# Shades of Race in the Deep South Press: An Examination of the 2012 Presidential Election

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## Abstract

*President Obama lost the Deep South states— Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana—to his Republican contestant Romney, a white man, in the 2012 Presidential Election. Examining 55 news articles, opinions, and editorials from three most prominent Deep South newspapers— Clarion-Ledger, Birmingham News, and Times-Picayune—this study seeks to understand whether racial profiling impacted the election results of 2012. The research revealed that the three newspapers seem to avoid race issues by following their declared integrationist, moderate and independent policy (at least by Ledger and Picayune) and considering greater readerships in the changing demographics of the region. The Birmingham News, however, showed a negative tone toward President Obama, proving the symptoms that the present generation is destined to pass on the problems of race to another generation.*

## Introduction

### Problem Statement

Barack Obama's election as President of the United States for the consecutive terms 2008 and 2012 is emphatically considered a turning-point of "post-racism" heralding the era of Obama. Many scholars call the "postracial" America a media myth as they set forth in the news presentation (Campbell et al, 2012; Cobb, 2011; West, 2011; Delgado and Stefancic, 2012; Wise, 2009). Obama made a call on March 18, 2008, at the Philadelphia's National Constitution Center for racial reconciliation for forwarding the nation toward "a more perfect union," an idea set forth in the Preamble of the U. S. Constitution (Brendese, 2012; Darsey, 2009; Dilliplane, 2012; Perkinson, 2012). So, Media's suggestion of post-racism makes Obama's call for racial reconciliation impractical, because it ignores the existence of racism.

Barack Obama won elections, but could not make a dent in the known conservative belt of the south, such as the State of Mississippi where about 40% population is non-white. A similar situation exists in Alabama and Louisiana with 34%, and 40% no-white population, respectively ((US Census 2012). According to an *Associated Press* story a day after the 2012 presidential elections (November 7, 2012), vote total fell in Mississippi with Republican votes falling twice as much as Democratic ballots. Even then, why Obama could not win the state, especially in 2012? Republican candidate Mitt Romney, a Caucasian, won Mississippi by 11.5%, Alabama by 22.2% and Louisiana by 17.2% (270 To Win, 2012). Did race/color play a major role especially in the South? And did the press play an anti-Obama (race) role in making voters' choice of candidate in the election? This study, therefore, attempts to explore the media framing of the race issues, especially in the Deep South since Obama failed to win votes in the region.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to look into the race-based frames and tones of the Deep South press which covered the 2012 Presidential Election by analyzing contents of three largest-circulated newspapers (of three states)—*Clarion-Ledger*, *Birmingham News*, and *Times-Picayune*. There were some studies on 2008 presidential election. But there was no scholarly research based study on the media texts about 2012 presidential election to give the readers a view of the media performance in regards to framing and toning of the messages. This research might help to fill in that gap, especially in the context of the media role in the Deep South region.

The race is an important age-old factor in American socio-political and economic life, and hence in elections too.

When Obama declared his candidacy in the presidential election 2008 the national media flooded the airwaves with images and sound-bites of Reverend Jeremiah Wrights, Obama's former pastor perceived as a fierce critic of America's race discrimination (Rowland and Jones, 2011). The media made it a "nightly spectacle" for quite a sometime (Perkinson, 2012, p. 98). To ease the firestorm of criticism, Obama delivered the March 18, 2008, speech in which he told the audience that he severed relations with Wright and introduced his idea of moving the country toward a perfect union. John Murphy (2011) observes Obama foresaw a transformation of American society as a historical Joshua Generation of redemption since Obama said "Yes we can heal this nation" (p. 399).

D. E. Young (2012) calls the post-racism phenomenon a "postrace posthaste." If we live in a post-racial society then calling for redress makes no sense if discrimination is a matter of the past. How is healing of racial discordance in America coming true? What is the media outlook in the backdrop of "institutionalized" killings of even black teenagers, such as Trayvon Martin (2012) and Michael Brown (2014) that stirred new debate? This research, therefore, attempts to explore the paradox of racial reconciliation in a "postracial America," especially what role the southern press played over the course of 2012 presidential election. The study included 55 news and views items-- 17, 15, and 23 for *Ledger*, *News*, and *Picayune* respectively.

## Significance and Relevance of the Study

Some newspapers adopt independent integrationist policy, but the news media maintain its own agenda in news and views coverage. Did the Deep South newspapers follow the independent policy properly in presidential election coverage? An examination of the election coverage may provide readers and scholars with a view of the role of the press in covering a historic election. The study is relevant with the existing realities of racial tensions in the American experience—police killings of unarmed blacks and angry reactions of black communities as well as conflicting political ideologies.

Even the 2016 Presidential Election is going beyond narrow scholarship of racism involving African Americans. GOP presidential candidate Ben Carson who belongs to people of color said he would not support a Muslim presidential candidate, calling Islam inconsistent with the US constitution in an interview on Meet the Press on September 20, 2015. Even, Donald Trump, who was known for his challenge of birther issue before the 2012 election, again came under criticism (Worland, September 20, 2015). Trump's challenge even reached out to his Republican running mates. It is not just Sen. Ted Cruz facing birther challenges. Now, Donald Trump is not sure whether Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) is eligible to be president (Terkel, 2016). AFP news agency headlined a report, "White House hopefuls hustle for votes as race turns 'toxic' (Mathes, 2016, March 14).

This is also significant in the backdrop of new Supreme Court verdict rescinding a provision of Voting Rights Act of 1965 which required prior permission of the Federal Government to change state voting laws (Drehle, 2013). More so, another Supreme Court decision to uphold a ban on Affirmative Action in college admissions in Michigan might open the door for lawmakers or voters in other states to establish bans of their own (Paulson, 2014). Deep South states are usually prone to the deployment of mechanisms for disenfranchisement of the people of color. This research will help expand examination of the "insidious, damaging, and harmful" (Holling et al, 2014, p. 270) effects of news reports, which used the Jeremiah Wright controversy to influence audience attitudes and their evaluations of candidates, politicians, and color-lines. Expanding our understanding is significant to narrow down misunderstandings too. Denise E. Bates (2012) says, many holes remain in our understanding of how the civil rights movements altered race relations, even beyond the black-white paradigm.

Researchers of this study insist that this attempt might help invoke an engaging dialogue on racial reconciliation and rethinking of mediating news on relative problems and possibilities that is still infrequent in America, especially in the conservative states. To achieve the purpose, the study considered different dimensions, besides the media resolve of framing and agenda-setting, of the previous scholarly studies.

**Literature Review**

**Obama's Rise to the Media Limelight**

Below the threshold many subliminal issues contribute to the media as well as public consciousness. Some researchers think that Obama's charismatic rhetoric as a young Senator brought him to the attention of the media. These scholars (Atwater, 2007; Bligh and Kohles, 2009; Clarke et al., 2011; Mercieca, 2012; Murphy, 2011; Rowland and Jones, 2011) believe that Obama's Keynote Speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention and his book, *The Audacity of Hope* are the overall roots of his rise to the national political limelight. However, Silverstein (2011) observed media attention to Obama as ''natural'' way of doing business within the order of "message" (p. 203). There was also question how would Obama perform in the context of the national economic condition especially messed up in the last few years of George W. Bush rule (Bligh and Kohles (2009).

**Racial and Socio-economic Complexities in the Deep South**

Following Bligh et al. (2009), Lewis-Beck and Nadeau (2011) think that three economic dimensions – valence, position, and patrimony – appear to have contributed considerably to the likelihood of an Obama vote nationally. Michelitch et al. (2012), and Desmond King and Rogers Smith (2008) in their studies found that though today's racial orders are not only aligned with the two major parties, but also related to economically-based political conflicts. A belt known as Deep South which includes Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana is undeniably known as the most "conservative closed society" (Davies, 2001), where as of now the racist Ku Klux Klan (KKK) has been "'playing its 'prank exclusively on blacks" (Newton, 2010, p. 3). In the Deep South newspapers usually follow their social agenda that tended to reflect white viewpoints "with the guiding principles of their Southern upbringing and the mores of their communities" (Davies, 2001, p. 12).

Some newspapers later adopted integrationist and independent strategies in regards to news coverage (Bennett, 2001). Studies of Corey Columb and Ashby Plant (2011), Greenwald et al. (2009), Kaiser et al. (2009), Payne et al. (2010), and Ward Kay and Jeremy Mayer (2010) found both the implicit and explicit white race leaning to vote for a white candidate, independent of political ideology. They suggest that the voting pattern and outcomes of the U.S. presidential elections still make an effect on the basis of the candidate's race, besides persona and other issues that reflects through the media mirror that scholars call agenda-setting, framing, priming.

**Shaping Persona in the media**

The news media, with their position at the intersection of various political and socioeconomic environments, become a crucial forum to establish the ideas and opinions. Sperry and Sperry (2007) stated that the media played a central role throughout American elections by "crafting our meaning making and shaping our decision making" about campaigns, candidates, and their parties, though sometimes candidates themselves craft the "impression" in the media (p. 366).  They showed an example of a cartoon that the American Eagle saved the Constitution from Jefferson, who was perceived to be overly inspired by French revolutionary values.

Kristen Hoerl (2012) maintains that the mainstream press frequently characterized the election of President Barack Obama as the realization of Martin Luther King's dream, and "the culmination of the civil rights struggle" (p. 185). Characterization of Obama's election functioned to reinforce hegemonic narratives of national transcendence, progress, and unity. These "reductionist narratives" Hoerl (2012) usually pertain to the greater canvases known as agenda-setting of the media.

**Agenda-Setting and Framing of in the News Media**

Agenda-Setting through framing ideas and thoughts for persuading public opinion is a major function of the media. Denis McQuail (2010) argues that either the event organizers or the media themselves are in a position to influence the way news is reported by fulfilling their own wishes or expectations. According to Robert Entman (2007), and McCombs & Shaw (1972), the media do not only tell the public what to think, but also tell what to think about. In many cases, the media prefer tactical stories over more in-depth policy coverage. The topic and tone coverage relative to a candidate are framed by the media and can have an impact on public opinion (Golan, 2006).

Framing is the second stage, i.e. functional part of agenda setting. McCombs and Shaw (1972), who developed the theory of agenda-setting, assert that the mass media have a strong influence on what the public (audiences) consider the important issue of the day.

In this way, the media not only provide information for the people to consider some events as the most important issues, but also promote certain issues or demote some relative to their policies and purposes. So, a frame is generally a determinant to tell the readers/audiences about the nature of attribution of issues in a news storyline. Sometimes journalists invent certain frames and they also use existing frames in their reports and narratives.

Arguing on the framing, Aalberg, Strömbäck, and de Vreese (2012) stated that the news media frame politics as a strategic game (known as horse race) rather than focusing on political issues. According to them, the strategy is characterized by a focus on who is winning and losing, the performances of politicians and parties, and campaign strategies and tactics. In this way, the press makes "strategy schema" where "candidates are seen as performers" (Aalberg et al., 2012, p. 166). In the game, the dominant frame takes the mode known as priming, signified according to the amount of time, frequency and order of appearance of various elements or contents.

Analysis of media contents identifies those frames, tones etc. According to Fico, Lacy, and Riffe (2008), content analysis is an essential step to understanding mass communication effects on the readers and audiences. Many of the content analyses of the visual representations of candidates are in print media (Platz, 2010). Hence, this researcher makes an effort to unearth the race-view of the Deep South press on the basis of extant studies, especially deploying six frames shown by Jesper Strömbäck and Daniela Dimitrova (2006). The frames are Sensationalism frame, horse-race frame, political strategy frame, news management frame, politicians as individuals frame, and conflict frame. These frames, along with other concepts, are defined in the Method Section. The study thus attempts to ascertain the relevance of the race-related complexities in the press coverage by adopting some research questions.

### Research Questions (RQs)

A content analysis of the *Ledger, News, and Picayune* focuses on the 2012 presidential election coverage in terms of topics, frame, tone, sources, and coverage amount to determine what resemblances and, or variances exist among the three newspapers— statewide and regionally.

   **RQ1**: How *Ledger, News, and Picayune* differ in their framing news and opinion stories on 2012 presidential election—across candidates—Obama and Romney?
   **RQ2**: How *Ledger, News, and Picayune* differ in terms of positive, negative, and neutral (tone) between Obama and Romney?
   **RQ3**: How *Ledger, News, and Picayune* differ in race-related coverage between Obama and Romney?
   **RQ4**: How *Ledger, News, and Picayune* differ in mentioning/referring the presidential candidates across the party lines?
   **RQ5**: How *Ledger, News, and Picayune* differ in their utilization of different sources as well as news and opinion stories?

The focus of all these questions is to discover race-related mindset of the press coverage while all other variables (frame, tone etc.) in other questions mediate with that and reflect on the candidates' winning and losing (horse-race) factors. The variables of the research questions and their operationalization are supported by scholarly views. "Substantive attributes and their tone emphasized in the media are likely to predict attitude toward candidates" (Kim and McCombs (2007, p. 310). Those protrude as common frames in the U.S. newspapers (Strömbäck and Dimitrova, 2006).

### Research Method

### Rationale of Choosing the Newspapers

Distinct representational differences may exist along the newspapers, especially by their circulation and editorial policy that reflect a great importance attached to their local identity, ideology, and policy. All three newspapers have the largest circulations in the respective states. Even, *Picayune* (133,557, 60th) and *News* (103,729, 78th) are considered among the largest newspapers in the U.S., according to *Mondo Times*, an organization maintaining worldwide newspaper circulations (2012). The *Ledger* has also about 100,000 circulations. However, the newspapers follow different news/editorial policies—*Ledger* follows independent policy (Ladd, 2006), *News* anonymous, and *Picayune* moderate (Nolan, 2012).

### Data Collection

Newspaper archive, *ProQuest*, has been the source of data collection. The contents of the news stories of *Ledger, News, and Picayune* are covered for the election year 2012 (January to December). The presidential election was held on November 6. A few days after the election are covered to see the evaluative and analytical stories.

**Unit of Analysis and the Sample**

The study has a total of 55 stories from three newspapers-- 17 for *Ledger*, 15 for *News*, and 23 for *Picayune*. The universe of this research project is all election related news and views, while the population is 55 stories. All 55 (N) populations are taken as a sample (n), as convenient sampling, and also because of fewer numbers of articles. These stories include the special reports, byline reports, agency reports, byline analytical articles, and editorials/opinions. Therefore, the unit of analysis is each story relative to 2012 US presidential election. The units are categorized as "news" and "opinion." The unit of analysis is based on each specific research question (RQ).

**Operational Definitions of Variables (Coding Categories) and Values for Each Variable:**

The independent variables in the *Clarion-Ledger, Birmingham News, and Times-Picayune* are types of news stories which will be according to frames, tones, race, sources etc. The news stories are different on the basis of incidents. So, the frames, tones, race mentions of the candidates, and sources are central organizing themes, The dependent variables are those different types of frames, tones, and sources as defined below.

**Name of Newspaper**: In which newspaper the news item and/or opinion/editorial was/were published. **News Story/article** includes specific, undeniable facts about an event, circumstance, individual(s) etc. written by its staff and/or got from the news agencies. **Opinion items** are editorial, signed or non-signed analytical articles, letters to the editor etc.

**Frames:** A frame means the overall nature of attribution of issue(s) and persons in a news story which are common in the U.S. newspapers (Strömbäck and Dimitrova, 2006, p. 139).. The researcher determines the frame of the particular news story and assigns value provided herewith: **Sensationalism Frame**: This frame is related to the "breathlessness" quality of news and opinion and over the play of a nominal issue. **Conflict frame**: This frame covered whether there was a substantial level of conflict in the news and views. **Horse-race Frame**: This frame covered news and views focused on winning or losing in the battle for votes. This is related to mainly strategic issues, not personal ones. **Political strategy Frame**: This frame is of news and views focused on why the parties or candidates act as they do with regard to electoral/opinion gains. **Campaign factors**: such as candidate's campaign finances, message, staff etc. **Politicians as individuals (Persona):** This frame covered news and views focused on politicians as persons with different attributes, characters, and behaviors rather than as spokespersons for certain policies; and candidate's **leadership competence:** credibility, morality, caring about people etc**. Candidates not mentioned**: The election issue might be discussed without mentioning candidates or related names.

**Tone**: The tone tells reader about the overall nature of a story—whether the story is complementary, neutral or against the issue in question. Tones are: **Positive**: A positive tone is identified by news stories which are overall complimentary toward the race of Obama or Romney. **Negative**: The negative tone identifies the news stories which are against Obama or Romney. **Neutral**: The neutral tone is neither clearly complimentary nor against toward candidates. **Not applicable**: If candidate name was not mentioned, then it may not be relevant to positive, negative, and neutrality.

**Sources**: A source can be an individual or organization. For this study, the first source of a news story will be the primary source. **Official Sources**: The official sources are any election or other officials who work with the government and election commission. **Unofficial Sources**: The unofficial sources are all sources other than government/election commission officials. **Own sources**: Own sources include reporters, writers, and news agencies used.

**Coverage Amount/Times:** This will count the number of times each candidate is mentioned in the article. Only references to the candidates' proper name – such as "Barack Obama", "Barack", "Obama", "Mitt Romney", "Mitt", "Romney", "other relative people and issues will be counted. For **Barack Obama**, party and their family members/Democrats; for **Mitt Romney**, family, and party members/Republicans come together.

**Inter-coder Reliability**

To assess the inter-coder reliability, researchers followed Holsti's coefficient of reliability (CR) formula (CR= 2M /N1 + N2. M= number of coding decisions agreed on by two coders. N= the total number of coding decisions by each coder). This is the straightforward and easy form of inter-coder reliability for making references by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of messages/contents.

Although, 70% (.70) agreement is accepted in Holsti's formula, most publications/researchers accept 80% (.80). This study, however, had 92% (.92) agreement by the coders to ensure reliability.

To analyze the findings on the basis of variables/RQs, statistical measures are used--Chi-Square for nominal variables and ANOVA for ordinal variables. This might suggest what the three newspapers had had significant/meaningful consistencies and, or contrasts in racial attitudes in their 2012 US presidential election coverage. The research tried to understand that if the newspaper readers received the same information and yet exhibited different voter behavior, then what were other reasons?

**Findings**

This research paper adopted five research questions (RQs) for all variables involving frame, race, and tone, mention of the candidates, and story sources and types. The story/article sources are in the same question (RQ 5) but are analyzed separately. The first question on newspapers' framing of the candidates— Obama and Romney— show that political strategy was the most important frame for all three newspapers—*Clarion-Ledger (CL), Birmingham News (BN), and Times-Picayune (TP)*—10, 13, and 10—respectively (Figure 1). Even, candidates' names were not mentioned in the second highest number. Horse-race and sensation frames were 3rd and 4th respectively. The newspapers took the conflict frame at the least. The Chi-Square tests for Obama Frames are not significant (df=8=13.36, p=.093, p>.05). However, for Romney the difference is significant (df=10= 21.16, p=.022, p<.05).

**Figure 1** The position of some important variables in *Ledger*, *News*, & *Picayune* 2012 Presidential Election

| Index | Frame | | Tone | | Race | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Dependent Variable** | **Number of Observations Obama---Romney** | **Dependent Variable** | **Number of Observations Obama---Romney** | **Dependent Variable** | **Number of Observations Obama--Romney** |
| 1 | Sensation | 4----------3 | Positive | 7-----------13 | CL | 14---------15 |
| 2 | Conflict | 2----------3 | Negative | 10 ……….4 | BN | 13---------14 |
| 3 | Horse-race | 5----------5 | Neutral | 30----------33 | TP | 17----------17 |
| 4 | Political | 33-------33 | N/A | 8-------------5 | | |
| 5 | Persona | 0-----------2 | | | | |
| 6 | Not mentioned | 11---------9 | | | | |
| Sample size (*n*) | | 55-------55 | | 55----------55 | | 44---------46 |

The second question is for tone toward candidates and is found neutral in the highest number (33) and positive (13) being the second. Interestingly, the tones for both the candidates are significant. Figure 2 data analysis reveals, all newspapers irrespective of their portraying either positive or negative traits about two presidential candidate's camps.

**Fig. 2: Tone Used to Portray Two Candidates (Three Newspapers)**
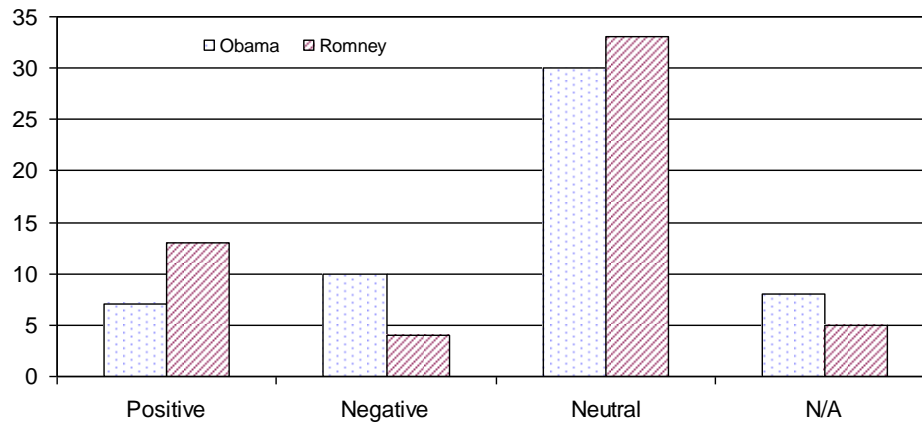


However, the three newspapers were also found different in their treatment (tone) of the candidates. For Obama, the difference significance level is: df=6=15.03, p=.023, p<.05. For Romney: df=6=22.45, p=.002, p<.05. This was the trend for all three newspapers individually also. Here, we can see this significance that Figure 3 conform similar predictions as it illustrated in Figure 2. However, the *Times-Picayune* is the one which most of the times reported news about two presidential candidates by locating itself in the neutral position i.e., neither biased to Barak Obama nor Mitt Romney.

**Fig. 3: Tone Used by Three Newspapers Irrespective of Candidates**
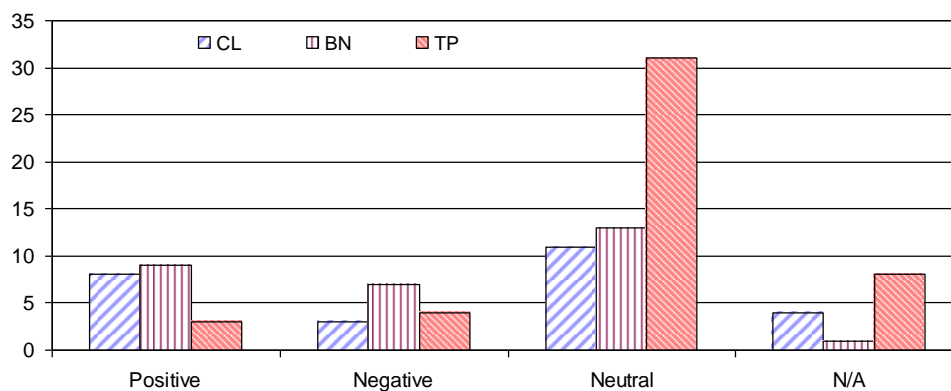


The race issue (RQ 3) related data was analyzed by One-Way ANOVA. The three newspapers mentioned race related to Obama 18 times in total and 11 times for Romney, *Ledger* being the highest for both the candidates (8 and 7 times) and *News* (*BN*) being the lowest (4 and 1). Obama's race mention level is (M=6.58, SD=2.64), df=2, F2, 15=.93, p=.41, p>.05, while the Romney level is (M=1.36, SD=.67) df=2, F2, 8=.15, p=.86, p>.05. But in overall mentioned times (RQ 4), Romney (46) was covered more (by counts/times) than Obama (44). Here, for Obama (M=5.45, SD=4.71) df=2, F2, 41=.42, p=.66, p>.05 and for Romney (M=10, SD=11), df=2, F2,43=2.77, p=.074, p>.05. Most mentioned case also supports the mention of times (RQ 4). Here, Chi-Square analysis shows that df=4=2.70, p=.17, p>.05. Therefore, the most mention between Obama and Romney is not significant in both the ANOVA and Chi-Square analyses.

The newspapers' story/article sources-related question (RQ 5) is found significant, being unofficial sources in the highest numbers (27), and official source numbers lowest (7). The Chi-Square analysis is df=4=2.70, p=.02, p<.05. In the same RQ, the news is the bigger number (45) than opinion number (10). The Chi-Square analysis of news and opinion shows the difference significant (df=2=13.81, p=.001, p<.05).

The results on the basis of research questions, in sum, are partially significant. Obama frame (RQ1) is not significant, but Romney frame is. Tones of the newspapers for both candidates are significant (RQ 2). RQ 3 & RQ 4 for race and mentions of candidates are not significant. RQ 5 for both news-views source and types (news & opinion) is significant. However, race bias is not mere a matter of statistical figures, it needs heuristic analyses.

**Discussions**

The purpose of the study was to explore race-related bias in the South Deep press through different popular frames, tones, number of citation times, source variations, and explicitly or implicitly cited race issues. The newspapers—*Ledger, News, and Picayune*—tended to stay politically conscious (as in the RQ 1) in the case of 2012 presidential election. The same consciousness might have also influenced the newspapers to remain mostly neutral (tone, as in the RQ 2) in most of the news reports and opinions. Even, though the very low number, "candidates not mentioned" frame was the second highest (9) preference for three newspapers together. This might have happened mainly because of national economic recession, and political upheaval in the international arena, especially in the middle-east, to which election campaigns and TV debates were also concentrated. The newspapers might have less opportunity of focusing on issues with the texture of sensation, conflict, and personal aspects of the politicians. More interestingly, the *News* covering all 15 items of news and views from unofficial and own sources had the highest number of political frame (13) for each of the candidates. However, the *News* has covered Obama-related items most negatively (7) with none for Romney. This trend is exposed from its highest positive treatment of Romney (9).

The race issue, count of candidates' names mention, and count of most mentioned for both Obama and Romney are insignificant. This means the three newspapers avoided race-related (explicit or implicit) issues, which might be sensitive to their readers. These cases (as in RQs 3 and 4), i.e., not referring to names and races also expose their improvement in cautiousness about race relations. No newspaper characterized Obama with personal reference (persona) while Romney came once in the *Ledger* and once in the *News*, especially for his faith issue which was not even appreciative (discussed by a group of Mormons). While, all three newspapers maintained neutrality (tone) as their highest policy; *Picayune* covered more neutral stories for Romney (16) than for Obama (15), the *Ledger* having the same trend.

What the researchers found here is that, although this content analysis reflects the neutral tone of the newspapers and their remarkable shift from race-bias (usual against the minority candidate) there is still inclination of negativity toward Obama and minority race that scholars like Payne et al. (2010) and Silverstein (2011) found in their news-based studies. This trend might be a pointer of the "post-racial America in the age of Obama" (Balkaran, 2015; Hughey, 2011), although many scholars such as Knowles et al. (2009) do not agree with that viewpoint.

**Conclusions and Implications**

News and editorial policy of the press reflect a great importance attached to their local identity, ideology, and policy. Economic and political systems of the south are quite powerful to shape its media (Anderson, 2015). The researchers, however, found that the three newspapers seem to avoid race issues by following their declared integrationist, moderate and independent policy (at least by *Ledger* and *Picayune*) and considering greater readerships in the changing demographics of the region. The *News* also showed a less bias but neutral tone, although it has a negative tone toward President Obama. Professional journalism, added with changes in staff members as well as readerships, might have contributed to the changes in framing news and views of these newspapers.

The limitation of this study is the limited numbers of articles—only 55 were available from different sources for the three newspapers. This limited number of items might not have fully reflected their 2012 presidential election coverage— whether it was much race-neutral or not.  The *Clarion-Ledger* had no items from January to May 2012. The limited numbers, as well as lapses of the period, seem to be strange for such newspapers with statewide circulation covering a national election especially in the year of the election.

Since there is no study on the 2012 presidential election, especially in the Deep South, this study might open up new outlook in mainstream journalism in the Deep South. Future studies can work on projects such as comparing Southern news media coverage of national and local elections with those of the Northern newspapers supposedly "liberal" to see the trend of framing issues relative to race. Although this study observed some positive, i.e., less-bias trend toward candidates' race (Obama) in three newspapers, it is yet to know what impacts their coverage made on the voters' decision-making process for choosing a candidate. Obama's defeat by Romney with big margins in the southern states leads to new questions. Why Obama could not win or at least narrow down the gap in the south when some mainstream newspapers were not unfavorable toward him? Why not the public responses peppered the pages of the press? Is it the public that ignored the press' apparent new "race-neutral" role?

Though the findings may vary depending on the contemporary empirical studies, the researchers may find clue in the recent resurgence of white nationalism in the U.S., as Jack Jenkins and Dylan Petrohilos (2016) indicate on the basis of a Southern Poverty Law Center study. Confederate line, culture of corrupt politics cannot be ignored much yet.  William J. Barber (2016, March 12, 2016) thinks that it is not mere "Trumpism," it is inherent in the historic polemics of segregation with the special texture of the South, pitting "us-against-them politics with a perverse idea of morality." New research may focus on why the Republican frontrunner's tirade targeting the immigrants, Muslims, Hispanics and other minorities, journalists and the disabled often gets so much raucous approval from thousands of chanting partisans?

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**Appendix A**

**Coding Sheet**
2012 Presidential Election Newspaper Coverage (Clarion-Ledger, Birmingham News, and Times-Picayune)
(Please Mark one as Appropriate)
v1. Name of article_____
v2. Date/Month article published: _____
v3. In which newspaper did the story publish? (Mark one)
_____ Clarion-Ledger (1)
_____ Birmingham News (2)
_____ Times-Picayune (3)

v4. Was the story a **news or opinion** article? (Mark one)
_____ News (1)
_____ Opinion (2)

v5. What is the **source** of the story? (Mark one)
_____ Official (1)
_____ Unofficial (2)
_____Own:  Clarion Ledger or Birmingham News or Times-Picayune (3)

v6. How **many times** were the candidates mentioned in the article?
_____ Obama and colleagues                    _____ Romney and colleagues

v7. Based on Question 6, which presidential candidate was **mentioned the most**? (Mark one)
_____ Obama (1)
_____ Romney (2)
_____ Tie/Equal between candidates (3)

v8. What core **Frame (Attribution)** was covered in the story, pertaining to **each candidate**?
    **Obama**           **Romney**
_____ Sensationalism Frame (1)      _____ Sensationalism Frame (1)
_____ Conflict frame (2)        _____ Conflict frame (2)
_____ Horse-race Frame (3)      _____ Horse-race Frame (3)
_____ Political strategy Frame (4)    _____ Political strategy Frame (4)
_____Politicians as individuals (Persona) **(5)** _____ Politicians as individuals (Persona) (5)
_____ Candidate not mentioned in article (6)   _____ Candidate not mentioned in article (6)

v9. How many times **race/ethnicity** related to candidates (Explicitly or implicitly) mentioned?

_____**Obama**              _____**Romney**

   v10. What was the coverage **tone** of each candidate? (Mark one for each candidate)
    **Obama**           **Romney**
_____ Positive (1)         _____ Positive (1)
_____ Negative (2)        _____ Negative (2)
_____ Neutral or unclear (3)     _____ Neutral or unclear (3)
_____ Not applicable    (4)     _____ Not applicable    (4)

## CODEBOOK
**Introduction:** The purpose of this research is to investigate race effect through frames, tones, sources, and candidate personalities in coverage of the U.S. Presidential election 2012.
**Coding Instructions:** These coding instructions will help the coders to ascertain how to code the items.

**General Idea: Universe**: The universe of this project is the news stories of *the Clarion-Ledger, the Birmingham News, and the Times-Picayune*. These news stories include the special reports, byline reports, agency reports, and byline analytical articles, and editorials. The duration of coverage is the election year (January-December, 2012).

**Unit of analysis**: The unit of analysis is each news story of the according to types of news and duration stated in the universe. Different types of frames, tones, sources, and persona are as defined below: ]

**Name of Newspaper**: In which newspaper the news item and/or opinion/editorial was/were published.

1=Clarion-Ledger

2=Birmingham News

3=Times-Picayune

**News items** include specific, undeniable facts about an event, circumstance, individual(s) etc. written by its staff and/or got from the news agencies.

**Opinion items** are editorial, signed or non-signed analytical articles, letters to the editor etc..

1=News item

2=Opinion

**Sources**: A source can be an individual or organization. For this study, the first source of a news story will be the primary source.

1= **Official Sources**: The official sources are any election or other officials who work with the government and election commission. For example……..

2= **Unofficial Sources**: The unofficial sources are all sources other than government/election commission officials. For example,

3= **Own sources**: The correspondents and/or its designated news agencies, writers of the *Clarion-Ledger, Birmingham news,* and the *Times-Picayune*.

**Coverage Amount:** This will count the number of times each candidate is mentioned in the article. Only references to the candidates' proper name – such as "Barack Obama", "Barack", "Obama", "Mitt Romney", "Mitt", "Romney", "Paul", "Ryan", "Joe Biden", "Joe", "Biden" – and other relative people and issues will be counted.

1=Barack Obama, and Joe Biden, and their family members/democrats and phrases such as "Democratic candidate", "senator", "President", "Governor" or "US Rep" (in reference to any of them) will be counted together.

2=Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan and their family members/democrats and phrases such as "Republican candidate", "senator", "former President", "Governor" or "US Rep" (in reference to any of them) will be counted together. No mention will remain blank.

Note: There will be more variables in course of coding, such as on date, month of publication.

**Frames (Attributions):** A frame means the overall nature of attribution of issue(s) and persons in a news story. The researcher determines the frame of the particular news story and assigns value provided herewith:

**1=Sensationalism Frame**: This frame is related to the "breathlessness" quality of a news story and/over play of a nominal issue. For example: changes in campaign staff, volunteer efforts and enthusiasm, and satiric/dramatic comments about a candidate.

**2=Conflict frame**: This frame will cover whether there was a substantial level of conflict in the news story. For example: scandals, internal/external campaign strife, and voter fraud.

**3=Horse-race Frame**: This frame will cover news story focused on winning or losing in the battle for votes. This will cover mainly strategic issues, not personal ones. For example: mentions of a candidate's poll numbers expectations, chances or strategies for winning and why a candidate is winning/losing.

**4=Political strategy Frame**: This frame will cover news story focused on why the parties or candidates act as they do with regard to electoral/opinion gains. For example: comments referring to a candidate and a major issues, such as the economy, foreign policy, and social issues; **Campaign factors**: such as candidate's campaign finances, message, staff etc.

**5=Politicians as individuals (Persona):** This frame will cover news story focused on politicians as persons with different attributes, characters, and behaviors rather than as spokespersons for certain policies. For example: professional/personal awards, personal background, experience, qualifications, family (pride in family) personal/professional ties; faith; Candidate's **leadership competence**: credibility, morality, caring about people etc.

**6= Candidate not in article**: The election issue can be discussed in general without mentioning candidates' names, party, and family.

**Race/Ethnicity**: Race and ethnicity will cover mentions explicit or implicit relative to candidates (Obama and Romney and their families and colleagues). **Explicit**: This will mean race/ethnicity is directly mentioned as black, white, Hispanic, Asian etc.; and **Implicit**: This will mean which is mentioned in regard to socio-economic status (SES/class) issue etc. Explicit and implicit will be taken together.

**Tone**: The tone tells reader about the overall nature of a story—whether the story is complementary, neutral or against the issue in question. Here, we determine the following tones:

1=**Positive**: A positive tone is identified by news stories which are overall complimentary toward the race of Obama. For example, a story headlined, …….

2=**Negative**: The negative tone identifies the news stories which are against Obama. For example, a news story headlined, …….

3=**Neutral**: The neutral tone is neither clearly complimentary nor against toward Obama. For example, a story headlined, …..

4=**Not Relevant**: This will apply if election issue is discussed without mentioning one or both candidate(s).

Appendix B
Frames
**Case Processing Summary**

|  | Cases | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Valid | | Missing | | Total | |
|  | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent |
| the type of newspaper * frames of Obama | 55 | 100.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 55 | 100.0% |
| the type of newspaper * frames of Romney | 55 | 100.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 55 | 100.0% |

**Crosstab**
Count

|  |  | frames of Obama | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | sensation | conflict | horse-race | political strategy | not mentioned |  |
| the type of newspaper | Clarion-Ledger | 1 | 2 | 1 | 10 | 3 | 17 |
|  | Birmingham News | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 2 | 15 |
|  | Times-Picayune | 3 | 0 | 4 | 10 | 6 | 23 |
| Total |  | 4 | 2 | 5 | 33 | 11 | 55 |

**Chi-Square Tests**

|  | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 13.594[a] | 8 | .093 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 15.635 | 8 | .048 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .012 | 1 | .914 |
| N of Valid Cases | 55 |  |  |

a. 12 cells (80.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .55.

**Crosstab**

Count

|  |  | frames of Romney | | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | sensation | conflict | horse-race | political | politician persona | not mentioned |  |
| the type of newspaper | Clarion-Ledger | 0 | 3 | 1 | 10 | 1 | 2 | 17 |
|  | Birmingham News | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 1 | 1 | 15 |
|  | Times-Picayune | 3 | 0 | 4 | 10 | 0 | 6 | 23 |
| Total |  | 3 | 3 | 5 | 33 | 2 | 9 | 55 |

**Chi-Square Tests**

|  | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 20.869[a] | 10 | .022 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 23.973 | 10 | .008 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .017 | 1 | .897 |
| N of Valid Cases | 55 |  |  |

a. 15 cells (83.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .55.

Most Mentioned

**Case Processing Summary**

|  | Cases | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Valid | | Missing | | Total | |
|  | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent |
| the type of newspaper * obama or romney | 55 | 100.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 55 | 100.0% |

**the type of newspaper * obama or romney Crosstabulation**

Count

|  |  | obama or romney | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | obama | romney | tie |  |
| the type of newspaper | Clarion-Ledger | 9 | 6 | 2 | 17 |
|  | Birmingham News | 2 | 9 | 4 | 15 |
|  | Times-Picayune | 6 | 11 | 6 | 23 |
| Total |  | 17 | 26 | 12 | 55 |

**Chi-Square Tests**

|  | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 6.515[a] | 4 | .164 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 6.608 | 4 | .158 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 2.737 | 1 | .098 |
| N of Valid Cases | 55 |  |  |

a. 3 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.27.

Sources

**Case Processing Summary**

|  | Cases | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Valid | | Missing | | Total | |
|  | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent |
| the type of newspaper * type of source | 55 | 100.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 55 | 100.0% |

**the type of newspaper * type of source Crosstabulation**
Count

|  |  | type of source | | | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | official | unofficial | own |  |
| the type of newspaper | Clarion-Ledger | 6 | 6 | 5 | 17 |
|  | Birmingham News | 0 | 8 | 7 | 15 |
|  | Times-Picayune | 1 | 13 | 9 | 23 |
| Total |  | 7 | 27 | 21 | 55 |

**Chi-Square Tests**

|  | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 11.584[a] | 4 | .021 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 11.764 | 4 | .019 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 3.136 | 1 | .077 |
| N of Valid Cases | 55 |  |  |

a. 3 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.91.

News & Opinion
**Case Processing Summary**

|  | Cases | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Valid | | Missing | | Total | |
|  | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent |
| the type of newspaper * type of article | 55 | 100.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 55 | 100.0% |

**the type of newspaper * type of article Crosstabulation**
Count

|  |  | type of article | | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | news | opinion |  |
| the type of newspaper | Clarion-Ledger | 14 | 3 | 17 |
|  | Birmingham News | 8 | 7 | 15 |
|  | Times-Picayune | 23 | 0 | 23 |
| Total |  | 45 | 10 | 55 |

**Chi-Square Tests**

|  | Value | df | Asymp.    Sig. (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 13.296[a] | 2 | .001 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 15.584 | 2 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 2.807 | 1 | .094 |
| N of Valid Cases | 55 |  |  |

a. 3 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.73.

Tones

**Case Processing Summary**

|  | Cases | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Valid | | Missing | | Total | |
|  | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent |
| the type of newspaper * tones for obama | 55 | 100.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 55 | 100.0% |
| the type of newspaper * tones for romney | 55 | 100.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 55 | 100.0% |

**Crosstab**

Count

|  |  | tones for obama | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | positive | negative | neutral | not applicable |  |
| the type of newspaper | Clarion-Ledger | 4 | 2 | 8 | 3 | 17 |
|  | Birmingham News | 0 | 7 | 7 | 1 | 15 |
|  | Times-Picayune | 3 | 1 | 15 | 4 | 23 |
| Total |  | 7 | 10 | 30 | 8 | 55 |

**Chi-Square Tests**

|  | Value | df | Asymp.    Sig. (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 14.676[a] | 6 | .023 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 15.501 | 6 | .017 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 1.096 | 1 | .295 |
| N of Valid Cases | 55 |  |  |

a. 9 cells (75.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.91.

**Crosstab**

Count

|  |  | tones for romney | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | positive | negative | neutral | not applicable |  |
| the type of newspaper | Clarion-Ledger | 4 | 1 | 11 | 1 | 17 |
|  | Birmingham News | 9 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 15 |
|  | Times-Picayune | 0 | 3 | 16 | 4 | 23 |
| Total |  | 13 | 4 | 33 | 5 | 55 |

**Chi-Square Tests**

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 20.730[a] | 6 | .002 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 25.660 | 6 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 3.803 | 1 | .051 |
| N of Valid Cases | 55 | | |

a. 8 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.09.

ANOVA for Times

**Descriptives**

| | | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean | | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound | | |
| times of obama | Clarion-Ledger | 14 | 4.8571 | 5.43291 | 1.45201 | 1.7203 | 7.9940 | 1.00 | 20.00 |
| | Birmingham News | 13 | 6.4615 | 4.92638 | 1.36633 | 3.4846 | 9.4385 | 1.00 | 16.00 |
| | Times-Picayune | 17 | 5.1765 | 4.03478 | .97858 | 3.1020 | 7.2510 | 1.00 | 15.00 |
| | Total | 44 | 5.4545 | 4.71245 | .71043 | 4.0218 | 6.8873 | 1.00 | 20.00 |
| times of romney | Clarion-Ledger | 15 | 5.8667 | 4.80872 | 1.24161 | 3.2037 | 8.5296 | 1.00 | 17.00 |
| | Birmingham News | 14 | 14.9286 | 13.89225 | 3.71286 | 6.9074 | 22.9497 | 1.00 | 45.00 |
| | Times-Picayune | 17 | 9.6471 | 10.62392 | 2.57668 | 4.1847 | 15.1094 | 2.00 | 48.00 |
| | Total | 46 | 10.0217 | 10.78783 | 1.59058 | 6.8181 | 13.2253 | 1.00 | 48.00 |

**ANOVA**

| | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| times of obama | Between Groups | 19.493 | 2 | 9.747 | .427 | .655 |
| | Within Groups | 935.416 | 41 | 22.815 | | |
| | Total | 954.909 | 43 | | | |
| times of romney | Between Groups | 598.434 | 2 | 299.217 | 2.774 | .074 |
| | Within Groups | 4638.544 | 43 | 107.873 | | |
| | Total | 5236.978 | 45 | | | |

36

ANOVA for Race
**Descriptives**

| | | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean | | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound | | |
| race of obama | Clarion-Ledger | 8 | 2.7500 | 2.12132 | .75000 | .9765 | 4.5235 | 1.00 | 6.00 |
| | Birmingham News | 4 | 1.5000 | 1.00000 | .50000 | -.0912 | 3.0912 | 1.00 | 3.00 |
| | Times-Picayune | 6 | 3.8333 | 3.76386 | 1.53659 | -.1166 | 7.7833 | 1.00 | 11.00 |
| | Total | 18 | 2.8333 | 2.64019 | .62230 | 1.5204 | 4.1463 | 1.00 | 11.00 |
| race of romney | Clarion-Ledger | 7 | 1.4286 | .78680 | .29738 | .7009 | 2.1562 | 1.00 | 3.00 |
| | Birmingham News | 1 | 1.0000 | . | . | . | . | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| | Times-Picayune | 3 | 1.3333 | .57735 | .33333 | -.1009 | 2.7676 | 1.00 | 2.00 |
| | Total | 11 | 1.3636 | .67420 | .20328 | .9107 | 1.8166 | 1.00 | 3.00 |

**ANOVA**

| | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| race of obama | Between Groups | 13.167 | 2 | 6.583 | .938 | .413 |
| | Within Groups | 105.333 | 15 | 7.022 | | |
| | Total | 118.500 | 17 | | | |
| race of romney | Between Groups | .165 | 2 | .082 | .150 | .863 |
| | Within Groups | 4.381 | 8 | .548 | | |
| | Total | 4.545 | 10 | | | |