

12-1-2013

The Representation of Blacks and Hispanics in Media Depictions of the Catholic Church

Sven Smith
Stetson University

Naseer Malik

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ecommons.udayton.edu/jbcts>



Part of the [Catholic Studies Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Smith, Sven and Malik, Naseer (2013) "The Representation of Blacks and Hispanics in Media Depictions of the Catholic Church," *Journal of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium*: Vol. 7, Article 8.
Available at: <https://ecommons.udayton.edu/jbcts/vol7/iss1/8>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium by an authorized editor of eCommons. For more information, please contact mschlangen1@udayton.edu, ecommons@udayton.edu.

The Representation of Blacks and Hispanics in Media Depictions of The Catholic Church

Sven Smith
Stetson University

Naseer Malik¹

Fifty years ago, Pope Paul VI promulgated the Decree on Means of Social Communication at the end of the second session of the Second Vatican Council.² In this document, the Council outlined the responsibilities of the media in the rapidly-changing post WWII global society. Here, Smith and Malik present the results of an empirical study of the media's approach to the retirement of Pope Benedict XVI and the election of Pope Francis I. They show that the media reinforces stereotypes of the U.S. Catholic Church as a white institution by choosing to over-represent Catholic membership as well as leadership as overwhelmingly white, and by under-representing Black and Hispanic membership and leadership. In their fascinating interpretation of this study's significance, they find that White Catholics may blame institutional factors for our society's racial inequalities, but these same White Catholics are blind to the fact that the Catholic Church, as an institution, actually plays a role in perpetuating racial inequalities.

Representations of racial and ethnic minorities in the media have been overwhelmingly negative throughout most of American history, but they have also been underrepresented in the media, i.e., they are depicted in lower than their actual proportions in

¹ Naseer Malik earned his Master's Degree in Sociology at The University of Chicago in 2006.

² "Decree on Means of Social Communication," *II Vatican Council, October 11, 1962 – December 8, 1965*, accessed September 14, 2013, <http://stjosef.at/council/>.

The Journal of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium VII (2013): 97-129

society. When they are represented, the media depicts Hispanics and Blacks as negative or powerless while portraying Whites as positive and powerful. This may not be limited to broadcasts regarding secular sources. Although approximately one third of the U.S. Catholic membership consists of Blacks and Hispanics, in-depth coverage of minority opinion on television news may not reflect this proportion.³ In this study, we sought to determine if the discrepancy in representation of racial and ethnic minorities extended beyond secular sources. If so, it could affect the way Catholics and non-Catholics view the Catholic Church and its relationship with racial and ethnic minorities. For example, the overwhelming depictions of Whites acting as leaders in the Catholic Church on television news may guide viewers to believe that Church leadership is dominantly White and that White leadership is a Church value, which is inconsistent with Catholic social teachings on the sin of racism.⁴

Media Influence on Viewers' Perception of Reality

Empirical literature suggests that media coverage is a strong determinant in the viewers' understanding of other persons. The more time a viewer spends with particular television portrayals, the

³ Several studies have compared racial and ethical representation in media. Consistently, Blacks and Hispanics have been portrayed as culprits while Whites are shown as victims and/or 'heroes'; see R. Entman, "Blacks in the News: Television, Modern Racism, and Cultural Change," *Journalism Quarterly* 69 [2] (June 1992): 341-361; J.V. Turk, J. et al., "Hispanic Americans in the News in Two Southwestern Cities," *Journalism Quarterly* 66[1](1989): 107-115; and D. Romer et al., "The Treatment of Persons of Color in Local Television News: Ethnic Blame Discourse or Realistic Group Conflict," *Communication Research* 25[3] (June 1998): 286-305.

⁴ "Poverty and Racism: Overlapping Threats to the Common Good," *Catholic Charities USA*, last modified 2008, accessed September 11, 2013, <http://develop.wikispaces.com/file/view/Poverty+and+Racism+Overlapping+Threats+to+the+Common+Good.pdf>.

more likely they are to believe them.⁵ The greater the quantity of programs presented, the more the depiction is believed by the viewer.⁶ These portrayals do more than just present information; they also allow viewers (including Catholics) to draw inferences about reality. The more this inaccurate portrayal is perpetuated in the media, the more likely the underrepresentation of Blacks and Hispanics is going to influence perceptions of the membership and leadership of the Church.⁷

In this paper, we present a brief history of media perceptions regarding the representation of racial and ethnic minorities. We then describe our research on the depictions of Blacks and Hispanics during the unusual circumstances of Pope Benedict XVI's retirement and the election of Pope Francis I. Finally, we discuss these findings along with other relevant literature, and suggest what these may mean for Blacks and Hispanics in the Catholic Church.

Highlighting Specific Groups in Media

Media—especially television—is often the only regular source of information Whites have about racial and ethnic minorities; the images are often negative and minorities rarely have the ability to influence how they are portrayed. Local news and other broadcast video-based media have long reified racial and ethnic groups as powerless, if they are portrayed at all. Ethnic minorities are severely underrepresented in television programming, and when they do appear, their prestige, power level, and ultimately social

⁵ R. Akers and C. Sellers, *Criminological Theories: Introduction, Evaluation, and Application* (Oxford Press, 2012).

⁶ G.J. Gorn, M.E. Goldberg, R.N. Kanungo, "The Role of Educational Television in Changing Intergroup Attitudes of Children," *Child Development* 42 (1976): 277-280.

⁷ M. B. Oliver, "Portrayals of Crime, Race, and Aggression in 'Reality – Based' Police Shows: A Content Analysis," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 38, [2] (1994): 179-92; R. Entman, op. cit.

status are significantly lower than Whites'. This polarizes these groups from the majority group. Repeated portrayal of this power imbalance, even when based in reality, reinforces stigmatized popular perceptions about Blacks and Hispanics as well as identity formation for members of these groups.

News and media tend to reinforce the interests of dominant groups and symbolically reproduce and reinforce current social orders and institutions. The media has been depicted as an agent of oppression and as alienating Blacks from rightful inclusion. This segregation is further shown in the news media's preference for Whites, who have structural (institutional) advantages.⁸ Noam Chomsky asserted that the very purpose of the media is to defend the agendas of privileged groups and reify the image of minorities as criminals and welfare leeches.⁹ Expecting the media to behave differently is unrealistic, especially when the privileged groups are the rich and generally belong to the majority culture. Chomsky explained that it would be like counting on business to not be selfish but altruistic.

News and other media create in-group cohesion for the elite and maintain dominance over minorities. Minorities are often represented as stereotypes in either passive roles as the mere targets of decisions and actions or as breaking norms and laws, being deviant and a threat to the white audience, while Whites are represented as victims or as taking vigorous action against such deviance, placing themselves in the role of the hero. They are portrayed as defenders of the status quo and white cultural dominance. This repeated portrayal of racial minorities in a negative light contributes greatly to negative stereotypes, prejudices and ideologies, hence leading to the enactment and

⁸ Chomsky, N. 1998. *The Common Good* (Tucson, Arizona: Odonian Press, 1998), 17 - 29 .

⁹ *Ibid.*

reproduction of racism. This is a trend that can be seen often and is predictable in the context of news programing.

Prominence of Papal Decision Gives Rise To This Study

In the few weeks leading up to and immediately following the election of Pope Francis I, hundreds of stories and interviews were aired by local network television news programs regarding Catholicism. Network news programs interviewed Catholics to provide information about Catholicism and Catholic life. In order to further broadcast to those interested in the vote, many of these stories were then uploaded onto the internet. The viewers of these news programs therefore constructed their views of the Catholic Church from these internet sources.

Watching the local and national news in March of 2013, we noticed that media coverage of all Catholics (but especially Hispanics) spiked when the discussion about the papal vote suggested that a Hispanic cardinal was being seriously considered for the papacy. This increase in coverage allowed for an opportunity to learn more about the participation of Blacks and Hispanics in the Catholic Church, and how their representation was portrayed in the media. In order to do this, we conducted an experiment designed to determine whether the portrayals of Black and Hispanic Catholics on television news differed from actual reality.

We sampled local news media depicting Catholics (Black, Hispanic, and White) available on the internet. These samples were divided in two ways. The first was a cultural group comparison, involving the three aforementioned groups. The second was a Membership versus a Leadership comparison, i.e. whether a person shown on TV news was represented as a member or a leader of the Church. We then looked at whether these depictions were

representative of the actual demographics within the Catholic Church by comparing the television news depictions to those reported by Church authorities.¹⁰

In viewing network programming regarding Catholics and Catholicism, two questions emerged that this study seeks to answer:

- (1) How does the local news coverage portray the racial/ethnic makeup of the Church?
- (2) How does the depicted makeup compare to the actual racial/ethnic makeup of the Church?

We sought insights regarding these two questions by drawing distinctions between the following role-based depictions:

- 1) Interviews versus Showings (see Appendix B) any person shown in a news story who is not subsequently interviewed; and
- 2) Leaders versus Members (see Appendix B) (any person depicted as Catholic who is not shown in a leadership role).

¹⁰ "Catholic Church in the USA," United States Conference of Cardinal Bishops: Church Diversity, last modified 2008, accessed May 21, 2013, <http://uspapalvisit.org/backgrounders/index.htm>; and "Intercultural Competencies," United States Conference of Cardinal Bishops: Cultural Diversity, last modified 2013, accessed May 21, 2013. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/>.

Hypotheses

Based on the research above, we decided to analyze the ethnic and racial representation of Catholics in the weeks surrounding the retirement of Pope Benedict XVI and the election of Pope Francis I. We formulated the following hypotheses:

- 1) Whites will appear on local news depictions of Catholics at higher rates than Blacks and Hispanics.
- 2) Blacks and Hispanics will be less likely than Whites to be portrayed as Leaders. When displayed, Blacks and Hispanics will be shown in positions that do not portray them as Leaders.
- 3) Blacks and Hispanics will be less likely than Whites to be the source for interviews.
- 4) The distribution of Catholics by race/ethnicity on television news will be inconsistent with the distribution reported by the Catholic Church and other authorities.

Methods

With use of a widely popular and utilized search engine, Google©, video excerpts of local news shows were downloaded from the internet in two different clusters:

1. Cluster A; 150 news excerpts extracted from the internet immediately following the retirement of Pope Benedict XVI on February 28, 2013. These were downloaded from March 2, 2013 to March 3, 2013.
2. Cluster B; 150 videos collected between March 15 and March 17, 2013, shortly following the announcement of 76-year-old Argentinian Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio elected as Pope Francis I on March 13, 2013.

Regarding both Clusters, only local news broadcasts that were

self-labeled with at least the following written content were kept and coded: “Pope”, “local news” and “announcement.”

A subsample was randomly drawn from both Clusters¹¹ to assure representativeness.¹²

Basic Variables of the Sample

Each cluster was then divided into two groups-(1) Showings and (2) Interviews. If there was a video representation of non-news personnel within the sample, this was counted as a “Showing”. If non-news personnel were shown responding to a question posed to them by news personnel, this was counted as an Interview (see Appendix A). These two dimensions were further divided in two, resulting in a total of four variables: Interviews of Catholic Members, Interviews of Catholic Leaders, Showings of Catholic Members and Showings of Catholic Leaders (see the Tables 1-5).¹³

¹¹150 videos were drawn from each group. The units of each cluster were assigned a number from 1 to 300. Using a table of random numbers, each unit in the cluster was chosen based upon the last 3 digits in each number on a table of random numbers until 150 members were chosen from each cluster. This process serves as a check on unconscious or conscious researcher bias. Secondly, access to the body of probability theory that provided the basis for estimating the characteristics of the population, examining accuracy of samples, and ultimately generalizing the results of our sample back to the population.

¹²D. Kunkle, et al., “Violence in Television Programming Overall,” in *National Television Violence Study: Scientific Papers 1994-1995*, edited by Media Scope, University of California Study, 1-171 (Studio City, CA: Media Scope, 1996); J. Potter, et al., “Content Analysis of Entertainment Television: New Methodological Developments,” in *Television and Public Policy*, edited by J. Hamilton (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 55-104; B. J. Wilson, et al., “Violence in Television Programming Overall,” *National Television Violence Study 3: Scientific Papers* (University of California Study, 1998), 3-204.

¹³ Regarding Cluster A and Cluster B, only local news broadcasts that were self-labeled with at least the following written content: “Pope”, “local news” and “announcement” were kept and coded. With regard to Cluster A, the additional word, “retirement” was used and with regard to Cluster B, the additional word, “election” was used. These additional words were used in order to narrow the scope and improve the primacy of the videos reviewed.

Only local news programs (e.g. programs that self-identify as “news”) were coded, and all local news programs listed in the search results were eligible for inclusion in the clusters and ultimately the samples.¹⁴

Coding and Reliability

To ensure maximum reliability, only two coders reviewed the videos. “Coding” here is used to refer to the identification and grouping of the factors being measured (Showings, Interviews, Leaders, and Members). Each case was coded by both coders apart from each other, each unaware of the other’s results. The codes of each were compared to look for inconsistencies. Coders identified the race/ethnicity of persons depicted, as well as their roles as Members or Leaders, and Interviews or Showings. Coder consistency in identifying each story was quite good, given the complexity of the task. Across all of the programs examined for reliability, both coders were highly consistent on the number of members and leaders stories, Hispanics, Blacks and Whites contained within the news programs. Overall, there was strong confidence in the accuracy of the data reported in the study (see Appendix A).¹⁵

¹⁴I.e. The internet news samples Clusters A and B, each with a total of 150 programs. If a repeat was found while proceeding through the content analysis, the second and any other multiple was dropped from the sample and the next number from the Table of Random Numbers was used to make the selection. If there was any problem with the video wherein it would not properly download or play, this same procedure was followed to ensure 2 samples of 150. However, when Cluster B was sampled, two copies were discovered that would no longer play given unknown problems with the Source. A total of 2 (1.9%) were removed from the sample because of downloading errors or other technical problems, yielding 148 programs for the sample drawn from Cluster B. No such problems were detected with the sample drawn from Cluster A.

¹⁵ There was little variance between the two coders. Out of a total of 46 attribute assignments, the 2 coders were aligned 43 times. This yields a very high

RESULTS

Table 1: Members and Leaders and Showings/Interviews Compared by Group (n=298)

	Leaders	Leaders		Members	Members	
Race/ Ethnicity	Showing	Interview	Total	Showing	Interview	Total
White	93% 269*	94% 88*	93% 357	91% 256*	85% 64*	90% 320
Hispanic	6% 17*	5% 5*	6% 22	7% 20*	12% 9*	8% 29
Black	1% 4*	1% 1*	1% 5	2% 5*	3% 2*	2% 7
Total	100% 290	100% 94	100% 384	100% 281	100% 75	100% 356

*reflects statistical significance at the .05 level. (n=298)

Comparisons of Depictions of Black, Hispanic, and White Catholics

Table 1 explains that there is a much greater depiction of White Catholics than Black and Hispanic Catholics in news stories available through the internet. Table 1 also shows that Leader depictions (including Interviews and simple Showings) are 71 times more likely to be White than Black, and 16 times more likely to be White than Hispanic.

Table 1 also shows the sums of Members depictions (including all three racial/ethnic groups). Member depictions were almost 11 times more likely to be White than Hispanic and more than 45 times more likely to be White than Black.¹⁶ We conclude that there is a strong relationship between Race/Ethnicity and the Membership/Leadership depiction.

consistency (reliability) rating of 93%. See Appendix A for a more detailed explanation of the reliability tests.

¹⁶ $\chi^2 (2, N = 298) = 57.17, p < .05$. With this same alpha we computed chi-square statistics to determine whether these percentages were significantly different. An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests. Since the P-value (0.0003) is less than the significance level (0.05), we cannot accept the null hypothesis. The statistics confirm that there is a strong correlation.

Comparisons of Interviews vs. Showings of Black, Hispanic, and White Catholics

Showings of Whites outnumbered those of non-whites by a factor of 10. In addition, White Members were interviewed 7 times more than Hispanics and 32 times more than Blacks as identified in Table 1. Depictions of Leaders followed a similar trend, with Whites outnumbering non-whites by a factor of 13. Leaders were 16 times more likely to be White than Hispanic, and 71 times more likely to be White than Black.¹⁷

Table 2A: Intra-Group Comparison of Leaders to Members for Clusters A and B (n=298)

	White Depictions	Hispanic Depictions	Black Depictions
Leaders	53% (n=357)	43% (n=22)	50% (n=5)
Members	47% (n=320)	57% (n=29)	50% (n=7)
Total	100% (n=677)	100% (n=51)	100% (n=12)

Table 2B: Intra-Group Comparison of Interviews to Showings for Clusters A and B (n=298)

	White Depictions	Hispanic Depictions	Black Depictions
Interviews	22% (n=152)	27% (n=14)	25% (n=3)
Showings	78% (n=525)	73% (n=37)	75% (n=9)
Total	100% (n=677)	100% (n=51)	100% (n=12)

Tables 2A and 2B are our intra-group comparisons. It is worth noting the differences between Leaders/Members versus the Interviews/Showings data. Table 2A shows complete White dominance, whereas Table 2B shows that, once depicted, Blacks

¹⁷ $\chi^2 (2, N = 298) = 245.23, p < .05.$

and Hispanics are more likely to be in interviews than Whites. 27% (14) of all Hispanic depictions were Interviews. Similarly in the depictions of Blacks, only 25% (3) were Interviews. However, only 22% (152) of Whites were Interviews.¹⁸ We recommend that this interesting and unexpected phenomenon be the focus of a future study.

Table 3: Depictions versus Actual By Race/Ethnicity for Cluster A and B (n=298)

	Depictions			Actual	
Race/ Ethnicity	Members	Leaders	Total	Members	Leaders(Priests)**
White	90% 320	93% 357	677	61% 41.2m	91% 36,846
Hispanic	8% 29	6% 22	51	35% 23.6 m	8% 3,000
Black	2% 7	1% 5	13	4% 2.7m	1% 250
Total	100% 356	100% 384	741	100% 67.5m	100% 40,271

** Total number of priests – does not include lay leaders, deacons, bishops, or cardinals.

Comparison of Black, Hispanic, and White Catholics on Internet News to Records of the Catholic Church

After comparing Showings to actual membership parameters reported by literature and the Catholic Church (Table 3), it is evident that the internet news media depicted Whites in much greater than their actual proportions. Conversely, there is a smaller

¹⁸ We computed chi-square statistics to determine whether these percentages were significantly different. Since the P-value (0.12) is greater than the significance level (0.05), we cannot reject the null hypothesis. However, the differences between Ethnic groups were all significant at .05 level.

percentage of Black members depicted than the actual membership. Although Blacks make up between 3% and 4% of Catholic parishioners, Blacks only made up 2% of the depictions. Similarly, Hispanics make up approximately 35% of Catholics in the United States, but only account for 8% of the depictions of members.

Depictions of Black, Hispanic, and White Leaders/Members Before and After Papal Selection.

The increase in Hispanic depictions between Clusters A and B was statistically significant, with three times as many showings and twice as many interviews in Cluster B than A. For Whites and Blacks, however, the differences between Clusters A and B were not found to be statistically significant.¹⁹ There was an increase in Showings and Interviews for Blacks in Cluster B but this may be a function of the small number of Black depictions.

The increase in depictions of Hispanics is of special interest. Even though the percentages rise dramatically, they do not reach a rate comparable with the actual percentage of Hispanic Catholics in the United States (35%).

Table 4: Papal Retirement versus Papal Vote by Race/Ethnicity (n=298)

	Cluster A		Papal Retirement		Cluster B		Papal Vote	
Race/Ethnicity	Showing	Interview	Total	Showing	Interview	Total		
White	96% 273*	94% 83	366	91% 252*	85% 69*	321		
Hispanic	3% 9*	5% 4	13	10% 28*	12% 10*	38		
Black	1% 2*	1% 1	5	3% 7*	3% 2*	8		
Total	100% 286	100% 88	374	100% 276	100% 81	367		

*significant at the .05 level.

¹⁹ $\chi^2 (3, N = 298) = 57.83, p < .001$

Table 5: Depiction of Actual Leadership Positions for US Catholics by Race/Ethnicity

	Total	Hispanics	Blacks	Whites
US Cardinals	100% 17 ^a	0% 0	0% 0	100% 17
Active Bishops	100% 273 ^b	11% 29 ^c	4% 10 ^b	85% 234
Total Priests	100% 40,271 ^d	7% 3,000 ^e	1% 250 ^a	92% 37,021
Catholics by % Total Membership	100%	35% ^a	4% ^a	61% ^f

a "Catholic Church in the USA," United States Conference of Cardinal Bishops: Church Diversity, accessed May 21, 2013. <http://uspapalvisit.org/backgrounders/index.htm>

b "Intercultural Competences," United States Conference of Cardinal Bishops: Cultural Diversity, accessed May 21, 2013. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/>

c Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, CARA Catholic Poll, Georgetown University, 2010.

d The Official Catholic Directory Anno Domini 2011. (P.J. Kenedy and Sons, 2011)

e Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate. The CARA Report, Summer 2012.

f Gautier, Mary L., and Mark M. Gray, "The Class of 2012: Survey of Ordinands to the Priesthood." Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate.

Review of Table 5 shows that Blacks are roughly 4% of the membership and 4% of the active bishops. However, Blacks are only 1% of the total priests and out of the 17 US Cardinals, not one is Black. Similarly, Hispanics are underrepresented in the media depictions as well Hispanics make up roughly 35% of the population of Catholic Members but only 11% of active bishops and 7% of total priests. They too are without any representation among the 17 US Cardinals.

Challenges

This research faced some obstacles worth noting. It is important to consider the possible lack of full registration of all U.S. Catholics and possible misinterpretation regarding Members/Leaders. Although each group was coded with a high level of reliability (consistency), the difference between depicted and actual Members/Leaders was determined only by visual aid as applied to the formal requirements laid forth in Appendix B. Also, Catholics depicted are compared to actual rates despite the fact that the persons shown in the videos may not have been registered Catholics. Second, traits among those depicted may not have been clear enough to determine completely accurately each person's race/ethnicity (Appendix B).

Hypothesis Confirmation

Our first hypothesis predicted that Whites would appear on local news' depictions of Catholics at higher rates than Blacks and Hispanics. This hypothesis was supported. As shown in Table 1, Whites, at 93%, were more likely than Blacks at 1%, or Hispanics at 6%, to be portrayed as Catholics on local news available on the internet.

Our second hypothesis predicted that Blacks and Hispanics would be portrayed in positions that would not display them as Leaders but as Members. This hypothesis was supported. To determine this we combined the Interviews and Showings for each group; this gave the sum of depictions for each race/ethnicity. We then compared the percentage of Leaders and the Members for each race/ethnicity, as seen in Table 2A. We combined the total numbers. Whites were the only group to have a greater number of depictions that portrayed them as Leaders rather than Members. Blacks were depicted roughly the same as Leaders and Members.

Our third hypothesis proposed that when comparing Showings versus Interviews within race/ethnicity, Blacks and Hispanics, when depicted, would be less likely to be displayed in Interviews than Whites. These figures are so similar across race/ethnicity, we conclude that there is no relationship between Race/Ethnicity and Interview percentages.

Our fourth hypothesis predicted that the ethnic distribution of Catholics on television news would be inconsistent with the distribution reported by the Catholic Church and other authorities. This hypothesis was supported.

Incongruity Between Actual and Expected Results

Hypothesis 3 claimed that, when comparing Interviews to Showings within each race/ethnicity, Whites would have a greater chance of being interviewed. This was not the case. The three ethnicities' ratios were relatively similar, with Hispanics being slightly more likely to be Interviewed (27%), than Blacks (25%), or Whites (22%).

With regard to Whites and Blacks, Depictions of the race/ethnicity of the Catholic Church remain roughly the same in the sample taken before (Cluster A) and the sample taken after the vote of the new Pope (Cluster B, see Table 4). This was not the case with Hispanics. It is important to note that the number of Hispanics depicted after the vote increased by 7%, but did not reach the actual percentage of Hispanics in the U.S. Church. Whatever effect the historical papal election may have had, it still did not bolster the Hispanic statistic to the point that the percentage of Hispanics depicted in Cluster B was equivalent to the actual percentage of Hispanics within Church.

Significance of Results for Catholic Church

The perceived race/ethnicity of American Catholics as shown on television network news shapes public perception of the racial ethnic composition of Catholics as a whole. If the Catholics interviewed in network news are only White then the public face of the Church is perceived to be overwhelmingly White. Viewers are likely to perceive the ethnic distribution of the Catholic Church by those people interviewed in television news programs. Underrepresentation of Blacks and Hispanics in television news creates an inaccurate perception by viewers. Approximately 35% of the Catholics in the United States are Hispanic. However, news media depicted only 8% Hispanic members, and 6% Hispanic leaders. Only 60-61% of the Catholics in the United States are White. However, an overwhelming 91% of Catholic depictions are of Whites. Similarly, 93% of the depictions of the Catholic Leaders (priests) are Whites. The trend in these numbers suggests that despite the actual disparity that exists in the Church, the depicted one far exceeds it! The same trend holds true for Member. There is a great overrepresentation of Whites when Catholics are depicted in the televised news media. The resultant underrepresentation of minorities is parallel with a preponderance of the literature confirming this exaggerated approach taken by the media.

Edgell and Tranby have suggested that Catholic parishioners believe that institutional factors in society play a major role in promoting racial/ethnic equality.²⁰ Using data from a national random sample telephone survey (n = 2081) conducted in 2003, they analyzed the effect of being Protestant, Catholic, etc., on social justice attitudes. They concluded that White Catholics share the

²⁰ Brian Froehle, "Sociology and the Catholic Church: Four Decades of Bitter Memories," *Sociological Analysis* 50, no. 4 (1989): 393-397.

opinion that laws and institutions explain Black disadvantage.²¹
They stated:

White Catholics are more sympathetic to explanations for African American inequality that place the responsibility on Whites, such as prejudice and discrimination, and with increasing religious involvement they are less likely to blame poor upbringing and more likely to believe that charities should do more to help.²²

Edgell and Tranby further purport that this notion is paralleled by Hispanic Catholics. “Hispanic Catholics believe that laws and social institutions are a barrier ... to Black equality”.²³ “Hispanic Catholics are especially likely to think that biased laws and social institutions are significant for explaining African American inequality”.²⁴ This suggests that Catholics – at least the ones who participated in the survey – believe structural and institutional solutions are necessary to produce social justice.

Yet, the preponderance of the literature shows that most Catholics do not hold the Church to the same standard as suggested by Edgell and Tranby. Despite the fact that US Catholic Bishops declared racism to be a sin²⁵ and Catholic Charities USA © has formally stated that it must take action against racism,²⁶ scholars have pointed out that there is a lack of sensitivity or attention paid to the Black experience by the “Catholic moral

²¹ P. Edgell and E. Tranby, “Religious Influences on Understandings of Racial Inequality in the United States,” *Social Problems* 54, no. 2 (May 2007): 278.

²² *Ibid.*, 273.

²³ *Ibid.*, 277.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 281.

²⁵ “Brothers and Sisters To US. US Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter on Racism,” last modified 1979, accessed September 11, 2013, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/african-american/brothers-and-sisters-to-us.cfm>.

²⁶ “Poverty and Racism,” *op. cit.*

guild.”²⁷ Robert Bartlett described Black Catholics as “feeling the unwarmth” of the Catholic Church and perceiving the Church to be “lily white and cold.”²⁸ Catholics are not including the Church as one of those charitable organizations or institutions expected to be an impetus for social justice. Our empirical findings buttress this notion of White privilege. They suggest a hegemonic structure that is, by its nature, unwelcoming to Blacks and Hispanics.

Media As Defeating Institutional Attempts Toward Balanced Representation

News media may also be discouraging racial/ethnic minorities to seek out the Catholic Church as a potential spiritual home. When local churches possess racial homogeneity, it may be intimidating for minorities to enter; and it also may attract more of the dominant group, Whites. Our own empirical findings further suggest that this disproportionality can be projected and even amplified by the media, furthering the chilling effect on the Church’s current or potential Black and Hispanic membership. This repulsion of non-white would further sustain the news media’s perception, which would be broadcast again to the viewers, creating a cycle in which minorities are even further discouraged.

Parallel to a preponderance of the previous research, our sampled media sources and our results portray a world where Whites hold most of the power and are necessary to establish order and to rescue minorities in trouble. This portrayal is supported by the relative social status of Whites and Blacks as well

²⁷ Bryan Massingale, “Racial Reconciliation In Christian Ethics: Toward Starting a Conversation,” *The Journal of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium* 2 (2008): 50.

²⁸ Robert Bartlett, “Committed To The Faith While Sticking Out Like a Sore Thumb: Stories of Black Catholics on the Social Frontier,” *The Journal of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium* 1 (2007): 92.

as the starkly divided depictions of Whites and minorities. It is the responsibility of television news reports to reign in their biases when retention and depiction of reality are requisites for proper communication.

Considering that the new Pope is Argentinian, the Catholic magisterium has taken an institutional step toward representative leadership. Despite this, the Church has a distance to travel before this is actualized, and local news is not pushing the Church toward equitable representation. This trend has been repeated in depictions of minorities in news regarding other areas beyond religion such as law enforcement, politics, and education; while Whites are consistently overrepresented in local news depictions available on the internet. Unfortunately, Chomsky's cynical position (that the press will not move beyond self-interest) is largely supported by the behavior of the news media during the Catholic campaign to reconfigure the Papacy.

Perhaps the only way to alter the underrepresentation of Blacks and Hispanics in news media is for the Church to ask a question. What might be the source for this inaccurate image? That source may be white dominance in Catholic leadership, a symbol of how the world, including media, perceives the Church. Encouragement of institutional practices that promote representativeness in membership, leadership, and depictions will foster a change in the perception by Catholics as well as non-Catholics (including non-Catholic media). If the leadership of the Church becomes more representative, or at least more minority apparent, it is reasonable to hypothesize that this noticeability will encourage media to become more balanced in its representations.

Americans take pride in the melting pot image of diversity. However, for Catholic Hispanics and Blacks, this image of harmonious acceptance and existence differs from their everyday

experiences. While diversity and equality are ideals touted by many, Hispanics and Black Catholics will see that these concepts have yet to be fully realized in their Church leadership or the Church's portrayal in local media.

Underrepresentation And Its Import to Blacks

There are approximately 3 million Catholics²⁹ in the United States who are Black, making up approximately 4% of the total population of U.S. Catholics. However, only half of the actual Black Catholic proportion is visible in the depictions in our sample. 2% of the depictions of the Catholic leaders are depictions of Blacks. Yet, 4% of bishops in the US and 1% of the priests are Black. The trend in these numbers demonstrates an underrepresentation of Blacks in the news media.³⁰

Blacks are often portrayed in situations that hinder their credibility both in the secular and non-secular world. Misrepresentation begets misrepresentation. In addition, when targeting a dominant White group concerning a topic believed to be associated with religious and moral piety, news media too often choose to not depict a group that is believed to be deviant and untrustworthy. The resultant overrepresentation of Whites heightens a sense of Whiteness as normative and more powerful, further serving the dominant racial/ethnic group.³¹

The audience, whatever their racial/ethnic origin, takes the media's depiction into a shared social construction of reality that is controlled by White perception. Portraying Black Catholics as

²⁹ "Demographics," U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Secretariat for African American Catholics, last modified 2013, accessed May 23, 2013, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/african-american/demographics/>.

³⁰ D.A. Graber, *Crime News and the Public* (New York: Praeger, 1980).

³¹ D. Kunkle, et al., op. cit.; J. Potter, et al., op. cit.; B. J., Wilson, et al., op. cit.

powerless supports the stereotypes shown in other aspects of news media. This perception of Black Catholics works with other depictions of Blacks to further reinforce stereotypes that extend far beyond the scope of the Church. This leaves Blacks to be viewed on the basis of the social reality constructed by Whites. Representation of Black Catholics in the media is important not only for Black Catholics but for all Blacks.

Looking Forward Given the Misrepresentation

There are a significant number of Black Catholics in the United States and throughout the world, each of whom represents possibilities for achieving the values of equality that the Church espouses. The Catholic Church is failing to properly utilize its resources as well as failing to enrich its leadership and overall membership.

Looking forward, it can only strengthen the Church to look for practical ways in which to implement the recommendations that this research suggests. The landscape of America has and continues to make drastic changes. Minorities will become the majority over the next 40 years. As an increasing number of minorities enter the fields of media and the Church, it is important that unique perspectives be added to the ongoing conversation of change, in order that the Church's values may be implemented in successful manner. Given the importance of these culturally diverse communities to Church success, it is imperative that these be represented at its administrative hierarchy in order to portray a more accurate Church to its members and non-members but also to better adjust and practically achieve its ideals in a culturally sophisticated and productive fashion. Exclusionary practice, whether actual or depicted, is never productive.

APPENDIX A: RELIABILITY TESTS

We checked our reliability using proportional reduction of error (PRE). The PRE technique used in this study is Lambda. Lambda is used as a measure of association appropriate for nominal data; it is a measure of the PRE which results from an association between two variables. It is the reduction of error divided by the original error. This means that, when two variables are related, the errors of predicting the values of one variable can be reduced by some percentage when we know the values of the other. It is the simplest of the PRE measures and most appropriate for this study given the number of coders (2) and the use of nominal data. The values of Lambda range between 0 and 1 with 0 signifying no PRE and 1 signifying total PRE.

Table 1A: Reliability Measure (Lambda) of Coders-(Race/Ethnicity)

		Coder 2			
	Race/Ethnicity	White	Hispanic	Black	Total
Coder	White	17	0	0	17
1	Hispanic	1	2	0	3
	Black	0	1	2	3

Table 1B: Reliability Measure (Lambda) of Coders-(Leadership)

		Coder 2			
	Leader/Member	Leader	Member		Total
Coder	Leader	6	0		6
1	Member	1	16		17

We wanted to measure the extent to which knowing Coder 1's assessments (the independent variable) can help us predict Coder 2's assessments (the dependent variable) in the race/ethnicity category as well as Leaders/Members distinction (reduction of error). We then compare this to our best guess regarding both (which we term original error). Therefore, the formula for the computation of this measure of association is: $\text{Lambda} = \text{PRE} = \text{reduction of error/original error}$. Table 1A (of this Appendix) shows the extent Coder 1 is similar to Coder 2 (and thereby can be used to predict Coder 2's code selection when determining Membership or Leadership).

Original Error (Error before knowing coder 2): We wish to make our best guess as to Coder 2's assessment of Membership/Leadership. The original error is discovered by examination of the "Totals" column. In this case there would be an identical chance that anyone in this sample made a "White," "Hispanic," or "Black" assessment. If one were to guess what type of assessment both coders made without knowing the definitions or identifications, it would be the same to guess any one of the three. The best guess here would be "White". It is probable that such a process would lead to 17 correct and 6 incorrect guesses. There would therefore be 6 original errors in Table 1a.

Improved Error (Error after): The reduction of error is discovered by examination of the results of the cross-tabulation. Knowing the attributes determined by Coder 1, improves the ability to determine what Coder 2 determined. We would be correct 21 times ($17 + 2 + 2 = 21$) and wrong 2 ($1+1+0=2$) times. With the errors before = 6 and the errors after equaling 2, the improved error is 2.

We then reviewed the amount that Coder 1's attribute assignments associates with Coder 2's attribute assignments.

Reduction in error = errors before (6) - errors after (2) = 4. We compare this to the original number of errors: $4/6 = .66 = 66\%$

When considering race/ethnicity, Coder 1 can predict Coder 2 by a proportion of 66% better than if from random choice. In other words, Coder 1's association with Coder 2 (practically the training that both followed) has *reduced error* by a proportion of 66% from arbitrary coding. Overall, combining race/ethnicity and the Membership/Leadership errors to determine the overall reduction in error, we find:

Race/Ethnicity: Errors before = 6, Errors after = 2;
Leadership/Membership: Errors before = 6, Errors after = 1.
Therefore the Total Errors before = 12 and Total Errors after = 3

How *much* does Coder 1 associate with Coder 2? *Reduction in error* = errors before (12) - errors after (3) = 9. Ultimately, we compare this to the original number of errors: $9/12 = .75 = 75\%$

When considering the overall attribute assignment of both Coders' variable sets, the maximum training affect on Coder 2 has reduced error by a proportion of 75%. A PRE of 66% and 75% for both variable sets is strong direct indicator that the formalized definitions and identifications (Appendix B) used by the Coders were followed very similarly by both.

Appendix B: Definitions

Depictions. A video representation of a person within the sample set.

Identification of Race/Ethnicity. The following items were used to assess the race/ethnicity of those displayed over the media source: (a) video (visual), (b) identification of member by the media source, (c) photo shown. When these more apparent indicators of race/ethnicity were not available, it was inferred based on characteristics of the story. Two variables were used: (a) surname (e.g. Rodriguez is associated with Hispanic) and (b) prior news reports that indicate the same depicted person's race/ethnicity. This was used to err on the side of caution by allowing for the maximum number of minority counts.

Identification of Leadership/Membership. The following items were used to assess the membership of those displayed over the media source: (a) video, (b) identification of member by the media source, (c) photo shown. When these more apparent indicators of membership were not available, it was inferred based on characteristics of the story.

Interview. Those non-news personnel depicted as responding to a question posed to them by the reporter or Interviewer. If they did not appear as though they were responding to anything asked of them but were still making a statement, this was NOT included as an Interview. Cues for responding to an Interview included responding to a question, looking into a camera, and looking like they were pondering a question or statement posed to them before they spoke.

Leader. Leaders are defined as people displayed with those traits that indicate formal leadership in the Catholic Church. They must

be displayed in such a manner that they are accompanied by two associations with leadership in the Catholic Church. These indicators can be auditory or visual. For example, in a video news story, if a person was depicted while Catholic Leadership is being discussed in a voiceover, this alone is not enough to code them as a Catholic Leader for our purposes. However, if the person is shown leading a congregation of Catholics or leading a group while wearing the garb that distinguishes them as a cardinal or bishop, then this was sufficient for the “Leader” designation. Only those persons designated by the media sources as leaders or as displaying behavior pertaining to leadership with the Church were coded as “Leaders”.

Member. Members were defined as persons that are members, associates, and/or supporters of the Catholic Church. They must be displayed in such a manner that they are accompanied by two associations with the Catholic Church. In other words, each must possess at least two indicators suggesting they are members/supporters of the Catholic Church. These indicators can be auditory or visual. For example, in a video news story, if a person is depicted while Catholics are being discussed in a voiceover, this is not enough to warrant them as Catholic for our purposes. However, if that person is shown walking into a Catholic Church or wearing a Catholic symbol or holding a Bible, then this, in addition to the voiceover, would be more than one indicator and so, for the purposes of this research, would be coded as “Catholic”.

Showing. A mere visual depiction of a person not being interviewed but merely displayed. It is any person shown that was not interviewed and not a Pope. Most Interviews were part of a story that included Showings of other persons not interviewed so it was common for stories to be coded as containing Interviews and

Showings after or before the Interviews. Interviews and Showings are mutually exclusive categories.

White and Other. The focus of this research is the representation of Blacks and Hispanics in relation to all other groups, Whites being the majority; the statistical categories for Asians and Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, Tahitian, etc. were categorized as the overarching "White and Other". It is important to note that this originally included a fourth category. From the entire sample 298 videos collected (2 being dropped) not one Local News broadcast of a Catholic Showing or Interview depicted the physical characteristics commonly associated with the Asian ethnicity.

WORKS CITED

- Akers, R., and Sellers, C. *Criminological Theories: Introduction, Evaluation, and Application*. Oxford Press, 2012.
- Bartlett, Robert. "Committed To The Faith While Sticking Out Like a Sore Thumb: Stories of Black Catholics on the Social Frontier." *The Journal of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium* 1 (2007): 84-107.
- Catholic Charities USA. "Poverty In America Issue Brief, Poverty and Racism. Overlapping Threats To The Common Good. Last modified 2008. Accessed September 11, 2013.
<http://develop.wikispaces.com/file/view/Poverty+and+Racism+Overlapping+Threats+to+the+Common+Good.pdf>.
- Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate. "Frequently Requested Church Statistics." *The CARA Report*, Last modified 2013. Accessed September 11, 2013.
<http://cara.georgetown.edu/CARAServices/requestedchurchstats.html>.
- Chomsky, Noam. *The Common Good*. Tucson: Odonian Press, 1998.
- Edgell, P and Tranby, E. "Religious Influences on Understandings of Racial Inequality in the United States." *Social Problems* 54, no. 2 (May 2007): 263-288.
- Entman, R., "Blacks in the News: Television, Modern Racism, and Cultural Change," *Journalism Quarterly* 69, no.2 (June 1992) 341-361.
- Entman, R., "Representation and Reality in the Portrayal of Blacks on Network Television News," *Journalism Quarterly* 71 (1994): 509-520.

- Froehle, Brian. "Sociology and the Catholic Church: Four Decades of Bitter Memories." *Sociological Analysis* 50, no. 4 (1989): 393-397.
- Gautier, Mary and Mark Gray. "The Class of 2012: Survey of Ordinands to the Priesthood." *Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate*. Last modified 2012. Accessed September 11, 2013. <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/ordination-class/upload/Ordination-Class-of-2012-Report-FINAL.pdf>.
- Gorn, Gerald, M.E.Goldberg, and R.N. Kanungo. "The Role of Educational Television in Changing Intergroup Attitudes of Children." *Child Development* 47 (1976): 277-280.
- Graber, D. A. *Crime News and the Public*. New York: Praeger, 1980.
- Hamilton, D. L., Stroessner, S. J., and Driscoll, D. M. "Social Cognition and the Study of Stereotyping." In *Social Cognition: Impact on Social Psychology*, edited by P. G. Devine, D. L. Hamilton, and T. M. Ostrom, 292–323. San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 1994.
- II Vatican Council, October 11, 1962– December 8, 1965. "Decree on Means of Social Communication." Accessed September 14, 2013. <http://stjosef.at/council/>.
- Kunkle, D., B.J. Wilson, D. Linz, J. Potter, E. Donnerstein, S.L. Smith, E. Blumenthal, and T. Gray. "Violence in Television Programming Overall." In *National Television Violence Study: Scientific Papers 1994-1995*, edited Media Scope, University of California Study, 1-171. Studio City, CA: Media Scope, 1996.
- Oliver, M. B., "Portrayals of Crime, Race, and Aggression in 'Reality – Based' Police Shows: A Content Analysis." *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 38, no.2 (1994): 179-92.

Massingale Bryan. "Racial Reconciliation In Christian Ethics: Toward Starting a Conversation." *The Journal of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium* 2 (2008): 31-58

Potter, J., D. Linz, B. Wilson, E. Donnerstein, D. Kunkle, S. Smith, E. Blumenthal, and T. Gray. "Content Analysis of Entertainment Television: New Methodological Developments." In *Television and Public Policy*, edited by J. Hamilton, 55-104. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998.

Romer, D., Jamieson, K. H., and De Coteau, N.J. "The Treatment of Persons of Color in Local Television News: Ethnic Blame Discourse or Realistic Group Conflict." *Communication Research* 25, no. 3 (June 1998): 286-305.

The Official Catholic Directory Anno Domini. Berkeley Heights, New Jersey: P.J. Kenedy and Sons, 2011.

Turk, J.V., Richstad, J., Bryson, R. L., and Johnson, S. M. 1989 "Hispanic Americans in the News in Two Southwestern Cities." *Journalism Quarterly* 66, no. 1: 107-115.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. "Pastoral Letter on Racism. Brothers and Sisters To Us." Accessed September 11, 2013. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/african-american/brothers-and-sisters-to-us.cfm>

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. "Catholic Church in the USA, Church Diversity." Accessed May 21, 2013. <http://uspapalvisit.org/backgrounders/index.htm> .

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. "Demographics." Last modified 2013. Accessed May 21, 2013. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/african-american/demographics/>.

- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. "Intercultural Competences, Cultural Diversity." Accessed May 21, 2013. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/>
- U.S. Census. "Reported Internet Usage for Households, by Selected Householder Characteristics: October 2009." Accessed May 19, 2013. <http://www.census.gov/hhes/computer/publications/2009.html>.
- Wilson, B. J., Kunkle, D., Linz D., Potter J., Donnerstein, E., Smith, S.L., Blumenthal, E., and Berry, M. "Violence in Television Programming Overall." *National Television Violence Study 3: Scientific Papers*, University of California Study (1998): 3-204.

