

Public Abstract

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Title:Picturing Dixieland: A Qualitative Analysis of Early Twenty-First Century Newspaper Photojournalism in the American South

The American South has long played a crucial part in the development of United States national identity. Since the 18th century, it served as a negative reference point against which to ground this greater national construct—the region was traditionally seen as representative of such un-American ideals as equality, prosperity, and opportunity. The narrative of South-as-other is well-established within United States history and culture, to the point that it lends itself well to use as a journalistic framing device. This study uses the qualitative research method of constant comparison to explore the relevance of the traditional Southern frame in current newspaper photojournalism. Photographs from two national newspaper outlets and two local newspapers were analyzed according to their content and visual makeup, with results indicating that while new framing devices have been forged to present the South, the traditional model still holds true in many instances. This was found to be particularly true regarding the region's self-presentation.

Results from this study indicate that, while journalistic frames used to present the South have changed in the past century, the potential for misrepresentation of the area remains. The Dixie that the South presents brings with it traditional yet updated frames, and with these come new complications—specifically, the glossing over of negative qualifications and use of stereotype within the region—that photojournalists should be aware of when working in the area. In addition to providing groundwork for future studies of the South and of framing devices, this research can also be applied to studies of other regions within the United States.