

## New Readers: Race, Ethnicity and Readership

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### Summary

The *New Readers* study shows that age has more effect than race/ethnicity or gender in determining how readers feel about and respond to their local daily newspaper – in other words, how they experience the newspaper.

But how race/ethnicity is presented in content and its representation in the newspaper's workforce are contributing factors to those experiences.

This report brings together all the findings from the *New Readers* study that pertains to race/ethnicity. It answers these questions:

- 1. Who gets covered in the newspaper?**  
Even in large, diverse markets, Whites make up more than 70% of the people shown in photos or mentioned in stories.
- 2. Who works in the newspaper?**  
The workforce is made up primarily of Whites (about 70%) and supervisors are about 80% White. The Circulation and Production departments are most likely to include higher percentages of non-White employees, while News and Marketing have the least.
- 3. Does race/ethnicity make a difference in how employees experience their workplace?**  
The dominant organizational culture in newspapers is aggressive-defensive. Most employees feel this way regardless of their race/ethnicity.
- 4. How does the race/ethnicity of the workforce relate to race/ethnicity in the content?**  
There is a correlation between the proportion of a particular racial/ethnic group in the workforce and how much that group is covered (i.e., mentioned in stories and shown in photos) in the content.
- 5. Does the race/ethnicity of readers make a difference in how they read the papers?**  
Readers' race/ethnicity plays a very minor role in readers' reading behavior. (Please note: this was a study of readers only, not the general population.)
- 6. Does the race/ethnicity of readers make a difference in how they experience the paper?**  
With a few exceptions, different racial/ethnic groups experience the local daily newspaper in similar ways.

**7. Does the race/ethnicity of readers affect how important they feel certain kinds of content are and how satisfied they are with the newspaper's coverage?**

Generally, readers' race/ethnicity makes little difference in how they rate particular editorial topics and advertising categories.

**8. Does the racial/ethnic representation and focus of the content make any difference to readers' reactions to the newspaper?**

Yes, for some of the people some of the time. For example, Hispanics/Latinos are more likely to say the paper "looks out for my interests" when there are more Hispanics/Latinos mentioned in stories and shown in photos.

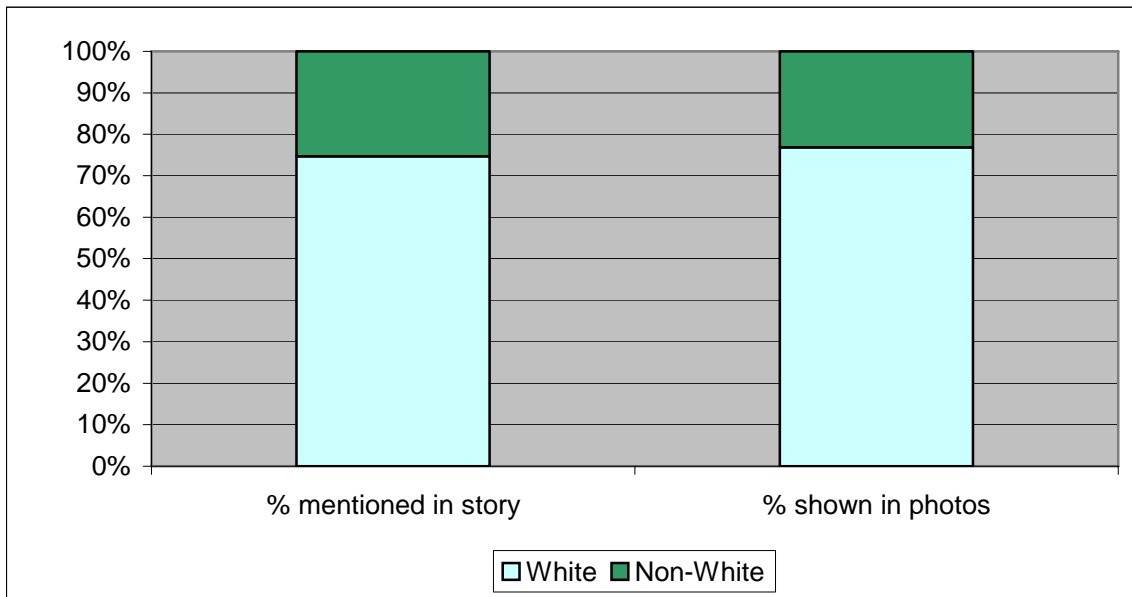
More detailed results follow.

**1. Who gets covered in the paper?**

Most people in the pages of the 52 *New Readers* newspapers ([http://readership.org/new\\_readers/paper\\_list.htm](http://readership.org/new_readers/paper_list.htm)) are White. Less than a third of identifiable people in the paper (in both editorial and advertising content) are people of color. (For a full report see [http://readership.org/new\\_readers/data/content\\_analysis.pdf](http://readership.org/new_readers/data/content_analysis.pdf))

**Editorial**

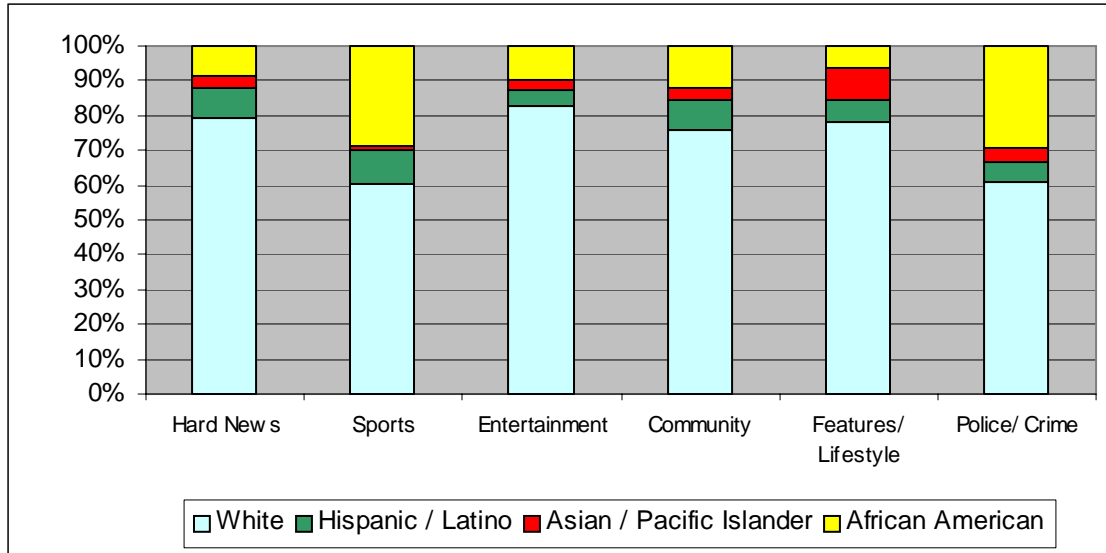
Even in large, diverse markets Whites make up more than 70% of the people shown in photos or mentioned in stories.



**Race/ethnicity in editorial content**

Base: 41 newspapers, Scale: 0-100, Percent of identifiable people in editorial

Non-Whites get relatively more prominence in Sports and Police/Crime stories. Compared to the overall average in the New Readers newspapers in which 23.1% of the people shown in photos are non-White, about 40% of the people shown in Sports (40.2%) and Police/Crime stories (39.49%) are non-White.

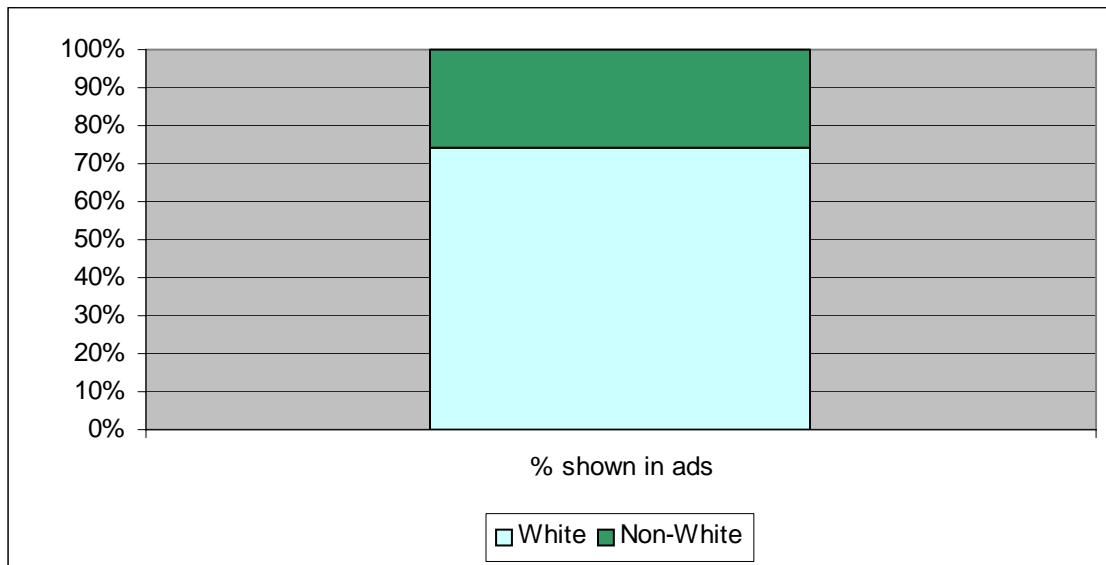


**Race/ethnicity in editorial, by category**

Base: 41 newspapers, Scale: 0-100, Percent of identifiable people shown in editorial photos

**Advertising**

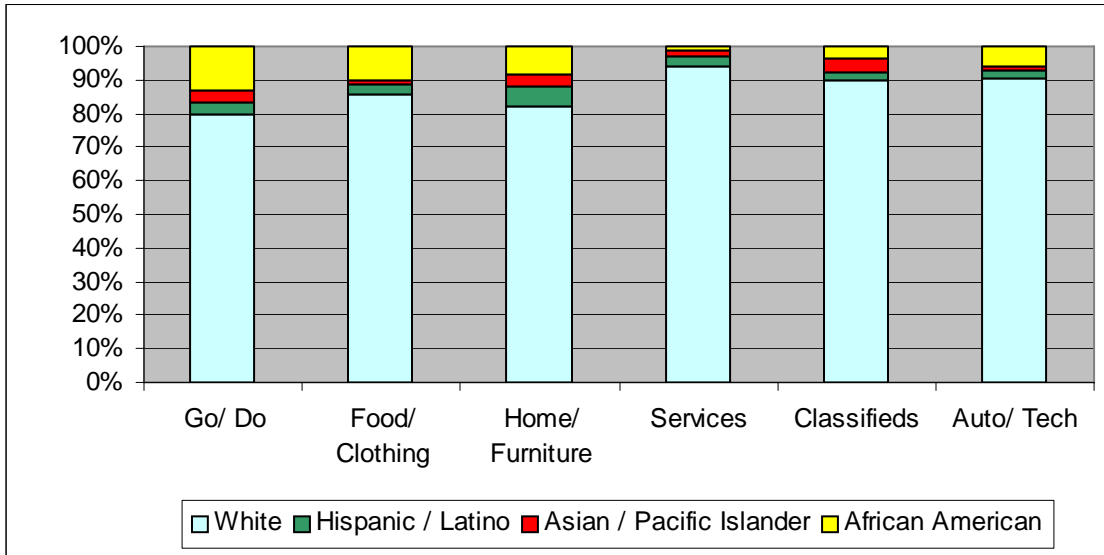
As in editorial content, a majority of the people shown in ads (about 70%) are White, even in large, diverse markets.



**Race/ethnicity in ads**

Base: 41 newspapers, Scale: 0-100, Percent of identifiable people shown in ads

Non-Whites have a relatively larger presence in ads about Places To Go and Things To Do (37.67%), Home/Furnishing (33.63%) and Food/Clothing/Basics (29.29%).

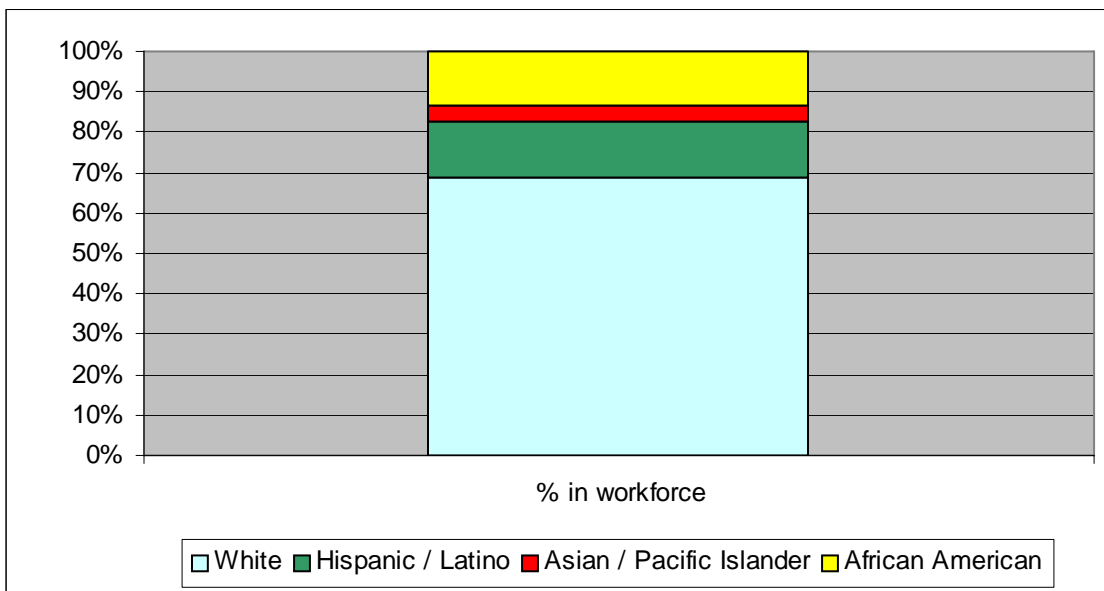


Race/ethnicity in ads, by category

Base: 41 newspapers, Scale: 0-100, Percent of identifiable people shown in ads

## 2. Who works in the paper?

The newspaper workforce is primarily White. Non-Whites comprise about 30% of the workforce even in the 41 diverse markets in this study.<sup>1</sup> (For a full report see [http://readership.org/new\\_readers/data/workforce\\_census.pdf](http://readership.org/new_readers/data/workforce_census.pdf))

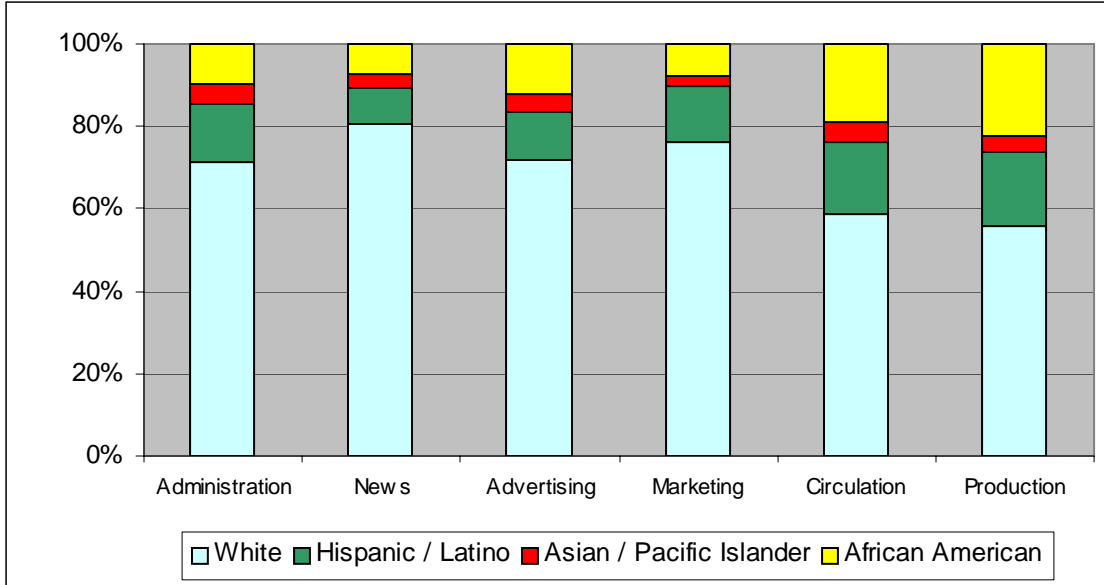


Race/ethnicity

Base: 41 newspapers, Scale: 0-100

<sup>1</sup> For the analysis of content and workforce, we looked at 41 “diverse markets” in our study. These are markets in which the non-White population exceeded the national average of 32%.

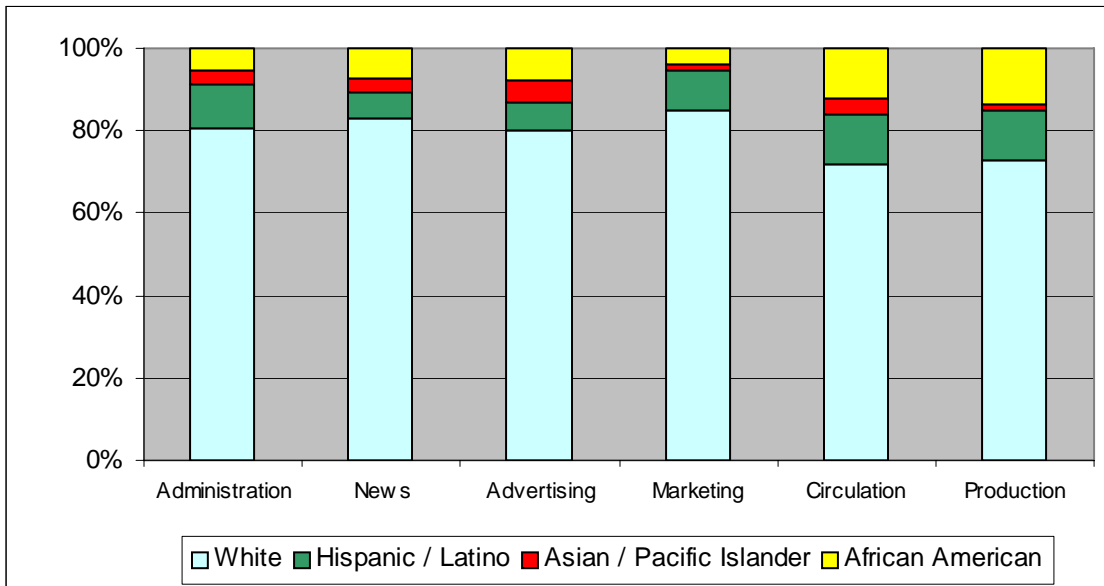
There are differences across departments, however, with the percentage of Whites ranging between 55.8% and 81.3%. The News department has the highest proportion of Whites (81.3%), followed by Marketing (75%), Advertising (71.7%) and Administration (70%). Circulation (41.6%) and Production (44.1%) have proportionately more non-Whites than any other department.



Race/ethnicity among in the workforce, by department

Base: 41 newspapers, Scale: 0-100, Percent in the workforce

Focusing on supervisors in the entire workforce, almost 80% are White. Circulation (28.6%) has the most non-White supervisors, whereas News (17.4%) and Marketing (18.4%) the least.



Race/ethnicity among supervisors, by department

Base: 41 newspapers, Scale: 0-100, Percent in the workforce

### **3. Does race/ethnicity make a difference in how employees experience their workplace?**

On the whole, newspaper employees perceive the organizational culture as aggressive-defensive. This means that members are expected to approach tasks in forceful, not cooperative, ways to protect their status and security. (For a full report see [http://readership.org/new\\_readers/data/industry\\_culture.pdf](http://readership.org/new_readers/data/industry_culture.pdf))

Race/ethnicity, age and gender make little or no difference in how employees experience the culture – how they are expected to behave as members of the organization. Neither does the department in which they work. What matters is where people are in the organizational hierarchy: non-management feels the expectations are passive defensive; middle management feels expectations are aggressive defensive, while upper-management perceives the culture to be constructive.

### **4. How does the race/ethnicity of the workforce relate to the race/ethnicity in the content?**

There is a correlation between the proportion of a particular racial/ethnic group in the workforce and how much that group is covered in the content. For example, the more Hispanic/Latino employees work at the paper, the higher the percent of people shown in photos who are Hispanic/Latino. This relationship is likely due to the makeup of the market – more Hispanics/Latinos in the market typically translate into having greater representation in the workforce and into having a better chance of being covered in the content.

Similarly, there is a correlation between the proportion of, for example, African Americans and the percent of stories with a demographic focus on African Americans.

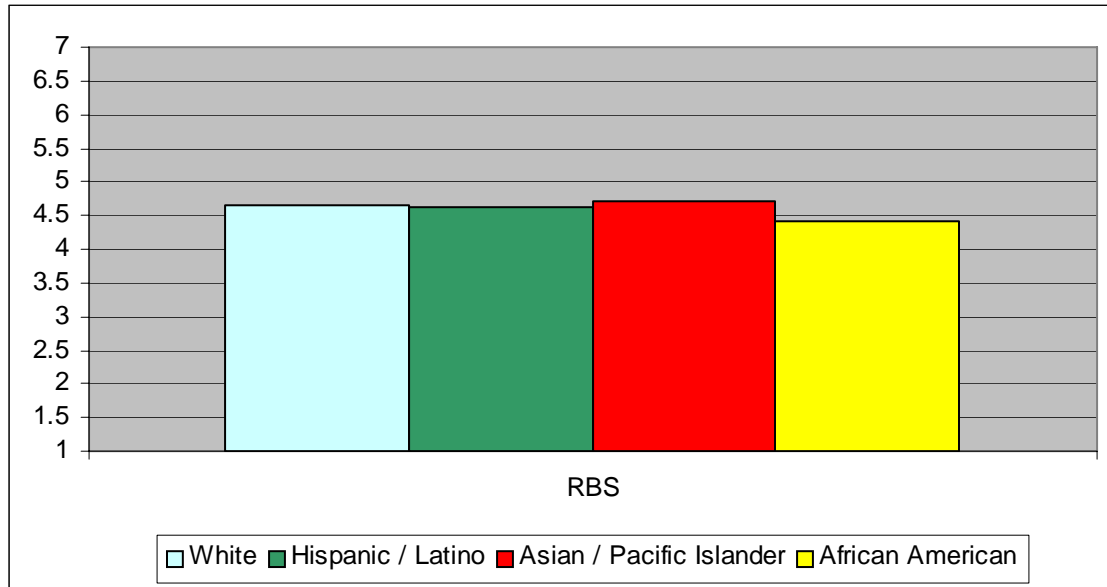
With ads, however, the correlation between the racial/ethnic makeup of the workforce and the diversity of people is less robust. The proportion of Hispanics/Latinos in the organization is correlated with the percent of Hispanics/Latinos in ads, and the proportion of African Americans in the organization is correlated with a demographic focus on African Americans.

Note: the correlations for Asian/Pacific Islander in this analysis are unavailable due to small numbers.

**5. Does the race/ethnicity of readers make a difference in how they read the papers?**

In general, the race/ethnicity of readers plays a minor role in their actual reading behavior – frequency, time spent with the newspaper and completeness of reading.

The *New Readers* study, which looked at readers only of the daily newspaper, found that reading behavior is similar among all racial/ethnic groups, with all groups rating at about 4.5 on the 1-7 Reader Behavior Score scale.<sup>2</sup>



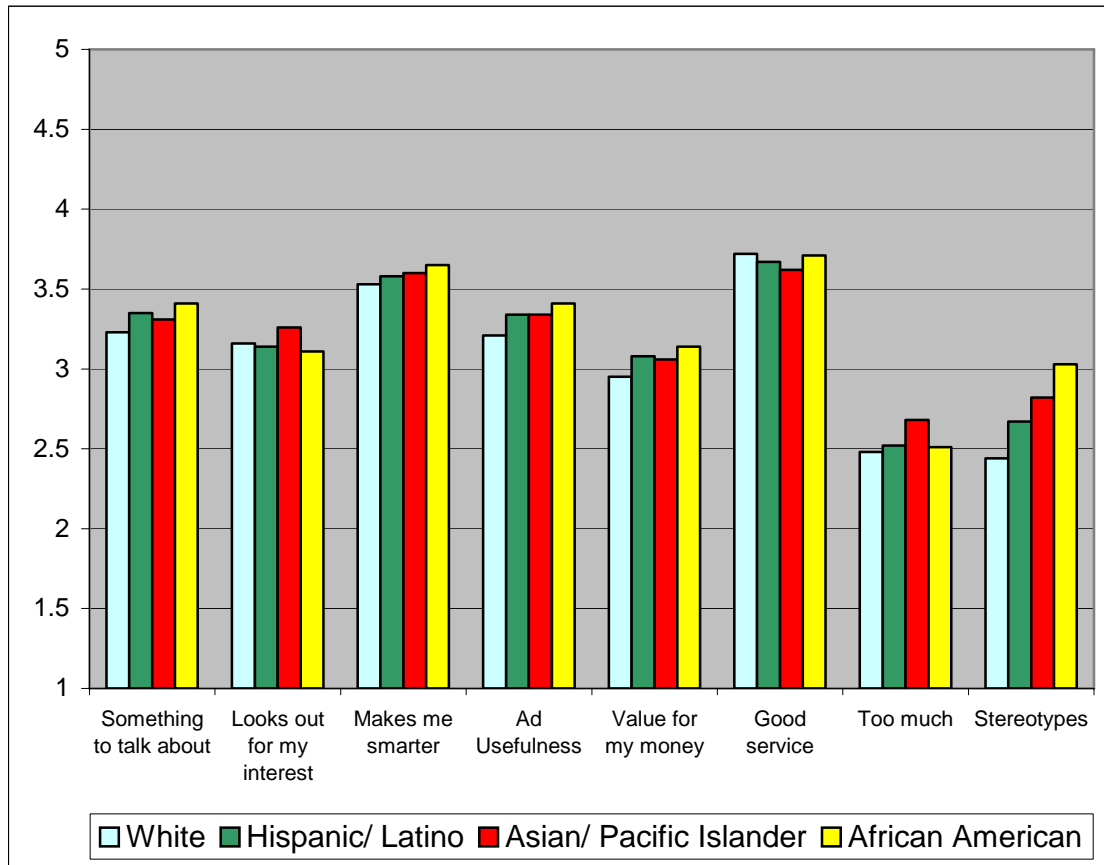
Reader Behavior Score (RBS)  
Base: 52 newspapers, Scale: 0-1

<sup>2</sup> For the analysis of readers, we looked at all 52 to ensure a large enough sample for each group.

**6. Does the race/ethnicity of readers make a difference in how they *experience* the paper?**

Race/ethnicity is not a large factor in how readers experience the newspaper. (For a full report see [http://www.readership.org/new\\_readers/data/all\\_experiences.pdf](http://www.readership.org/new_readers/data/all_experiences.pdf).)

Overall, readers are more similar to each other than they are different in their rating of the newspaper on eight key experiences. African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos and Asians/Pacific Islanders rate their experiences with the newspaper about the same as, or slightly higher than, Whites. The clear exception is an experience that inhibits reading, “Discriminates and stereotypes,” which they feel more strongly than Whites.

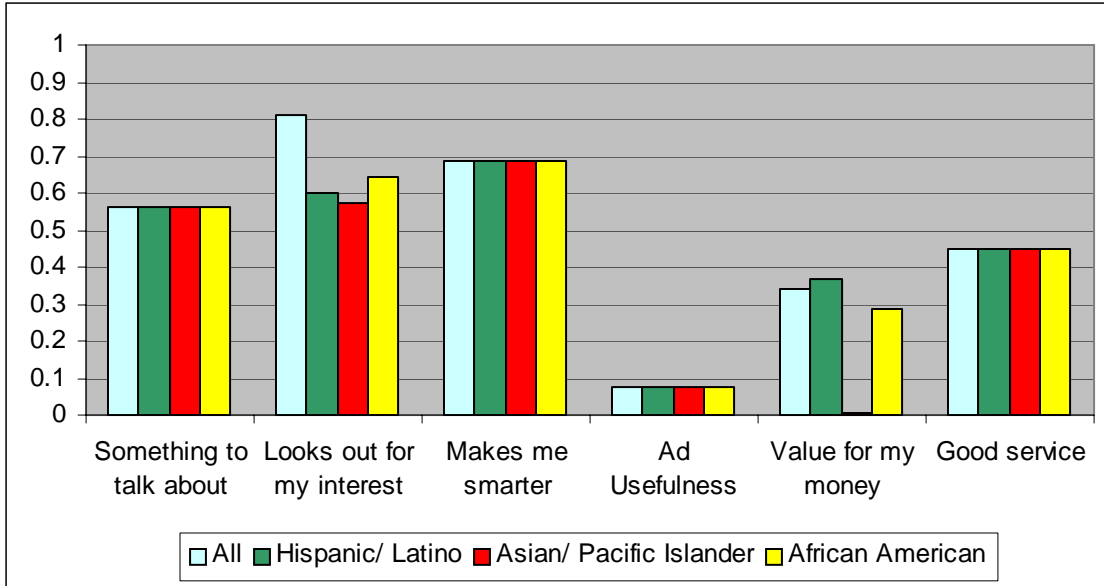


Experience current performance ratings  
Base: 52 newspapers, Scale: 1-5

The relationship between RBS and experiences is largely the same among the different racial/ethnic groups as well. That is, most experiences translate into the same reading behavior, regardless of race/ethnicity.

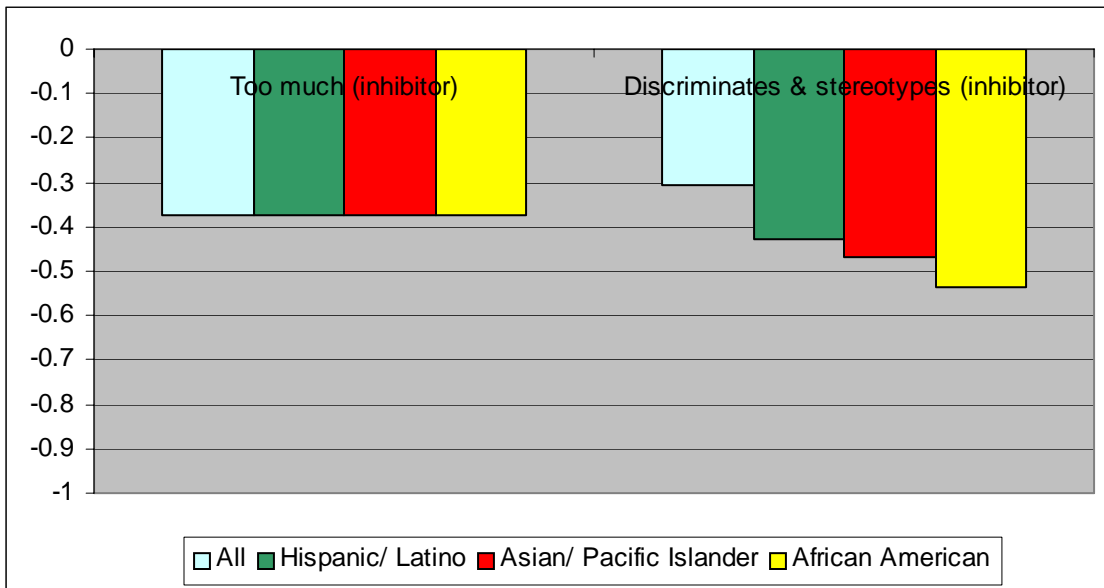
There are three notable exceptions:

- “Looks out for my interests” – For Hispanics/Latinos, Asians/Pacific Islanders and African Americans, this experience has less of an effect on readership than it does for the population as a whole.
- “Value for my money” – For Asians/Pacific Islanders, this experience has no effect on their reading behavior, and for African Americans, it has less of an effect than it does for Whites or Hispanics/Latinos.
- “Discriminates and stereotypes” – For Hispanics/Latinos, Asians/Pacific Islanders and African Americans, this experience has more of an effect (in this case, more negative) on readership than it does for the population as a whole.



**Impact of experience (motivators) on readership (RBS)**

Base: 52 newspapers, Scale: 0-1



**Impact of experience (inhibitors) on readership (RBS)**

Base: 52 newspapers, Scale: 0-1

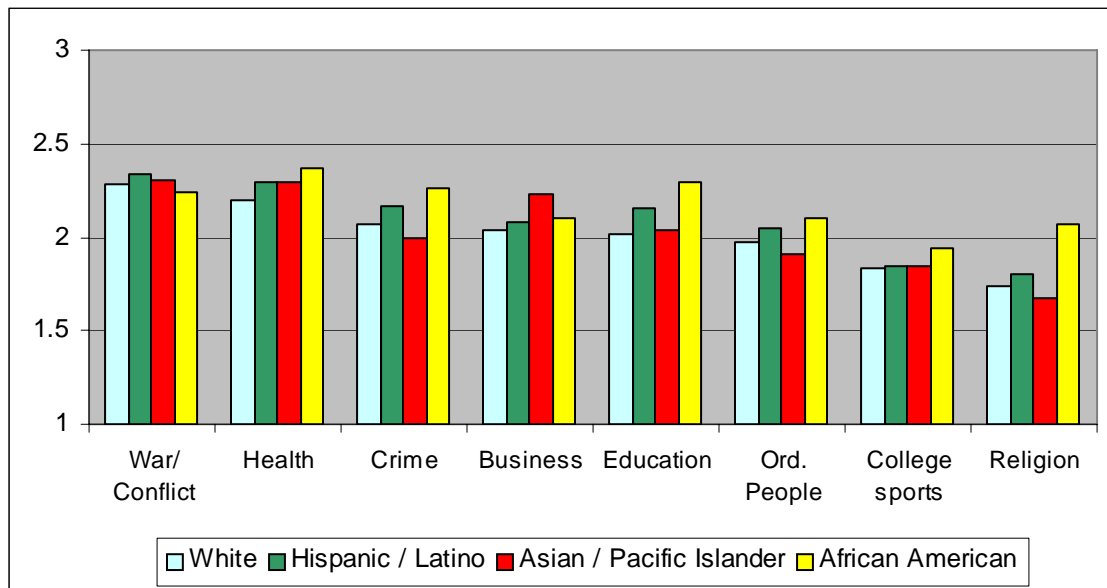
**7. Does the race/ethnicity of readers affect how important they feel certain kinds of content are and how satisfied they are with the newspaper’s coverage?**

(For a full report see

[http://readership.org/new\\_readers/data/charts\\_ad\\_content\\_service.pdf](http://readership.org/new_readers/data/charts_ad_content_service.pdf))

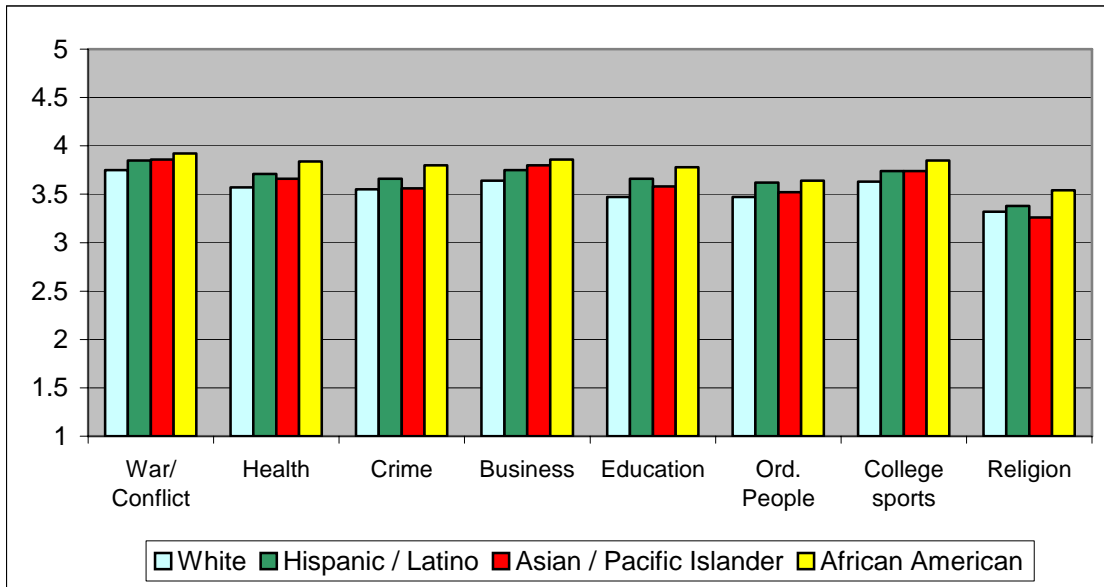
As with readership and experience, race/ethnicity makes little difference for how readers rate satisfaction with particular editorial topics and advertising categories. Differences among racial/ethnic groups are more pronounced in importance ratings than in satisfaction ratings.

African Americans, and to some extent Hispanics /Latinos, see many news topics as more important than do Whites. In particular African Americans place higher importance on religion, education and crime and Asians /Pacific Islanders on business.



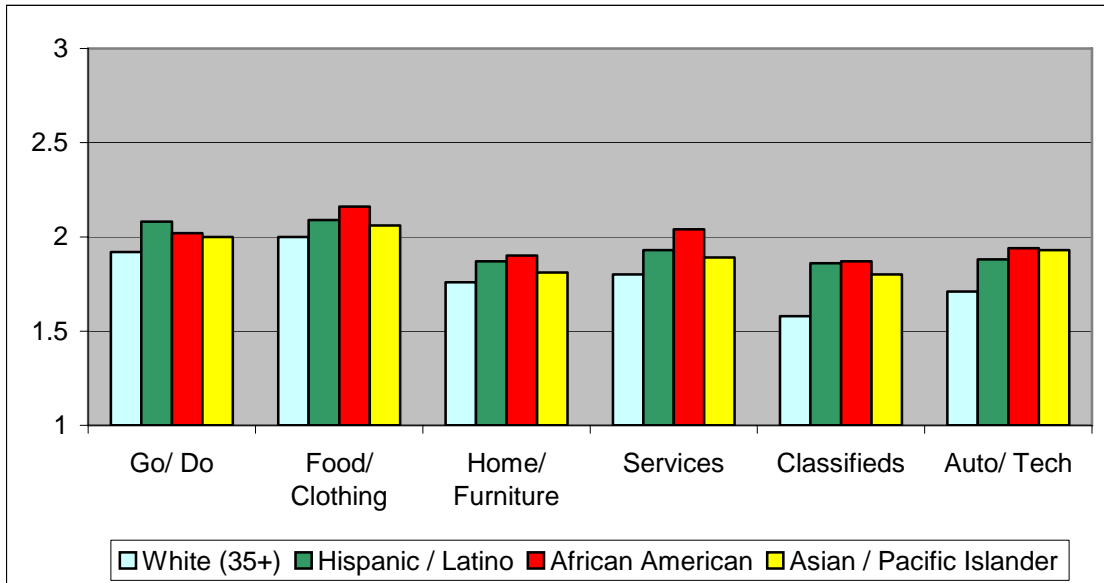
Importance ratings, editorial, by category  
 Base: 52 newspapers, Scale: 1-3

African Americans and Hispanics /Latinos consistently give newspapers higher ratings on satisfaction with specific topics than do Whites, though the differences are generally small.



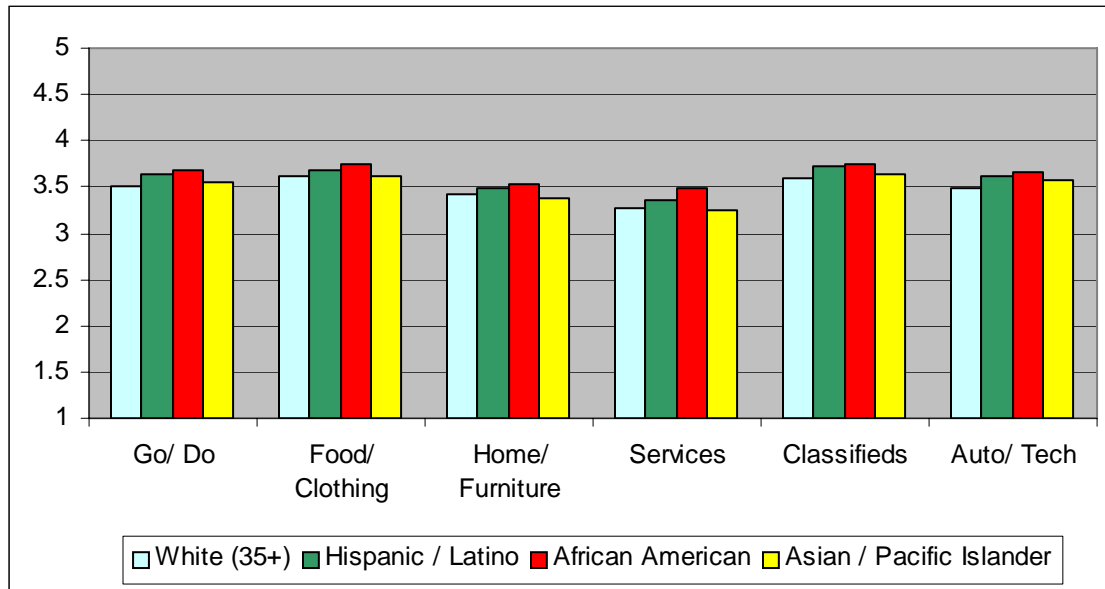
Satisfaction ratings, editorial, by category  
Base: 52 newspapers, Scale: 1-5

With regard to advertising, non-Whites rate ads in all categories as more important, particularly African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos. Asians/Pacific Islanders rate Classified and Auto/Tech ads as more important than Whites.



Importance ratings, advertising, by category  
Base: 52 newspapers, Scale: 1-3

There are little differences between groups in their satisfaction ratings of advertising categories. African Americans and Hispanics /Latinos rate newspapers slightly higher on satisfaction with all advertising categories than do Whites, and Asians /Pacific Islanders rate them about the same as Whites.



Satisfaction ratings, advertising, by category

Base: 52 newspapers, Scale: 1-5

In a separate analysis we ranked the editorial and advertising topics by importance and by satisfaction for each group (from most important or most satisfied with, to least). There are only a few differences between groups in how they rank the editorial topics and advertising categories. In this analysis, we compared racial/ethnic groups with newspapers' core readers, who tend to be older Whites:

**Importance:**

- African Americans place relatively more importance than older Whites on
  - Movies, music and art
  - Ads for food, clothing, basics
  - Ads for services
- Hispanics /Latinos place relatively more importance than older Whites on
  - Movies, music and art
  - Ads for places to go & things to do
- Asians /Pacific Islanders do not differ from Whites.

**Satisfaction:**

- African Americans and Hispanics /Latinos are relatively less satisfied than older Whites with coverage of
  - Business /stocks
- Asians /Pacific Islanders do not differ from Whites.

## 8. Does the racial/ethnic representation and focus of the content make any difference to readers' reactions to the newspaper?

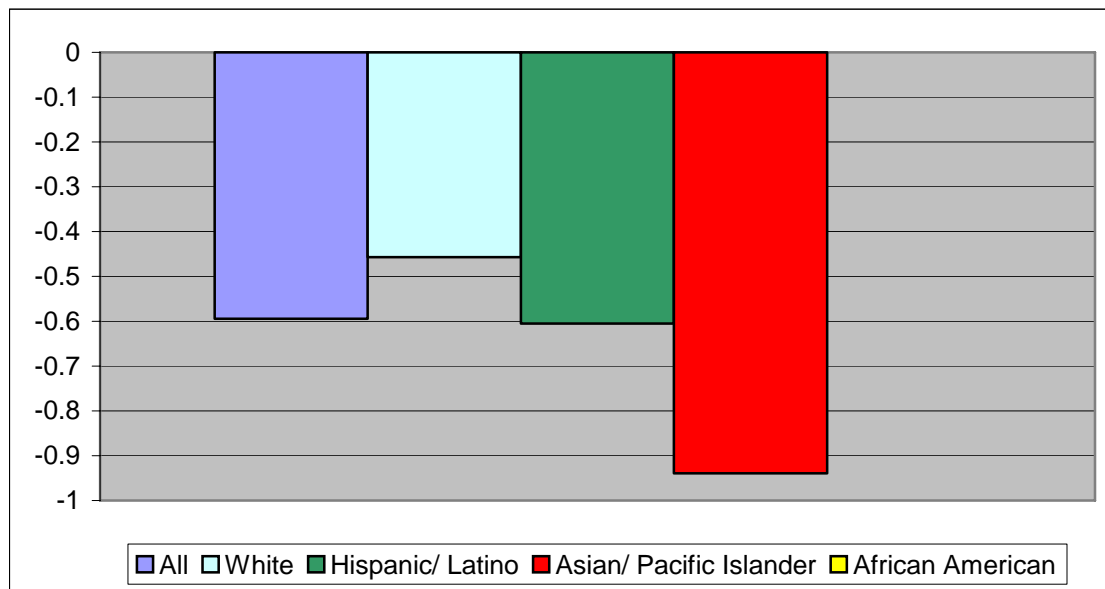
The content analysis involved counting and categorizing people who were shown in photos and mentioned in stories in the newspaper. In this analysis, we found evidence that these numbers are associated with how readers experience and rate their satisfaction with the newspaper.

But it is important to note that this is correlation, not causation.

### *Content and experience*

Including diverse racial and ethnic groups in the content matters for how some people experience the paper.

For example, when there are fewer white faces in photos, all groups but African Americans feel the paper “looks out for my interests.”



Partial correlation between rating “looks out for my interest” and % of Whites in photos, by racial/ethnic group, controlling for circulation size

Base: 52 newspapers, Scale: -1-0

Additionally, fewer White faces in photos is associated with higher experience ratings by

- African Americans and Hispanics of “something to talk about.”
- Hispanics of “makes me smarter.”
- African Americans of “value for my money.”
- Whites of “discriminates and stereotypes” and “ad usefulness.”

The relationship between seeing and reading about one's *own* racial/ethnic group and one's experience with the paper is more evident for Asians and Hispanics/Latinos than it is for African Americans.

- A higher proportion of Hispanics/Latinos mentioned in stories and shown in photos and a higher proportions of stories focusing on Hispanics/Latinos is associated with higher ranking of “looks out for my interests,” “something to talk about” and “makes me smarter” by Hispanics/Latinos. A higher proportion of Hispanics/Latinos mentioned in stories is also correlated with lower rating of “discriminates and stereotypes” by Hispanics/Latinos. Note too, that more African Americans in the content correlate with a greater sense that the paper is “too much” for Hispanics/Latinos.
- A higher proportion of Asians/Pacific Islanders mentioned in stories and shown in photos is associated with higher ranking of “looks out for my interests” by Asians/Pacific Islanders. However, Asians/Pacific Islanders’ “looks out for my interests” and “makes me smarter” experiences are also related to more African Americans in the content.
- African Americans experiences are not correlated with the proportion of people who are African Americans (or from any other racial/ethnic group) in the content.
- Whites respond with mixed experience ratings when there are more non-Whites in the content. For example, more Hispanics/Latinos in the content is associated with higher ratings of “looks out for my interests” and lower ratings of “discriminates and stereotypes” by Whites. More Asians/Pacific Islanders in the content is associated with lower ratings of “ad usefulness” and “good service” by Whites. More African Americans in the content correlate with a greater sense for Whites that the paper is “too much.”

### ***Content and satisfaction***

Of the four racial/ethnic groups, Hispanics/Latinos are most sensitive to who's in the content – more Hispanics/Latinos in the content correlate with higher ratings of overall content satisfaction for this group. For African Americans, overall satisfaction ratings go up with fewer Whites in the content. Whites' and Asians/Pacific Islanders' satisfaction ratings are not correlated with the race/ethnicity of people in the newspapers' content.