PICTURING DIXIELAND: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF EARLY TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY NEWSPAPER PHOTOJOURNALISM IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH

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by

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PICTURING DIXIELAND: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF EARLY TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY NEWSPAPER PHOTOJOURNALISM IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH

Presented by Ivy Rae Ashe

A candidate for the degree of Master of Arts

And hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my grandfather, Norris M. Ashe, who would have liked to read it. Thank you for always being there for me.

And to my parents, Karen Ashe and Biff McGilpin, who have been very understanding while I muddled through this process. There’s no way I could have finished without your support and encouragement. I love you.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I didn’t decide to write a thesis until the first week of my last semester of classes, when I realized that I wasn’t at all finished exploring the topic I had originally written about for my Qualitative Research Methods class. I am pleased to say that ten months after I initially started researching photojournalism, framing, and the South, I’m still hooked. Writing a thesis is not the easiest process in the world, but it does help to have stumbled upon a truly engaging topic. It also doesn’t hurt to have outstanding academic support.

Dr. Lee Wilkins and Seth Ashley helped shape the initial direction of the research in their respective Thesis Seminar and Qualitative Methods courses, giving me the solid ground I needed to tackle the final semester of writing. Once the first chapter was complete, Kim Bennett and Chad Painter proofread for me so I could turn in the most polished product possible.

I was fortunate enough to have a superb committee who pushed me to think about every idea I was laying on the page. It has been both inspiring and humbling to work with Dr. Berkley Hudson, Dr. Earnest Perry, and Dr. Mark Carroll, and I cannot thank them enough for offering their advice and suggestions.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.................................................................................................................ii

LIST OF FIGURES..........................................................................................................................v

LIST OF TABLES.............................................................................................................................vii

ABSTRACT...........................................................................................................................................viii

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION........................................................................................................................1

2. LITERATURE REVIEW..............................................................................................................5
   - Regionalism in the United States
   - Defining the South
   - Creating the Myth- Internal Orientalism
   - The “Other” Frame
   - Photography, Framing, and Visual Convention
   - Photojournalism and the South
   - Research Questions

3. METHODOLOGY.......................................................................................................................20
   - Research Goals
   - Conducting Visual Analysis
   - Data Selection
   - Data Sources
   - Defining Journalistic Situations
4. RESULTS ..................................................................................................................35

Categorical Breakdown of Images
National versus Local Coverage
The Case of Virginia Tech
The Continued Presence of Hurricane Katrina
Military and Political Life
Pit Bulls and Handguns
Local Framing of National Issues
The South Framing the South: Male-Dominant Categories
The South Framing the South: Human Interest and Community
The South Framing the South: Environmental Influence
The South Framing the South: Skewed Demographics
Diversity in the Realms of Education and Religion
Violence and Backwardness
History in the Present

5. DISCUSSION ..........................................................................................................74

Limitations
Further Study
Conclusion

REFERENCES ..............................................................................................................90
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. USA Today staff photo of Virginia Tech candlelit vigil</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The New York Times staff photo of Virginia Tech memorial service</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Commercial-Appeal staff photo of Virginia Tech vigil in Tennessee</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The Commercial-Appeal AP photo of residents returning to New Orleans</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The New York Times staff photo of residents returning to New Orleans</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. USA Today staff photo of Arlington National Cemetery</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The New York Times Getty Images photo of President Bush at biolab</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Atlanta Journal-Constitution AP photo of President Bush at biolab</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The New York Times staff photos of Coca-Cola headquarters and museum</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Atlanta Journal-Constitution staff photo of Coca-Cola Museum</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The Commercial-Appeal staff photo of litter on Mud Island</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. USA Today AP photo of Jena 6 protestor</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The New York Times staff photo of abused pit bull</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The Commercial-Appeal AP photo from court trial of Michael Vick</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. The Commercial-Appeal staff photo of men who stopped mugger</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Atlanta Journal-Constitution staff photo of family mourning son</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. The Commercial-Appeal staff photo from the funeral of local teenager</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. The Commercial-Appeal staff photo of conversion to Judaism</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Atlanta Journal-Constitution staff photo honoring local teachers</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
20. Atlanta Journal-Constitution AP photo from economically sinking town..............69
21. The Commercial-Appeal AP photo of giant boar killed in Alabama..................69
22: Atlanta Journal-Constitution staff photo spread honoring Confederate soldiers......72
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Number of photographs per newspaper</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Frequency of photographs per category</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PICTURING DIXIELAND: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF EARLY TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY NEWSPAPER PHOTOJOURNALISM IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH
Ivy Rae Ashe

Dr. Keith Greenwood, Thesis Committee Chair

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.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“Sometimes the South is hard to see because it’s so full of images of itself”
Josephine Humphreys, *Picturing the South*

Human culture is the product of symbolic interpretation. As Hall (1997) writes, it results from the activation of shared constructions of meaning. An individual becomes a member of a given society via identification with “established morals, ideals, stories and definitions” (Hertog & McLeod, 2003, p. 141), and, indeed, societies themselves self-identify according to community norms and narratives. Such narratives have played a part in the creation of American national identity since Christopher Columbus first “discovered” the West Indies over five centuries ago.

It is often difficult, however, to determine where collective cultural history leaves off and myth begins, and whether or not one has replaced the other entirely. This matter is complicated by the fact that the foundation of group identity is often not only an affirmation of membership within one community, but also a rejection of outside groups—simultaneously being “one thing and not another” while additionally “drawing on images of the other” (Cobb, 2005, p. 3). Cultural communities are thus defined as much by the negative reference points of other groups as by their own traditions and histories. Here, then, perspective rears its head—one man’s history may be another’s myth and vice versa, as seen in the case of the Columbus story.
Friedman (1994) suggests that an objective history can only be achieved by forcing a definitive context upon the original material—“a certain kind of selfhood, one that is based on a radical separation of the subject from any particular identity”—in other words, a null frame (p. 857). In the case of American national identity, however, broad selfhood is too closely linked to those myths that are specific to identities of regions within the nation for this process to be at all successful. The West, for example, has helped solidify the broad concept of America since frontier times; as Dippie (2004) writes, “the words most often associated with the West in the rhetoric of the first half of the nineteenth century involved space and freedom and the future” (p. 10)—that is, the same vocabulary that would eventually come to describe the nation as a whole was first used to describe one particular region.

The opposite phenomenon can be seen in the United States’ relation to the southernmost areas of the country. To return to Cobb’s terminology, the American South traditionally has served as the negative reference point against which to compare the greater construct of the United States. Since pre-Revolutionary times, this region has provided a convenient foil for its Northern counterpart, and indeed for America as a whole (Cobb, 2005); there exists a historical tendency to “other” and exoticize the South in order to strengthen overall national identity (Jansson, 2007). Such a process converts the narrative arc of the region into myth. Indeed, as Gerster and Cords (1989) point out, while all corners of the country have their own stories to tell, “it is the American South more than any other region that has taken command of the nation’s mythic imagination” (p. 44). Grantham, writing in 1968, observes that
in the modern American mind the regional imagination has expressed itself most compellingly in the South, both in the attitude of the region’s own inhabitants and in the image it evokes in other parts of the country (p. 3).

This study seeks to examine the relevance of the traditional Southern myth model in the twenty-first century, using a combination of framing theory and visual communication theory.

When cultural narratives such as that of the “South-as-other” become embedded into societal deep structures, they provide the basis for the creation of frames—presentation devices that “introduce or raise the salience or apparent importance of certain ideas” through activation of pre-existing schemas (Entman, 2007, p. 164; Hertog & McLeod, 2003). With respect to media theory, frames offer a way to ground new information by tapping into this store of cultural knowledge; journalists rely on prior texts and constructs to organize material in a manner that allows for the greatest possible audience accessibility (Scheufele, 1999). Bantamaroudis and Kampanellou (2007) posit that media frames of a given culture are largely responsible for subsequent audience perception of the group in question, as they offer “current mediated notions of cultural identity” (p. 82).

Yet despite their practicality and widespread usage, frames can also be problematic. By their very nature, they are based on shared assumptions, not objectivity, and promote certain aspects of reality at the expense of others (Bantimaroudis & Kampanellou, 2007). Frames seek to access the most widespread cultural narratives in order to achieve mass comprehension; in the process, contextual details that complicate the base structure are left unaccounted for. These potential pitfalls are particularly evident
in the realm of photojournalism, which employs multiple levels of framing in the process of media creation. A photographer literally must make a frame when shooting an image, and figuratively employs the same framing techniques as would a reporter when choosing which elements to include or emphasize in his photograph, and which to neglect. A visual rhetoric, reflecting not only the event or person being photographed, but also the greater constructs of social values and ideologies, is created (Lucaites & Hariman, 2001). Such effects, whether intended or not, and regardless of whether they are recognized by the average viewer, are omnipresent in the creation of all photographic images (Sontag, 1977).

This research examines the types of frames used to present the modern American South and, in doing so, explores the extent to which the appeal of the traditional “other” still takes hold. Rankin (2007) has cautioned against overuse of standardized frames, writing that

“powerful images of time and place influence the way a generation sees, limiting our collective ability to re-envision and image…A challenge facing all photography, but particularly photography of the American South, is need for fresh eyes and ever-changing focus on new content that is reflective of a changing, dynamic region.” (p. 19)

By examining photographs taken in the South during the twenty-first century, the study hopes to determine how the present generation of photojournalists views and depicts the region, and what frames they employ to present their subject to a mass audience. Raising awareness of framing theory in turn helps draw attention to those frames that may be neglected and offers the opportunity to increase journalistic objectivity with regards to this cultural situation.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Regionalism in the United States

It has been argued that, in the context of the twenty-first century and its globalization-leaning sociological atmosphere, such localized constructs as regional culture would die out in the face of a more unified worldview (Meyrowitz in Griswold & Wright, 2004). Aay, writing in 1999, notes that “speech patterns, dress, music, sport, foods, and religions, to name a few culture traits, are each forfeiting their regional/local expressions and have been replaced by nation- and continent-wide habits” (p. 90). Factors such as increased residential mobility—that is, less of the current population lives in the state in which they were born—and technological advancements are viewed as threats to the distinctiveness of national geography (Griswold & Wright, 2004).

This death of Place, however, has been somewhat overstated; rather, regionalism remains a robust force within the greater unit of the nation. As Potter (1989) points out, “in a nation as vast and diverse as [America], there is really no level higher than the regional level at which one can come to grips with the concrete reality of the land” (p. 34). Griswold and Wright’s 2004 survey of regional literature and residential mobility suggests that the factors thought to be affecting the death of regionalism could in fact be strengthening it—“enthusiasm for local landscapes [and] historic preservation and ethnic communities and traditions” continues to develop (Aay, 1999, p. 91).

The regionalist trend is perhaps strongest in those areas marked as traditional regions (Zelinsky, 1992)—areas such as the South, whose parts have, over time, developed along similar sociocultural lines and now share a “common worldview and
way of life” (Aay, 1999, p. 91). The South, writes Bartley (1995), “has its own history and tradition, its own myths and symbols, its own images vis-à-vis the rest of the nation” (p. 4). It is true that such descriptions apply to other areas of the country; however, as Falk and Webb (2010) point out, the majority of cases tend to assign labels according to specific states, not broad locales—people from California, for example, are not often referred to as “Westerners” (p. 81). The South, by contrast, is often viewed (correctly or not) as a monolithic region—the sum is greater than its parts (Ray, 2003). The multistate expanse thus creates what Grantham (1968) refers to as the “most forceful manifestation” of regionalism in the United States (p. 32).

Defining the South

According to Zelinsky’s definition, traditional regions are marked at a basic level by geography. Factors inherent to this level of definition in turn influence other characteristics; in the long run, this results in regions defined as much by historical and cultural factors as purely environmental ones (Ray, 2003). In the case of the South, the geographic element distinguishing the region from other areas of the United States is its subtropical climate (Degler, 1977). This single trait then gives rise to a host of features that have historically defined the South: the long, frostless growing season played a crucial role in the cultivation of cotton, while increased demand for this and other climate-specific crops gave rise to the plantation system and to economic dependence on slavery, which itself was one of the leading factors in the build-up to the American Civil War (Degler, 1977; Rubin, 1975). Indeed, a consistent pattern defining the South as those states that were part of the former Confederacy—Virginia, North Carolina, South
Carolina, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, Georgia, and Arkansas—emerges in scholarly literature (Odum, 1931; Reed, 1976; Jansson, 2005).

A 1976 survey by Reed makes the distinction between “the South,” a purely geographical term and “Dixie,” a term shaped by its associations with the sociohistorical forces of the region. Reed’s survey has been referred to as a “geography of feeling,” as it moves beyond the political conceptualization of borders (Cobb, 1999, p. 133). The idea is not a new one; Vance, writing in 1935, argues that “history, not geography, made the solid South” (p. 43). In more recent takes on the subject, Garreau (1981) observes that “Dixie’s boundaries are defined more by emotion than any other [region]” (p. 131), a stance echoed by both Jansson (2010) and Falk and Webb (2010). What makes Dixie a region unto itself, then, is continued commitment not to the concrete state lines that surround it, but rather to the abstract idea of the area.

While most of the states falling under the umbrella of Dixieland are also considered part of the South, Texas and Florida, aside from a few select cities, are not. Both of these states, though they too seceded from the Union, have histories that diverge significantly from the traditional cotton-plantation-Civil War model (Ayers, 1992; Jansson, 2003); indeed, Florida’s historical trajectory is such that the modern state “can serve as a sort of southern counterpoint” to other regional patterns (Reed, 2003). For the purposes of this paper, these states will not be considered part of the definition of the South.

When moving away from a purely geographic definition of the region and more towards a description of “Dixie,” factors ranging from the historical to the societal to the psychological begin to come into play in shaping the South’s greater identity. The
creation of such an identity is, again, a process shaped entirely by contextual factors: “the real continuities are present in the forms of identities...construed in relation to people’s immediate conditions and everyday existence” (Friedman, 1992, p. 841). The problem with Southern identity, however, is that while these current markers are based in fact, they are often “a mixture of the unvarnished and the varnished or even the whitewashed truth” (Cobb, 2005, p. 6), or, as Ellen Dugan puts it, “a curious conflation of fact and fiction” (1996, p. 14). It is frequently the case that the idea of the South, for Americans of any region (including the South itself), is one more appropriately described as a powerful social myth (Tindall, 1989).

Compounding the problem is the standard practice of ignoring Dixie’s “quilt” of individual histories and cultures in favor of the broad, sweeping “Southern” appellation (Garreau, 1981, p. 131)—a practice that even academics are guilty of: O’Brien (2007) comments on the “extreme rarity” of comparative studies dealing with the many Southern subregions (p. 65). The oversight is an ironic one—it is arguably the very intra-region diversity of the South’s “fascinating localities” and “patterns of cultural blending” that help define it as unique (Kirk, 1984, p. 175; Ray, 2003, p. 7)—yet as Kirk points out, “nearly all who use ‘South’ bootleg into the usage an assumption that the term is singular, the region firm and regular” (p. 174). The commonality of this assumption, though consistent with Zelinsky’s traditional regions definition, allows for the myth described by Tindall to be spread with greater ease.
Creating the Myth—Internal Orientalism

The potency of the Southern myth as compared to those of other regions is due in large part to the identity creation process described by Jansson (2007) as internal Orientalism. Orientalism, a term coined by Edward Said, refers to the strengthening of a given national identity via the “othering” of another geopolitical entity—in its original use, the context placed the Western Europe region as a whole against the so-described “exotic and inferior” backdrop of East Asia. Internal Orientalism, however, is an extreme example of the negative reference point phenomenon, pitting a specific region against its parent nation with the aim of fortifying the country’s overall external presentation.

Since colonial times, when the image of the industrious New York Yankee was set against that of the genteel Virginia Cavalier, the two poles of American identity have been those of North and South (Cobb, 2005). This concept of the South as a distinct “other” within the United States of America dates back to the immediate post-Revolution years, as the new country sought to break with the tradition of presenting itself in relation to Britain (Cobb, 2005). By the 1830s, the American quest for an “articulable national character” had reached its endpoint in the face of widening socioeconomic differences between the North and South (Kirk, 1984, p. 167; Smith, 1985). The agrarian, aristocratic South and its Cotton Kingdom provided contrast to what was perceived as a democratic, industrial and more “American” society in the North (Cobb, 2005; Kirk, 1984). These latter attributes, placed against the context of the values and institutions of the South, came to be seen not merely as Northern characteristics, but as representatives of the very ideal of national identity. The South was excluded from discussions of equality, prosperity, freedom and tolerance—all of which are now considered to be
American values. As Woodward (1989) points out, the American Dream is in fact a Northern one.

W.J. Cash, author of the influential *The Mind of the South* (1943) was of the opinion that the more positive attributes of Southerners, such as loyalty, bravery, and generosity could not compete with what came to be termed the Savage South, a construct “manifested in traits such as ‘violence, intolerance, aversion and suspicion toward new ideas’” (Cobb, 2005, p. 183). O’Brien (2007) notes the presence of these traits in both academic circles and mainstream circles: “Traditional American historiography told us that the South was backward, immoral, belated, inferior, [and] frozen” (p.12). Even the positive traits are marred by historical thoughts—well into the twenty-first century, studies continue to attribute patterns of Southern violence to the region’s established “code of honor” (Lee, et al, 2007; Vandello, et al, 2008). In the face of a phenomenon such as internal Orientalism, this pattern seemed almost doomed to happen. America needed the “other” of the South in order to construct itself as the Land of the Free (Tindall, 1989; Cobb, 2005; Jansson, 2003). The Dixieland states “created, for many Americans, a convenient scapegoat upon which the sins of all [could] be symbolically laid and thereby expiated” (Tindall, 1989, p. 15); they formed, in the words of Egerton (1974), a “colony of the nation, an inferior region, a stepchild” (p. xix). Over time, following the Civil War, the region became an even greater catchall of negative characteristics (Jansson, 2003). The South was thus largely excluded from the overall identity America sought to cultivate. As Roland (1989) writes:
Unquestionably, one of the most familiar images in the American mind has been that of what George B. Tindall has called “The Benighted South”—a land of persistent racial prejudice, religious bigotry, endemic poverty and clusters of other presumably un-American attitudes and conditions. (p. 157)

Yet although the traditional model continues to “render the South a convenient regional dumping ground for the nation’s shortcomings regarding race” (Wrobel, 2004, p. 1205), the South is by no means alone among American regions in terms of historical exhibitions of negative traits. Zinn (1964) observes that although the South is seen as “racist, violent, hypocritically pious, xenophobic, false in its elevation of women, nationalistic, and conservative…the United States as a civilization, embodies all of those same qualities” (p. 64). With regard to issues of race, for example, one need look no further than such examples as anti-Asian legislation in 19th-century California, Japanese internment camps during WWII, and large-scale race riots in 20th-century Chicago, Detroit, Newark and Los Angeles. While the South was the long-time home of slavery, the most visible rendering of racially skewed outlooks in American history (Bartley, 1995), the North, and indeed the United States, is no less guilty of its broader racial attitudes (Morris & Monroe, 2009)—yet by the historical model, these are often overlooked in the face of the Southern repository. Gerster and Cords (1977) offer that the North “seems…to have conspired in southern mythmaking because of its guilt over slavery and its repressed attitudes on race relations” (p. 574).

Problems of race and violence are not the only negative attributes frequently assigned to the South. The two features of poverty and “unshakeable dedication” to religion, though both are present throughout the country, bucking against the ideals of the American Dream and the Constitutional separation of church and state, have also
historically taken up residence firmly within the region (Cobb, 2005; Woodward, 1989). Cobb (1999) additionally notes W.J. Cash’s disparaging of the South’s “exaggerated sense of individualism” (p. 25)—but what is America without emphasis on the individual? That each of these traits is endemic to America itself does not fit well with the overall national mythology, and causes them to be relegated—through internal Orientalism—to the South.

The “Other” Frame

The process described by Jansson contributes to the creation of both the American and the Southern myth, and provides the groundwork for the purpose of this research: examining media framing theory as it pertains to the idea of the South. Framing theory centers on the idea that the manner in which a topic or theme is presented by the media has an effect on subsequent audience perception of the topic at hand (Scheufele, 1999); the process is one of “selecting, emphasizing, and presenting some, but not all, available information to the audience” (Fahmy, et al; 2007). Tomanic (2004) describes the parent theory to Jansson’s—Orientalism as originally defined by Said—as a frame in itself, one that applies to depictions of race, nationality, and Otherness (p. 482). As with many frames, it is reductionist, simplifying complex interactions to a bare-bones “Us versus Them” mentality (Tomanic, 2004, p. 482). This in itself is a framing device, and an example of previous constructs being used to place new information against a backdrop of the old, in order to utilize and further develop a common base of audience knowledge.

Without a frame, news stories and events have little to no meaning. Scheufele (1999) writes that the way in which people process new information is by putting it in the
context of schematic structures that already exist, allowing for easier interpretation and understanding; those frames that have greatest audience accessibility are those that are easily retrievable from memory. Because it is the result of a course of selection, however, a frame can be defined as much by what it contains as what it does not (Entman, 1993). Furthermore, because of the number of variables potentially affecting the presentation of a text, the exact same issue could have different meaning to its audience depending on how the journalist chooses to structure a news item (Kim, et al, 2002).

In the case of the South, the prior text and common knowledge base are those of the two identity myths—the South as “Other” and the United States as the norm against which it contrasts—which have been running side-by-side since the seventeenth century, helping forge the very idea of “America” and in the process becoming well ingrained into the greater public consciousness. The dangers of structuring reality around such constructs are mentioned by Tindall (1989), who notes that an observer can often be “blind to things that do not fit into the mental image” (p. 2). Indeed, as Pierce (1984) observes, “it is less important that [Southern] mental images often exaggerated and distorted reality than that they [are] widely held to be true. As such they became part of the reality of history” (p. 182). When the observer is a journalist, charged with relaying information to a mass audience, such blindness can lead to the furthering of dated and inaccurate perceptions. The black-and-white distinctions drawn in the process of internal Orientalism have faded noticeably in the present era; as Woodward (1989) puts it: “It is not that the present South has any conspicuous lack of faults, but that its faults are growing less conspicuous and therefore less useful for purposes of regional identification” (p. 121). Indeed, Egerton (1974) writes that “the South and the nation
seem in many ways to be imitating the worse in each other”. Does the Southern myth persist in spite of this fact? Exactly how relevant the standard framing device is in a twenty-first century world remains unclear.

Complicating the matter is the issue of Southern self-identity in the current era. If the South has served as the negative reference point for America itself, the reverse is also true—for much of the South, “whether considered as a nation or as a notion, the North…consists of everything that is not southern” (Current, 1983, p. 82). The idea that the South is wholly different from its neighbors is one accepted by all parties involved (Pierce, 1985). Ray (2003) observes that “southerners have also contributed to the creation and perception of negative stereotypes, embracing them with a mixture of humor and pride, and as part of their own regional consciousness” (p. 3). Smith (1985) describes this reaction to the South’s second-tier national status as a type of defensive mythology; according to Wilhoit (1973), the region was unable to forge new myths to accommodate its various internal social, economic, and political changes and upheavals because “virtually all the national historic symbols” of the United States had already been claimed in the name of the original American identity myth (p. 56). In the years following the Civil Rights movement, cultural lines between the two areas thus had begun to blur in what Woodward (1989) deemed the “Americanization of Dixie,” and, as Cobb (1999) points out, “once the South’s most negative traits were either neutralized or nationalized, determined advocates of southern distinctiveness found themselves scrambling” to demonstrate the continued meaningfulness of their region (p. 76). By the mid-twentieth century, the South had begun to redefine itself by sorting through its various identity mythologies in order to create a uniquely Southern one that bore as little association as
possible to the identity imposed by Northerners. Yoder (1965) described this phenomenon as the “Dixiefication of Dixie.” If “Dixiefication” has continued to occur, it might be expected that new framing devices have been forged to account for this change—or, alternatively, that the South continues to self-identify according to the older, distinctive models.

**Photography, Framing, and Visual Conventions**

Analyzing news photography offers the chance to explore these multiple facets of the framing phenomenon. News photographs are seen as offering proof that some entity—be it a person, event, or idea—existed at one point in time, when the photographer saw fit to press the shutter (Tomanic, 2004). Photographs “imply the potential for verification, there being a general presumption that the image must have been dependent to some extent on a real-world event” (Legrady, 1990, p. 267); the information they present, unlike textual information, is in “a form that looks so much like the world we perceive with our own eyes” (Newton, 2001, p. 5). “There is a presumption,” writes Bissell (2000), “that photographs present an unbiased glimpse of the world” (p. 9).

Yet despite these powerful assumptions of realism associated with them, images remain irrevocably bound, in literal and figurative terms, by their respective frames (Sontag, 1977). Dauber (2001) elaborates on the phenomenon, noting that images “come with historical baggage, both in terms of [a] particular event and in terms of previous events…The trace of the past clings to such images, giving them…presence as evidence
of what was” (p. 657). Those who consume news, then, are “susceptible to the power of the image in a way [they] are not in other contexts” (Dauber, 2001, p. 654).

Lucaites and Hariman (1998) describe the photojournalistic medium as a performance of sorts—the dual features of aesthetic convention and storytelling properties combine to offer the viewer a representation of a given moment. The term ‘performance’ is especially apt, however; a photograph does not present reality, but rather one slice of one perspective of one moment—the importance and relevance of which are determined by a photographer. News photographs, despite the aura of objectivity about them, are for better or worse equal to their text counterparts: “manufactured products, not a mirror on ‘reality’” (Lowrey, 1999, p. 10). Photographers rely on frames to transmit their intended message. An environment of viewer accessibility cannot be created without catering in some way to prior texts, and, again, when presenting the South, the traditional model would appear to be the most likely candidate for increasing this accessibility.

Besides the standard method of using framing, however, a photograph has the advantage—and disadvantage—of being a physical framing device; all of its content must fit inside one rectangle. Parrish (2002) refers to this as “shoehorning the scene” (p. 104), which forces a photographer to think carefully about how to present the information they wish to convey (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). For example, the photographer “must choose first, literally, where to stand and next decide on a camera angle. He must choose a point of view” (Kligerman, 1977, p. 174). Composing a photograph such that it presents a particular message is an inherently creative process (Parrish, 2002).

Further, as with any text, a photograph can be interpreted in multiple ways depending on context. For this reason, photographers frequently use symbolic devices in
order to better convey one particular meaning. In his analysis of print journalism
symbols, Huxford (2001) defines three categories of signifiers: temporal—evocation of
different time frames; metaphorical—usage of analogistic signifiers; and synthetic—
gross distortions of reality. Although Huxford also relates these categories to techniques
used by news designers, they are equally applicable to symbolism within a photo. Each
category can be achieved via technical manipulations (for example, type of lens used, or
aperture or shutter settings), content framing, or compositional decisions. Kress and Van
Leeuwen (1996) and Parrish (2002) outline additional photographic conventions, such as
use of perspective within an image, that “allow [the photo’s] articulation and
understanding” (Kress & Van Leeuwen, p. 120). This research examines both manners—
the abstract and the literal—in which photographers use framing techniques.

Photojournalism and the South

Rankin (2007) writes that “no region’s photographic tradition has been more
engaged in…exploring and reflecting the injuries of time—brought on more specifically
by war, bondage, discrimination, class conflicts, and the ravages of nature, to name a few
forces—than photography in the American South” (p. 5). Ellen Dugan, curator of the
1996 photography exhibit *Picturing the South* takes this sentiment a step further:

Southern reality…has been vigorously recorded, defined, and recreated
through literature, music, film, the mass media, and their agencies of
popular and high culture. It has been photography, however, which has
arguably had the most sustained, wide-ranging, and indelible role in
chronicling how the region has perceived itself and been understood (or
misapprehended) by others (p. 14).

Indeed, photographers and writers have long recognized that compressed and magnified
within Southern history are many of the events and underlying issues that have
dramatically shaped American society as a whole—the Civil War and Civil Rights
Movement immediately rise to the forefront of any discussion on the matter—and that
will continue to exert their convulsive pressures well into the twenty-first century.

Closer examination of this documented Southern reality reveals a noticeable
reliance on the traditional Southern frame. For example, much of the Southern
photographic tradition is tied to documentary photographs, such as those of the Farm
Security Administration photographers. O’Brien (2007) looks at the images of such FSA
documentarians as Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans, as well as those of Margaret
Bourke-White in You Have Seen Their Faces, finding that the content and composition of
these photographs, which were taken during the mid-20th century, align with the Southern
identity frame and offer “dramatic visual documentation for the scholarly observations
and statistics offered by concerned academics” (p. 36). The presence and prevalence of
the exoticized South, then, appears evident. Indeed, a 1998 survey by Zanes focuses on
Picturing the South—a collection featuring art photography and posed media content
(such as stills from the production of Gone With the Wind) as well as documentary
images—comes to this very conclusion, observing that, overall, “racial strife, religious
fanaticism, an obsession with its own history” are constant throughout the work
(para.12). Zanes also analyzes a collection of suburban South photographs taken by Alex
Harris, noting that Harris, too, relied upon conventional Southern frames when working
in the region, showing the audience “not what we don’t know about the South, but what
we’ve already been told,” and concluding that it is nearly impossible to work in the South
without getting “tangled” in the area’s powerful mythology (para.14).
However, many explorations of working within the Southern photography tradition tend not to treat with daily newspaper photography; Dugan’s collection is a rare example of including these types of images. The proposed study thus seeks to at least partially fill this void; a body of information will be created that further develops both the ideas of photographic framing and of the American South.

RQ1: What visual frames do newspaper photojournalists currently use when photographing in the South?

RQ2: How do these frames reflect the historically grounded perception of the South as Other?
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Goals

The overall intent of the proposed research is to determine the extent to which the American South is portrayed as an “other”—that is, an entity foreign to and separate from the overall national identity of the United States—in twenty-first century documentary photography. Specifically, the study proposes to examine the framing devices, both literal and figurative, used by photographers when they make pictures in the South in order to determine the extent to which these frames reflect historical perceptions of the area. Does Jansson’s theory of internal Orientalism still hold true for the South?

To carry out this research, framing theory, the idea of contextualizing and situating media by relating it to prior texts, is used as a general guideline. In addition to relying on this basic groundwork, the constant comparative method [CCM] of analysis, combined with textual analysis—using images as texts—is employed as a methodology for data processing.

Conducting Visual Analysis

Textual analysis is itself an offshoot of the field of discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 1991), which examines human communication. Rather than analyze the linguistic patterns of spoken communication (discourse analysis in its most basic form), however, the practice instead focuses on the semiotic patterns found within artifacts of human culture. These artifacts, be they books, newspapers, or photographs, are referred to as
texts. Despite a photograph’s status as a text, analysis of this product differs from that of a more prototypical text in that traditional (that is, written) linguistic conventions and grammatical elements cannot be studied. This is not to say, however, that a photograph cannot be “read” just as easily as can a news article; the same basic principles of analysis can be applied to the principles of visual grammar.

Lister and Wells (2001) and Jewitt and Oyama (2001) offer general guidelines for conducting visual analysis, which are, for the purposes of this study, combined with Glaser’s (1965) constant comparative method of qualitative research in order to best examine the body of data gathered. Constant comparison, as Boeije (2002) note, is a method rooted in grounded theory, where the theory arises from the data itself rather than being imposed on a data set. Theory is thus the end result, not the first step, and is highly specific to the given research question.

CCM itself is a four-part process; it begins with the coding of each specific data incident in as many different categories of analysis as possible (Glaser, 1965). After individually analyzing the incident, it is then compared to other items in the sample (it is this step that gives the process its name). Greenwood and Smith (2009) describe an adaptation of CCM specifically intended for photographs—the very first image studied is assigned a theme based on its content, the next image is analyzed according to whether or not it presents the same theme. If the themes are the same, the two images are grouped together in one category. If not, a new, unique category is created to accommodate the new theme. This process is repeated for every image in the data set such that each item is assigned to the category in which it best fits.
Images are, as they were in Greenwood and Smith’s study, assigned a theme based upon their content; these themes are based upon the message an image is intended to convey. Photo captions are of utmost importance for understanding an intended message, as they “help put images into perspective and explain details that are not visually obvious” (Parrish, 2002, p. 156). Without a caption, a photo has unlimited possibilities for viewer interpretation; the presence of literal text to ground the “text” that is the image increases the potential for achieving a common understanding of the photo’s meaning (given that a particular audience can read the specific language), as less is left to audience interpretation. Captions are also relied upon to provide the geographic information needed to determine whether a photo was taken in the South or not.

In terms of visual content, images were analyzed according to a loose application of Collier’s (2001) method: data were first grouped in an order contingent upon such contextual factors as temporal, spatial, or geographical placement—here, a photograph must have been taken in one of the nine states previously identified as being “Southern,” or, more specifically, as part of the social construct of Dixie. Micro elements of each image—“identification of participants, records of temporal shifts, tracking of behavior, [and] details of gesture, expression or posture” (Collier, p 43)—were noted. Besides the basic content information given by the image, however, such compositional elements as positioning of figures within the frame and relative to one another, and sizing of the figures (that is, which are larger and emphasized) are noted. These conventions are further outlined in Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), Huxford (2001), and Lister and Wells (2001). In their discussion of visual analysis as a component of cultural studies, Lister and Wells also point out the importance of “viewing position”; that is, an image’s ability
to cast its audience in a privileged position (the viewer is able to see all content clearly) or a voyeuristic one. Parrish (2002) elaborates this concept, noting that usage of wide-angle lenses in particular tend to place the audience as one of the crowd. In the context of this research, then, would an audience feel part of a Southern scene, or outside of it?

Finally, Jewitt and Omaya (2001) and Parrish (2002) offer additional analysis parameters based upon theories of social semiotics. Certain elements, for example, may be emphasized over others, thereby increasing their salience to the viewer. Power relationships are conveyed via usage of a vertical angle—whether or not the camera is trained up, down, or at eye-level with its subject (Kim and Kelly, 2008). An above-subject perspective, in addition to being a useful method for depicting an entire scene, gives more power to a viewer, while a low-angle shot taken below the subject instead “cedes power” to the persons in the frame (p. 157). Additionally, lines within a photo hold subtle meanings all their own; verticals, for example, imply action and conflict, while diagonals imply movement and dynamism (Parrish, 2002). Coding therefore must take into account these elements.

The overall coding process, then, has two parts. The first part, sorting via constant comparison, establishes thematic categories for the photographic data based on content and captions. As photos are sorted, their compositional and contextual elements are noted. Throughout the process of coding, categories are constantly redefined as different trends and themes begin to make themselves apparent; for this reason, Glaser stresses the importance of keeping memos in order to track the shifts and changes, and to accommodate accordingly—this integration of categories forms the next stage of the overall CCM process.
The second part of coding occurs after the initial sort, when images are examined again to look for patterns within each constructed category. The previously-written memos are again used to help guide the intra-category examination. In coding each image according to its visual makeup, patterns of “recurrent and contrasting elements” are established (Collier, p 40). These are manifest in the combination of visual codes present in each image, and can then be used in the next step of constant comparison—delimiting the theory. Indeed, it is from this step that much of the theory building occurs.

Delimitation occurs as “features of the…method set in to curb what could otherwise become an overwhelming task” (Glaser, p. 441), and takes place at both the level of the developing theory and at that of the original list of proposed coding categories. Dye, et al (2000) write that “the meaning of a given category evolves as more and more decisions are made about which…data can or cannot be assigned,” equating the process to the twist of a kaleidoscope; that is, smaller patterns and trends are eventually sorted out of the data into one overarching picture. Glaser refers to this process of discovering uniformities as ‘reduction’, further noting that reduction brings about more selective coding, which in turn eliminates categorical redundancy.

During the course of delimitation and reduction, and subsequent honing of previously vague criteria, precise notation of the refinement of categories and codes becomes of particular importance, as this “forces the analyst to make theoretical sense of each comparison” and account for each image’s inclusion or exclusion from the various groupings (Glaser, p. 444). Following delimitation, then, the researcher is armed with data, memos, and the basis of a theory. All that remains is to solidify the latter.
It is important to note, however, that constant comparison makes no claims to “ascertain the universality or the proof of suggested causes”; in other words, the method is concerned with the creation, not the proof of, a theory (Glaser, p. 439). Testing of this newly developed theory becomes a matter for future study and exploration. As it relates to this research, the constant comparison method is intended to formulate a general theory relating the visual frames of the South with the historical perceptions of the area, and is meant to create a starting point for further research on the topic.

**Data Selection**

Data for the visual analysis was selected using the constructed week method, in which a 7-day week is built by randomly selecting representative days (Monday, Tuesday, and so forth) from a given year. Sampling a population of newspaper pieces in this manner has been shown to predict overall trends reasonably well (Stempel, 1952; Riffe and Aust, et al, 1993), with reliability increasing if two constructed weeks are used (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2005). For this reason, as well as to ensure a large enough sample, two weeks were constructed for this study.

Data was drawn from newspapers published in 2007, as this year is not only firmly within the identity of the twenty-first century, thus lessening the potential influences of the 1990s, it also offers the additional benefit of having been witness to very few potentially confounding factors. For example, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the Hurricane Katrina destruction of 2005 are both extreme cases of news events that fall well outside the boundaries of what this particular research question pertains to—and, indeed, could warrant separate examinations of their own. The occurrence of these events
also eliminates the years immediately following them (2001, 2006), as anniversary and fallout coverage would still be prevalent. Finally, 2003 and 2004 were excluded from the study because each saw, respectively, the start of the Iraq war and a Presidential election. No such events occurred during 2007. While the beginning of the 2008 Presidential campaign did see its start at this time, 2007 nonetheless remains the millennial year least affected by national-level confounding events.

The constructed weeks were created using the website 


Using this site’s algorithms, a random integer between 1 and 365 was drawn; the number selected would then correspond to a day of the year (hence a 2 would correspond to January 2, a 3 to January 3, and so forth). The date was then matched up with the day of the week on which it fell in 2007. Once each day (Monday, Tuesday, etc.) had been matched with two dates, it was considered complete. Any subsequent dates that also matched were thrown out of the data set. 30 numbers in total were drawn in order to arrive at two unique dates for each day of the week, with 16 being thrown out to avoid repetition of days. The two constructed weeks are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>THURSDAY</th>
<th>FRIDAY</th>
<th>SATURDAY</th>
<th>SUNDAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 26</td>
<td>June 26</td>
<td>January 3</td>
<td>January 18</td>
<td>February 23</td>
<td>August 18</td>
<td>May 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 10</td>
<td>September 18</td>
<td>April 18</td>
<td>March 8</td>
<td>August 17</td>
<td>September 1</td>
<td>December 23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Sources

Sources for the data set consist of the archives of the New York Times, the USA Today, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, and The Commercial-Appeal (Memphis). The websites for these news organizations provide archives of text articles, and can be used as
a reference point for contextual purposes; however, they do not catalog images online, which necessitates the use of microfilm files. The collection of the University of Missouri- Columbia was used for data collection for the *Times* and *USA Today*; microfilm for *The Commercial-Appeal* was obtained at the University of Memphis, while that of the *Journal-Constitution* was taken from the Vanderbilt University archives.

The four newspapers were selected specifically because each offers a different perspective on the South, in terms of political geography, circulation and distribution, and potentially varying attitudes and preconceptions regarding the South.

The *New York Times* was selected as a resource because it is recognized as “one of the most influential newspapers in the United States” (Manheim & Albritton, 1984, p 642), and, more importantly, is one of a handful of newspapers in the country that enjoys nationwide circulation. Of this selection, the *Times* is “considered to be the pre-eminent national newspaper in the United States: other papers and broadcasters use *Times* coverage to determine which stories are important” (Erickson & Mitchell, 1996, p. 400). Because the *New York Times* is thus established both as a national newspaper and as one that is recognized as guiding media coverage in other outlets, it is a logical starting point for conducting research—if this particularly influential paper employs historical framing when depicting the South, it is highly plausible that the trend has carried over into other news media.

In spite of the *Times’* elevated status as both a national newspaper and a potential agenda-setter, the paper nonetheless places priority on coverage of the New York/New Jersey area. Further, in terms of weekday circulation, it is third in the country behind the *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* (Perez-Pena, 2009). The *Wall Street Journal*, despite
its wide audience, was not selected because it is “primarily a business-specific
publication” (Kian, 2008, p. 38) and therefore does not have a representative cross-
section of news stories and photographs to draw from. Rather, in order to include a truly
national large-circulation media outlet, USA Today was also chosen as a resource. USA
Today is a relatively new paper, founded in 1982 by Al Neuharth of Gannett publishers
and, from the very beginning, intended to stand out from other newspapers (Brockus,
2008). Emphasis is consistently placed on reader accessibility, achieved through a
“snappy, quick-to-read format” (Vivian, 1993, p. 106). It follows that this increased
attention to accessibility could lead to an increased reliance on standardized news frames.

Of particular note regarding USA Today is its status as Gannett’s primary
newspaper. The company, which owns 84 newspapers in 31 states, is the largest
newspaper publisher in the United States; its role within the industry itself is “without a
doubt a transformative one” (Brockus, 2008, p. 23). As the most prominent paper in
Gannett’s cache, USA Today in turn tends to set the tone for practices to be implemented
in the other 83 papers (Brockus, 2008). Photographic trends in USA Today, then, much
like those present in The New York Times, may carry over into the other Gannett papers.

The Journal-Constitution was chosen as the third data source in order to provide
insight into whether the South continues to self-identify according to the standard frame.
The newspaper, which serves the eighth largest metropolitan area in the country, has the
greatest circulation of all regional papers in the Southeast with a daily print readership of
214,303—2.2 million if online readership is included (New Georgia Encyclopedia, 2004;
Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 2009). Again, the sizable audience indicates that the
newspaper must provide content that is accessible to all of its readers, which in turn speaks to the potential for utilizing as many common-knowledge frames as possible.

Data from Atlanta is also of use because the city is widely considered to have “taken on the traits and landscapes of the national culture” during the latter part of the twentieth century (Aay, 1999, p. 98), despite entering the century as a veritable symbol of the South and the “capital of Dixie” (Cobb, 2005; Garreau, 1981, p. 131). This phenomenon is particularly evident in the changing demographics of the city. Over the past 30 years, Atlanta has become what Singer (2007) refers to as an “emerging gateway” city for foreign-born populations—it has experienced large influxes of immigrants in a relatively short amount of time, especially when compared to the steady growth of such better-known immigrant hubs of New York and San Francisco. The population diversity stemming from these increases is far more reflective of the American ideal of a multicultural haven than is the historical model of Atlanta as a city defined, quite literally, in black-and-white terms (Adelman, et al, 2006).

The drifting of Atlanta from the traditional Southern frame can be seen in other, more deliberate ways as well. Beginning in the late 1980s, the city began an intentional move away from self-identifying as Southern—a move which saw its apex during the 1996 Olympics, when many pointed out that Atlanta presented itself in a way that was “predictably generic” as opposed to culturally distinct (Cobb, 2005, p. 235). In 2008, however, the city abandoned its more “generic” tourist marketing campaign (“Every day is an opening day”) in favor of “City lights, Southern nights”—a specific return to embracing the city’s regional status (Ramos, 2007). Atlanta’s identity conflict thus makes study of its newspaper images valuable—will photographs be made with a distinctly
Southern frame, or will they instead seek to shy away from such representation? Will they align with the frames used by the national beacons of the *New York Times* and *USA Today*?

In contrast to Atlanta, Memphis has long embraced an exceptionally well-established identity. This identity, however, is largely tied to the history of the city itself—Memphis’ current tourism campaign offers “Home of the Blues, Birthplace of Rock & Roll” as the official slogan, eschewing references to the South—as opposed to that of the region (Memphis Tourism, 2009). This is not to say that Memphis has little in the way of a Southern connection; indeed, the history of *The Commercial-Appeal* itself is a close reflection of the changes that have occurred in the South since the paper’s inception in 1841. The *Commercial-Appeal* expressed pro-Confederate views during the Civil War, but was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1923 for coverage in opposition to the Ku Klux Klan (*The Commercial-Appeal*, 2006). During the Civil Rights Movement, the *Commercial-Appeal* began hiring black journalists for editorial positions—while also quietly downplaying the serious race problems within the city, which would reach a boiling point with the 1968 assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Green, 2004). Memphis, and the practices of its newspaper in particular, serves to highlight the internal conflict and contrasts within the South as social changes were forced upon the region.

An examination of Memphis’ newspaper additionally offers the chance to move beyond metropolitan coverage. While the *Journal-Constitution* focuses mainly on coverage of Atlanta and its immediate suburbs, *The Commercial-Appeal* reports on events pertaining more to the overall region, which includes not only the city of Memphis and suburbia, but also small towns and rural areas in surrounding counties—including
those in nearby states. For example, DeSoto County, located just over the Tennessee border in northern Mississippi, receives regular coverage in *The Commercial-Appeal*, and has its own community edition of the paper; parts of eastern Arkansas also fall under *The Commercial-Appeal*’s coverage spectrum. Thus, the inclusion of the Memphis paper in the sample increases diversity as it relates to both geography and to population centers.

**Defining Journalistic Situations**

Images for the data set were drawn from instances of photojournalism. Visuals as photo illustrations and mug shots are not included, as they do not hold situational content. Further, in the case of mug shots, the image reveals nothing except the subject’s outward appearance; it is purely descriptive, not interpretative (Kim & Kelly, 2008). By contrast, environmental portraits, which are included in the data set, not only place the subject within a specific context, they are also influenced by the photographer’s decisions about how to best frame and compose the final image. They are thus interpretative in nature and of use in analysis of overall framing patterns.

With the exception of the posed environmental portraits, however, this study is primarily interested in how photographers choose to work within journalistic situations, defined as a naturally occurring event not staged by the photographer. Only those images taken by professional staff photographers are considered; no reader-submitted images are included in the data set, as they do little to shed light on the practices employed when intentionally shooting with a broad audience in mind.

Travel photos, those that by nature stress the exoticism of their depicted local, were intentionally left out, as were other ‘specialty’ photo categories such as those
depicting interior decorating, food, or fashion. Also excluded were images of sports action photography; this subset follows its own conventions within the realm of news photojournalism (Hagaman, 1993). However, sports feature photographs are included, since these images are first and foremost feature photographs. The preliminary data set, then, consists of those news and feature photographs that do not fall into one of the previous categories.

In total, 634 images were coded: 414 from the *Journal-Constitution*, 159 from *The Commercial-Appeal*, 39 from *USA Today*, and 22 from *The New York Times*. 40 images were wire photos from either the Associated Press or Getty images, while the rest were all staff-taken photographs.

Table 1:
Number of photographs per newspaper

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Number of Images</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta Journal-Constitution</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>72.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memphis Commercial-Appeal</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Local Outlets</strong></td>
<td><strong>573</strong></td>
<td><strong>90.4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>63.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York Times</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total National Outlets</strong></td>
<td><strong>61</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.6</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All Images</strong></td>
<td><strong>634</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The bulk of the data set comes from Georgia and Tennessee, with Mississippi, Louisiana, and Virginia also making up noticeable proportions. However, because the intent of this research is examination of the Southern frame as used to define the region as a whole—that is, usage of a broad frame at the expense of more localized ones, the greater representation of these states does not affect the overall data analysis.

Also of note regarding the images included in the sample is the publishing schedule of *USA Today*. Unlike the other three papers in the sample, all of which publish
daily, *USA Today* runs just five times a week; its weekend edition publishes on Friday and remains in circulation through the weekend. In the cases of Saturday, September 1, Sunday, May 27, and Sunday, December 23, then, the events covered and subsequent images published in the newspaper did not necessarily align with the images that ran in other outlets, as these days were represented by the respective Fridays. (May 27, the day before Memorial Day was an exception to this, as all of the newspapers ran holiday-related coverage, with *USA Today* starting its themed coverage two days early to account for its publishing schedule). These Fridays were, however, included in the sample in order to maintain accurate construction of the two weeks needed. Saturday, August 18 was unaffected in that it was already covered by the Friday, August 17 edition of the paper.

A potential confounding factor is the background and origin of the photographers themselves—no photograph is made in a vacuum, and it is possible that personal biases on the part of individual photographers may come in to play. Furthermore, the photos that end up in print are the result of a long selection process—from selecting a scene to taking the photo to various levels of editing—and it is also possible that these steps complicate the matter at hand. Each human element of the newspaper production process, beginning with the photographer and continuing through photo editors, managing editors, and publishers, brings slight human bias to the final product. However, this study is concerned not with *how* or *why* a photograph made it into circulation and thus the public eye, but rather with the simple fact that it actually did. The result, not the process, is of greatest concern for this research, although answering the how and why questions could
be topics for future study. In case of relevant emergent patterns, photographer background is noted and given due attention in the Results and Discussion sections.

While this research can shed light on the extent to which the Southern myth persists in photojournalism, it does not propose to explain the same phenomenon in print or other media, nor will it be able to explicate how America itself currently constructs its national identity. Again, while the creation of this entity does depend partially on a construction of the South, the confounding factors of other regional identities complicate the matter. Finally, the study is not concerned with such framing effects as bias and priming; rather, it focuses exclusively on the very basic tenets of the theory.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Using the constant comparative method, the images in the data set were broken down and analyzed first according to their thematic content. Contextual details of each image were then examined according to the basics of Collier’s visual analysis method—demographic information, such as race and gender, was noted, as were such factors as subject-to-viewer distance and camera perspective. While these were the primary elements coded within a given image, other contextual details, such as environment, were given due attention as well.

In looking at images of the South as published in national media outlets, a general pattern emerged in which photos with a greater global relevance—depicting issues pertinent to the entire country—were more likely to use broad framing devices; that is, those intended to relate the South to the rest of the nation. Images depicting Southern-exclusive issues, however, were more likely to be constructed according to the traditional “Other” Southern frame. Meanwhile, Southern images as published in the regional media outlets displayed a tendency to portray the South as a more sanitized version of both its historical and current incarnations. Specifics of the image breakdown are discussed in further detail in this chapter.

Categorical Breakdown of Images

The first research question of this study asks what frames newspaper photojournalists use when photographing the South. Based on the initial constant comparative sort of the images, a list of eighteen general categories was created to
contextually place the data; this step accounts for the major photographic themes that are employed by newspapers. These categories provide a basic starting point, as they are more a representation of the types of assignments a photographer received than of the specific ways in which the photographers chose to photograph a particular theme. However, once the categories had been defined and all of the 634 images placed within one, each of the eighteen themes was individually analyzed to determine what sort of devices were used to create frames within the groups.

The categories were defined as follows:

1. **Community life** - The most general category, featuring images that depicted everyday events within a suburban community. Photographs ranged from images of children at play to people enjoying an outdoor festival.

2. **Social issues, justice, and community safety** - Photographs of court trials, public protests/rallies, and social issues such as hospital care and treatment of prisoners.

3. **Connection to history or past events** - Any photo that gave reference to an earlier time period or event. Among the subgroups in this category were Memorial Day photos.

4. **City life** - another Community Life subset, created to investigate differences between coverage of Atlanta and Memphis and their less metropolitan surroundings

5. **Community Service** - Persons engaged in volunteer activities/fundraising, or otherwise actively helping others.

6. **Success/achievement** - Images spotlighting a person or persons doing well in a particular field, i.e. sports or business. These were often environmental portraits.
7. Virginia Tech- Images specifically relating to the school shootings. These were placed in a category unto themselves because of their sheer number, and because of the anomalous nature of the event itself.

8. Education- Photos of school life, ranging from preschool to college.

9. Community growth- Images pertaining to literal expansion, such as highway building, or new home developments. These photographs had a positive or neutral tone to them; if the tone was negative, they were placed in Category 13.

10. Local connection to national issues- Images specifically connecting local residents with pertinent national issues, which ranged from immigration reform to food recalls.

11. Religious or spiritual life- Images depicting scenes associated with faith and worship.

12. Job profiles- Similar to yet distinct from Category 6 in that no special achievement prompted the story.

13. Growth issues- Economic matters, zoning or housing issues. As compared to Category 9, these photos reflected the problems and negative side of growth.

14. Rural life/connection to nature- A subset of Community Life specifically concerned with life outside of the city and suburbia.

15. Katrina- Images specifically relating to the continuing impact of Hurricane Katrina

16. Military community- Related specifically to current events and persons who are currently in the military; veteran affairs were placed in Category 2.
17. Environmental issues, scientific advancement- Images relating to the “greening” of a community.

18. Politics- Images of government affairs at both the national and local levels.

Each of the categories, by nature, has subsets within it. If there came a point during the sort at which the general theme of the subset began to deviate significantly from the overall theme of the category, it was bumped to its own separate group. This occurred specifically in the case of the Community Life category (Category 1), which splintered into categories 2, 4, 9, 13, and 14. In the cases of 2, 9, and 13, the tone of the images placed in the new category was such that the data item merited separation into its own area. An image of highway construction was different in meaning from one of a funeral, which was in turn different from that of a child on Santa’s lap, despite the fact that all did share the very broad characteristic of depicting “Community Life.” Categories 4 and 9, meanwhile, were separated from the larger group because one of the arguments for the South as “Other” centers around the region’s delayed industrial growth. Thus, City Life and Rural Life were pulled out to examine how these different areas were presented. This same tactic, however, was not used to divide up, for example, the Education category according to the ages of the children depicted in the photos, since this trait did not alter the overall tone of the photograph, nor did it offer insight into Other framing devices.
### Table 2: Frequency of photographs per category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category Name</th>
<th>Number of Images</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Life</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Issues/Community Safety</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection to History</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Life</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Service</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success/Achievement</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Tech</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Growth</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Connection to National Events</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Profiles</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth Issues</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Life</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurricane Katrina</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Community</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Issues/Scientific Achievement</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite having been broken into subgroups, Community Life nonetheless remained the largest category—77 of the 634 images (12.1%) fell under this heading—with Social Issues/Community Safety (66 images) and Connection to History (64 images) falling close behind. The smallest groups, respectively, were Politics (15 images), Environmental Issues (16 images), and Rural Life, Katrina and Military (all with 17 images).

Upon breaking down the main body of images into these broad thematic categories, distinct patterns and trends began to emerge both within and across the overall data set. Often, these patterns were first noted in memos as part of the CCM process. Others emerged following the initial sort, when the categories were examined on an individual basis; all are further developed and explicated here. Taken as a whole, these
patterns offer a more detailed and specific look at the framing devices photographers use to present their images.

**National versus Local Coverage**

One of the primary goals of examining both national and local newspapers was to investigate the potential differences in photographic frames as they appeared in different circulation markets. How would coverage of the South in *The New York Times* and *USA Today* vary, if at all, from that in the newspapers of Georgia and Tennessee? Put another way, did any themes take precedence in one market as compared to the other?

In looking over the 18 categories, it becomes apparent that the latter phenomenon did indeed occur. Certain themes occurred frequently in national coverage, while others did not appear at all. Community service, religion, education, rural living, community growth, and community problems/safety made no appearance whatsoever in the national papers, nor did community life, the largest overall theme in local papers. City life was nationally represented in just three stories, a *Times* piece about the newly built Coca-Cola museum (which ran three photos), a *USA Today* feature story about motocross racing in Atlanta, and a *USA Today* feature on Louisiana State University football. Further, in terms of proportion, national newspapers placed noticeably less emphasis (3 percent of the *Times* and *USA Today* photos combined) on the South’s connection to history than did the local papers (10.5 percent, and just 7 percent if Memorial Day coverage was not included).

Among the categories that did see greater proportional coverage in the national newspapers, representation was divided nearly equally among those depicting military
life, social issues, environmental/scientific issues, and politics. The New York Times published each of the four national-newspaper political images that ran, while USA Today ran all but one of the images of the military community. Social issues made up 6.5 percent of the total national images published (as compared to 8.9 percent of all local images). Taken as a whole, however, these four categories of issue-based photos were more prevalent in the national newspapers than the local outlets.

In both types of media outlets, the most common genre of photo published was a feature image—a “candid situation that features strong human interest,” (Kim & Kelly, 2008, p. 161), which accounted for about two-thirds of the total photos in both the local and national data sets. The New York Times was more evenly balanced in terms of feature and news photos than was USA Today, which ran more features, with one notable exception that will be discussed in the next paragraph. Local outlets also included more environmental portraits than did either USA Today or the Times.

The Case of Virginia Tech

It was stated in the previous chapter that the year 2007 was selected as the basis of the data set specifically because of its relative lack of influential national-level events that might confound findings. Nevertheless, upon selecting the random two-week period from which to draw images, what was perhaps the most prominent national event of the year—the shootings at Virginia Tech—made an unexpected appearance in the constructed weeks. The shootings, which occurred on April 16, 2007, were still receiving considerable media attention two days afterward, on the 18th. The latter date had been selected as a representative Wednesday prior to learning of the continued coverage
phenomenon. However, rather than throw out the constructed weeks and create new ones, it was decided that this date should instead remain in the set in order to serve as another source of comparison. How was this national event—which also happened to take place in the South—treated by the different media outlets?

To account for potential confounding, the examination of photo genres was thus intentionally conducted once without taking into account the relative wealth of news photos that were published following the shootings, in an effort to highlight patterns that would appear during a regular news cycle, and once when all of the Virginia Tech photos were included in the data set. When the Virginia Tech photos were included, they not only increased the overall prevalence of the news genre in the national newspapers, but also created the largest discrepancy of representation in a thematic category between the national and local markets. Whereas Virginia Tech coverage was quite prominent in the New York Times and USA Today, it accounted for just two percent of all local images. Meanwhile, nearly one-third of all the images from the Times and half of those from USA Today (as compared with the twelve total images that were published in both the AJC and the Commercial-Appeal) dealt with the events of the school shootings.

USA Today, the paper with the largest circulation and greatest national presence, not only published the greatest number of images of Virginia Tech—19 of the total 39 images published by all four papers, which also accounts for half of all the Southern images run by USA Today)—it also had the strongest presence in terms of coverage depth, including a photo spread relating to the shooter’s background and hometown, and long-term post-event coverage. No other newspaper, for example, published images of students returning to campus in the fall.
By April 18, coverage of the Virginia Tech shootings had already shifted from spot news images of police, rescue workers, and victims to general news photos of the memorial services and vigils that occurred in the aftermath. The national import of the tragedy was underscored by images of President Bush attending services; to a lesser extent, a national connection was also made through images of Virginia Tech’s football coach, Frank Beamer—the Hokies football team being a well-known player in the NCAA—which appeared in both USA Today and Journal-Constitution.

While all outlets ran photos of the President and of the site itself, the Atlanta and Memphis newspapers also featured photos of local vigils held at Georgia Tech and the University of Memphis, respectively; that is, the impact of the event beyond the borders of Virginia was visually touched upon. The AJC additionally emphasized the local connections by including a photo of a Tech alum from the Atlanta area at an in-town memorial, and publishing an image (and story) of the local girlfriend and friend of one of the victims. Neither the Times nor USA Today included images from other schools or, indeed, other states that might also be engaging in the mourning process. The two regional newspapers thus treated the shootings as an event that, despite its implicit connection to the university and town of Blacksburg, Virginia, nevertheless had an impact on other specific communities, while the national outlets focused exclusively on the Virginia Tech shootings as affecting Virginia Tech.

In terms of content, and framing of content, the images that the four newspapers chose to run were strikingly similar—large groups at candlelit vigils, students embracing one another, and individuals sitting at makeshift memorial sites appear in all papers. Most of the images placed the photographer eye-level or slightly above the subjects;
approximately one-third placed the viewer close to the subjects through tight framing or usage of a wide-angle lens to create a “part-of-the-crowd” feeling. The remainder kept the subjects fairly distant from the viewer, generally in order to include the context of a memorial site. One-fifth of the total photos were of a large crowd at the vigil (see Figures 1 and 2); more common was a tendency to focus on one or two main subjects in the crowd. In all but three of these cases, the visibly mourning subjects were female (two of the three exception photos were of a male and female embracing; the other depicted an Army cadet saluting during the memorial). When the focus expanded to three or four subjects, there nevertheless was always a female present (Figure 3), presumably to tap into the broad framing devices of both female-as-comfort-source and female-as-victim.

Figure 1.
USA Today staff photo of Virginia Tech candlelit vigil in Blacksburg, Va. Published April 18, 2007.
The Continued Presence of Hurricane Katrina

Framing of national tragedy specifically around the women who were affected was not limited to the Virginia Tech coverage. As was the case with inclusion of Virginia Tech in the data set, initial plans to avoid coverage of Hurricane Katrina and its effects were unsuccessful—nine of the fourteen days in the sample had at least one photo of this
type of coverage. Aside from the afore-mentioned *USA Today* photo of LSU’s football presence, these photos were the only coverage the entire state of Louisiana received in any of the newspapers. Eight images in the data set for the *AJC* and *Commercial-Appeal* depicted scenes of the continued impact of the hurricane—the same number published in the *NYT* and *USA Today* data set, which, in the latter case, amounted to 13 percent of all national-outlet images.

Also similar to Virginia Tech coverage, the national scope of Katrina was in one respect conveyed through images of the President and First Lady visiting sites in the affected areas of Louisiana and Mississippi. Five of the 17 total photos included no people at all; these depicted either future housing sites (three photos), or future memorial sites (two photos). Two Katrina-related images (one published in the *Times*, one in *USA Today*) showed a group of people en route to trial for neglect in a nursing-home case. The remaining photos were largely positive in tone, however, and referred to residents returning to the city, either to new homes constructed in the Ninth Ward, or simply to their former homes. These images provided the viewer with the context of the new homes—which means the photographs did not have the “part-of-the-crowd” feeling that appeared in the Virginia Tech photos. Subjects were generally eye-level with the camera or photographed from below (see Figures 4 and 5). All of the residents shown in these photos were female; all but one of these females was Black.
Figure 4.

Figure 5.
Military and Political Life

The female frame was also employed in national-level coverage of military life. A *USA Today* feature story (published close to Memorial Day weekend) about Arlington National Cemetery ran four photos, all of which featured women (the one image that included a male adult featured a mother-son pair as the main subject. The only appearance of the military community in *The New York Times* was a feature about Army wives. Interestingly, the most noticeable group absent from military coverage in the national papers was that of the soldiers themselves.

Figure 6:

This pattern shifted upon moving to local-level coverage, however: prevalence of women in military-related photos fell off, while that of soldiers increased. Further, coverage of military life was largely grounded by its relevance to and impact on the
civilian community, particularly when compared to the limited local context given to Virginia Tech photos, and the complete lack of localization in Katrina coverage. That is, while the war in Iraq clearly had national-level importance, the photos that appeared in the regional papers placed the ongoing event using small-scale coverage. In addition to this increased context, local photos showed a wider range of frames than did those in the national papers. Atlanta ran images of soldiers in training as well as of civilians testing military equipment at a Memorial Day showcase. When coverage focused on the soldiers themselves, the men and women (one woman soldier appeared in the Memphis newspaper) were often being celebrated or honored.

As far as compositional framing devices were concerned, no pattern was manifest in the military images; subject-to-viewer distance was nearly evenly distributed between close, middle, and distant shots, as were the varying degrees of camera perspective. In turning to the images in the Politics category, however, six of the fifteen total images were set below the subject, looking up, a technique described as giving more power to the subject (Kim, 2008), while another seven were set eye-level with the subject. The remaining two were aerial shots. *The New York Times*, the only national outlet to include political coverage in the South, placed its subjects relatively far from the camera. Atlanta ran two part-of-crowd shots, one of which featured city government and the other the state-wide legislative body, but with these exceptions, images with political figures in them maintained a separation between the viewer and the subject. Content-wise, the local papers focused on local politicians, while the *Times* focused on those in the running for the 2008 Presidential campaign. As with the other groups of photos, one exception existed in each outlet: an image of Barack Obama’s stop in South Carolina made it into
the Commercial-Appeal, while a photo of retiring Virginia senator John Warner was published in the Times.

With regard to coverage of environmental and scientific issues, framing devices, unsurprisingly, varied depending on whether the audience was meant to view the issue as one of national or local importance. For example, both the Times and the AJC published an image relating to the development of alternative fuels. As with other issues, the national importance of this event was emphasized by President Bush—shot from a low angle in both photos—being the main subject.

Figure 7.

Figure 8:
Broad framing intended to appeal to a wide audience was also used by The New York Times in a feature story spotlighting the Coca-Cola museum in Atlanta. The Journal-Constitution had also published a story about the museum (one month prior to that of the Times), which highlighted an element completely unmentioned and lacking photographic representation in the national newspaper—the expected LEED certification of the new building. Atlanta’s photos of the museum are full of light, de-emphasizing the people in them in favor of the building as a whole; the Times images depict men in suits walking down halls and rows of oversized Coke bottles. Emphasis in the national newspaper, then, fell on the more recognizable corporate brand and patterns of corporate life.

Figure 9. The New York Times staff photos of Coca-Cola headquarters and recently-opened museum in Atlanta, Ga. Published May 27, 2007.
Environmental photos published exclusively in the local outlets often followed the Atlanta pattern of de-emphasizing the actual human subjects, who were, with one exception, white; one image was a portrait of an African-American man who suffered a smoke-induced asthma attack. However, many of the figures were too far away—generally placed against the backdrop of buildings or power plants—to determine any sort of identifying features. Emphasis in these instances fell more on the surroundings than on the people themselves, a trend underscored by the fact that there were no part-of-crowd images in this group; rather, subject-viewer space was evenly divided between mid-range and distant photos. However, a majority of these local photos did create
subject-viewer connection by placing the viewer at eye-level with the subjects—even if
the subject was litter on the ground (Figure 11).

Figure 11:  
The Commercial-Appeal photo of litter on Mud Island in Memphis, Tenn.  
Published May 27, 2007.

No hats off to us

A paper covers a pile of mysterious luggage on the overbank at Mud Island, where officials were seen looking for the bag before. With Earth Day only a few weeks behind us, Shelby County residents have returned to their filtering work. Every month the Tennessee Department of Transportation picks up 30 tons of litter and debris along the interstates. Memphis residents say it reflects the amount of litter they see every day. More packages are collected on Shelby County's highways than in any other region in the state, and parks and open spaces frequently suffer from the same problem.

Pit Bulls and Handguns

The final category in which both the Southern and national newspapers covered similar topics was that of Social Issues and Community Safety (category 2). Stories published in the national newspapers that fell in this category related to football player Michael Vick and dogfighting, a lack of troopers on highways, sex-offender relocation laws, struggles with disability claims, and protestation of the treatment of the Jena 6, a group of black teens accused of beating a white peer. These images made up a small portion (about twelve percent) of the overall national data set. Southern newspapers in the sample made no photographic reference to the Jena 6 story, although this was likely the result of USA Today’s altered publishing schedule—the image in question ran during a
weekend edition and would not have been part of the data set for the three other newspapers.

Figure 12. 
USA Today AP photo of Jena 6 protestor in Jena, La. 
Published August 31, 2007.

Framing of the Vick case in particular is of note, as it also received coverage in the Atlanta and Memphis newspapers. The images published in the Southern newspapers depicted courthouse procedures and anti-dogfighting protesters outside of the courthouse, both of which showed the actual persons involved in the case—Vick’s co-defendant appeared in the foreground of the protest image (Figure 13). In The New York Times, the issue was represented by an image of one of the abused pit bulls in a cage (Figure 14).
Figure 13: The Commercial-Appeal AP photo from court trial of Michael Vick and co-defendants in Richmond, Va. Published August 18, 2007.

Figure 14. The New York Times staff photo of abused pit bull in Hanover County, Va. Published August 18, 2007.

Pit bulls and dog abuse (though not related specifically to Michael Vick) appeared on two other occasions in the Atlanta newspaper, although Memphis made no further
mention of the issue. In one story, it was given a positive light, and featured an abused
dog about to be re-adopted. In the other, the story detailed a dog attack suffered by a
woman then in the hospital—this latter story is also significant in that it is one of the few
in the entire data set to picture Asian subjects). The pit bull issue, in all instances, is
shown as something that did not affect non-minority persons (in the re-adoption story, the
dog’s trainer was African-American).

Indeed, stories of pit bulls formed a subset of the lone category of locally-
grounded issues in which the Southern newspapers presented a racial frame—violence,
which made up about a quarter of all AJC and Commercial-Appeal images in the Social
Issues and Community Safety, and which, additionally, appeared almost exclusively in
the context of the African-American community. The one instance in which violence was
shown as affecting other communities was also in the context of a positive portrayal of
the theme—an environmental portrait of two white men who had used their handguns to
stop a mugger (Figure 15). In all other cases, which included a child’s accidental death by
handgun, memorialization of murder victims, and a defendant in a shooting trial, the
persons in the photo were Black. The mourning-female frame was also common within
this subset.
In general, however, Social Issues and Community Safety as represented by the Memphis and Atlanta outlets fell more along the lines of the lack-of-highway-troopers theme from *USA Today*. That is, those affected by unsafe roads (and drivers), courtroom procedures, or drug-related matters were apt to be of any race and of any gender, as seen
in Figure 17; no clear pattern emerged within these subsets, which combined to make up a third of the category. The Category 2 topics that were depicted in positive ways, which made up a quarter of the total and included profiles of a whistleblower and a new school sheriff, a young girl calling 911, and the trials and success of a neighborhood youth center, were similarly split in this manner. Within the entire category, no pattern emerged in terms of camera-subject distance or perspective.

Figure 17: The Commercial-Appeal staff photo from the funeral of a local teenager killed in a car crash. Published January 18, 2007.

Local Framing of National Issues

Not all topics with national relevance appeared in the large-market outlets; some were pictured exclusively in the local newspapers. Events in this category (Category 10) were wide-ranging, depicting everything from local chapters of the anti-immigration Minutemen group (in the Journal-Constitution) to blind persons and their struggles to use
American currency (in the *Commercial-Appeal*). However, while the actual topics that were given a local context varied greatly, their presentation did not. In all but two of the cases, there were no more than two main subjects pictured; more frequently, only one main subject appeared, thus providing a visual manifestation of the local relevance of the issue. The area of camera angle was dominated by above-subject and eye-level shots, with just one image in the 26-photo set framed from below. Most of the images were mid-distant from their subjects; only two used part-of-crowd framing, and six placed the viewer at a considerable distance from the subject; two of these six dealt with immigration issues, while one each depicted identity theft at hospitals, Disability Day, global commerce in Memphis, and the sinking economy. In terms of the subjects themselves, females were pictured in fifteen of the photos. Of these, thirteen were white.

**The South Framing the South: Male-Dominant Categories**

By contrast, there was a complete lack of white females and a noticeable presence of images featuring white males in Category 13, which showed the economic and community growth issues that adversely affect Southern areas. The category was a small one, totaling just 17 images; 8 are of men, while six of these were of white men. Black men were featured just once, in a story about a Mississippi town on the verge of economic failure, while Black women appeared on four instances. In the remaining images, gender and racial characteristics could not be determined (three images), or, more commonly (in four of the photos), there were no people present. The issues themselves are varied and range from zoning changes in a Memphis suburb to hospitals having financial difficulties.
Overall, images representing community growth as a positive or neutral theme were much more common. This group was composed of 33 images, all of which concerned new developments in city suburbs, renovations of existing buildings (high schools and hotels), or construction projects (roadwork and bridge building). No particular camera angle was predominant within this group. Only three images were framed using a part-of-crowd perspective, while twelve—slightly less than one-third of the whole—were set at a distance from the viewer. The remaining photos were shot from a mid-range perspective. Patterns were found in terms of demographic makeup of photo subjects, however. Just as negative aspects of growth were framed primarily in terms of their effects on non-minority populations, so too was this category dominated by photos of men (21 images), and in particular, white men (11 images). There were also, within the first grouping, five images of males in which race could not be determined.

**The South Framing the South: Human Interest and Community**

The Community Growth community, although relatively small, speaks to what was unquestionably the largest point of emphasis in Southern newspapers—everyday life, or, more specifically, positive aspects of everyday life. This trend feeds into the previously-mentioned pattern of feature-based images over news-based images in the local newspapers. Representation of people going about daily activities took precedence over all other themes in the data set, as evidenced by the number of photos in the general Community Life, Rural Life, and City Life categories, which totaled 159—about twenty-eight percent of the total body of local images. Including the Community Service, Success/Achievement, Education, and Religion categories, the number of images jumped
to 313, or roughly fifty-three percent of the total. Issue-based coverage, while still important in the regional papers, did not have the overall presence of the more lifestyles-based images.

Interestingly, despite the fact that both Southern newspapers studied are based in large cities, portrayals of city life were less common than were images set in the suburbs and surrounding towns of Atlanta and Memphis; the former group comprised 60 photos as compared to 79 in the latter. Rural Life, meanwhile, was made up of just 17 images, 11 of which were from the Commercial-Appeal. Overall, however, the Atlanta newspaper published three times the amount of pictures as did its Memphis counterpart, a pattern reflected in nearly every other category. This reversal is made all the more striking when considering that the actual city of Memphis is larger than Atlanta, although Atlanta has the larger metropolitan area.

The South Framing the South: Environmental Influence

The AJC/Commercial-Appeal ratio reversal was one of several ways in which Rural Life stands in contrast to nearly all of the categories in the sample. It was, for example, the only group in which the lone racial group represented were Caucasian, and the only group in which forty percent of the images have animal subjects in them. Additionally, states that normally received comparatively little representation (that is, states that are not Tennessee or Georgia) make up slightly less than a third of the category—Alabama, Arkansas, and South Carolina have one photo each, while Mississippi has three. Gender representations were more reflective of overall category
trends, and were split almost exactly between males and females (men are in 10 photos, women in 9).

With regard to the actual topics appearing within Rural Life, most concerned human-and-nature interactions—tornado damage in Arkansas, horse shows in Georgia, and alligator control in South Carolina, for example. Others had a renovation theme, such as restoring an old farmhouse, clearing a nature trail, or increasing fish stocks in a lake.

Compositional framing techniques used in the Rural Life category proved distinct from those in all other groups in that no below-subject angles were used—the majority of images were taken eye-level with the subject or slightly above. Distant subject-viewer framing made up approximately one-third of the images in the group, which was also the case in the City Life category. By contrast, the Community Life category tended toward mid-range photos; distant images made up just 16 percent of the total group. Part-of-crowd photographs comprised one-quarter of Community Life, but had no presence at all in Rural Life and made up less than ten percent of the City Life category. This furthered the pattern of surroundings taking precedence over subjects that was first seen in the Environmental Issues (Category 17) group. In the suburbs, where the environment was not as prominent, the human subjects received more compositional emphasis.

Also receiving more emphasis in Community Life were children. Aside from the Education group, which was composed largely of children and teens, these age groups did not make up significant proportions in any other category. However, 30 of the 77 photos in Community Life have non-adult subjects. Additionally, Community Life was the one of a handful of groups—the others being Community Service, Success/Achievement, and Education, all of which are more specific representations of
Community Life—that included no more than one image of a non-human subject. City Life, by contrast, had several images that had no people in them whatsoever, but rather were of buildings, airplanes, or roads, and thus was similar to the Environmental Issues category in this respect.

**The South Framing the South: Skewed Demographics**

Topics in City Life and Community Life included festivals, which in turn varied from city festivals in Memphis to a Caribbean Carnival in Atlanta; children at summer camps and other activities, including a feature on boys attending ballet classes; gala events and holiday parties; and local sporting features such as a marathon in Alpharetta, Georgia. Although animals were not as present as in the Rural Life category, features on dogs and dog-related services (grooming, dog-sitting) were relatively common, as were stories about animals at the local zoos and aquariums. Demographic representation was roughly split between males and females. Only 24 of the Community Life and 18 of the City Life photos were of non-white persons, a trend not reflective of actual demographics in the area (see Discussion).

Demographic patterns in Community Service, Success/Achievement, and Job Profiles also showed skewing of representation towards one group or another. Females were more common than men in photos of Community Service, a category in which two-thirds of subjects were white. Gender ratios were flipped in Success/Achievement, in which 26 of the 41 total images featured only males. Seven were female only, and seven had both females and males. Of the fourteen photos that depicted females, eleven had the subjects as part of a group. By contrast, 20 of the male-specific photos featured just the
one subject, which additionally reflects the relatively large presence of portraits in this category. Race representation was split evenly between black and white, with three photos of Hispanic persons and one of Indian persons. Blacks—and high school teenagers—were more likely to appear in the area of sports success, however; the only white adult in this subset was a trainer, who was pictured with a black athlete.

The Job Profile group, which contained 21 pictures, was divided equally between females and males. Three of these photos—all from the same story—were of Asians, while just two were of Blacks. Camera distance was mid-range in each of them, most likely in order to include the context of the job, which is equally as important as the subject himself. The same was true in Success/Achievement and Community Service. There was a very slight tendency for females in the Job Profile category to be presented from an above-subject perspective, but no other patterns of composition emerged.

In moving to examinations of the remaining categories: Education, Religion, and Connection to the Past, answers to the second research question—how the frames used by photojournalists in the South reflected the stereotypical frames of the South as an “Other”—became more apparent. As noted by such authors as Cobb, Jansson, Tindall, and Zinn, these frames revolved around presentation of the South as a backward region of religious intolerance, racism, and poverty, whose residents had an exaggerated sense of history and violent tendencies.
Diversity in the Realms of Education and Religion

The South’s connection to religion did not appear at all in the two national newspapers. The Atlanta and Memphis coverage of this topic, meanwhile, depict a South in which religious diversity is far more prevalent than stereotype would have one believe. Of the 27 total photos in the local papers, six related to Judaism (one of these images depicted African-Americans converting to the faith; see Figure 18), six to a feature about Buddhist monks living at a Catholic monastery in Georgia and one each to, respectively, Mormonism and Hinduism. One photo, meanwhile, was taken during a creationism-versus-evolution debate held at Emory University. The remaining images related to Christianity; however, a variety of denominations were represented, if denomination surfaced at all. The category as a whole was also diverse in terms of other demographics; the images were evenly divided in terms of both race and gender representation. However, there were comparatively few instances in which different races were shown in the same photo, these being in the monks feature and a story about a Christian health club.

Figure 18:
The Commercial-Appeal staff photo of African-Americans taking the first step towards conversion to Judaism.
Published December 10, 2007.
The health club photos underscore another pattern in coverage of this topic—religion as presented outside the basic context of worship. For example, religion was presented in the context of a food co-op at a synagogue, exercise classes at a Christian health club, dance classes at a Baptist church, a Christian rock concert, and Habitat for Humanity. It was, aside from the debate photo, shown in a largely positive light.

Furthermore, 19 of the 27 photos included two or more people, and 10 photos were presented from a part-of-crowd point of view. Only two photos had a significant subject-viewer distance, and one of these depicted construction of a church—in this case, then, the context of the building took precedence over the people in the frame.

Depiction of education in the South also runs counter to stereotypical ideas of the region. As was the case with religion, the category was not represented on a national level, but was nevertheless the eighth-largest in the sample, with 38 total photos. The group was evenly divided in terms of both gender and racial representation. Only three images had distant framing, while a third employ the part-of-crowd technique. Twenty-three images were taken eye-level with the subjects, while seven (most of which are of teenagers) were taken from the empowering below-angle perspective. The remaining seven images used above-subject perspective; of these, five had females as their main or only subjects.

Topics addressed in the Education group with more than one image representing them included graduation ceremonies, tutoring, experimentation with charter schools and same-sex classrooms, honoring teachers, and engineering classes for girls. The one instance of somewhat negative traits being present in this category was a feature about
the presumed narcissism of current college students; by and large, however, Education
subjects and their subsequent presentation were positive and reflected well on the region.

Figure 19:
*Atlanta Journal-Constitution* staff photo from a feature honoring local teachers recognized by the
State of Georgia.
Published January 18, 2007.

**Violence and Backwardness**

The evidence from Education provided an argument against the idea of the South
as a region constantly attempting to “catch up” to the rest of the nation. Looking again at
coverage of violence and of national issues represented by Southern locales offered
further insight into the issue of backwardness. Violence, as was mentioned before, was a
subset within the Social Issues and Community Safety category, and made up a quarter of
all images in this category at a local level. National-level topics in this category, although
not a large portion of the total group, nonetheless contributed to the idea of the South as a
backwards region where dogfighting ringmasters and relocated sex offenders took up
residence alongside racially biased juries (in the case of the Jena 6 case). The other
national stories, those focusing on shortages of highway troopers and disability claim
fights, do little to shake this perception. While the dogfighting and Jena 6 stories were both topics that inherently occurred in the region, the other three were national-level issues that were illustrated by examples from the South.

Other, less negative, issues illustrated by Southern examples were Indian immigrants enjoying success in the hotel business, eco-friendly products in large chain stores, motocross racing, and the previously-mentioned alternative fuels story that featured President Bush. Without the influence of Katrina- and Virginia-Tech-related coverage, then, positive and negative national associations of the South were nearly balanced. Even in the case of the latter instance, the tragic nature of the event nonetheless was presented in a compassionate way, emphasizing the unity the college community felt after the shootings.

This pattern of national papers using “Other” frames when referencing the South was also mirrored in the local papers themselves, which showed tendencies to “other” areas that were not part of everyday coverage (that is, not located in Tennessee or Georgia). These images made up 8.9% of all local photos—52 images of the 582, of which 12 covered Virginia Tech and 8 continuing Katrina coverage, and in many cases focused on either the problems of the states or their rural connections. Mississippi, no doubt due to its proximity to Tennessee and subsequent falling into the circulation range of the Commercial-Appeal, broke this pattern somewhat—many of the Mississippi images fell into the Community Life category, which cannot be said for the other less-represented states—however, even these images often portrayed a economically stagnant Mississippi preoccupied with hunting and fishing (boar hunting in Alabama and alligator removal in South Carolina also received coverage in the local papers). Indeed, the
economic woes of Mississippi towns were the only non-Katrina instances in the entire data set that explicitly referred to poverty in the South—on either a local or national level.

Figure 20: 
*Atlanta Journal-Constitution* AP photo from the economically sinking town of Fulton, Miss. Published January 3, 2007.

Figure 21. 

**History in the Present**
In addition to being the lone representative group for this part of the Other frame, minority states were often pictured in terms of their connection to the South’s turbulent past (white students attending historically black colleges in South Carolina, men on trial for violating the Voting Rights Act in Mississippi). This particular pattern, however, was manifest throughout all levels of coverage—national, local, and intra-local. The category itself (Category 3) was the third-largest in the data set, containing 64 images in total. Eighteen were of Memorial Day coverage. Even without these photos, however, the category still ranked fifth in terms of representation, just after Community Service.

The fact that the South had two separate pasts to it—one for blacks, one for whites—was manifest in the data of Category 3. Just one image was of a person not of these groups, and depicted a Palestinian immigrant attending a book release for Jimmy Carter’s book about his Middle Eastern policies. Only three images, meanwhile, showed blacks and whites in the same photo; two of these were of high schoolers (visiting Civil Rights sites) and college students (the historically black colleges story). The other image referred to a more recent and more personal past—people affected by a car accident that had occurred several years before.

Of the 60 remaining images, 43 had white subjects, 8 portrayed African-Americans, and 2 had no human subjects at all. In seven of the images, such identifying features could not be determined. The historical contexts against which each group was placed were split as well; some made no reference at all to the “Benighted South.” These included features about the anniversary of a Georgia literary magazine, a sports memorabilia collector, the retirement of a Mississippi River paddleboat, an Elvis fan, the star of *Hoop Dreams*, and the discovery of a prehistoric canoe. When the days of the
Benighted South did appear in reference, they were almost always presented using the frames of memory and preservation. One story honored the Tuskegee Airmen, while another argued for the preservation of segregation-era schoolhouses (both of these had African-American subjects). Other photos showed decaying Civil-War-era buildings—a hospital in Georgia and Andersonville Cemetery (in the same state), and illustrated stories about efforts to restore these locations.

Besides the inherent connection to slavery present in these Civil War-related photos, the only other image to reference this topic was that of an African-American man whose ancestors had been slaveholders. This image was published in the *Commercial-Appeal*.

Other references to the Confederacy appeared in Memorial Day coverage in the *Atlanta-Journal Constitution* (not, interestingly, in the Memphis newspaper); four images were from a ceremony honoring Confederate soldiers (Figure 22). In these photos, subjects appeared dressed in period clothing. Atlanta Memorial Day images also included Sons of the American Revolution, which emphasized not only the connection to history, but also to war in that the Sons were firing muskets. The presence of these historically-based images stood in stark contrast to the six Memorial Day photos that featured children—the future generations—placing flags at gravestones of those who came before them.
Figure 22: *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* staff photo spread from Memorial Day ceremony honoring Confederate soldiers. Published May 27, 2007.
Overall, 30 percent of the Category 3 images published in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution related to the standard Southern myth (one AJC story ran two images from the funeral of a descendant of Gone with the Wind author Margaret Mitchell), as compared to 20 percent of those in the Commercial-Appeal. Compositional patterns were few—as was the case in many categories—with mid-range images being most common. Distant subject-viewer framing was used in 12 of the 64 total images. Of the 14 part-of-crowd images, eight related to the South’s historical frames. No patterns emerged within the realm of camera perspective.
In his 1984 piece *The South as Pernicious Abstraction*, historian Jack Kirby described the region as “singular; it is American but un-American; it is glory, horror, escape and amusement” (p. 167). Few turns of phrase could so accurately sum up the findings from this research, which present a South that is at once rendered indistinct from the rest of the nation and yet remains committed to (or resigned to, in some cases) maintaining its status as a unique area.

The frames that are used by photojournalists in the modern South are indeed standard ones, frames that appeal to a broad audience by making reference to constructs already established in society and culture. Many of these, however, are even more all-encompassing and widely recognized than a frame of a stereotypical South—they rely on gender framing, in the case of Virginia Tech coverage, or power framing, in the case of the white male figure dominating categories relating to growth.

Examination of the South as presented in the local newspaper outlets of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and Memphis *Commercial-Appeal*, when compared with the national-level coverage given to the region in the *New York Times* and *USA Today*, found no patterns indicating that the large media outlets—both of which had more incentive to rely on the well-known traditional Southern frame in order to better connect with their large audiences—framed the South in a way that isolated it from the rest of the country. Rather, the opposite phenomenon took place—the South was often included in national coverage when it appeared in the context of issues that had relevance for
America as a whole. This was particularly true, for example, of political coverage, which underscored the importance of the South as a campaigning region and thus its importance to the United States.

In these instances, the purpose of including the South in the first place was not to underline differences between this region and others, but rather to help illustrate themes that applied to the entire nation. There was little need to “other” the region, as this would have downplayed the overall importance of the issue at hand. In no area was this phenomenon more salient than in the photo record of the Virginia Tech aftermath. While the original event was clearly a local one, as it occurred on a single Southern college campus, the framing devices used to present it tapped into themes of national unity. Rather than isolate the campus shooting as a byproduct of regional violent tendencies, newspapers used images of large groups, the President, and to a lesser extent, of the Virginia Tech football team and coach, to convey the scope of the matter in a larger national context. That the national outlets made no reference to local vigils, as the regional papers did, is unsurprising; to do so would have de-emphasized this element. Local outlets, by contrast, needed ways to connect with their own communities as well as to highlight the national scope.

The prominent usage of the female frame in national newspaper coverage also highlights the differences in audience size for each of the two types of media outlets, not only in the case of Virginia Tech but also within other categories. In Military Life, for example, local newspapers, needing to connect stories of war and the armed forces to their respective communities, offered images of the local soldiers themselves, thereby emphasizing the small-scale implications of the greater “war” issue. The national outlets,
however, needed to frame the war and the military in far more general terms. Rather than present images of individual soldiers, they instead used the widely recognized—due to its prevalence throughout historical coverage of war—image of the left-behind woman. This frame could be read with greater ease by communities anywhere in the country, regardless of their actual connection to the women. Such a process also explains why the Hurricane Katrina images featured no men at all—a very broad framing device helped ensure resonance with a greater audience.

The need for the national newspapers to resonate across community lines is apparent, too, in their thematic framing devices. It is unsurprising that no images in the Community Life category appear in USA Today and The New York Times—these images were highly specific to the greater Atlanta and Memphis areas and served to present the metro areas with “slice of life” coverage. The national newspapers could not be so focused, as they had to work with stories applicable to any given community in the country. This goal was achieved through issue-based, rather than feature-based, photographic coverage. The South was thus presented in terms of issues relevant across America.

The phenomenon speaks to the “Americanization of Dixie” idea presented by Woodward, who also offered the argument that the South’s shortcomings were no longer viable mechanisms by which to define the region. Presenting the South in national-level terms additionally supports the ideas of Egerton—where the faults of the South become less prominent when they take on features of the nation as a whole. However, this is not to say that the traditional Southern frame did not emerge at all in national coverage. Rather, it often arose in instances in which the story dealt specifically with the region—as
in the case of the Michael Vick dogfighting saga—as opposed to issues pertinent to areas across the country. That is, when the South was presented in its own context, not in a nationwide one, it was more likely to take on negative attributes and be defined by its faults. In order to fully explore this concept, it would be helpful to compare how non-Southern regions are represented in newspapers. Such a comparison would shed light on whether other areas are also shown in the specific context of their shortcomings, or if the pattern is a Southern-exclusive one.

Comparison of Southern versus non-Southern coverage in *USA Today* and the *Times* would additionally offer insight towards another potential barrier to integration of the South and America. Because the data is Southern-only, it is difficult to tell whether the national outlets are depicting the South only when convenient for them to do so, or whether the region receives equal press time as other areas. In other words, the South may be relegated to “stepchild” status by a relative absence from national newspaper coverage. Again, however, further study would be needed to explore this topic.

The Southern frame, however, makes appearances not only in national coverage, but also within the South itself, speaking to the idea of the region continuing to self-identify according to traditional standards. It is almost cliché, for instance, to speak of the region in terms of its ‘obsession with the past’, yet the photographic evidence indicates that history is indeed very important to Southerners. Perhaps more significant within this characterization is the demonstrated commitment to preserving and honoring the past, regardless of its ugliness and turbulence.

Interestingly, in its commitment to preserve and honor, the South tends to end up sanitizing its history and keeping the more reprehensible aspects at arms length. Slavery
is mentioned only in the context of black slaveholders, while the Voting Rights Act is presented in terms of a disenfranchised white voter. Segregation appears in the context of saving segregation-era schoolhouses, while historically black colleges appear in the context of the white students who attend them. Of particular note regarding these stories is the fact that the last three are all Associated Press stories. Put another way, the South did no local reporting—or photographing—of its own past that would cast a negative light on the region. Instead, the positive, more progressive elements—ceremonies honoring the Tuskegee Airmen, KKK members being jailed—were emphasized. While this latter trend is in itself certainly not a concern, when combined with the lack of local reporting it would appear to indicate a region that is still wary about taking on too much responsibility for its past actions. If, as Woodward, Cobb, and several others have postulated, the modern South has successfully “caught up” to the rest of the nation in terms of representing American ideals, it thus follows that the region would prefer to self-depict in such a way as not to call attention to its past. Actively pursuing local coverage of the South’s more shameful historical sagas, such as slavery and segregation, does not feed into a forward-moving narrative, and instead perpetuates negative constructs of the region. By using AP images and stories to represent these matters, the South is able to offer coverage without actively exploring any potential hot spots.

From the photographic evidence, it seems more likely that South would prefer to recognize its history without going so far as to create an overly negative portrait, a trend running contrary to Cobb’s 2005 observation that “as the twentieth century drew to a close, there was some evidence that white Southerners were ready to acknowledge the racial confines and abuses of the past” (p. 303). Besides the AP photo data, no image set
represents this concept so fully as the AJC Memorial Day feature honoring Confederate soldiers, which presents a polished reminder of the region’s (literally) un-American past without explicitly noting any of the problems associated with it.

In some instances, however, the historical frames of the region have not been reworked nearly enough, particularly with regard to portrayal of race. If one is to judge exclusively by the photographs from the Atlanta and Memphis newspapers, the region is home mainly to white persons, who appear in almost two-thirds of the images. African-Americans make up a little over a third of the images (there is slight overlap in instances where both groups are in the same photo). Census data indicates that the actual ratios are much more balanced in the metropolitan areas, while the population ratios in both cities are closer to the exact reverse of what is pictured (U.S. Census Bureau, quickfacts.census.gov). The most accurate presentation of demographics came in the Religion and Education categories, a positive reflection on both the framing decisions of the Southern photographers and on the ability of the region to step outside of the traditionally held ideas of the South as a backwards area. At the other end of the spectrum is the representation of violence in the South, which, aside from the anomaly of Virginia Tech, was presented almost exclusively as a characteristic of the African-American community, a pattern that not only reflects poorly on the community itself, but also on those who present it in this way.

The persistence of standard framing devices also emerges in the depiction of race in the two Southern cities, more notably in the case of Atlanta’s presentation of persons who do not fit into the “black-white dichotomy that, historically, characterized the community” (Adelman, 2006, p. 270). Indeed, the photographic record makes very little
indication that such groups live in the area at all. While Memphis has only recently begun
to attract immigrant populations, Atlanta has been developing as a Southern haven for
foreign-born persons since the 1970s (Bankston, 2007). In 2005, for example, nine
percent of all Georgians, most of whom settled in the Atlanta metropolitan area, were
born outside of the United States (Bankston, 2007). Many of these persons were Hispanic
in origin, but both Cobb (2005) and Adelman (2006) make note of the “growing stream
of Asian immigrants to the area” (Cobb, p. 336).

These populations, however, appear in just 22 images in the entire data set, and
make up four percent of all AJC photos—less than half of actual population levels. Of the
18 Atlanta-based images showing persons not of the “historical” black/white model, just
five are of Hispanic persons, a number hardly representative of the 57 percent of
Georgia’s Hispanic population that resides in Atlanta (Bankston, 2007). Asian
populations—specifically East Asian populations; South Asians make no appearance in
Atlanta photos—fare somewhat better, both in terms of overall representation (15 images
in the Journal-Constitution) and the actual frames used to present them, which tended to
be more positive in nature. Asian immigrants were shown in a relatively wide variety of
contexts, within thematic categories ranging from Religion to Success/Achievement. In
the case of images of Hispanic persons, however, three of the five photos present the
group in the contexts of ungrateful immigrants and hired help. Because this was the only
coverage offered of the group, it creates enormous potential for misrepresentation and
perpetuation of stereotypes.

The underrepresentation of groups that do not have a large part in the traditional
two-race model of the South does no favors to challenging stereotypes and does not speak
to the South as a region successfully at one with the rest of the nation, particularly since America as a whole is well-known for its multiculturalism. Hispanics in particular were framed according to their import on a national level—that is, not on a Southern community level, indicating that they have yet to break into the traditional model of what a Southern community is ‘supposed to’ look like. Frames not only seek to engage audiences by including exceptionally salient information, but also by excluding that which does not fit into a particular schema. The exclusion of immigrant groups is itself a manifestation of this quality, and serves as another indicator that, in many ways, the South has yet to view and depict itself differently from its historical perceptions.

The trend of broad framing in instances where the photo subject was a relatively uncommon presence was manifest in coverage not only of groups of people, but also of regions within the South. Similar lack of coverage depth and potential for misrepresentation was seen with states that were not Georgia or Tennessee. As was expected, the presence of Mississippi’s DeSoto County, on the Tennessee border, does a great deal for helping evaluate this trend—because DeSoto County was part of the circulation region for *The Commercial-Appeal*, it had its own staff photographers working in the area, and was visually represented much as the other Tennessee towns were, with an emphasis on Community Life. In every other Mississippi appearance, however, including those in *The Commercial-Appeal* itself, the state was presented as poor (again, the only explicit mention of poverty in the South was in a Mississippi story), damaged (from the effects of Hurricane Katrina), and backwards (the Voting Rights Act and KKK stories). It is true that these are all elements that pertain to the state, but, as shown by the DeSoto counterexamples, they are not the only options available. Similar
patterns—although not so extreme in their Othering tendencies—existed for each of the Southern states in the data. What coverage did exist often played not to the idea of community so stressed in the Atlanta and Memphis newspapers, but rather to frames that fit more with stagnation and backwardness.

The occurrence of this trend is potentially an offshoot of internal Orientalism, making it a meta-form of Said’s original Orientalism theory. If the modern South is running out of ways to self-define as a result of increased industrialization, decreased, de-emphasized “Benighted South” characteristics, and the original problem of the American national identity having already claimed most historical symbols, perhaps it is instead strengthening its current identity by presenting specific regions within its own borders in negative ways. It thus comes as no surprise that these mini-regions (Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana) are those typically considered the “Deep South”—the areas that have not industrialized as fast as the rest of the region, nor that the large metropolitan areas of Memphis and Atlanta are furthering this process.

Atlanta, as mentioned in Chapter Two, was selected as a data source because of its status as a representative city of the traditional South (the “capital of Dixie,” according to Garreau) that went out of its way to take up residence in the greater international community, and, in doing so, gave up a great deal of its Southern attributes. As was shown in the case of the Connection to the Past images, it would be inaccurate to describe Atlanta as completely overlooking its inherent Southern connection—but the city does take on many traits normally associated with the modern, globalized world. The Americanization of Atlanta becomes apparent particularly when its self-presentation is compared with that of Memphis. Although Memphis is the larger of the two cities, it
tends to downplay its “city” nature in favor of focusing coverage on life in the suburbs. Just one photo in *The Commercial-Appeal* data set gave any indication that Memphis has buildings over five stories tall. By contrast, Atlanta did not shy away from depicting its skyscrapers, nor other elements of industrialized city life, such as its airport (airplanes appeared in *The Commercial-Appeal* only when vintage models were being flown during a Memorial Day parade). In the cases of both Memphis and Atlanta, however, there were indicators that the city environs were overwhelming, as the dominant city setting literally dwarfed the human subjects in many photos. Such a framing pattern rarely occurred in images set in the suburbs, where subjects were depicted as more at one with their surroundings.

The general Southern setting, as Zanes and Rankin have argued, is one nearly impossible to portray accurately in photography. Zanes’ 1998 critique argued that most who work in the region fail to present the viewer with any sort of new information, as the urge to evoke a traditional “Southernness” wins out over the need to offer a more reality-grounded representation. His statement remains true more than a decade later, but it is important to note that both the idea of Southernness as well as its representation have changed.

Scholars have spoken of the “Americanization of Dixie” phenomenon since the 1970s; that is, the muting of characteristics that have historically defined the South in favor of the region becoming more akin to the nation as a whole. This trend can be seen in the image data from the national media outlets—*The New York Times* and *USA Today*—where the distinctive traits of the South receive little emphasis. When they do make appearances, however, they remain in accordance with the old model of relegating
negative, un-American traits to the South, thus maintaining a separation between the nation and the region.

In looking at the photos from the South itself, a different phenomenon surfaces—the standard Southern myth being taken by the region and reshaped into a mythology more in keeping with the way the South sees itself, not the ways in which it is seen by others. The “Dixieification of Dixie” phenomenon described by Yoder in the 1960s thus continues to remain relevant as well, perhaps because, as evidenced by coverage of the South in national papers, the area has lost a bit of the regional separation that once existed.

However, even this new Southern self-representation is subject to the sway of “what has already been told,” a trend that speaks to the overall influence of frames and the need to place information, no matter how current, in the context of what has been previously established. With the added burden photography bears of being perceived as absolute slices of reality, it becomes all the more important to maintain a balance between these two factors—to not let the past overwhelm the present. An ideal representation of the South would thus fall between the national presentation tendencies and the more localized ones.

Limitations

This study is intended to serve as a beginning point for future research; it does not and did not intend to formulate an all-encompassing theory regarding photojournalism in the South. Rather, the research used constant comparison to draw general patterns out of a particular body of data, which could then be examined in greater depth in future studies.
It is possible that a different constructed sample of days would have yielded different results, although, as Riff, Lacy, and Fico point out, two constructed weeks are generally enough to serve as representative of a greater body of data.

One of the major limitations to interpreting the results of the research is the very news process itself. A photograph that is published in a newspaper is the result of a long editing process that relies upon input and influence from many other parties aside from the person who originally made the image. A hierarchy of editors and publishers all have a role in the types of images published by a given media outlets; each of these individuals—to say nothing of the photographers themselves—brings with them biases (Bissell, 2000). However, the same can be said for any type of published media; the collections of non-newspaper Southern photography that were referenced in earlier chapters were subject to these same limitations. While it is important to recognize that a newspaper photo does not occur in a vacuum, it is worth noting that this is also an industry-wide phenomenon, which lessens the confounding effects of newsroom editing.

With regard to other newsroom processes that could affect this study, the divide between representation of urban and rural coverage is one that appears throughout the country, not just in the South (Chambers, 1999). Rural areas are literally less accessible to a wide audience, and as such are presented in terms of broad framing devices, which tend to present the areas as Others. As the case of DeSoto County shows, however, increased coverage and local staffing decreases the presence of these frames and makes for more accurate representation. Finally, as was mentioned in the previous section, the greater presence of Other frames in the Atlanta newspaper does speak to the idea of this
particular city needing to highlight its differences from the rest of the South as it makes itself into a global force.

On a more practical level, a wholly thorough examination of each individual image was rendered difficult by the poor quality of many of the scanned microfilm pages from the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, which was often such that racial or, less commonly, gender features could not be determined for the subjects. In total, 58 of the 414 Journal-Constitutions fell into this categorization. While it is unlikely that the extra information would have had an effect on the larger groups of images, it may have influenced patterns in the smaller categories. The “can’t tell” designation also was given to 15 images from the other media outlets, although in these instances it was due to figures being too far away from the camera to make out such details.

Further Study

There are several directions that can be taken if using this research as a starting point. The first would be, as mentioned in the previous section, to take the patterns found in the course of the study and apply them to a more quantitative research method; that is, to create and test a hypothesis (or hypotheses) regarding Southern frames. As far as other qualitative-based studies are concerned, a particularly useful course would be the application of the findings to other Southern newspapers, especially those in Alabama or Louisiana, the former of which was presented almost entirely in terms of the Southern frame—giant hogs and the Civil Rights movement—and the latter of which only appeared because of Hurricane Katrina coverage. Including images from any other newspaper in the region would certainly provide further insight into Southern framing.
theory, and, additionally, would allow more conclusions to be made regarding the individual state-by-state frames. This data, for instance, has shown how Alabama appears to Georgia; what would be the reverse characterization? Related to this matter is the pattern of the South “Othering” the South that was present in the data, which also merits further study as it has bearing on the perpetuation of the idea of a backwards and growth-stunted region.

The photographs examined here are all from newspapers with large circulation bases, the reasoning behind this decision being that newspapers needing to appeal their coverage to a wider audience might be inclined to rely on standardized framing devices. Also of value for further study, then, would be to investigate the frames used by smaller media outlets, such as those serving small towns or other mid-market areas. Moving from the national to the local level of coverage meant an increase in human-interest stories as compared to issue-based ones; by this reasoning, it might follow that hyperlocal news would exhibit this tendency to an even greater degree.

The South is not alone in its status as a traditional region within the United States; other areas, particularly the West and New England, have played considerable parts in shaping the American national identity. Future studies could explore the framing devices, both historical and current, that are used when representing these areas. Additionally, Cobb (2005) points out that the history of the Southwest region in particular parallels the Southern story in many ways, especially in terms of identity conflicts between white residents and Hispanic and Native American residents. It would be useful to delve deeper into this matter and explore not only the regional framing devices, but also demographic ones.
Finally, of the specific themes found in the image collection, certain ones could merit additional study in different contexts. Photographic coverage of Virginia Tech is a surprisingly underrepresented area of study within journalistic academia; as of this writing, no research on the subject could be found to supplement the findings presented here. The little-acknowledged presence of religious diversity within the South is also a topic that could be further investigated, as could, indeed, general photo representation of religion in newspapers.

**Conclusion**

The South has long been a dynamic force in United States history, shaping Americans’ self-perception and national identity before the very entity of “America” existed. Distinctions drawn between North and South during the colonial era grew in scope and magnitude during the course of the early nineteenth-century, pitting the two regions against one another and in the process contributing to the development of two of the most salient myths in the American narrative. The first, that of America as a land of prosperity, freedom, and opportunity, was historically bolstered by the second myth, that of the South as an inferior area and “convenient regional dumping ground for the nation’s shortcomings” (Wrobel, 2008, 1205). As is the case with any myth, each of these cultural narratives was composed of de-emphasized truths and overstated exaggerations. Because both ideas had been so inextricably linked to the construction of American national identity, they became part of the broad collective consciousness of the American public, and thus were ripe for use as themes against which to ground news material.
The American South at the beginning of the 21st century is a far cry from its historical counterpart—yet not to the extent that the traditional South has been completely left behind. While the region tends to be portrayed by national outlets as no different from the greater entity of the United States, it is also used to illustrate themes of violence and racism, underscoring the fact that these attributes continue to remain firmly linked to the South. Additionally, the South itself continues to self-identify according to a historical model in many ways, particularly regarding representation of racial and ethnic groups, which are often framed in a negative manner—when they receive any photographic coverage at all.

As Cobb (2005) puts it, “the southern identity of the future will reflect not just what Southerners themselves have chosen to make it but what other Americans need or want it to be as well” (p. 339). This phenomenon is manifest throughout the photographic representation of the region, both in terms of how the South has elected to depict itself and the ways in which the rest of the nation continues to portray the area. Yet despite the changing influences on the standard ways to frame the South, the potential for misrepresentation 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. The potential for becoming “tangled in the mythology of the South” has not yet faded.
REFERENCES


