



# The American Media and Race Relations in an Interdependent World: A Report on the Shorenstein Center Conference on Race and the Press

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Joan Shorenstein Center  
on the Press, Politics and Public Policy

John F. Kennedy School of Government  
Harvard University



**THE AMERICAN MEDIA AND  
RACE RELATIONS IN AN INTERDEPENDENT WORLD**

**A REPORT ON THE  
SHORENSTEIN CENTER CONFERENCE ON RACE AND THE PRESS**

June 28, 2001

Washington, DC

By

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With an introduction by Alex S. Jones  
Director, Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy





## *Introduction* □

On June 28, 2001, the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy sponsored a conference in Washington, DC on an issue we consider to be both very important and rarely addressed: “Race and the Press.” The objective of the conference was to examine the complicated entwining of race and media from both local and national perspectives. The urgency of the issue was underscored by our luncheon speaker, Former President Bill Clinton, who chose this occasion to make his first public address in Washington since leaving office.

Our intent was to take a clear-eyed look at the interaction of media and race as it exists in mid-2001. We did not seek to be definitive or encyclopedic, but instead to bring as sharp a focus as possible to the issues our panelists regard as the important ones. We invited some of the most insightful people we knew to take part, and shaped the conference around two large themes – the local story and the national story of race and the press. Our goal was to use this conference to paint a portrait of the way it is now when it comes to the media and race, and then to use this portrait to prompt and guide future action.

We asked North Carolina State University’s Professor Robert Entman, a conference panelist, top scholar in the area of race and the media, and former colleague from his days as the Visiting Lombard Professor at the Shorenstein Center, to write a report based on the issues discussed at the conference. We were certain that the discussion would merit a wider audience than the hundreds assembled at the Hotel Washington back in June.

The Shorenstein Center is a Harvard research center at the John F. Kennedy School of Government. Created in 1986 through a generous gift by Walter and Phyllis Shorenstein, the Center is dedicated to exploring the intersection of press, politics and public policy in theory and practice. Since its beginning, the Center has been active in examining many aspects of race and the media — through studies of press coverage of race in Crown Heights, the LA riots, the coverage and disputed impact of welfare reform, the 2000 presidential election, and the challenges associated with implementing diversity in the newsroom. The Center sponsors individual research projects, a Visiting Fellowship and Faculty program, courses, and regular events at Harvard – all in an attempt to engage students, the public, journalists, scholars and policymakers in discussions about a range of press and public policy topics.

This year’s June conference was launched on the heels of a study by Deborah Mathis, a Shorenstein Fellow based in Washington, and conversations with Marvin Kalb, executive director of the Center’s Washington Office. Deborah’s study of the post-election news coverage’s not-so benign neglect of non-white voices led us back to the larger issue of race and the media and to the conference we so proudly sponsored. We were fortunate to be able to bring together a former president of the United States, a bevy of prominent Harvard scholars and leaders from the journalism community to share their thoughts on one of the most pervasive problems that continues to eat away at our great nation. I am delighted to be able to present this summary of the discussion, so ably written by our friend and colleague, Bob Entman.

Alex S. Jones  
Director  
Joan Shorenstein Center on the  
Press, Politics and Public Policy

## SHORENSTEIN CENTER CONFERENCE ON RACE AND THE PRESS

The Shorenstein Center's Conference on Race and the Press offered a timely and searching exploration of issues currently receiving scrutiny by scholars, journalists and increasingly, the citizenry at large. Featuring discussion among several distinguished editors, reporters, and scholars and a keynote address by former President William Jefferson Clinton, the conference revolved around such key issues as these:

- Are the news media doing an adequate job covering the news of a progressively more diverse society in which members of the long-dominant white, Euro-American ethnic groups are heading toward minority status?
- If the media exhibit deficiencies in covering multicultural America, exactly what should be done, and how much can be done given the economic pressures that constrain all media organizations?
- Should news personnel consciously take race and ethnicity<sup>1</sup> into account when choosing and reporting the news, or are ethnic identities best left out of journalists' calculations?

Perhaps for the first time since the landmark Kerner Report of 1968,<sup>2</sup> the impacts of the media on race relations have become matters of public controversy. Several forces have converged to place media and race on the agenda. First, President Clinton's Initiative on Race (1997–98), although foreshortened by the controversies that engulfed the administration in its latter years, stimulated frank public discussion of race across the country. More recently, several scholarly books written with a broader audience in mind have investigated the nexus of race and media.<sup>3</sup> The 2000 Election, with its disputes over disparate treatment of African American and Hispanic versus Anglo voters in the decisive state of Florida (and elsewhere<sup>4</sup>), also drew attention to power differentials among groups and the media's role in sustaining them. In addition, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) has placed improving media images of blacks near the top of its agenda, and other ethnic organizations have followed suit.<sup>5</sup> Finally, data from the 2000 U.S. Census point to an even greater than expected acceleration in the ethnic diversity of the country.<sup>6</sup> This point reinforces a central theme of President Clinton's speech, which emphasized globalization and interdependence as forces spurring the need for inter-ethnic harmony within and outside the United States—and for media that recognize these imperatives.

### FRAMING THE ISSUES FOR JOURNALISM

The dominant view among the journalists and news executives represented on the panel seems to mix concern, optimism, and

frustration with the way newsroom culture and the pressures of the market combine in shaping journalism's contributions to race relations. Although the panelists themselves did not put it this way, an analysis and distillation of their observations based on the scholarly literature might look something like the following. The professional norms of journalism, and the standard operating procedures that implement these norms<sup>7</sup> have unintended consequences for race relations in America. Arguably, the four norms at the core of American journalism are:

1. *Follow the power*: the activities of powerful government institutions should take highest priority in news judgments.
2. *Report objectively*: In answering the standard "Who, What, When, Where, Why" questions, provide equivalent treatment to the sides in disputes, and avoid injecting substantive personal judgments into stories.
3. *Ensure accuracy through institutional corroboration*: Validate factual assertions designed to answer the five questions by using credible institutions or witnesses (court records, police statements, official reports).
4. *Protect the bottom line*: Report in accordance with the above three precepts, but accept the constraints and standards established by the need to maintain profitability and satisfy legal requirements to stockholders.

Although perfectly understandable and in many ways useful, these norms and associated journalistic procedures, which took root in a much more homogeneous culture than that of 21<sup>st</sup> century America, may neglect important and sometimes paradoxical side effects of manufacturing and distributing news to an increasingly diverse public. These include the creation of a distorted profile of role models, the implanting and reinforcement of group stereotypes, and the undermining of long-term profitability. Thus the professional norms and institutionalized practices of news organizations rooted in a simpler and culturally more insular American society, may clash with the culturally and ethnically heterogeneous, globalizing American political economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

For instance, if the normal daily routine of Washington journalism includes telling the audience what the president, his subordinates and key players on Capitol Hill are planning, proposing, and debating, and if virtually all of them are white, an inadvertent by-product of newsmaking will be a dearth of non-whites demonstrating competence and making major positive contributions to the nation's business. For whites, longstanding cultural stereotypes and misunderstandings of non-whites readily fill in the blanks, reinforced by residential and social segregation that obstructs development of empathetic first-hand intimate relationships across

group lines. The stereotypes and misapprehensions are anything but objective and accurate.

A second example of the way that journalism's governing norms, rooted in an unmindful assumption of a homogeneous, white (and largely Anglo-Saxon) culture can be found in the idea of accuracy. To those (including some at the conference) who allege that the local media devote far too much attention to street crime committed by blacks and others outside the dominant group, journalists can fairly respond that the disproportionate minority presence merely reflects higher than average crime rates, as demonstrated by court records and government statistics. But there is much more to the story of crime by non-whites, most of it well-understood by journalists but poorly integrated into their reporting. Journalists know (and President Clinton's address reminded them) that there is a tremendous disparity between treatment of drug offenders who are white and those who are not, and they know that racial profiling persists. Both of these contextual facts inflate the arrest and incarceration rates of people of color.

Consequently, by defining newsworthy "crime" as those acts which result in the entry of the accused into police custody and the judicial process, journalists impart a racial skew to their crime coverage. The texts of the crime stories may be

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accurate in themselves, they may be impartial, but they may promote inaccurate stereotypes in the thinking of many white persons who lack the contextual information and are also prone, for a host of psychological and social reasons, to engage in stereotyping.<sup>8</sup> Since subtle racial cues in news reports can alter whites' political opinions

and voting preferences,<sup>9</sup> seemingly objective and accurate reporting can in practice promote a particular side in conflicts over race-related public policy and candidates, and reinforce empirically invalid stereotypes.

The concern with short-term profitability has until quite recently led most news enterprises to pitch their products to a lowest common denominator, an imagined consumer who is white and working or middle class. But between growing competition for audiences' time, changing generations (a cohort of young people raised on video games, the internet, and cable channels like Comedy Central and MTV) and the shifting ethnic composition of many metropolitan areas, most daily news outlets confronted with declining circulation and ratings recognize the need to alter

their habits. Still, white-dominated newsrooms cut off from ethnic and youth communities, following their standard news definitions and newsmaking processes, may in some cases be producing news of declining relevance to the evolving mass audience. This heightens pressures on the bottom line and sets up a vicious cycle: in the view of several panelists, it is precisely the intensifying profit chase (and associated cost-cutting and sensationalizing) that militates against the kind of high quality journalism that yields contextualized reporting of race relations and of non-white communities.

### PRESIDENT CLINTON'S SPEECH

President Clinton's keynote address provided a useful context for understanding debates over race and media. Mr. Clinton emphasized globalization and interdependence as forces spurring the need for inter-ethnic harmony within and outside the United States. The U.S. is linked more and more closely to countries throughout the world via instantaneous communication networks, fostering commercial and trading relationships that bind economies and cultures in unprecedented relationships of mutual reliance. Communities of immigrants from dozens of nations and ethnic or language groups now live in the United States while using those same communication technologies and commercial ties to maintain close relationships with their countries of origin.

The defining character of the world today, said Mr. Clinton, is not "globalism" but "interdependence," and the key question is whether interdependence will have positive or negative impacts on people's lives. Mr. Clinton cited a book by Robert Wright entitled *Nonzero*.<sup>10</sup> It argues that societies today are far more complex than in previous epochs and as a result are far more interdependent than ever, and it asserts that evolutionary forces actually encourage cooperation as interdependence grows. Zero sum outcomes arise where my gain is your loss; this kind of thinking is, Mr. Clinton suggested, outmoded in an interdependent world. Global interdependence makes it both possible and important to develop production processes, commercial practices, trade relations, and resolutions of issues that clearly benefit all affected parties—that make for non-zero sum outcomes

Globalization itself has had mixed effects, he said. It has brought new economic opportunities and increased living standards to many places. But still half the people of the world live on less than \$2 a day, most of them people of color, and the same persons experience inadequate health care and education. The United States's ability to lead in building a better future will depend in significant part on this society's ability to solve its own inter-ethnic problems. America must teach by example if it seeks to help banish destructive ethnic strife; implicitly, Mr. Clinton suggested that apparently distant conflicts in places like Kosovo or Rwanda ultimately

have negative effects even on Americans in this interdependent world.

And the media, Mr. Clinton said, will have a “profound impact” in helping Americans understand and appreciate each other’s differences and commonalities. Mr Clinton cited the practice of racial profiling as a particularly pernicious example of zero-sum behavior that should be banned by law, and he challenged the media to provide the contextual understandings that will promote “nonzero” cooperation among America’s diverse groups. “It is inconceivable that we will do what we ought unless you help people deal with the facts in a calm way,” Mr. Clinton said.

Mr. Clinton brought up as another example of continuing discrimination the sentencing disparities between whites and non-whites involved in non-violent drug crimes. He urged legislative efforts to reform mandatory minimum sentencing laws that disproportionately incarcerate people of color—at great cost to all taxpayers, white and non-white, as well as to detainees. Mr. Clinton endorsed the importance of the media providing contextual understandings that would help finish America’s “unfinished business of race” by educating whites about the opportunity gaps, discrimination, and other experiences faced by non-whites, thereby promoting a public opinion more supportive of policy solutions. “We have to be able to count on you not to be silent about the things that matter,” Mr. Clinton noted. Indeed, he said, “You can’t expect a politician who has to run for election to be for this [sentencing reforms] without some support from the electorate based on [their understanding of] options and new information.” Beyond public policy, Mr. Clinton suggested, the ultimate goal for media should be presenting America’s religious and cultural diversity “not as a problem to be solved but an asset to be celebrated.”

### THE LOCAL MEDIA

Both panel discussions preceded President Clinton’s talk but many points of connection are apparent. The panel discussions gave some reason for hope that the media might have the will and the means to live up to his charge—and some reason to fear that they might not. For while Mr. Clinton described the changing social context in which race relations play out, and emphasized the importance to all Americans of understanding it, panelists suggested that contextual understanding may be lacking not merely among the American (especially white) public, but among the journalists who are the ostensible suppliers of context.

The first panel focused on local news of race-related matters, and suggested that educating Americans in nonzero thinking may require quite a long effort. (Full titles of all panelists are listed at the end of this report.) The situation now, at least as painted by Harvard professor Robert Blendon, sug-

gests either a systematic failure of media reporting on the lives and communities of non-whites, a refusal of white media audiences to believe or remember what they read and see, or, most likely, some of each. Blendon described vast differences between the way whites perceive the conditions under which non-whites live, and the experiences non-whites themselves report. Nearly half of blacks in a recent national poll said they had faced serious discrimination and over 80% said they suffered occasional incidents of adverse public behavior (poor service, racial slurs, fearful or defensive behavior, and lack of respect) from members of other groups. Large majorities of Asians and Latinos also reported such experiences.<sup>11</sup> Yet, as Professor Blendon recounted at the conference, majorities of whites in a recent survey (and others) deny the persistence of discrimination and thus do not believe minorities need special federal policies to help them overcome its effects.<sup>12</sup> This gap in perception is both a residue and cause of continuing racial disharmony.

Several panelists emphasized that a closer connection between newsrooms and non-white communities would provide a mechanism for closing these perceptual chasms among audiences. Paul Tash of the St. Petersburg Times emphasized the important contributions that having a diverse staff had made to his paper’s ability to cover news more comprehensively, accurately, and creatively. He cited several examples, including the story written by an Indian reporter on an Indian woman who defied her father by marrying a non-Indian. The reporter’s own life experiences enabled him to understand these events and their significance to the Indian community and to convey it to the wider readership. Gerald Boyd of the *New York Times* discussed the way upward class mobility can work to isolate non-white reporters from their ethnic communities. It is important to maintain the connection, even for reporters who share ethnic background with subjects of their stories. Paula Madison of NBC’s Los Angeles television affiliate mentioned overreliance upon police scanners to select stories, a practice that is both symptom and cause of poor communication between reporters and the diverse communities they must serve.

Panelists also discussed the need for more honest dialogue among and between members of non-white and white communities. The dearth of understanding feeds on the rarity of frank discussion, in person or in the media. Paula Madison suggested that news organizations hold systematic meetings with community groups to find out their issues and

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concerns. However, Gerald Boyd cautioned that such dialogues could be painful and even misleading if participants assume that a handful of people can speak for large communities whose members hold a variety of political orientations. Paula Madison also recommended professional training for newsrooms conducted by facilitators who can guide news organizations' internal discussions of race matters in productive directions. It will prove difficult to report adequately on race and encourage honest dialogue among readers and viewers if such discussion has not occurred within the newsroom itself, Madison argued.

In common with the national media panel and with President Clinton, this group came back frequently to the importance of providing context that would aid audience members (particularly whites) to more fully understand the causes and meaning of the images they see. For instance, local news (especially on television) devotes so much time to crime because, in Gerald Boyd's words, "Crime is news. People want it and expect it." But uncontextualized stories about crime, often populated with non-white protagonists, have very little informational value and considerable potential to activate racial resentment. Consequently, as Boyd put it, crime coverage without balance and context is "wrong morally and ethically and makes journalists less relevant" to their increasingly diverse potential audiences. Thus there is an economic incentive for media to begin providing more context as well as a moral imperative. And supplying whites with more nuanced contextual depictions of non-whites, according to Blendon's poll data, offers the necessary foundation for productive dialogue across ethnic lines.

### THE NATIONAL MEDIA □

Panelists on the panel considering national news emphasized the growing complexity of ethnic relations as the country endeavors to make a transition from the long-dominant black-white paradigm. In Harvard Law Professor Christopher Edley's words, "Race is not rocket science, it's harder than rocket science." Among other things, this means journalists who cover race must be well versed in the sociology, psychology, history, and politics of inter-group relations in the United States. Such qualifications, unfortunately, are not often on display. If anything, said Edley, his experience suggests quite the opposite: especially among younger white male journalists, a belief that the biggest race problem in the U.S. is the "oppression of white males." Such notions are common among much of the larger white public;<sup>13</sup> if Edley's observation about journalists is valid, it suggests that many journalists may be no better informed than the readers and viewers they are supposed to be informing.

Compounding the ignorance is a widespread feeling at least among white journalists that, as Ray Suarez of PBS put

it, the U.S. long ago "slayed the dragon" of discrimination. Said Suarez, "there's a feeling in the newsroom of 'Oh, that again—we've been doing that [race] story for decades.'" Deborah Mathis, a Shorenstein fellow who was formerly a Gannett correspondent, added that the great attention given unusually heinous hate crimes, such as the Texas murder by two white men of a black man they dragged behind a truck, has a paradoxical effect of inducing complacency about race. After all, the audience reasons, "I would never do something like this; if that is what racism is, then I most certainly am not a racist and hardly anyone is." This "race fatigue" among journalists and audiences is compounded by the feeling in the white-dominated media and perhaps among large swaths of the population both white and black, that perhaps we have made as much progress as we are going to. This means there is no more need for agonizing discussions of the type, for example, that President Clinton's Initiative on Race sought to stimulate. And the growing complexities make avoidance even more psychologically and perhaps politically attractive; at least when the major racial conflict was black-white its parameters were fairly well known and fixed.

These observations sparked perhaps the biggest dispute of the conference. On one side was Harvard sociology professor Orlando Patterson, who argued that far from neglecting the story of race, the media actually impose race frames on many stories where none belong. He said that reporters play up the race angle in order to get their stories on the air or on page one. He cited as examples some of the dominant news stories of the 1990s. For example, both of the main protagonists in the Clarence Thomas story (the Supreme Court nominee and his accuser, Anita Hill) were African American. The proper frame was gender, not race. Yet just because the press saw black people centrally involved, Patterson contended, it decided this must have been a story about race. Similarly for the Los Angeles riot, a multi-ethnic affair in which the majority of participants

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were apparently not black: media coverage framed the uprising as largely one of blacks protesting the acquittal of the police accused of beating Rodney King.<sup>14</sup> Patterson urged that the real conflicts in these matters, such as gender and class, take center stage in the news.



Among several panelists who rejected Patterson’s diagnosis and prescription, Carole Simpson of ABC News most emphatically pointed to the pressures of heightening competition on the traditional broadcast networks’ news operations. These have instilled an overwhelming focus on maintaining profit and cutting costs, and that means doing the easy and entertaining stories, cutting way back on the kind of expensive enterprise or investigative reporting that might provide context for news about America’s diverse groups or their relationships. Going further, panel moderator Marvin Kalb of the Shorenstein Center’s Washington office cited a study written by former network news executive Av Westin.<sup>15</sup> The Westin study found that race is indeed a criterion in news selection but in the opposite direction from that described by Orlando Patterson: stories are kept *off* the air when they focus on minority members. News producers seem to feel that such stories will only interest members of the group and therefore the majority audience will tune them out. Detailed minute-by-minute ratings data appear to confirm that audience size drops when stories emphasize non-whites (presumably this does not include crime or sports reports). Given the pressures of competition, few news operations can afford to disregard what they see as the preferences of their core (white) audiences, so the neglect of race persists.

Beyond the economics and the fatigue, Ray Suarez cited the importance of politicians’ talk to the content of the news, a point long emphasized by scholars.<sup>16</sup> For example, far from imposing a gratuitous race frame as asserted by Orlando Patterson, when it came to the coverage of the 2000 election controversies, Suarez argued, key stories were stripped of their racial subtext. Thus the decision of Florida officials to strike alleged felons from the list of eligible voters had a clear racial impact—a majority of those stricken (many of whom should have in fact been eligible under Florida law) were non-whites.<sup>17</sup> But both Democrats and more obviously Republicans had reasons for remaining silent about the implicit racial profiling that led to disproportionate disenfranchising of minority voters in Florida, and the media for a variety of reasons rarely have the independent ability to reframe stories on their own. Political elites have a key role to play, then, in providing a racial frame and a larger racial context to stories that merit such treatment. At the same time, it is politicians who often share the responsibility when, as Orlando Patterson argued, journalists do impose an inappropriate racial frame.<sup>18</sup>

One admittedly partial internal solution aired at the conference would be for journalists to mindfully choose non-whites when the story calls for experts and other positive role models, and in this way offer powerful, counter-stereotypical exemplars to white and non-white audiences

alike.<sup>19</sup> Currently, this is not the norm. Deborah Mathis described the study she undertook at the Center of the guests on 158 public affairs talk shows concerning the 2000 election controversy. There were a total of 750 guest appearances (e.g., excluding James Baker, Warren Christopher and other principals to the story). Twenty different black persons appeared, accounting for 44 guest appearances on the shows. In other words, 94 percent of guest appearances were by whites.<sup>20</sup> Panelists cited several reasons for this pattern. Christopher Edley noted that those who select guests do not perceive persons of color as neutral experts. Therefore they will readily choose non-whites as guests only when the show is designed as a “mud wrestling” contest of strident advocates. In addition, guest bookers worry only about the next show. Nobody on the staff monitors overall long-term trends in guests’ ethnicity, let alone seeks to balance representations ethnically. On the other hand, Carole Simpson said that ABC does make a conscious effort to provide diverse guests on “Nightline,” and on the news shows she anchors, to illustrate poverty by showing the white poor in Appalachia rather than stereotype-reinforcing images of the black poor in central cities. Relatedly, Suarez observed that media have many opportunities to show images of individuals

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that stand for people or Americans in general—stories about, say, the effects of pollution, controversies over genetic engineering, or retirement planning. Rarely if ever do non-whites provide the illustrations of just plain people. In this way, the media indicate the continued assumption that the “default mode, regular communities” are those of whites.

A parallel issue arises when it comes to assigning reporters. Should news organizations not only seek to hire a diverse news staff (a point not contested at the conference) but consider ethnicity when assigning reporters to stories? Here again Orlando Patterson argued the case for de-emphasizing race. In his view, editors should not ghettoize blacks or other non-whites by assigning them to report the race beat or race stories. On the other hand, Carole Simpson argued, assigning white reporters alone to do the stories of race and ethnicity in America is undesirable as well. She proposed a (diverse) team approach and this seemed to win general assent.

Taeku Lee, a professor at the Kennedy School, discussing the substantive content of stories, raised perhaps the most perplexing conflict that news operations face when they do cover

non-white communities. On the one hand, reporting the problems confronting non-whites threatens to stereotype people

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of color as victims or sources of problems that might require expensive, taxpayer financed solutions, or other burdens falling heavily (though not exclusively) on the current majority group. On the other hand, if journalists decide to focus on the good news and positive contributions coming out of non-white communities, the danger is reinforcing the denial of discrimination and complacent sense that we've put those issues behind us—the race fatigue—that is already all too common.

The key to resolving this conundrum is providing accurate context for understanding both kinds of stories. The problems faced by non-whites most often result in major part from deficiencies in the operation of the political, educational, and economic systems. They do not arise from non-whites' moral failings or other inherent deficiencies relative to whites. But it is easy for whites to believe that they do. In the same way, the positive experiences and activities of non-whites also mark not merely the positive attributes of the individuals involved, but successful outcomes of the same larger, interacting systems. If news reports routinely provided this contextual understanding of the interwoven systems that shape, support, or undermine the good qualities and achievements of every individual American, they would contribute significantly to ameliorating some of the deleterious effects that media practices now have on intergroup relations.

### CONCLUSION □

Perhaps the dominant themes at the conference could be boiled down as follows: the culture is becoming more diverse, and as a result, the market is speaking in more complex and insistent ways than ever to the news media (and entertainment media as well). These two factors pose challenges to the longstanding norms and routines governing the media. The implications of these changes for the responsibilities and opportunities of the media, and ultimately for public opinion, therefore merit vigorous and continual public

dialogue, for they will deeply affect the future of democratic citizenship in a multi-ethnic society.

The media's responses to market pressures can have both helpful and problematic effects on race relations. On the one hand, there appears to be a growing deployment of resources, especially in print media and on specialized cable channels, toward covering news of minority communities more frequently and with more depth. In this way, the news media protect their market positions while potentially helping to incorporate groups traditionally left out on the margins of public discourse. On the other hand, white audiences may pay little attention to these news niches (e.g., special sections or neighborhood editions of daily newspapers, ethnic magazines, or specialized shows on ethnic cable channels).

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**Segmenting the audience into ethnic enclaves may prove the most economically efficient, profit-generating solution for news operations . . .**

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Moreover, in considering the optimal moves for news organizations, both in terms of commercial success and of serving larger democratic goals, the issue of fragmenting and thus culturally segregating the audience along ethnic lines arises in bold relief. Segmenting the audience into ethnic enclaves may prove the most economically efficient, profit-generating solution for news operations,<sup>21</sup> and may help to serve those groups' specialized information needs. But where that leaves the function of nourishing a common public sphere that includes all ethnic groups, via truly *mass* media, remains unclear.

## Endnotes

1. The terms “ethnicity” and especially “race” are problematic, and have generated much critical analysis among scholars. This brief report cannot delve into these matters (see, e.g., K. A. Appiah and A. Gutmann, *Color Conscious* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); it uses the terms interchangeably.
2. See *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968).
3. Robert M. Entman and Andrew Rojecki, *The Black Image in the White Mind: Media and Race in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Martin Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Ronald N. Jacobs, *Race, Media, and the Crisis of Civil Society: From Watts to Rodney King* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Tali Mendelberg, *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages and the Norm of Equality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).
4. *Income and Racial Disparities in the Undercount in the 2000 Presidential Election*. Report by the Minority Staff, Special Investigations Division, Committee on Government Reform, U.S. House of Representatives (July 9, 2001). At <http://www.house.gov/reform/min/pdf/electionsnational-study.pdf>.
5. For example, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) listed among its legislative agenda items for 2001 the “positive portrayal of Hispanics and their culture.” by the media, and states that it “encourage[s] the FCC to require broadcasters to provide better programming for Latinos.” LULAC, *2001 Legislative Platform* at <http://www.lulac.org/Issues/Platform.html>.
6. See Elizabeth Grieco and Rachel Cassidy, *Race and Hispanic Origin* (U.S. Census Bureau, March 2001). At <http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-1.pdf>.
7. Herbert Gans, in *Deciding What’s News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time* (New York: Pantheon, 1979) provides the most influential and comprehensive overview of the enduring values and operating procedures of twentieth-century American journalism.
8. For discussions, see Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto, *Social Dominance: An Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Jon Hurwitz and Mark Peffley, Editors, *Perception and Prejudice: Race and Politics in the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Paul M. Sniderman, Philip E. Tetlock and Edward G. Carmines, *Prejudice, Politics, and the American Dilemma* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).
9. See Mendelberg, 2001; Gilens, 1999; Gilliam F. D. Iyengar S. 2000. Prime suspects: The influence of local television news on the viewing public. *American Journal of Political Science* 44: 560-73; cf. Donald E. Kinder and Lynn Sanders, *Divided by Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
10. Robert Wright, *Nonzero: The Logic of Human Destiny* (New York: Pantheon, 1999).
11. Richard Morin and Michael H. Cottman, “Discrimination’s Lingering Sting; Minorities Tell of Profiling, Other Bias.” *Washington Post* (June 22, 2001), P. A1.
12. Richard Morin, “Misperceptions Cloud Whites’ Views of Blacks.” *Washington Post* (July 11, 2001), P. A1. Poll data at: <http://washingtonpost.com/wp-rv/nation/sidebars/polls/race071101.htm>.
13. See Howard Shulman, Charlotte Steeh, Lawrence Bobo, Maria Krysan, *Racial Attitudes in America: Trends and Interpretations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).
14. Darnell Hunt, *Screening the Los Angeles “Riots”: Race, Seeing, and Resistance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
15. Av Westin, “Best Practices for Television Journalists.” (New York: The Freedom Forum, 2001).
16. See, e.g., Robert M. Entman, *Democracy Without Citizens: Media and the Decay of American Politics* (New York: Oxford, 1989); W. Lance Bennett, *News: The Politics of Illusion* fourth edition (New York: Longman, 2001).
17. See *Income and Racial Disparities in the Undercount in the 2000 Presidential Election*, cited above.
18. See Entman and Rojecki, 2000 (poverty and affirmative action reporting), and Mendelberg, 2001 (the “Willie” Horton/prison furlough issue in the 1988 election), on the role of elite discourse in shaping racial themes (and their absence) in the news.
19. The importance of counter-stereotypical images to blocking the expression of white prejudice is demonstrated in Mendelberg, 2001.
20. Entman and Rojecki (Chap. 4) found a similar paucity of non-whites among those providing soundbites in hard news stories on the networks.
21. Cf. Joseph Turow, *Breaking Up America: Advertisers and the New Media World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

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