Deconstructing the Portrayals of Haitian Women in the Media: A Thematic Analysis of Images in the Associated Press Photo Archive

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Abstract

Haitian women constitute a group that is lauded within Haiti as the "pillar of society" and yet is also often silenced both within Haiti and abroad. Given the role of the media in shaping attitudes and behaviors toward Women of Color, evaluation of media portrayals is critical to challenge oppressive discourses about these groups. Therefore, in this study, the authors conducted a thematic analysis of 650 photographs of Haitian women in the Associated Press Photo Archive in the years 1994–2009. The analysis comprised a two-step process: First, the authors identified coding categories through an inductive analysis of the data; later, these categories were analyzed from a feminist poststructuralist framework to generate themes that could describe how Haitian women are positioned in relation to media consumers. The three themes generated—"Negotiating Power and Resistance," "Enacting Haitian Culture," and "Showcasing Affliction"—delineate the media's tendency to emphasize the "otherness" in Haitian women, as well as to characterize this group as victims in need of rescuing by powerful others. The authors conclude by emphasizing the impact of these images on the identity of Haitian women and Women of Color, as well as on the attitudes and behaviors of media consumers toward these groups.

As one of the most powerful means of communication in society, international news media continue to objectify, dissect, and stereotype groups that have few other means to voice their experiences. Media portrayals have been examined as vehicles that maintain or disrupt attitudes and behaviors toward traditionally disenfranchised groups such as racial and gender minorities (Cole & Henderson Daniel, 2005; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Halliwell, Malson, & Tischner, 2011; Riggs et al., 1991). Such research points not only to the impact of media on dominant gender and cultural groups' perceptions of minorities but also to how people who are socially positioned as minorities learn about the "scripts" available to them (Bryant-Davis, 2005; Gordon, 2008b). The representation of Women of Color in particular has come to the attention of researchers because such portrayals have typically underrepresented or misrepresented the experiences of these groups (Tuchman, 1979; Woodard & Mastin, 2005), reinforcing often unspoken stereotypes that already circulate in media consumers' schemas about them.

A group of Women of Color that deserves attention in the context of media representations is Haitian women. A growing body of literature examining media representations of Haiti *as a state* has denounced the predominantly negative coverage of Haiti as influenced by the political interest of the United States (Hallward, 2007; Lawless, 1992). In contrast, research on the way the media portrays *Haitian women*, who make up the largest segment of the Haitian population both within Haiti (Institute Haïtien de Statistique et d'Informatique, 2003) and in the Diaspora living within the United States (Buchanan, Albert, & Beaulieu, 2010), is largely absent from media or psychological studies. The paucity of such research is perhaps due to the absence of media coverage about the experiences of Haitian women, an oversight that parallels media coverage about Women of Color in general. With the exception of coverage of the 2011 Haiti presidential election, where one of the final candidates was a woman (Padgett & Desvarieux, 2010), news about Haitian women's accomplishments might be overlooked by major news outlets. For instance, the work of other Haitian women elected for political office in the past 6 years (e.g., former Prime Minister Michèle Pierre-Louis, U.S. Representatives

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Linda Dorcena Forry and Marie St. Fleur, and former Canadian Governor General Michaëlle Jean) might be known only through local press outlets or by people inside the Haitian community. Similar to the treatment of Women of Color, media coverage that includes Haitian women seems to interweave an invisible discourse about this group as the media recycle old narratives of Haiti as "a failed state" (Lawless, 1992; Potter, 2009). These narratives, if not identified, continue to perpetuate unspoken stereotypes that can impact how people think and behave toward women of Haitian descent (Bell, 2001; Santana & Dancy, 2000).

Given the need to identify these narratives, in the present study, we examine how Haitian women are portrayed in the Associated Press (AP) Photo Archive—the photographic database of one of the largest international news organizations in the world. We draw from a feminist poststructuralist framework (Weedon, 1987) to conduct this analysis because this perspective is highly relevant to understanding media messages as socially constructed, rather than representations of a "single reality" (Gavey, 1989). This perspective also demonstrates how media narratives maintain media consumers in a position of power relative to its observed subjects—in this case, Haitian women. For our analysis, we integrate work from two relevant areas of scholarship in which portrayals have been utilized to maintain or disrupt the oppression of Haitians: (a) the historical representation of Haitian women within Haitian literature and (b) the historical portrayal of Haiti in American and international media.

Media Portrayals From a Feminist Poststructuralist Framework

Feminist theory, with its focus on analyzing the social construction of gender and gender inequality, provides a framework through which the disparities of women's and men's representations in the media can be understood. Specifically, social construction theorists view gender as a social classification that is linked to power, status, and resources (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1990). Roles that are allocated to men and women differ across cultures, and the availability of roles for women in a particular society are likely to influence the positions of women depicted in the media. For example, in Haiti women are the primary caretakers of the children, and thus images of these women are likely to include women in these nurturing roles.

Among the different perspectives offered within gender studies on the portrayal of women, feminist poststructuralism (Gavey, 1989; Hollway, 1989; Weedon, 1987) provides a framework that focuses on the subjectivities embedded in language (Lather, 1988) to evaluate the function of messages with respect to distributions of power. Feminist poststructuralism, as described by Gavey (1989), proposes three key assumptions relevant to our analysis. First, reality (or truth) is socially constructed,

and therefore it cannot be universally captured or understood. In regards to how Haitian women may be portrayed in our study, feminist poststructuralism posits that there are multiple, socially constructed realities and thus the photographed event can be understood in different ways by the photographer, the media consumer, and the subject of the picture. This assumption helps in delegitimizing media messages as the authoritative interpretation of events, and it calls for readers to consider the existence of other points of view about Haitian women's experiences (e.g., as described in books, oral narratives, or other observations of Haitian women's lives).

Second, language and discourse, which are necessary elements of people's meaning-making processes, are socially constructed. As such, the availability of words and expressions a person has relies on the cultural and ideological tradition to which that person has been socialized. Whereas feminist poststructuralism has typically engaged in the analysis of verbal discourse, its assumptions about language can also be applied to the appraisal of photographic representations. Like language in verbal discourse, the "social construction" of images may not be immediately obvious in a collection of photographs, given the apparent legitimacy of photographs as snapshots of events that truly took place at a given space and time. Instead, critical evaluation would need to consider that a featured photograph in any given news story is one of many images that was carefully chosen to highlight specific elements in its accompanying article. Such a photograph is captured at a specific time, space, and position to frame certain messages about its subjects (Gordon, 2008a).

A third assumption discussed is that discourses provide positions that individuals can undertake in regard to a topic, and the positions "chosen" by individuals depend both on the discourses available to them and on the likelihood that such discourses help maintain their status in society (Gavey, 1989). This assumption helps us understand that journalists involved in the reproduction of media portrayals of Haitian women may be uncritical of the negative effects of these images on this group because these portrayals will not have detrimental effects for the journalists themselves—or, in fact, may have positive consequences such as earning journalists career recognition in the field.

The emphasis of feminist poststructuralism on subjectivity of meaning, as discussed, allows for a critical examination of the *function* of discourses in maintaining or disrupting the power relations between Haitian women and media consumers. This examination also calls for a general understanding of the historic social, cultural, and economic forces that have shaped the experiences of Haitian women, as well as the representations of Haitian women within Haiti and abroad. As such, we turn to a succinct discussion of issues that Haitian women authors and advocates have identified as relevant to research about this group.

Haitian Women's Roles and Experiences in Haiti and the Diaspora

In our study, we define Haitian women as all women who self-identify as Haitians. Although it is critical to acknowledge that there are differences in beliefs and social capital across individual women due to differences in skin tone, socioeconomic status, religion, sexual orientation, and place of residence, for our study we will focus on Haitian women as a single group with shared concerns emerging from their status as women in a disenfranchised nation.

Within Haiti, Haitian women have been acknowledged as "the pillar of society" (Becker, Bergan, & Schuller, 2009; N'Zengou-Tayo, 1998) due to their critical role in supporting family, society, and economy—both within the island and within the Diaspora abroad. Women's roles in the island have traditionally involved caregiving, household duties, and, for the large segment of women living in poverty, breadwinning through informal labor practices (e.g., as urban market vendors; N'Zengou-Tayo, 1998). Outside the island, women are key participants in transnational social networks through which remittances are sent to Haiti, and through which newly arrived Haitians to the United Sates can establish themselves (Burton, 2004; Pierce & Elisme, 2000).

Despite the significance of their roles in Haitian society, advocates for women rights and researchers have raised awareness of how Haitian women often have been silenced in a predominantly patriarchal society (Bell, 2001; Charles, 1995). Similarly, studies about the experiences of Haitian women in the United States point to the added discrimination these women face because of their status as Black immigrants (Buchanan Stafford, 1987; Pierce & Elisme, 2000; Santana & Dancy, 2000). Recognition of the impact of gender, class, and skin color in Haitian women's lives is therefore crucial toward understanding how Haitian women are depicted both within local and foreign representations.

Portrayals of Women in Haitian Literature

The creation of a discourse about Haitian women within Haiti itself reflects issues of power because few Haitian women are actually involved in the discussion of their issues and experiences in politics (Charles, 1995), academic works, fiction, nonfiction, or national media (N'Zengou-Tayo, 1998; Romain, 1997). Indeed, relatively few sources feature Haitian women as the focus of attention (e.g., Becker et al., 2009; Bell, 2001; Chancy, 1997; N'Zengou-Tayo, 1998). One particular outlet where women have always been part of the discourse is Haitian literature—a resource that reflects the historical positions that Haitian society has had about gender, skin color, and class at any particular point in time. Women's portrayals in these works have not always represented the views and experiences of actual women, as discussed by Haitian women themselves (Chancy, 1997; N'Zengou-Tayo, 1998; Romain, 1997; Shelton, 1992). Instead, these portrayals have been utilized by male authors to further the nationalistic or political interests of society at large (e.g., using women as a metaphor for "free Haiti"; N'Zengou-Tayo, 1998; Romain, 1997).

With the growth of feminism in Haiti in the latter half of the 20th century (Charles, 1995), women writers began to provide more introspective narratives about women's experiences (e.g., through themes of women's subvert resistance in family and politics; N'Zengou-Tayo, 1998). Paralleling the patriarchal exclusion of women's experiences in previous literature, however, these new narratives typically were limited to the experiences of educated women in the upper class and were influenced by male Haitian and Western feminist traditions in literature, effectively blocking the experiences of poor Haitian women from reaching the public (N'Zengou-Tayo, 1998). It is disturbing to note that, congruent with a pattern of keeping women's voices silenced within Haiti, the more outspoken feminist Haitian writers were eventually forced into exile during or following the Duvalier dictatorship beginning in 1957 (N'Zengou-Tayo, 1998). This chasm across the narratives of women speaks to the lack of a common space for Haitian women to dialogue about their stories across the societal boundaries of class, which in turn has prevented Haitian women from presenting a unified discourse of their experiences to others.

Portrayals of Haitians in the U.S. Media

Whereas portrayals of Haitian women in Haitian literature have evolved into more balanced representations since the latter half of the 20th century, the quality and quantity of foreign media coverage on Haiti and its inhabitants continues to be criticized for its overall focus on the negative. In *Haiti's Bad Press*, Robert Lawless concludes: "Haiti is presented in a bad light and the quality of the media is inferior to its coverage of many other subjects" (Lawless, 1992). Lawless thus argues two points: reporters are reporting limited snippets of reality, and they are shaping their news coverage through a political and cultural lens that is incompatible with, and detrimental to, Haiti's goals and culture.

Some of the most detrimental stereotypes that circulated through media outlets in the last three decades include those of Haitians as practitioners of a supernatural religion (Vodou), as "boat people," and as "AIDS carriers." The discourse on Haitian Vodou traditionally typecast Haitians as "primitive," given the Afrocentric and polytheistic nature of the religion (Dubois, 2001). These portrayals typically ignored how Vodou is a legitimate religious structure through which people organize their worldview. The common stereotype of Haitian immigrants as "boat people" emerged following the desperate arrival of Haitian refugees to South Florida in the 1980s (Stepick, 1982). This stereotype of Haitians has been used as a justification for subsequent policies that both hindered the legal entry of these immigrants into the

United States and supported their deportation back to Haiti. In the same decade, Haitians were listed—along with homosexuals, hemophiliacs, and heroin users—by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) as one of the four high-risk "AIDS carrier" groups (Farmer, 2006). Although the CDC eventually removed Haitians as a high-risk group (Nachman & Dreyfuss, 1986), the propagation of this misinformation through the media not only impacted the tourism industry within Haiti in subsequent years (Potter, 2009) but also has had detrimental long-term effects on American attitudes and behaviors toward Haitian immigrants (Santana & Dancy, 2000).

A more recent content analysis of news coverage on Haiti further documents that suboptimal press coverage continues onto the 21st century. Potter (2009) documented that as recently as 2004, American news coverage about Haiti focuses largely on issues of violence, poverty, drug trafficking, and environmental deterioration. She further concludes that articles on Haiti not only focus almost exclusively on the negative but also fail to include the context of imperialist forces (such as the United States and France) in the maintenance of Haiti's plight. This conclusion is congruent with other literature on the representation of Caribbean subjects, which asserts that such portrayals are often constructed in ways that benefit the "observer" societies rather than the observed (Sheller, 2003; Soderlund & Nelson, 2003).

The power issues involved in the manufacture and dissemination of press coverage on the Caribbean are significant to this discussion. Given the lack of more structured press services within Caribbean countries, media production and dissemination about the region are dominated by international news organizations (Pertierra & Horst, 2009), organizations which are based in industrialized Western societies.

The AP, which is based in the United States, claims to be the "oldest and largest news organization in the world," reaching "more than half the world's population" through United States and international news and television outlets (Associated Press, 2011). It is therefore clear that AP coverage of Haiti reaches a large segment of the world population. Paradoxically, these organizations may not have as powerful an impact within Haiti as they do on audiences in the United States and the rest of the world. Media scholars have argued that despite the increased consumption of media technologies within the Caribbean, consumers in these countries actively filter media imports in ways that are compatible with their local worldviews (Pertierra & Horst, 2009). Haitians in particular continue to rely almost exclusively on the radio and two local newspapers (Le Nouvelliste and Haiti Today) to learn about local and international developments. As such, one assumption of our study is that portrayals of Haitians in international news media may impact Haitians, not through direct exposure within the nation, but rather by shaping attitudes toward Haitians among people outside the island.

The Current Study

An examination of Haitian women's images in a major news organization is warranted to provide important information about the dominant themes present in this medium and to assess the extent to which these portrayals are congruent with other perspectives on the identity and experiences of Haitian women. We argue that identifying current notions about Haitian women is an important, if not crucial, task given that the media have played an important role in shaping public opinion about Haitians. To this end, our study seeks to delineate the major themes portrayed about Haitian women in the images of the AP Photo Archive. Our analysis is concerned with appraising how these images maintain power relations between media consumers and Haitian women, and as such we draw from feminist poststructuralism to generate themes and provide information on the function of these images.

We originally aimed to analyze the media portrayals of Haitian women inside and outside the island, such that we could explore whether there are differences in the ways that women inside and outside the island are represented. Given constraints in the availability of images of women outside of Haiti in the database of the AP Photo Archive, however, the current study only presents an analysis of how Haitian women within the island are portrayed in this particular news source. The themes generated in this study were therefore not inclusive of images about women living in the Diaspora communities in the United States or other countries in the world, a shortcoming that we hope other researchers might be able to address in the future. The results in our study may still be relevant when considering how the media impacts people's views on Haitian women in Diasporas around the world, given that images about Haitian women within the island currently seem to be the most widespread representation of Haitian women in general, and thus are expected to impact how people think of the Haitian women in their local spaces.

Method

Our thematic analysis involved a two-step approach. In the first step, we utilized an inductive (data-driven) approach to generate coding categories. The use of an inductive analysis for our study was appropriate to minimize theoretical and researcher bias and to generate cohesive, descriptive blocks of information that are closely representative of the database content. However, we are cognizant that implicit biases we had as authors (by virtue of our position as Women of Color and as researchers in multicultural psychology) were likely to shape coding categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In the second step, we organized the extant coding categories into themes that could best describe the database while also addressing how these images maintain power relations between the audience and Haitian women. This step explicitly draws on a feminist poststructuralist framework to create themes that speak to issues of power (Gavey, 1989).

This step also includes the interpretation of these themes in the context of extant literature on the representation of Haitian women and Haitians in the media, as detailed later in the present article.

Data Collection

Images for our study were drawn from the AP Photo Archive, covering the years 1994–2009 (prior to the major earthquake in Haiti on January 12, 2010). The AP Photo Archive is an online database of photographs produced by AP photo journalists, which are available for purchase to public and private organizations. Images from the AP Photo Archive are frequently published alongside local news publications and thus constitute a rich source of information regarding the type of images available to news editors for purchase. Data from the AP Photo Archive were available to us royalty-free through our institution's library, a determinant in our decision to study images in the AP rather than in other international news organizations. A limitation of this single source is that all the images stored in the Archive were not made public nor do they necessarily represent all locally published images; rather, they represent one original set of images available to local media outlets to purchase and publish.

Images were acquired through the AP Photo Archive website (http://www.apimages.ap. org) on May 19, 2009. First, images tagged with the terms "Haiti" or "Haitian" and "woman" or "women" were included, yielding 860 photographs. Sixteen images taken before 1994, which appeared to belong to a historical archive rather than to contemporary series of photographs, were excluded. In addition, 68 images that were taken outside Haiti were excluded because they yielded too few pictures to make meaningful statements about the coverage of the press on Haitian women outside Haiti. Examples of images' contents in this excluded subgroup included Haitian women athletes in the Olympics, Haitian immigrants to the Dominican Republic or the Bahamas, and naturalization ceremonies in the United States. After excluding these images, and removing 126 duplicates, the total sample was reduced to 650 photographs.

Coding Categories

The first author acted as an open coder who examined the content of each of the 650 images and created coding categories to sort the images. In this stage, each new image was compared with previous images and with coding categories already created to determine whether the image could be assigned to the same or a different category. The first author focused on the following elements of each image to determine the message told by the picture: women's roles in interactions with others (as observed in women's clothes and position in the image), the environmental context in which women were portrayed (e.g., rural or urban areas and strong or fragile infrastructures), and women's facial expressions and body language. The criteria for coding categories were then reviewed jointly by both authors for consistency and then listed in a coding manual. In total, 26 categories were developed at this stage. In addition, a residual category, "neutral," was created for images that did not seem to have meaningful content. Images in this neutral category are not included as part of our thematic analyses.

Tinsley and Weiss's (2000) approach was used to examine whether the categories created could capture most images in the data set and were meaningful in the viewpoint of other coders beyond the present authors. According to Tinsley and Weiss, obtaining agreement between coders is necessary in content analysis because it allows a measurement of "the extent to which the different judges tend to assign exactly the same rating to each object" (p. 98). The coding manual was used by the first author and two volunteer coders to recategorize the images. Raters were not trained to conduct the ratings but were asked to follow the instructions in the coding manual. Because personal biases among the coders are expected to impact how they make meaning from the coding categories and images, we include here some characteristics about these coders. All coders were doctoral students in counseling psychology. Whereas the first author identifies as an immigrant Woman of Color, the volunteer coders were both U.S.-born White women. With regard to knowledge about Haitian culture, coders did not have direct working experience with Haitians, but rather they were informed through academic research on Haitian and Haitian American populations.

Coders were allowed to select more than one category to describe each case, with the intention that each image could be described by more than one original category (e.g., an image could feature both extreme poverty and negative affect because these categories focus on different aspects of the images). The ratings of all three coders were then compared to decide final category labels for each of the cases.

The original sample of 650 images was coded 795 times, from which 145 images (22%) were assigned two category labels. These cases were allowed to retain two category labels because the coders agreed that these images met criteria for more than one category. The most common categorizations for these images included the sets of "Extreme Poverty" and "Natural Disaster" or of "Foreign Intervention" and "Making a Line."

Although there are many types of methods for calculating interrater reliability (Popping, 1988), there is currently no consensus on the best methods that can be used among social scientists. Currently, methods for evaluating interrater reliability bind coders to assign a single category to each case. Because our raters were allowed to assign more than one category to the cases, none of the traditional interrater reliability methods were appropriate to reflect the rate of agreement across coders in this study. Intercoder agreement is therefore described in the following terms: In 407 of the 650 images, the three raters were matched on at least one of the categories that they independently chose for each of

Table 1. Open Coding Categories: Description and Image Count

		Image Count (*N*)	
Subtheme Category	Description of Images	Two-Rater Agreement	Three-Rater Agreement
Theme 1: Negotiating power and resistance			
Power through occupational roles		116	68
Market vendor	Women are sitting at the market with produce baskets, selling food (e.g., standing in the streets with cooking utensils or pots); women are walking and carrying baskets on their heads, usually carrying produce	46	28
Caregiver	Women are taking care of children, elderly or the sick. Category excludes images of women who are taking care of house affairs (e.g., cleaning the backyard, carrying food items) without an explicit recipient of care	38	25
Career women	Women are wearing professional or casual attire, providing services; they are usually not the focus of the picture	13	4
Politicians	Women are wearing professional attire, speaking at an event; they are usually the focus of the picture	9	3
Farmer	Women are carrying sacks of rice or other products in a rural landscape	7	5
Textile worker	Women are sewing clothes in a factory environment	3	3
Building resistance		88	56
Civic engagement	Haitians are helping or assisting each other (e.g., in the midst of natural disasters). Category includes images of women interacting positively with local politicians (e.g., with the president) and excludes images where foreigners (e.g., United Nations soldiers) help Haitians	43	22
Protests	Women are in a crowd or alone protesting for a cause; banners and signs may be present	23	22
Voting	Women are voting in an election; category excludes pictures of people interacting with the president or another political figure (e.g., with Bill Clinton)	8	3
Education	Women are reading a book, attending classes, or wearing a school uniform	5	3
Fighting	Women are physically fighting with each other for food donations	6	3
Illegal activities	Women are wearing orange lifesavers and are escorted by U.S. coast guards for deportation	3	3
Receiving help		117	76
Foreign intervention	Women are carrying rice bags or water bottles that are clearly given by the United Nations or another foreign aid organization (has a logo, materials are new). Women are interacting with United Nations peacekeeper soldiers in food distribution centers. Women seem to be protected by foreign soldiers	88	61
Making a line	Women are waiting in line in the context of food aid distribution centers or health care services	29	15
Being oppressed		179	100
Extreme poverty	Background shows houses with peeled paint, rusty metal; yards covered in rocks or mud. Images may feature the slums, junk, dirt on the streets (though not debris), people facing bad weather (e.g., a light flooding), people with ragged clothes, or people collecting trash	79	40
Natural disaster	Natural disasters (flood, hurricane, heavy tropical storms) are occurring or have occurred. The background features buildings that have been destroyed or stained with mud; streets are flooded or filled with mud or debris; women are carrying their children or possessions away from the site of the disaster	48	37

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Subtheme Category	Description of Images	Image Count (*N*)	
		Two-Rater Agreement	Three-Rater Agreement
Neighborhood violence	There is evidence of violence initiated by humans; vehicles or buildings are on fire, stained with blood or showing bullet holes	14	9
Harassment by police or soldiers	Women are being physically attacked (pointed at with a rifle, taken by an arm or both arms); women's body language or facial expressions suggest that they feel threatened	14	6
Fainting	Women have fainted in the picture (on the ground, or being carried by others). These photographs usually make a closer shot of women on the floor, unlike pictures of dead women	15	4
Death	Include images of dead women only. The image of dead subjects tends to not capture the face of the victim, only the body from a far away perspective	9	4
Theme 2: Enacting Haitian culture			
Religious customs		76	53
Prayer	Women are praying (e.g., palms raised to the sky, eyes closed, etc.). Women may be alone or in groups	47	30
Vodou	Women are usually dressed in white and praying or participating in a circle with other women, praying, bathing in a stream or the river, or utilizing herbs	29	23
Other aspects of culture		58	28
Haitian iconography	Women are standing next to pieces of art, paintings in walls or advertisements (including election advertisements); art is the focus of the picture	32	12
Cultural Events	Pictures of carnival, cultural meetings (excluding religious meetings) or other "national days" (e.g., Flag day)	26	16
Theme 3: Showcasing affliction			
Negative affect		55	36
Negative affect	Women are crying or featuring a sad or pained face regardless of context	55	36
Positive affect		32	21
Positive affect	Women are smiling, laughing or showing pleasure	32	21

Note. Image count columns indicate number of images that coders categorized under the specified categories. The column for two-rater agreement image count indicates the number of images that two of the three coders classified under a given category. The column for three-rater agreement image count indicates the number of images that all three coders classified under a given category.

these cases. Of the remaining 243 images, 204 images did not have perfect consensus by the three raters, but had agreement by two of the three on at least one of the categories that they independently chose for each of these cases. For the remaining 39 images, coders' category choices were not matched. A meeting between the coders was conducted to obtain consensus on the final category to be given to these images.

In Table 1, we report the number of images included within each category, based on agreement by at least two of the raters. The image count produced by two raters is inclusive of the image count produced by the three raters, and it is typically higher than the image count produced by the three raters. The higher two-rater agreement image count reflects that it was more likely for two of the three raters to agree on a final category than for all three raters to be matched. One reason for not attaining perfect matching for each image may

be that the descriptions for the categories in the coding manual were not sufficiently clear to convey the exact meaning of these categories to all coders. In addition, the differences in cultural background of the coders (Woman of Color and White) could have influenced how coders interpreted both the images and the meaning of the coding descriptions.

Themes

In the second step, the first and second author engaged in multiple discussions of the coding categories constructed in order to create themes that could best organize and explain how these images positioned media consumers in relation to Haitian women. This process involved reflecting on the different ways in which images might function to empower, disempower, or equalize Haitian women in relation to the

audience. The categories were ultimately organized into three higher-order themes, each of which had subthemes in order to provide a structured explanation of the original categories within the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Results

To catalogue how images positioned Haitian women in relation to media consumers, we created three themes based on the 26 categories described above: (a) Negotiating Power and Resistance, (b) Enacting Haitian Culture, and (c) Showcasing Affliction. Each of these three themes, in turn, encompasses various subthemes that bring together and organize the coded categories (see Table 1).

Negotiating Power and Resistance

This theme encompassed about half of all the initial coding categories. This theme refers to perceptions of women accruing or losing autonomy over their lives, as active or passive agents in relationships with others. The theme contrasts images of women who are perceived to sustain control through everyday occupational roles or through specific instances of assertive or aggressive resistance (e.g., protesting or fighting) versus women who are perceived to surrender to uncontrollable events (e.g., natural disasters) and to systemic oppression by powerful others (e.g., national and international authorities). We developed four subthemes to organize these images—two that capture perceptions of women accruing power: (a) Power through Occupational Roles and (b) Building Resistance; and two that capture perceptions of women as powerless: (c) Receiving Aid and (d) Being Oppressed.

Images in the Power through Occupational Roles subtheme captured images of women as caregivers, market vendors, career women, politicians, farmers, and textile workers. We clustered together images of women in different occupational roles into this subtheme to examine the extent to which women's occupational roles are perceived to enhance women's personal empowerment (e.g., through income or social capital) or support community well-being (e.g., through women's roles as caregivers or political leaders). Images in Building Resistance comprised the categories of civic engagement, protests, voting, education, fighting, and illegal activities. In this subtheme, we included images where women's behaviors are suggestive of attempts to resist oppression toward themselves or their communities. Of note, we did not distinguish between socially sanctioned activities (e.g., protests) and objectionable activities (e.g., physical fights or illegal migration)—particularly because these images of objectionable activities were too few in number to warrant a subtheme but were consistent with the concept of resistance.

The Receiving Aid subtheme included the categories featuring foreign intervention, such as women queuing to receive foreign food assistance. This third subtheme refers to images that portrayed women as passive recipients of help from powerful donors, such as international aid, U.S. soldiers, and local police or politicians. Finally, the Being Oppressed subtheme comprised the categories of extreme poverty, natural disasters, neighborhood violence, harassment by police or soldiers, fainting, and death. This subtheme refers to portrayals of women as victims of uncontrollable events or powerful others, such as the police. Of all four subthemes within Negotiating Power and Resistance, this last subtheme numerically represented more images than others.

Enacting Haitian Culture

This second theme refers to images in which women participated in aspects of culture that appeared to be unique to Haitians when observed from an outsider's perspective. Images in this theme were clustered together based on an assumption that the behaviors of women (e.g., praying with raised arms, being in a trance, utilizing expressive body language) and the environmental context (e.g., the people, objects, or places in the background) in these images alluded to the unique, exotic, or different aspects of Haiti when compared to the life of people in Western societies. The prominence of cultural images focusing on religion prompted us to also create two subthemes to differentiate between images of (a) Religious Customs and (b) Other (nonreligious) Aspects of Culture.

Showcasing Affliction

This final theme explores how images portray the valence of Haitian women's emotional responses to their environment as shown in their facial expressions and body gestures. This theme was created to emphasize the contrast between two subthemes of (a) Negative Affect and (b) Positive Affect. Images portraying Negative Affect showed women in an anguished state, typically crying or screaming into the camera. The surrounding context in these images shows women responding to extreme environmental conditions (e.g., poverty or a natural disaster) or effectively pleading for help from an authority figure (e.g., an international aid worker distributing food). Images conveying Positive Affect showed women who were smiling or laughing, often in the contexts of political demonstrations or in the presence of a celebrity in Haiti (e.g., the president, a diplomat, or an artist).

Discussion

Through our content analysis, we described three major thematic messages portraying Haitian women in the photographic content of an international news organization, the AP: (a) Negotiating Power and Resistance, (b) Enacting Haitian Culture, and (c) Showcasing Affliction. A feminist poststructuralist framework is utilized below to argue more

explicitly about how media images position Haitian women in relation to media consumers through each of the themes.

The first theme, *Negotiating Power and Resistance*, presents four variants of images in which women interact with others or the environment to fulfill their needs. In the first subtheme, women are seen in a variety of occupational roles through which they create access to income and social capital. In the second subtheme, women's resistance to oppression is emphasized, through photographs of women in protests and acts of activism. The third subtheme comprises images of women as passive recipients of foreign aid and guidance. The final subtheme features images of women impacted by conditions of extreme poverty, many which reflect instances of women dealing with natural disasters. A comparison of the number of images in each subtheme demonstrates that the media more often shows Haitian women as passive recipients of help or as victims (the last two subthemes), rather than as fulfilling positions of power or protesting the conditions of their lives (the first two subthemes).

The prominence of images in which women appear to be helpless is especially important to analyze from a constructivist perspective. On one hand, the prevalence of these images may reflect legitimate representations of the economic poverty and unemployment that affect a large proportion of the Haitian population on a daily basis (Institute Haïtien de Statistique et d'Informatique, 2003). From a gendered perspective, however, the prevalence of these images further suggests that the media do not find it valuable to examine women-initiated efforts to help themselves—such as organizing or capturing women in professional and political roles (Bell, 2001; Charles, 1995). Instead, there is an investment in continuing to portray women as victims in need of rescuing—as would be suggested in images of women queuing to collect food aid. This latter portrayal is consistent with the imperialist portrayal of Haiti as a country that cannot rule itself as well as the veneration of Americans as rescuers, images traditionally attached to Haiti–U.S. relations in American and international media (Lawless, 1992; Potter, 2009).

The second theme, *Enacting Haitian Culture,* explores the prevalence of cultural themes in media portrayals of Haitian women. In our analysis, we identified a significant group of images emphasizing rituals, cultural events, images, and religious activities which in turn characterize Haitian culture as unique, or especially different, from Western cultures. A primary message conveyed through the prevalence of these cultural images is the "exoticization" of Haiti compared to other cultures. From a gendered perspective, most of these images seem to present segregated groups of women rather than being inclusive of both men and women in cultural events (e.g., in processions and ceremonies), which further supports a notion of women as exotic beings. Such representation is not surprising because Black women have historically been portrayed as sexualized and exotic individuals (Riggs et al., 1991; Tuchman, 1979; Woodard & Mastin, 2005).

The seemingly innocuous emphasis of these images on Haitian customs may also engender notions of "otherness" in the audience (Celeste, 2005; Gordon, 2008a; Lawless, 1992). Images of Haitian women engaged in Vodou, for instance, can exacerbate xenophobic feelings toward Haitians because it makes them undesirable or frightening to viewers who have been traditionally exposed to stereotypes about Vodou as supernatural or evil (Dubois, 2001). Conversely, these images could also incite feelings of admiration and veneration in audiences if observed through an emic perspective, that is, a culturally congruent view that is cognizant of the spiritual significance of Vodou among Haitians. This view is, however, likely to be taken only by a minority of media consumers who are already familiar with Vodou or Haitian culture.

The final theme, *Showcasing Affliction*, specifically highlights the high prevalence of images portraying anguish, distress, and suffering when compared to images of joy, happiness, and pleasure among women. When examining the likely cause of women's emotional reactions, it is apparent that negative affect is salient among many of the images already identified under the Oppressed and Receiving Help subthemes. The excessive focus on Haitian women's suffering may indeed reemphasize how women in Haiti are in need of rescuing, as discussed in the theme of Negotiating Power and Resistance. Through this frame, this third theme contributes supporting information for the first theme in our study.

Alternatively, Gordon (2008a, p. 131) has argued that photographic portrayals of Haitians, and particularly of Haitian women's emotionality, speaks to fear of "Blackness," specifically to the myth of "an indifference to morality, a lack of composure and an uncontrollable sexuality." Thus, the sensationalistic images featuring negative affect can also promote a stereotype of Haitian women as melodramatic and uncontrollable, especially when the environmental circumstances of the picture are not appropriately contextualized. Through this frame, the Negative Affect of this third theme also supports the portrayal of women as "the other" as described in Enacting Haitian Culture.

In contrast, images in which women showed Positive Affect were unlikely to overlap with other categories, and in fact, they seemed to be present exclusively in political demonstrations or in the presence of celebrities. This portrayal of women "enjoying" events appears to encompass a rather narrow selection of events, and it serves to minimize other sources of well-being in the lives of Haitian women. These portrayals are at odds with documented strengths in Haitians' help-seeking behaviors, such as the support they build in their community, family life, and religious groups (Nicolas, Schwartz, & Pierre, 2010). The scarcity of positive images in the realm of well-being may additionally be related to the often criticized focus of photojournalists on the sensational and the strange over more mundane representations of Haitians (Lawless, 1992; Potter, 2009). Many times this misrepresentation is due to the fact that photojournalists may be

unable to enter into more private spaces where positive instances of Haitian life can be experienced, precisely for lack of fluency in Kreyòl or because they do not know how to navigate the cultural and social network within Haitian communities. However, such lack of access to private spaces does not justify the exclusion of these positive aspects of Haitians' lives.

Our analysis of media images about Haitian women tells two stories to non-Haitian audiences about Haitian women's positions. The first story emphasizes Haitian women as being in need of rescuing by a benevolent, powerful imperialist entity. Although there is some acknowledgment of women's power to control their own lives, such empowerment is easily overwhelmed by the number and intensity of images that portray women in desperate situations. A second story places Haitian women as the "other"—as strange exotic entities, different from the audience and disturbing to those who have been exposed to negative stereotypes of Blackness and Vodou. Our subtheme of Negative Affect, which finds Haitian women portrayed as typically desperate or suffering, seems to reemphasize notions of women both as needing to be rescued and as being the "other." Altogether, these unidimensional characterizations of Haitian women are consistent with findings from other thematic analyses examining the representation of Haitians (Celeste, 2005; Lawless, 1992; Gordon, 2008a; Potter, 2009), where positive aspects are marginal and themes of victimhood and otherness are prominent.

Implications

Our study joins a growing body of research in the field of the psychology of women and gender that emphasizes the need to approach media representations with a critical eye, particularly when viewing news stories about Women of Color. Our study ultimately leads us to ask some fundamental questions: How do these themes fit with the narratives that Haitian women tell about themselves? How do these portrayals continue to disenfranchise Haitian women? What is the function of such portrayals for journalists and photographers involved in its creation and dissemination? And what is the media consumer to do with the information presented in our study?

We have discussed how the representation of Haitian women as helpless and oppressed diverges from, and even contradicts, Haitian women's own discourse of resistance. Haitian women, through several publications, make explicit that no matter how bad things are in Haiti, they will not only *survive*, but also resist (either through overt or subvert ways) oppression in its multiple dimensions (Becker et al., 2009; Bell, 2001; Charles, 1995; N'Zengou-Tayo, 1998). Negative media portrayals of women are also likely to counter the individual self-image that many Haitian women with access to varying levels of power and status (in the middle and upper classes, both within Haiti and abroad) have of themselves.

This impact on identity might be stronger among Haitians who do not have consistent access to more emic perspectives on Haitian culture, as is the case for children born in the Diasporas (Buchanan Stafford, 1987). We have also examined how portrayals that insist on highlighting narrow aspects of Haitian women's lives continue to disenfranchise this group in multiple ways—be it by exacerbating current stereotypes about Haitians, by sabotaging Haitian women's sense of ethnic pride and identity, or simply by silencing important aspects of their lives and history. We now turn to question how the continuation of particular portrayals about Haitian women (and indeed, of other disenfranchised groups in general) into the 21st century might benefit its authors and the more powerful sectors of society.

It is clear that the portrayal of women in the media is not void of the creator's beliefs and assumptions. Indeed, the images chosen for publication may have a beneficial impact for journalists at the individual, institutional, and societal level and in ways that are not explicit to the audience. For example, the institution may have selected particular images to publish not only to highlight particular messages about the news story but also to increase sales through sensationalistic marketing practices or to increase the author's chances of winning acclaim in their field. The voice of the subjects portrayed in such photographs may be nowhere present in this decision to capture and publish particular images about their lives.

Previous scholars have pointed out that journalists have a special responsibility to document news articles that are closely representative of the truth (Celeste, 2005). From a feminist poststructuralist view, however, objective truth is unfeasible given the myriad possible perspectives different individuals can have about a single event (Gavey, 1989; Weedon, 1987). Rather than encouraging journalists to represent "truth," which is subjective and thus open to cultural bias, we argue that newsmakers have a responsibility to frame news in ways that are congruent with the voices of the women portrayed in their stories. Such work necessitates an effort from journalists to engage and share power with underserved groups by prioritizing the lens that these women have about the events surrounding their lives over the lens journalists bring from their own culture.

Despite the authority media coverage exerts over information about Haiti, there are increasing resources dedicated to documenting the strengths, challenges, and successes of Haitian women and about which readers ought to be aware in order to critically evaluate content in the press. It is clear that each source of information provides additional perspectives about the group of interest, and ultimately it is the reader's responsibility to integrate information from various sources to arrive at a comprehensive perspective of a cultural group. Indeed, a single source of representation should not serve as the total representation of any group; rather, the perspectives of multiple sources of information (such as media, literature, personal observations, and experiences) collectively may

enable a more balanced understanding of the group of interest.

In addition to the relevance of these findings to Haitian women's standing, our study has implications for future analyses of media representations of Women of Color. Whereas the focus of our article centers on an examination of Haitian women in the media, the methods and process used here can also be applicable to the study of other groups of women. Future projects could focus on questions such as: How are other Women of Color presented in the media? To what extent do images in the media provide a comprehensive portrayal of these women? And how are these views concordant with their subjects' views and perspectives?

Limitations

Although our article adds to a growing body of research on Haitian women, as well as on the representation of underrepresented groups, there are some limitations to be addressed. First, our analyses focused on a single source of materials (photographs) from a single media source (the AP Photo Archive)—an approach that excluded images from other mediums (e.g., magazines) and major news sources (e.g., Reuters or the Agence France-Presse). Although focusing on a single source eliminated confounds across sources, it does not allow for a comparison of the images across sources and materials. It is our hope that our findings can be used as a source of comparison for future projects that also analyze the portrayal of Haitian women in other forms of media.

Second, thematic analysis is subject to the research and theoretical biases of the authors. Although safeguards were taken to present a relatively unbiased analysis, such as involving multiple coders in the validation of initial categories, it is likely that the themes found in the dataset are influenced by the authors' background and interest in Haitian women's affairs. We believe these findings are generalizable, however, given that these views are substantiated by a growing body of research that criticizes the media's narrow coverage of Haiti and Haitian women. In the future, studies may include coders with varying degrees of familiarity with the culture examined in order to gain an understanding of how cultural background and cultural knowledge of the coders may influence the themes identified through the coding.

Finally, factors such as the focus of the time period and location of these images may affect the messages found. In terms of time effects, our database was limited to images taken between 1994 and 2009, a time frame that excludes images of more recent events such as the highly publicized earthquake disaster in January of 2010. This limitation calls into question whether images in our analysis are in any way different from images published in the subsequent months. A quick glance through the AP Photo Archive's holdings posted since the 2010 earthquake, however, suggests that images of Haitian women in this past year could also be categorized under the themes presented in our article.

Location of the images could also have influenced the themes developed. Unfortunately, images in the AP Photo Archive did not provide sufficient information to draw meaning about the portrayal of Haitian women in the international Diaspora. Whereas this limitation highlights the lack of representation of this subgroup within images of Haitian women as a whole, we can only speculate about how media representation of Haitian women abroad might be represented in other media sources and about how such representations could alter the themes we found in our current analysis. For example, many Haitian women abroad have acquired the resources and social capital to secure positions of power (e.g., as doctors, academics, politicians, and other professionals) as documented in *Who is Who in Haitian Diaspora* (Vilsaint & Heurtelou, 2008) and other studies (Pierce & Elisme, 2000). Examining how the media might represent occupational roles among these women could add yet another dimension to the issues of representation already discussed here. The analysis of images of Haitian women in other time periods and spaces hence remains an important task for future research.

Conclusions

Despite these limitations, our study provides an initial account of extant themes about Haitian women in the media and provides an opportunity to evaluate them critically. In this era of advanced technology, the ease of access to representations of individuals from different cultural groups is greater than ever before, as is our increasing reliance on the media to educate ourselves about the lives and experiences of these cultural groups. Although such media representation is important and enhances our knowledge and understanding of events throughout the globe, it is important that we recognize that such representation constitutes a single perspective among others. Thus, consumers must take on a more active role in evaluating the media critically and in engaging with other sources for further learning about a particular subject or group. We recommend many of the sources cited here as good articles with which to begin this journey.

We end our article by pointing out how inappropriate (and humorous) it would be for individuals in other countries to imagine all women in the United States based on the images of political figures like Hilary Clinton or Sarah Palin as the only sources of information. Although the news media provides an important source of information to the reader, it is a shared responsibility for all of us to critically evaluate the information presented to us and to seek out additional information that will further inform our understanding of women (and people in general) in other cultures.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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