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studies, including lists of key play-
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ing or becoming involved in one.
Of course, although Manheim very
well may be comfortable with the
latter use of his book, it clearly is
not what his publisher had in mind.
In the end, it may well be its great-
est value.

Note

¹ We should note that one evaluative statement by a communication scholar is included in the advertising for the book, W. Lance Bennett's conclusion that "Manheim has written the definitive work on corporate campaigns. It is a must read for anyone who wants to understand the proliferation of strategic communication campaigns that have captured American politics, left, right, and center."

**White News: Why Local News
Programs Don't Cover People
of Color**
Don Heider
Erlbaum
Mahwah, NJ
2000
x + 116 pp.
Hard \$29.95; Soft \$17.50

Reviewed by Ronald L. Jackson II
Pennsylvania State University

"Introduce me to a world where I don't
have to miss myself."
(Leslie Reese, cited in Jackson, 2000)

In the above quotation, Leslie Reese
makes a humble request to be seen,

to be valued, and to be granted
opportunities to view positive rep-
resentations of her everywhere she
goes. The request is simple; the
challenge is monumental. In *White
News*, Don Heider makes the same
request on behalf of people of color
in Honolulu, Hawaii, and Albu-
querque, New Mexico, and with
regards to local news coverage in
those places. They were selected
because they were midsize televi-
sion markets with large popula-
tions of people of color. He at-
tempts to deconstruct why local
news programs do not cover of
people of color.

The book begins by pointing out
that, even in Hawaii where there
are "not all that many pink people"
(p. 1), news coverage of people of
color is sparse. The state and local
citizens there have been introduced
to a (local television) world where
they are forced to miss themselves.
Heider's self-appointed task is to
uncover real reasons and real solu-
tions to this quandary. He con-
ducted a triangulated study of eth-
nographic observation and ex-
tended interviews in order to un-
cover the reasons. As any skilled
qualitative researcher would,
Heider discloses his cultural point
of reference on page 1. He indicates
that he worked 10 years in local
television news and had not recog-
nized the biased coverage until he
left the industry. He asserts,

For Anglo-Americans, color, especially the
color white (or pink) is most often not no-
ticed. We live in a country where millions

of people can still go through their daily existence and never notice how Whites are in so many authoritative positions, because it has been for so long the norm (p. 1)

Recognizing that his news expertise, familiarity with the newsroom context, and whiteness were each a factor in this study, Heider mentions this early to let the reader know he is aware of the confounding effects. With respect to these initial advantages, he claims, "[P]eople spoke to me frankly about race and the news" (p. 2). I have no doubt that this was true for Whites in the newsrooms he visited, however, I wonder if the people of color he interviewed in person and by phone were fully forthcoming in their narratives about their experiences and perceptions. I remain mostly curious about the solicited opinions of those in powerful nonactivist positions within both, the newsrooms and the community.

I must say first that Heider has written a concise, widely accessible volume. This is perhaps its greatest strength and limitation, however. I would estimate that this book was written at the eighth-grade reading level. It fluctuates between the overly simplistic and more nuanced evaluations of news coverage. There is an introduction followed by seven chapters and an appendix labeled "detailed methodology," which is actually the methods chapter, though not afforded the important and consistent label of "chapter."

The introduction is fairly easy to follow, as is the rest of the book. However, as a scholar and critical race theorist, I was disappointed by both the nebulous distinctions between race and ethnicity and the lack of theory. First, I must admit Heider was very cautious in describing the episteme of race so that it was apparent that race is a non-construct, but not a nonissue. Unfortunately, this meticulous but brief overview of race was eclipsed by an inept conceptualization of ethnicity. It was clear that Heider had not done his homework in teasing out the real distinctions between the two terms, and he certainly had ample space to do so. The average length of each chapter was about 12 pages with the first two chapters and the appendix being the longest. Also, the lack of theory was quite evident early in the book. The author did have a section entitled "analytical frameworks," but he later made the distinction of naming this a theoretical framework. This subtlety may seem petty to an atheoretical person, but it misleads the reader into thinking that a theoretic framework is being used. Instead, we are stuck with ideas with no real frame to interpret the observations and interview data. Hegemony and everyday racism are concepts, not theories. They have become so overused that they might even be considered basic critical studies vocabulary.

Chapter 1, "News Power," is quite intriguing. Its purpose was to

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explore the various strata of decision-making that influence how the news is produced and shared with the public. Heider was careful to note that many of the chief decision makers were Whites and that that facet of the process impacted how, when, and where news was considered news. He further suggests that people of color are sometimes involved in the decision-making process, but seldom is this the case. In fact, Heider explains that many people of color tend to go for anchor positions rather than management, because they are high visibility positions. This has positive trickle-down effects for the community, according to Heider, because the anchors often receive respect as community spokespersons and dignitaries. Nonetheless, the behind-the-scenes managers are principal decision makers, and have more impact on how news is produced and distributed. This chapter was very informative, especially since I have heard several of these arguments presented as suspicions rather than products of research. Heider now offers evidence to support these claims.

Chapter 2, "News Coverage," begins with an indication that citizens of two communities share their sentiment that news coverage was both poor and "negligent" (p. 32). The author then explains the kinds of local news coverage received and citizen perceptions of the types of topics covered. Heider reports "a consensus also emerged as to the location of most coverage of people

of color. The two topic areas identified were *festivals* and *crime*" (p. 34). The author evokes "hegemony" to explain how agenda setting is accomplished. Hegemony functions in a peculiar manner, Heider explains. It does not suppress ethnic perspectives; instead, the news celebrates ethnic diversity via coverage of festivals rather than real issues. This, as one of Heider's respondents notes, is an "antiseptic" (p. 35) approach that promotes the nondisturbing aspects of race and ethnicity so that no one [especially Whites] feels intimidated or to blame. Crime is a different story, figuratively and literally. One of Heider's interviewees suggests that crime news in a local Hispanic community in Albuquerque, allows a 1-2 day coverage that concentrates on the assailant, whereas crimes in local White communities often have news coverage that accents measures to restore justice to the victims. Issues not covered in marginalized group communities are language and environmental decay, health and education deficits, as well as social and political inequity. Heider lets the producers "off of the hook" by diagnosing the problem as "incognizant racism." After talking to these citizens, his most fascinating conclusion is that they didn't mean it! This is an interesting analysis that hinges on both an overworked attempt to offer a balanced perspective and pure naivete.

Chapters 3 and 4 discussed citizen's access to newsrooms and coverage, and the role of geogra-

phy on news coverage, respectively. Chapter 3, titled "Access," carefully unpacks the necessity of selling nonfestival and noncrime stories to assignment editors. Although ordinary citizens can call, write, fax or email news stations, their story is often placed to the side, unless there is a convincing enough reason to count it as newsworthy. Heider suggests that well-designed media campaign proposals tend to convince news stations to seriously consider airing an issue, special, or program. By familiarizing oneself with the benefits of news and the details of a good proposal, communities are much more likely to be successful in gaining some coverage.

Chapter 4, "Geography and News," is a review of designated market areas, which refers to locations where people can pick up television news signals. By exploring the ramifications of station politics, distanced residencies, and technological limits, the author is able to unveil an insider's perspective on how news reaches each home. Fortunately, Heider does not belabor the reader with technological details and jargon. This chapter was written in a simple and concise manner and supplemented by maps of physical territories studied.

Chapters 5 and 6 were the shortest chapters in the book, eight and seven pages, respectively. Chapter 5, "History and the News," explains why the news worker's worldview is just as important as the historical relevance of news

items. If a news worker can not see how a citizen's culturally centered concerns link to his understanding of the world, then that citizen's story is likely to be ignored. Even though newsrooms experience position turnovers and vacancies, the next person hired has a potential impact on how news is produced. Heider argues, "a lack of historical knowledge makes it convenient for news reporters to construct a story, or a worldview, without having to acknowledge entire groups of people or entire historical eras." This issue seems especially critical given the histories of the two cities studied, one of which still has Pueblo Indian reservations nearby. In chapter 6, the conclusion, Heider reiterates that coverage is denied to no one, but it is still difficult to attain. The newsrooms and citizens in this study are identified as typical. The newsrooms are "journalistically sound" (p. 81) and filled with veteran news workers. Heider reminds us that his study was qualitative, hence, he says he does not seek to generalize findings. The chapter ends with several rhetorical, conceptual questions that this project intended to answer. The reader is left to guess that these were the research questions.

In the final chapter, "Possible Remedies," Heider offers the following solutions: reporter outreach, community member education (about news production), and improved news worker training on ethnic diversity. The author concludes by discussing the incumbent

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effects of nonextensive news coverage of people of color, among which is the continued detachment of news and the citizens' lives it claims to represent.

Strengths, Limitations, and Best Reading Audience

White News is a fairly decent read. Although I think it has several significant limitations, its greatest strength is the accessible style in which it was written. I am sure it will be continually criticized for this bold move to write in this manner to a mostly academic audience. There will also be those who will celebrate it for this reason. I have already developed a love-hate relationship for this style, perhaps because it is so uncommon among scholarly monographs and so frequently seen in textbooks. I must also say I am pleased with the humanity so intricately woven into the fabric of this book. Every paragraph and every chapter introduces the texture of lived experiences as well as common local and national perceptions.

Heider's work also has limitations that have not already been mentioned. Clearly, Heider should have employed a phenomenological method or perhaps conducted an auto-ethnographic inquiry, or at the very least, spoke of how he kept track of his own perceptions as interruptions of the process. He mentions several times throughout the book that he was intimately involved with this topic due to his previous work experience as a journalist, but he does not tell the

reader what safeguards he used to prevent uneven or biased interpretations of the data.

The author mentions Chris Campbell as one among a small list of scholars who inspired him to write the book, though he does not cite Campbell's important 1995 work, *Race, Myth and the News*. It is blatant omissions like that one that limit the fullness of the theoretic scope and range of ideas that may have facilitated reader awareness of related communication research. In my opinion, this book can not compare to Entman and Rojecki's *The Black Image in the White Mind* or to Gandy's *Communication and Race*, both of which are related works published in 2000. These two books are theoretically grounded and not apprehensive about discussing method at the beginning, middle, and end of the book. Method is not an appendix or supplement to the text, as is the case with *White News*. For instance, the research questions are implied, but never stated in *White News*. On page 105 of a book with 109 pages of text, Heider finally tells the reader how many interviews were conducted as though he was "rolling the credits" at the end of a recording. Information concerning hours of observation are not offered, except for Heider's note that each of two newsrooms was observed every day for 5 weeks, but for how long each day? That information is not given. Although I enjoyed reading *White News*, I also felt cheated. The book

lacked scholarly substance. It is a great layman's book or maybe a book to be added to media experts' recommended reading list. It is entirely too nonsubstantive to serve as a primary or sole text for any course. *White News* is a bold and challenging text that would be suitable perhaps as a supplemental reading for a course on race, ethics, and news reporting.

Regardless of its approach, omissions, or limitations, *White News* is an important text that should be read by anyone interested in the confluence between race and local media. Congratulations to Heider for a book that may very well introduce to the discipline a different way to talk about local news coverage.

References

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Strategic Public Relations Management: Planning and Managing Effective Communication Programs

**Erica W. Austin
& Bruce E. Pinkleton
Erlbaum
Mahwah, NJ
2001
399 pp.
Hard \$89.95; Soft \$39.95**

Reviewed by Charles A. Lubbers
Kansas State University

Austin and Pinkleton offer instructors in public relations programs everywhere something that has always been in short supply: an option. There are few texts for advanced public relations courses available, so it is no surprise that a new offering generates great interest. *Strategic Public Relations Management* offers instructors of public relations management and campaigns classes a new and worthwhile text option.

Texts in this area have often had a difficult time developing a following because there is no general rule about how management instruction should fit into the public relations curriculum. Some programs offer management instruction at the advanced undergraduate level, whereas others place such instruction at the graduate level. Additionally, programs approach the relationship between public relations management and public relations campaigns differently. Some programs merge the two, taking the