve their being central figures in news photographs but that old stereotypes of the “calm” child still abound.

Researchers have long criticized the media for its stereotypical representation of gender, age and ethnic subgroups, arguing that such stereotypes provide mental pictures that can be harmful to those who are represented. Theoretically speaking, our findings suggest that, although pictures of these subgroups are reproductions of reality, they also have a second meaning that is real to those who interpret the photograph and its contents. We assume that media messages can act as teachers of values, ideologies and beliefs and can provide images for interpreting the world whether media producers are conscious of this intent (Gamson et al., 1992). Our findings suggest that emotion is socially constructed within the context of gender, age, and race. For example, by framing ethnic minorities as emotionally calm or submissive the message in this imagery has implications for understanding the operation of power in American society and world politics.

Reinforcement theory states that while the media may not change what people think and do, they do have the power to reinforce existing thoughts and actions (Klapper, 1960). If the socially constructed reality with which women, children, teens, seniors and ethnic minorities are portrayed emotionally is traditional in nature, then the photographs will further reinforce that reality. The photographs, though presenting different emotions of these subgroups, present a unified and stereotypical view of these individuals in terms emotions that might be expected—girls who are calm, happy and dependent and men who are active, serious and independent. This view is not unlike that presented by other media. Because the emotions do not reflect the reality that most women, children, teens, seniors and ethnic minorities experience, the emotional images serve to reinforce to readers that this is who they should be and this is what they should be like. We assume that this process occurs with both biological and cultural factors. Women, for

instance, biologically differ from me with respect to how they behave in society. However, cultural factors such as principles of photo selection are also part of the news process.

The preceding discussion suggests that news photographers and editors may need to be educated about gender, age and ethnic stereotypes to help reduce the likelihood of their occurrence. For instance, news photographers can be trained to snap more photographs of females who are engaged in an activity or sport (excited) or who are the dominant individual in the picture frame, particularly relative to males. More photographs of seniors doing happy things or children being the dominant subject in a photo may help to balance the stereotypes that children are submissive or that seniors are sad.

Another implication is that more female and ethnic photographers and editors may be needed to balance the coverage of females and minorities and their visual depictions in news photos, assuming that one leads to the other (see Rodgers & Thorson, 2003). Despite efforts to provide more balanced photo news coverage, our findings suggest that news editors and photographers may need to shoot and select photographs that are more representative of individuals in American society to combat the narrow definition of various subgroups relative to their emotional presentations in news photos.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

One of our goals was to offer a multi-dimensional measure of emotion that could be reliably coded within the context of framing and stereotypes, and we believe this goal was met. As with any study, however, there are a number of limitations that should be noted. First, we examined only one U.S. newspaper and, despite the random sample, the findings may not be generalized to other years in the newspapers examined or to other U.S. daily newspapers.

In addition, our conceptual definition of emotion—based on pleasure, arousal and dominance—was adapted from an existing psychological scale. Many of the calibrations in the scale were not used in our coding, but instead, only the two extreme end-points were coded (e.g., happy/sad, excited/calm, dominant/submissive), as well as the neutral category. This was done to maintain acceptable levels of intercoder reliabilities, but future studies may want to examine more finely tuned categories of PAD. For instance, only individuals with an obvious up-turned smile were coded as happy in our study. However, there were numerous individuals with a half-smile who may fall into this, or perhaps, another category of emotion. Although not without their own set of challenges, there are countless emotions that were not examined here that may expound upon the current findings, for example, guilt, fear, disgust, or exhilaration. In addition to fine-tuning the emotional schema offered here, future studies could also attempt to conceptualize these and other emotions.

Last, we assume that the meaning conveyed in news photographs is a dual process that starts with news producers and photographers but that also includes those who interpret the images—news readers and consumers. To that end, future studies should examine how news readers interpret emotionality conveyed by individuals in news photographs to determine whether they differentiate among the emotions or passively accept the dominant meaning of the photographs. This could be accomplished with a series of experiments that manipulate emotionality of individuals of different genders, ages and ethnicities to determine the effects on information processes such as attention, comprehension and readership intentions.

## **Conclusion**

This research examines emotionality frames in news photographs for various gender, age and ethnic groups. Since many news consumers scan news photographs first, sometimes at the

expense of the news story, understanding the contents of the photographs beyond manifest levels of content is an important undertaking. The use of emotionality in the current research demonstrates how constructs in other disciplines (e.g., PAD) can be applied to mass communication—a contribution we hope will help to extend what we know about the social construction of emotionality in the news.

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Table 1. Frequencies of Coding Categories

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	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Variable:		
Gender		
Female	455	30.5
Male	980	65.6
Can't tell	<u>58</u>	<u>3.9</u>
TOTAL:	1493	100.0
Age		
Child	79	5.3
Teen	130	8.7
Adult	1151	76.8
Senior	121	8.1
Can't tell	<u>17</u>	<u>1.1</u>
TOTAL:	1498	100.0
Ethnicity		
African American	206	14.8
Asian American	25	1.8
Caucasian	755	54.3
Latino American	120	8.6
Can't tell	<u>285</u>	<u>20.5</u>
TOTAL:	1391	100.0
Pleasure		
Happy	609	38.4
Sad	283	17.8
Neutral	<u>695</u>	<u>43.8</u>
TOTAL:	1587	100.0
Arousal		
Calm	672	42.2
Excited	577	36.2
Neutral	<u>344</u>	<u>21.6</u>
TOTAL:	1593	100.0
Dominance		
Dominant	1037	65.1
Submissive	189	11.9
Neutral	<u>367</u>	<u>23.0</u>
TOTAL:	1593	100.0



Table 2. Chi-square Results: Gender x PAD (n is in parenthesis)

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	<u>Pleasure</u>			
	Happy	Sad	Neutral	Total:
Female	48.6 (219)	11.8 (53)	39.7 (179)	100.0 (451)
Male	38.3 (374)	17.9 (175)	43.8 (427)	100.0 (976)
$\chi^2(2, N = 1,427) = 16.35, p < .0001$				
	<u>Arousal</u>			
	Calm	Excited	Neutral	Total:
Female	51.1 (232)	31.9 (145)	17.0 (77)	100.0 (454)
Male	41.1 (402)	38.9 (381)	20.0 (196)	100.0 (979)
$\chi^2(2, N = 1,433) = 12.71, p < .01$				
	<u>Dominance</u>			
	Dominant	Submissive	Neutral	Total:
Female	63.6 (288)	14.8 (67)	21.6 (98)	100.0 (453)
Male	71.1 (697)	10.1 (99)	18.8 (184)	100.0 (980)
$\chi^2(2, N = 1,433) = 9.73, p < .01$				

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Table 3. Chi-square Results: Ethnicity x PAD (n is in parenthesis)

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	<u>Pleasure</u>			
	Happy	Sad	Neutral	Total:
African American	43.2 (89)	8.7 (18)	48.1 (99)	100.0 (206)
Asian American	32.0 (8)	16.0 (4)	52.0 (13)	100.0 (25)
Caucasian	43.9 (330)	12.4 (93)	43.7 (328)	100.0 (751)
Latino	35.3 (41)	19.8 (23)	44.8 (52)	100.0 (116)

$\chi^2(6, N = 1,098) = 10.94, p < .10$

	<u>Arousal</u>			
	Calm	Excited	Neutral	Total:
African American	41.3 (85)	43.7 (90)	15.0 (31)	100.0 (206)
Asian American	60.0 (15)	4.0 (1)	36.0 (9)	100.0 (25)
Caucasian	40.0 (301)	36.0 (271)	24.0 (181)	100.0 (753)
Latino	59.2 (71)	25.0 (30)	15.8 (19)	100.0 (120)

$\chi^2(6, N = 1,104) = 35.76, p < .0001$

	<u>Dominance</u>			
	Dominant	Submissive	Neutral	Total:
African American	75.2 (155)	9.7 (20)	15.0 (31)	100.0 (206)
Asian American	52.0 (13)	24.0 (6)	24.0 (6)	100.0 (25)
Caucasian	72.6 (547)	7.6 (57)	19.8 (149)	100.0 (753)
Latino	55.0 (66)	9.2 (11)	35.8 (43)	100.0 (120)

$\chi^2(6, N = 1,104) = 31.51, p < .0001$

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Table 4. Chi-square Results: Age x PAD (n is in parenthesis)

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	<u>Pleasure</u>			Total:
	Happy	Sad	Neutral	
Child	62.7 (47)	13.3 (10)	24.0 (18)	100.0 (75)
Teen	67.6 (88)	9.2 (12)	23.1 (30)	100.0 (130)
Adult	36.5 (419)	18.4 (211)	45.2 (519)	100.0 (1149)
Senior	35.3 (42)	17.6 (21)	47.1 (56)	100.0 (119)

$\chi^2(6, N = 1,473) = 64.81, p < .0001$

  

	<u>Arousal</u>			Total:
	Calm	Excited	Neutral	
Child	70.9 (56)	29.1 (23)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (79)
Teen	18.6 (24)	65.1 (84)	16.3 (21)	100.0 (129)
Adult	41.0 (471)	37.6 (432)	21.5 (247)	100.0 (1150)
Senior	83.5 (101)	12.4 (15)	4.1 (5)	100.0 (121)

$\chi^2(6, N = 1,479) = 159.16, p < .0001$

  

	<u>Dominance</u>			Total:
	Dominant	Submissive	Neutral	
Child	46.8 (37)	24.1 (19)	29.1 (23)	100.0 (79)
Teen	71.5 (93)	16.2 (21)	12.3 (16)	100.0 (130)
Adult	70.1 (806)	10.8 (124)	19.1 (219)	100.0 (1149)
Senior	64.5 (78)	14.0 (17)	21.5 (26)	100.0 (121)

$\chi^2(6, N = 1,479) = 26.86, p < .0001$

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Appendix  
Pleasure, Arousal, Dominance (PAD) Defined

- Pleasure--a portrayal of enjoyment or happiness, when the individual is gratified. We coded whether an individual was depicted as happy (i.e., pleasant, favorable or positive) or, sad (i.e., unpleasant, unfavorable or negative). This was accomplished by examining facial cues, such as mouth and eyes. We also examined contextual cues, such as the individual's surroundings. Examples of happy individuals included: a mother kissing her son goodbye as he left for school, an elderly person sipping iced tea contentedly on the porch, etc. Examples of sad individuals included: a poverty-stricken individual begging on a street corner, an individual of a devastated community or country after a natural disaster, an ill person in a hospital bed, etc. A neutral category meant that the individual was neither happy nor sad.
- Arousal—a combination of physical activity and mental alertness. This dimension included calm (i.e., not physically active or mentally alert) and excited (i.e., very physically active or mentally alert). In cases where arousal was not present, a neutral category was selected. We coded whether the individual was calm (i.e., subdued, serene or tranquil) or excited (i.e., stimulated, thrilled or electrified). This was accomplished by examining both facial and body cues, such as arms and body posture. We also examined contextual cues, such as the individual's surroundings. Examples of calm individuals included a person sleeping or sitting. Examples of aroused individuals included an athlete crossing the finish line, or an individual giving a speech (e.g., mental alertness). A neutral category meant that the individuals were neither excited nor calm.
- Dominance—the authority or influence one person has over another. Dominance refers to that which is, at the moment the photo is taken, uppermost in importance or influence. We coded whether a person in a photo was dominant (i.e., influential or important) or submissive (i.e., compliant, yielding or unimportant). This was accomplished by examining an individual relative to others in the photo. Individuals who were larger, higher and more central in the photograph were considered more dominant. Individuals who were smaller, lower than others and peripheral in the photo were considered submissive. When there was only one individual in the photo, the individual was coded relative to his/her size, position and body posture within the context of the photo. Examples of a dominant individual included a teacher in front of a group of students, a boss directing her staff, or an athlete dominating an opponent. Examples of submissive individuals included an alleged criminal peering out of the window of a police car, or a sick or injured child being held in the arms of a doctor. A neutral category meant the individual was neither dominant nor submissive.