

# The White Pages: Diversity and the Mediation of Race in Public Business Media

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**C.L. Jackson**

Loyola University Chicago, USA

**David G. Embrick**

Loyola University Chicago, USA

**Carol S. Walther**

Northern Illinois University DeKalb, USA

## Abstract

In this article we examine the empirical impact of diversity on non-white participation in corporations by analyzing images of racial minorities that appear in business magazines. Our findings indicate that odds of non-white inclusion increase when explicit reference to diversity is made. We also find that non-whites are more likely to be depicted as having ancillary roles in corporations; rarely are they presented in leadership positions. Media images are not only produced and disseminated, they are translated into social practices. Therefore we also consider how the images that are included in the magazines we reviewed may inform organizational practices that shape the racial makeup of corporate workplaces. We argue that how and when non-whites are included in these media reinforces an emergent ideology, which concedes that diversity enables corporations to give discursive attention to race without prompting deep investigations into continuing patterns of racial inequality in the workplace.

## Keywords

racial diversity, diversity ideology, corporate organizations, racial inequality

## Introduction

There is little doubt that diversity has achieved wide appeal in American society (Bell and Hartmann, 2007; Embrick, 2011; Embrick and Rice, 2010; Freedman, 2004; Michaels, 2006;

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### Corresponding author:

David G. Embrick, Department of Sociology, Loyola University Chicago, 1000 W. Sheridan Road, Chicago, IL 60660, USA.

Email: dembric@luc.edu

Zweigenhaft and Domhoff, 2006). Not only does the idea of diversity have popular appeal, its value is reaffirmed in public discourse (Bell and Hartmann, 2007).<sup>1</sup> While the term diversity has been variously defined, Herring maintains that diversity 'refers to policies and practices that seek to include people who are considered in some way, different from traditional members ... diversity aims to create an inclusive culture that values and uses the talents of all would-be members' (2009: 209). This conceptualization suggests that the notion of diversity encompasses a broad array of social differences that are actively being negotiated.

More and more, corporations are implementing diversity policies (Rice, 2005; Rice and Arekere, 2005; Rice and White, 2010). Achieving racial parity is one objective of these policies.<sup>2</sup> Despite the growing availability of corporate diversity programs meant to encourage best practices,<sup>3</sup> compelling evidence suggests that racial marginalization in the workforce remains an issue of concern. For instance, the number of racial and gender discrimination lawsuits filed against corporations that have diversity programs in place have been on the rise in recent years (see Rice and Arekere, 2005). Many researchers have also found that although corporations may be discursively committed to creating racially diverse workplaces, these remain largely uninterrupted spaces for the expression of white male dominance (Burk, 2005; Collins, 1997; Embrick, 2008, 2011; Fernandez, 1999; Zweigenhaft, 1984, 1987; Zweigenhaft and Domhoff, 2006 [1998]; see also Acker, 2006; Feagin, 2005). Similarly, other analysts (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008; Unzueta and Binning, 2010) suggest that while racial minority inclusion in corporate organizations has increased over time, these minorities remain underrepresented in positions of power (i.e. authority and status positions). Thus we see a disjuncture between expressed commitment to achieving racial diversity and the actual practices occurring in American corporations (Embrick, 2011).

In this article we examine images of racial minorities<sup>4</sup> that appear in three popular business magazines in order to better understand the empirical effect of diversity programs on non-white participation in corporate organizations. Specifically, we employ negative binomial regression analysis to measure the odds of non-white inclusion in editorials, advertisements and dedicated advertising space promoting 'diversity' in *Forbes*, *Fortune* and *Money* magazines. Our findings indicate that racial minorities are more likely to be included in the magazines we reviewed when explicit reference to the idea of diversity is made; they are less likely to be included independent of this discursive frame. We also find that while racial minorities are routinely included in these magazines, they are more likely to be depicted as having ancillary roles in corporate organizations; rarely are they presented in leadership positions.

Media images are not only produced and disseminated, they are also translated into social practices (Hall, 1980). Their meanings, 'influence, entertain, instruct or persuade, with very complex perceptual, cognitive, emotional, ideological or behavioural consequences' (Hall, 1980: 509). We therefore not only examine diversity's empirical impact on non-white participation, but also take into account how the images that are included in the magazines we reviewed may inform organizational practices that shape the racial makeup of corporate workplaces. We consider how these images may support or enable common understandings about racial diversity in corporate organizations; and how the ideas carried forth may inform practices that seek to address racial inequality in American corporations. We argue that how and when racial minorities are included in the magazines we reviewed reinforces an emergent ideology, which concedes that diversity enables corporations to give discursive attention to race without prompting deep investigations into continuing patterns of racial inequality in the workplace. We end the article by discussing how our findings factor in with other research that indicates racial barriers continue to shape corporate hierarchies.

## Diversity: A New Ideology in Corporate Organizations

Although they are relatively recent phenomena, diversity programs are now commonplace in American corporate organizations.<sup>5</sup> Diversity programs emerged in corporations during the 1980s and 1990s<sup>6</sup> when laws meant to improve the access women and minorities had to the American workforce were increasingly being met with political challenges.<sup>7</sup> Then, policies like Affirmative Action, which were ratified under the law in the 1960s, were being put aside in favor of broader conceptualizations of inclusion.<sup>8</sup> Challenges to Affirmative Action were informed by two arguments emanating from American culture. The first argument suggested that the social and political actions instigated during the era of rights had fundamentally changed the nation's tendency toward racial discrimination. Therefore legal mandates meant to ensure racial parity were no longer necessary.<sup>9</sup> The second argument similarly focused upon the idea that the political and social changes of the 1960s had created a level playing field where racial differences no longer prevented the social advancement of racial minorities; and where quota-driven interventions like Affirmative Action could only create environments that encouraged 'reverse discrimination' against whites. Within this context, the idea of diversity emerged as an appealing alternative.

Important differences separate diversity from early interventions. As it relates to race, Affirmative Action and perhaps to a lesser extent multicultural efforts,<sup>10</sup> were legal mechanisms that took into account the nation's history of racial discrimination with the dual intentions of achieving parity and responding to its emerging commitment to egalitarianism, as a progressive social ideal.<sup>11</sup> Unlike Affirmative Action, diversity initiatives did not carry with them unpopular legal mandates; nor were they presumed to be policy redress for the egalitarianism that defined the country historically (DiTomaso and Smith, 1996; Thomas, 1992; see also Berrey, 2011; Bond and Pyle, 1998). Instead, diversity programs proceeded in a more neutral fashion by celebrating presumed differences between people.<sup>12</sup> If the unfair *absence* of racial others lay at the crux of public discourse and corresponding legal mechanisms up to the 1980s, then in the years that followed, the focus was upon how the *presence* of racial minorities (in the workforce and in other social institutions) acknowledged racial inclusion, as an 'always already' condition of American social life that is valued within corporate organizations.

While efforts to include racial minorities did not disappear altogether from organizational interventions (Kelly and Dobbin, 1998; see also Thomas, 1992) or their discourses (Embrick and Rice, 2010) after the 1980s, the introduction of diversity policies allowed organizations to consider race without taking socially objectionable legal actions to promote racial inclusion. Embrick (2008, 2011; see also Embrick and Rice, 2010) argues that the common understanding that emerged in the 1980s, which concedes that diversity continues to take race into account, along with a broad range of other social identities, impacts the way organizations understand and address racial imbalances. For instance in an analysis of managers of Fortune 1000 companies Embrick (2011) found that only 20 percent of managers explicitly mentioned race (or gender) when asked to define diversity, while over half the respondents (57%) included non-racial factors such as socioeconomic background and belief systems. A smaller percentage (7.5%) defined diversity as reverse discrimination of whites. No less than 15 percent of the sample provided responses that ignored all forms of institutionalized inequality (i.e. race, gender, age, disability, etc) in favor of idiosyncratic factors like having discrepant job responsibilities. As it relates to race, these findings suggest that diversity 'works hegemonically by accepting [the] language, and even the moral order of diversity, without dealing with the practical and political elements involved in creating a truly [racially] diverse workplace' (Embrick, 2008: 37).

## Data and Methods

### Data Collection

In this article we examine three popular business magazines to understand how racial diversity is depicted in a public forum. We understand business magazines to play an important role for corporate organizations. The editorials, along with other information that is included in issues, help subscribers understand the work that corporate organizations do. The magazines provide a forum where emerging trends can be discussed, and where strategies that effectively respond to them are presented. And because the content of these magazines intends to give useful information, or at least information that is believed to be relevant, they also provide opportunities to identify corporate interests.

We understand the images of racial minorities that appear in the magazines we reviewed as both a type of text that is part of an ongoing public discourse, and as markers of the success of a commonly employed organizational intervention. Cultural understandings about race and racial minorities are commonly advanced through the media (Entman and Rojecki, 2000). The ways non-whites are included (or excluded) from media forms can therefore reinforce or transform how they are understood (Deo et al., 2008). We suggest that images of non-whites that are included in business magazines provide a means of evaluating their collective experience within corporate organizations. We additionally maintain that the images contribute to common racial understandings, particularly as they are related to ongoing dialogues on racial progress in the workplace. We, therefore, use business magazines as units of analysis because of their capacity to describe corporate practices and beliefs as these relate to racial inclusion.

We reviewed the contents of three nationally recognized business magazines between the years of 1997 and 2007: *Forbes* magazine, *Money* magazine and *Fortune* magazine. *Forbes* magazine is the bi-weekly flagship publication of Forbes, a major American publishing and media company. The magazine has an annual circulation of 900,000 subscribers (not including newsstand sales). The average age of subscribers is 43 with an average yearly income of \$217,000. *Fortune* magazine, one of *Forbes*'s major competitors, is a bi-weekly magazine with an annual circulation of 830,000 subscribers whose average age is 49 and whose average annual income is \$347,500. *Money* magazine is a monthly publication that, unlike the other two magazines, caters more broadly to the finance world and has an annual circulation that includes over 1.9 million people with an average age of 48 and an average annual income of \$83,105.

Content analysis was elected as the best method because it allows researchers to analyze data both quantitatively and qualitatively, in that it identifies the frequency of certain words and subjects, but also allows a researcher to understand the context in which those subjects are used.

We first developed a coding scheme through an iterative process (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).<sup>13</sup> General coding categories for racial groups were created based on theoretical grounds and an initial examination of a sample of business editorials and advertisements. Next, we developed a coding sheet that included operational definitions for the characteristics of interest in the editorials and advertisements. We also included a section for describing and commenting on observed racialized or sexualized stereotypes appearing in editorials or advertisements. Last, we included a section that allowed us to consider race and gender, as observed on the cover pages of each magazine. Each member of the research team reviewed the initial coding sheet, noted problems, and met routinely to discuss and make any necessary changes.

All data were coded independently, with informal checks occurring periodically to ensure inter-rater agreement. Six items from the classificatory system were used to test inter-rater reliability. We examined the extent to which the coders agreed on observed instances of non-white inclusion in editorials and advertisements. We also examined the extent to which the coders agreed on observed

instances of non-white inclusion on the covers of magazines. Inter-rater agreement was also observed for editorials, advertisements and magazine covers which included images that provoked racialized stereotypes.<sup>14</sup> The lowest agreement among the coders was on observed instances of racial minorities in advertisements in which there were multiple actors whose faces were obscured or semi-obscured, thus limiting the researchers' ability to categorize them racially. The highest agreement was for the observed instances of non-whites appearing on magazine covers.

## Variables

Our study considers the likelihood of non-white representation in business magazines as predicted by four variables. First, we developed a variable called *time* to measure how representations of racial minorities change over time. The notion of diversity suggests that racial difference is one of many differences between people that are celebrated by society. The presumed value of racial diversity in corporations and other social realms anticipates a particular outcome: racial parity. Taking into account corporate organizations' expressed commitment to diversity, we use the variable, *time*, to understand how racial diversity is manifested over time in this particular forum.

Secondly, the variable *diversity* is used to predict how rates of non-white representation change in our sample. The topic of 'diversity' is often explicitly referenced in the text of the magazines included in our sample. Entire sections of some issues were dedicated to exploring diversity and the way it was carried out in organizational interventions. The pages included in these sections provided readers with information on specific programs meant to encourage diverse workplace environments. For instance, diversity sections provided organizations with a means of discussing internships made available to racial minorities who were interested in working in a particular corporate firm. At other times, the sections served as a means of conveying how diversity had been achieved in some corporate organizations. Sections dedicated to diversity described how corporate organizations had been successful at creating diverse work environments by including images of non-whites who occupied a variety of positions within their organizations. These sections tended to highlight the ways non-whites were participating in particular corporations or the broader marketplace (features that highlighted non-white participation in engineering or computer science, for instance).

Our review also found a number of instances where companies that are not based in the USA, but have high rates of participation in the American marketplace (for instance, Mitsubishi or Sony) used business magazines as forums to describe specific contributions to the business world, or organizational dynamism. While these sections were not introduced to readers under the textual umbrella of diversity, they did provide an opportunity to consider how non-whites contribute to the American marketplace. Special advertising sections that were purchased by international companies tended to give attention to topics like 'Samsung Business Ingenuity', and feature images and brief commentary on individuals in the company's workforce. Thus, these purchased spaces provide international firms with a means of showcasing leadership that might otherwise be excluded from these magazines.

The relative frequency of each of these types of section allows us to measure diversity empirically. We predict that rates of non-white participation will increase when *diversity* is present.

*Advertisements* and *editorials* are also used as predictor variables in our study. For some scholars (Unzueta and Binning, 2010; see also Collins, 1993, 1997; DiTomaso et al., 2007) differentiating between numerical (i.e. number of non-whites occupying corporate positions in general) and hierarchical (i.e. number of non-whites occupying positions of power or status) representation is important, as it relates to racial diversity. Numerical representation may indicate that non-whites

are included in corporate organizations, but it does not clarify the quality of integration they experience. Considering hierarchical representation therefore provides an opportunity to describe the extent that non-whites occupy positions of power or status – those positions that reflect full integration rather than those that convey the idea that non-whites play only ancillary roles in corporate workplaces. By differentiating between these categories, qualitative differences in the ways that racial minorities are included can be adequately described. We analyze numerical representation by considering the number of times that racial minorities are featured in advertisements and editorials. Hierarchical representation is analyzed by considering the number of times racial minorities are the focal point of a particular issue (i.e. featured in a magazine editorial).

The final variable considers non-white representations that appear on the *magazine covers* of all issues in our sample. Magazine covers have the potential to persuade consumer buy-in. They also convey the central focus of a particular issue. Analyzing how racial minorities are included on magazine covers therefore provides another opportunity to assess how substantive non-white participation is made apparent in this particular public forum.

In this study, we investigate the following hypotheses:

H1: Non-white representation in the magazines will more likely be in advertisements as the issue year of the magazines increases.

H2: Magazines that adhere more closely to corporate culture will be more likely to have non-white representation in advertisements, when compared to the reference category.

H3: Magazines that include the diversity variable will be more likely to have non-white representation in advertisements, when compared to issues that do not include a section dedicated to diversity.

H4: Non-white representation in the magazines will more likely be in editorials as the issue year of the magazines increases.

H5: Magazines that adhere more closely to corporate culture will be more likely to have non-white representation in editorials, when compared to the reference category.

H6: Magazines that include the diversity variable will be more likely to have non-white representation in editorials, when compared to issues that do not include a section dedicated to diversity.

## Measures

The count data for non-whites in advertisements and general editorials are relatively low. According to Cameron and Trivedi (1998: 2), in data sets that include low count data, 'Common regression estimators and models, such as ordinary least squares in the linear regression model, ignore the restricted support for the dependent variable.' Given the distribution of our count data, the negative binomial regression model allows for the completion of effective analyses. Therefore, within our study, we incorporate negative binomial regression analyses to determine counts of non-whites in advertisements and general editorials.

Our study considers non-white representation in both editorials and advertisements as outcome variables. The year the issue was published, magazine type (i.e. *Money*, *Forbes*, and *Fortune*), the inclusion of a non-white person (or persons) on the cover, and the presence of diversity as a section in an issue were used as predictor variables in our study. Within our study, the dependent measures are derived from count data of blacks, Asians, and Latinos in advertisements and editorials occurring in a given issue. The data indicate that blacks have the highest mean (9.61) for advertisements and Asians have the highest mean (5.37) for editorials. Moreover, the standard deviations for

Asians, blacks, and Latinos for advertisements and editorials are very close to the mean, indicating the need for negative binominal modeling.

A negative binominal regression is used for model estimation because the dependent variables are count data, which is centered around the mean. We report the odds ratios, which are an estimate of the odds of an event, such as an increase or decrease in non-white advertisements or editorials, relative to non-diverse advertisements or editorials of the same event. An odds ratio (OR) of 1.00 is not statistically significant. An OR greater than 1.00 means that there is an increase in non-white advertisements or editorials, while an OR less than 1.00 means that there is a decrease in non-white advertisements or editorials (Agresti and Finlay, 2008).<sup>15</sup>

We create two dichotomous variables to analyze data from the magazines included in our sample. In this study, *Money*, which is the most widely distributed magazine and has a higher non-business oriented readership, and the lowest number of issues, is the omitted magazine. Thus, the dichotomous variable of *Money* is treated as the reference category. While 26 percent of the data are from *Money*, 35 percent are from *Fortune* and 39 percent are from *Forbes*. Table 1 shows yearly issues for each magazine. A dichotomous dummy variable was also created to consider magazines with diversity as a stated part of the issue. Magazines without a diversity section are treated as the reference category. In all, 18 percent of the three magazines had a diversity section. A dichotomous variable was additionally created if a non-white person (or persons) (black, Latino or Asian) was included on the cover. Magazine issues that did not include a non-white person on the cover were coded as zero. A total of 10 percent of magazines in the sample had an issue with a non-white person on the cover of the magazine. The content analysis was conducted on the three magazines from 1997 to 2007, with a mean of 2000.78. We next discuss our results.

## Findings

Our findings indicate that representations of non-whites on the cover of magazines, and the inclusion of sections dedicated to diversity had differential impacts upon the number of non-whites represented in advertisements and editorials. For advertisements, a representation of non-whites on the cover of a magazine is not statistically significant. However, if a section on diversity was present within an issue, representation within advertisements increased for non-whites. Representations of non-whites on the cover of a magazine issue also functioned differently for general editorials. The data indicates that a non-white representation on the cover of a magazine issue increased the representation of non-whites within editorials. The inclusion of the variable *diversity* in the models also increased the representation of non-whites in general editorials. We first discuss advertisements then editorials.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics of variables.

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Advertisements including racial minorities	17.76	14.21	0-120
General editorials including racial minorities	11.28	9.89	0-85
Diversity	.18	.39	–
Racial minority on cover	.10	.31	–
Year	2000.78	3.06	1996-2007
<i>Forbes</i>	.39	.49	–
<i>Fortune</i>	.35	.48	–
<i>Money</i>	.26	.48	–

## Advertisements

Table 2 presents the odds of non-white representation in advertisements when non-whites are featured on magazine covers. In model 1 on Table 2, the year and *Fortune* variables are statistically significant. For every year increase, rates of representation of non-whites in advertisements increased (2.6%;  $1-e^{.026}$ ). This increase, while small, supports our study's first hypothesis, that is, non-white representation in the magazines will more likely be in advertisements as the issue year of the magazines increases. Furthermore, in model 1 *Fortune* experienced an increase in the number of non-whites in advertisements when compared to the magazine, *Money*, while *Forbes* did not. While the increase in representation of non-whites was statistically significant for both *Forbes* and *Fortune* in model 2 on Table 2, *Fortune* magazine experienced the greatest increase. Therefore, we also find conditional support for the study's second hypothesis, which is that magazines that adhere more closely to corporate culture will be more likely to have non-white representation in advertisements.

Table 2 shows odds of representation of non-whites in advertisements when the diversity variable is present. For each issue that contained the variable *diversity*, odds of representation of non-whites in advertisements increased by 49.1 percent ( $1-e^{.491}$ ). Furthermore, for each additional year, the number of non-whites in advertisements increased by almost 3.5 percent ( $1-e^{.035}$ ). *Fortune* increased its representation of non-whites in advertisements by 70.3 percent ( $1-e^{.703}$ ), while *Forbes* increased the number of non-whites in advertisements by 40.7 percent ( $1-e^{.407}$ ) with *Money* as the reference category. The variable racial minority on the cover of a magazine was not statistically significant.

In summary, we suggest that magazine issues that include the diversity variable will experience higher odds of non-white representation in advertisements. Each issue that contained a section dedicated to diversity within a magazine issue increased the number of non-whites in advertisements. Thus, we find support for our third hypothesis, that is, magazines that include the diversity variable will be more likely to have non-white representation in advertisements, when compared to issues that do not include a section dedicated to diversity.

## Editorials

Table 3 displays negative binomial regression models for non-whites in editorials. Odds of non-white representation do not increase over time in either model that examines general editorials.

**Table 2.** Negative binomial regression of advertisements including racial minorities, 1997–2006.

	Model 1			Model 2		
	b	s.e.	Percent change in IRR (%)	b	s.e.	Percent change in IRR (%)
Racial minority on cover	.0168	.091	1.017	-.006	.077	.993
Year	.0258***	.010	1.026	.034***	.008	1.035
<i>Fortune</i>	.401***	.073	1.494	.532***	.078	1.703
<i>Forbes</i>	-.035	.072	.965	.341***	.076	1.407
Diversity				.913***	.060	2.491
Constant	-48.984***	19.044		-66.095***	15.584	
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.014			.079		
Likelihood Ratio $\chi^2$	-2295.746			-1858.615		
N	617			617		

\*p < .05 \*\*p < .01 \*\*\*p < .001.

Thus, hypothesis four (non-white representation in the magazines will more likely be in editorials as the issue year of the magazines increases) is not supported by our examination of general editorials. Non-white representations on the cover of magazine issues increase the number of non-whites in editorials by 70.2 percent ( $1-e^{.532}$ ) in model 1. While *Fortune* increased the number of non-whites in editorials by 21.1 percent ( $1-e^{.191}$ ) in model 1, when compared to the reference, *Forbes* did not. Thus, the study's fifth hypothesis is partially supported, which is: magazines that adhere more closely to corporate culture will be more likely to have non-white representation in editorials, when compared to the reference category. We next examine the results of including *diversity* as a variable.

Model 2 in Table 3 examines non-white representation in general editorials when the diversity variable is included in the model. Magazine issues that include representations of non-whites on the cover increased the number of non-whites in editorials by 55.9 percent ( $1-e^{.444}$ ). *Fortune* increased its odds of non-white representation in editorials by 44.8 percent ( $1-e^{.370}$ ), while *Forbes* experienced a smaller increase (29.7%;  $1-e^{.260}$ ) of the number of non-whites in editorials, when compared to *Money*. The variable *diversity* also increases the odds of non-white representation in editorials by 21.3 percent ( $1-e^{.102}$ ).

In summary, we argue that magazines that include the diversity variable will experience higher odds of non-white representation in editorials. Model 2 in Table 3 finds support for the sixth hypothesis, that is, magazines that include the diversity variable will be more likely to have non-white representation in editorials, when compared to issues that do not include a section dedicated to diversity.

## Discussion

In this study we utilize business magazines to investigate the empirical impact of diversity programs on non-white participation in corporate organizations. We also take into account how common understandings about racial diversity in corporate organizations may be conveyed in images of non-whites that appear in business magazines; and consider how the ideas carried forth may inform beliefs, and ultimately practices that seek to address racial inequality in corporate organizations. In general, our findings indicate that images of non-whites are less likely to be included in the magazines we reviewed than are images of whites. However, the odds of racial minority

**Table 3.** Negative binominal regression of editorials including racial minorities, 1997–2006.

	Model 1			Model 2		
	b	s.e.	Percent change in IRR (%)	b	s.e.	Percent change in IRR (%)
Racial minority on cover	.532***	.096	1.702	.444***	.102	1.559
Year	-.007	.010	.993	.003	.010	1.003
<i>Fortune</i>	.191*	.080	1.211	.370***	.103	1.448
<i>Forbes</i>	.021	.078	1.022	.260**	.101	1.297
Diversity				.193*	.083	1.213
Constant	15.631***	20.252		-3.224***	20.738	
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.009			.011		
Likelihood Ratio $\chi^2$	-2073.164			-1779.266		
N	617			617		

\*p < .05 \*\*p < .01 \*\*\*p < .00.

inclusion tend to increase under certain conditions. First of all racial minorities tend to be included in both editorials and advertisements at higher rates when diversity is made an explicit topic of discussion. Odds of non-white inclusion in editorial sections of *Forbes* and *Fortune* increased when the magazines took on special topics which highlighted the contributions of racial minorities working in corporate organizations, or those who are working in other industries – especially entertainment and sports. For instance, we found high rates of non-white inclusion in issues that included editorials such as ‘The 100 Richest Black Americans’ or ‘The Top 25 Black CEOs’. Odds of non-white inclusion increased in a similar way in advertising sections. For example, odds of inclusion increased in ad campaigns meant to convey the intentions particular corporate organizations had to create diverse environments. Odds of non-white inclusion also increased when magazines included special advertising sections that focused upon the business contributions of international companies (e.g. Samsung, Sony, Mitsubishi).

These images are being considered in a complex social environment. On one hand, legal interventions meant to address racial inequality have been met with increasing resistance, while on the other, the nation’s collective commitment to achieving racial parity remains intact. Consistently associating racial minorities with the idea of diversity may inform ongoing dialogues where the collective positions that whites and non-whites occupy in corporations are evaluated and reconciled. Directly linking racial minorities to the idea of diversity (or similar dialogues on racial progress) may support the prevailing sentiment in that they effectively challenge the nation’s painful history of racial exclusionary practices, and historical responses to it. Thus, the meaning assigned to the images of racial minorities that tend to be included in these magazines takes on social importance.

Over the last 30 years, laws and policies meant to encourage racial parity in the workforce have been amended in ways that effectively limit their ability to actually achieve this goal. The changes that have ensued suggest that social and political views on racial inequality have changed since the laws were first introduced in the early 1960s. No longer does it seem there is a readiness to alleviate racial barriers that define that nation historically through legal interventions. That images of racial minorities tend not to be included independent of the discursive frame of diversity (or other topics that highlight the accomplishments of racial minorities) suggest that they are part of ongoing dialogues on racial parity that are taking place in corporate organizations despite resistance to programs like Affirmative Action.

This finding is especially evident in editorials featuring non-whites. Editorials are the centerpieces of the magazines we reviewed. They discuss issues of central importance to corporations and they often feature people who occupy high positions of authority, or those who possess the ability to exact effects on the way corporations do business. Editorials often highlight the careers of CEOs of corporations or they feature individuals with strong ties to financial and business markets (a person like Ben Bernanke may be featured in an editorial, for example).

However, we find that editorials featuring non-whites tend to substitute race where discussions about corporate zeal are typically introduced to readers. Instead of being presented as enactors of corporate agendas in ways similar to whites, they are primarily associated with the idea of racial progress. Including non-whites in this way may be important because it can provide corporate organizations with a means of conveying public commitment to racial egalitarianism without being associated with unpopular policies that stipulate how it is to be achieved.

The tendency for the magazines in our review to associate non-whites with larger discussions of racial progress may manage to meet the social expectation of racial egalitarianism, but it does so without acknowledging more typical experiences racial minorities have while working within corporate organizations. For example, a survey of black and white managers in Fortune 500 companies found that black managers are promoted at slower rates and receive less social support

compared to white managers (James, 2000). Similarly, Elliot and Smith (2004) found that women and minorities are less likely to achieve higher levels of workplace power when compared to whites, and that 'homosocial reproduction' predicted candidates' attainment of sought after positions. Routinely featuring non-whites in ways that suggest the achievement of truly diverse workforces has been attained despite evidence that indicates otherwise may impart the idea that the exceptional case is the rule. As such, it may fail to provide opportunities to consider how organizational practices continue to shape power imbalances among whites and non-whites in the corporate workforce.

Our findings also indicate that while non-whites are often included in the magazines we reviewed, images that depict racial minorities in positions of power and authority are less likely to appear than are images that suggest they play only ancillary roles in corporate organizations. Recent findings indicate that numerical representation – one standard for measuring the achievement of racially diverse workplaces – yields different interpretations for whites than it does for non-whites. While whites equate numerical representation with the full achievement of racially diverse workplaces, non-whites place more value on the quality of inclusion racial minorities actually experience (Unzueta and Binning, 2010).

Although images depicting non-whites in ancillary positions may be interpreted as a sign of racial progress for some, they may fail to take into account compelling empirical evidence, which suggests that a 'glass ceiling' continues to prohibit racial minorities from advancing into the higher echelons of corporate organizations (see Burk, 2005).<sup>16</sup> In other words, while numerical representation may be one indicator that non-whites are included in corporate organizations, it does not sufficiently acknowledge other factors that shape the racial makeup of corporate organizations.

Integration that fails to bring about changes in existing power and status structures ultimately does little to achieve racial parity (see DiTomaso et al., 2007). If quality of inclusion is not a factor that whites in general, and perhaps corporate leadership more specifically, take into consideration when evaluating the achievement of racially diverse workplaces, then it is unlikely that the limited ways that non-whites are included in business magazines like those we reviewed will provoke dialogue that brings about increased hierarchical integration. Embrick (2011) argues that the number and kinds of social identities that fall under the umbrella of diversity prohibit close examinations of racial inequality. Including images that fail to disturb common understandings of what the achievement of racial parity looks like may function similarly. In fact, routinely including non-whites in business magazines like those we reviewed may promote racial apathy on the part of whites (Forman, 2004; Forman and Lewis, 2006) in that the images can provide them with enough evidence to distance themselves from discussions that question the corporate racial status quo. In a similar way, it may give corporations a way of discussing racial equity without addressing structural factors that prevent its attainment (see Bonilla-Silva, 1997, 2001, 2006; Bonilla-Silva and Lewis, 1999; see also Feagin, 2006).

## Conclusion

Our findings suggest that the idea of diversity is routinely used in conjunction with images of non-whites in ways that signal the achievement of racial progress. However, the ways in which non-whites tend to be included in the magazines we reviewed may preclude deep investigations into a variety of factors that contribute to persistent racial inequality in corporate America. At best, the images of non-whites that are most likely to appear in the magazines we reviewed may create opportunities to discursively consider race and racial inequality without encouraging a sincere forum for its interrogation (Moore and Bell, 2010, 2011).

We understand the patterns of non-white inclusion we observed to be informed by, and to shape, common understandings about race and the role it plays in corporate organizations. Since the 1980s, political and social sentiment has imposed significant limitations on legal redresses meant to address racial and gender inequality in the workplace. Within this context, the idea of diversity has gained social and political currency. As a common way of talking about American society, it provides a way to 'represent subjects and ideas' (Hall, 1996) that reflect prevailing social understandings; diversity's emphasis on inclusion and its embrace of non-traditional identities seems to resonate with the current American sentiment of egalitarianism.

The images of racial minorities that we considered may serve as commentary on a socially appealing discourse in that they provide proof of an established way of thinking about racial progress. Yet just as the idea of diversity (and representations that convey its social importance) enables common understandings, it obfuscates others. If associating racial minorities with diversity tells a particular story, it forecloses (or at least limits) the possibility of alternative interpretations that understand the goal of racial parity as an ongoing project. That corporate organizations and those who are interested in them can turn to magazines like *Forbes* and *Fortune* and confirm particular beliefs about the role race plays in corporate America 'delimits the sayable' by narrowing the interpretive frame through which racial inequality is understood and acted upon.

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### Notes

1. As it specifically relates to race, analysts (Doane, 1996; Houts-Picca and Feagin, 2007; Myers, 2005) have described how racial egalitarianism, as a cultural value and social expectation, is also reaffirmed in public discourse and in public social interactions.
2. For additional discussion of the role race plays in the notion of diversity see Berrey (2011), Edelman et al. (2001), Herring (2009), Kalev et al. (2006) and Purdie-Vaughns et al. (2008). See also Bell and Hartmann (2007).
3. See Hansen (2003) for an expanded discussion on diversity programs as best practices.
4. In this article the terms 'non-white' and 'racial minority' are used interchangeably to reference African Americans, Asian Americans and Latinos.
5. For instance, a survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) in 1998 found that 75 percent of organizations surveyed had recruitment efforts designed to increase diversity, and over 60 percent of organizations surveyed conducted community outreach to increase workplace diversity. In 2005 SHRM similarly found that three-quarters of organizations surveyed addressed diversity in the workplace through the use of practices that encouraged inclusiveness. For additional discussion on the increasing prevalence of diversity programs in corporations, see also Hansen (2003).
6. See Embrick and Rice (2010) and Bond and Pyle (1998) for an expanded discussion on the emergence of diversity programs.
7. The idea that federal programs like Affirmative Action and other social welfare programs meant to encourage racial equality are no longer necessary has been validated in a number of legal and economic policy decisions occurring in the 1980s and 1990s. Williams (1996) describes a series of political decisions implemented under the Reagan and Bush Administrations, which severely limited welfare and other social programs. See also Moore and Bell (2011).
8. For instance in many states including California, Texas, Michigan and Washington, race is now one factor among a constellation of factors companies and educational institutions may take into consideration during hiring or admission processes.
9. According to Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2001, 2006) these kinds of changes encouraged new racial understandings and new ways of talking about racial inequality. Bonilla-Silva argues that the post-civil rights

era has ushered in a new racial ideology that is grounded in the assumptions that no privilege or significance is attached to one's race and where continuing patterns of racial inequality are disproportionately attributed to apparent non-racial factors. The emergence of this new racial ideology largely precludes the interrogation of ongoing social processes that contribute to the racial subordination of non-whites on one hand and the racial privileging of whites on the other.

10. See Embrick and Rice (2010) for an expanded discussion on multiculturalism in corporate organizations.
11. The idea that Affirmative Action intended to respond to the nation's history of racial discrimination and its collective intention to move toward the achievement of racial parity is reflected in a speech given by President Johnson in June 1965 where he said in part, 'You do not wipe away the scars of centuries by saying, "Now, you are free to go where you want, do as you desire, and choose the leaders you please". You do not take a man who for years has been hobbled by chains, liberate him, bring him to the starting line of a race, saying, "You are free to compete with all the others", and still justly believe you have been completely fair ... This is the next and more profound stage of the battle for civil rights. We seek not just freedom but opportunity – not just legal equity but human ability – not just equality as a right and a theory, but equality as a fact and as a result.'
12. Scholars studying diversity in the workplace including Thomas (1992), Bond and Pyle (1998) and Williams (1996) suggest that the broad range of identities included in diversity initiatives in American workplaces beginning in the 1980s also responded to the nation's increasing inclination toward economic liberalism. Diverse workforces presumably enabled corporations to tap into increasingly diversifying markets. Diversity was therefore also associated with corporate efficiency and profitability.
13. The research team included a professor and two graduate students.
14. The researchers plan to discuss findings related to observed instances of racialized images in editorials, advertisements and magazine covers in a forthcoming manuscript.
15. We considered using event history to model the outcome variables. However, event history would not be advisable because we have multiple counts of advertisements and editorials from three different media. Secondly, we do not censor any of the advertisements and editorials. Thirdly, there is no change in time. Each issue is published in a certain month and thus it is predictable when the issues will be published. The only time change that occurs is in the year that the magazine was published. We use year as one of our predictor variables. Therefore, event history modeling would not be appropriate for this study.
16. See also analyses (Collins, 1993; Embrick, 2011; Fernandez, 1999) that indicate non-whites continue to experience peripheral participation within corporate business organizations.

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