

## Content Analysis: Promotional Materials of ACIC Members

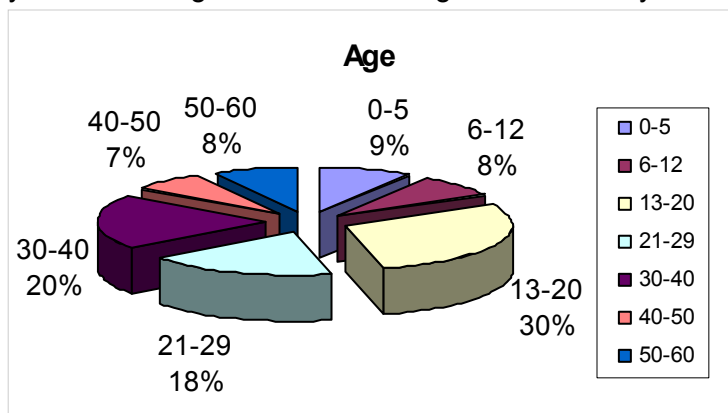
As part of our Ethical Images research project, we collected and assessed images that represent the developing, or Southern, world. The content analysis will serve to provide concrete statistics we can use to discuss how images perpetuate or discount stereotypes, and which aspects of an image contribute to the final impact.

The first part of this report examines promotional materials from a number of ACIC members in Atlantic Canada. The relevance of this particular image set is that our members are primarily NGO's; organizations that one would trust to reliably represent Southern partners. In order to achieve statistics, we broke down the images into specific categories including gender, race, region, action and expression that describe each person in the image.

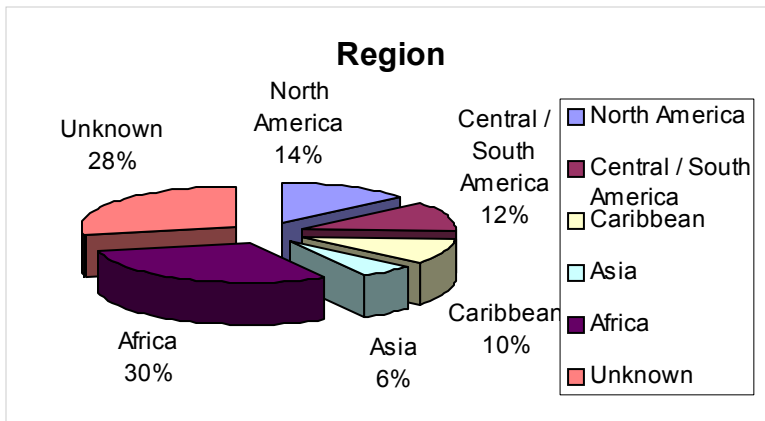
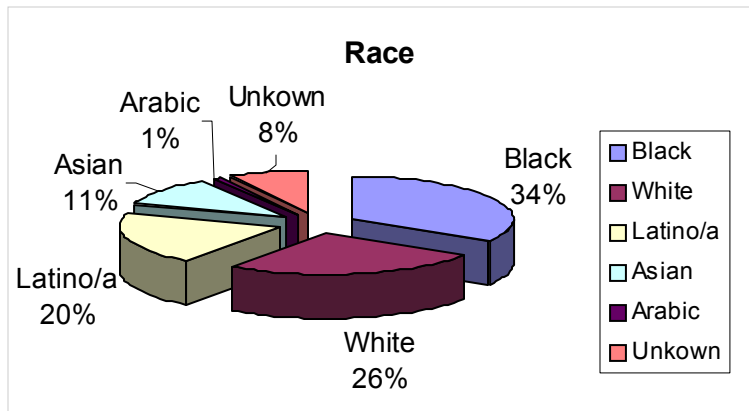
Prior to presenting our conclusions from the content analysis, I would like to call attention to the fact that trends in images may, or may not be, directly correlative to trends in societies, cultures, or development work, rather than a trend in images. As well, certain judgments are inevitably subjective; one must take into account the natural biases of the analysts.

Conclusions from our content analysis include:

- There were slightly more women than men in the images we collected (55% opposed to 45%). Although these are fairly balanced, this statistic also helps interpret other categories. Of those images that show people working, 59% were male and 41% female. Of those images that show people learning, approximately 65% were male and 35% female. Women were also more likely to be wearing traditional clothing of their country or culture, while men were typically in Western dress.
- The predominant age group represented was late teen (age 13-20) with over one quarter of the people falling into this age group. Organizations that involve youth and/or target youth as the main recipients of the information were more likely to post pictures of young people and children.

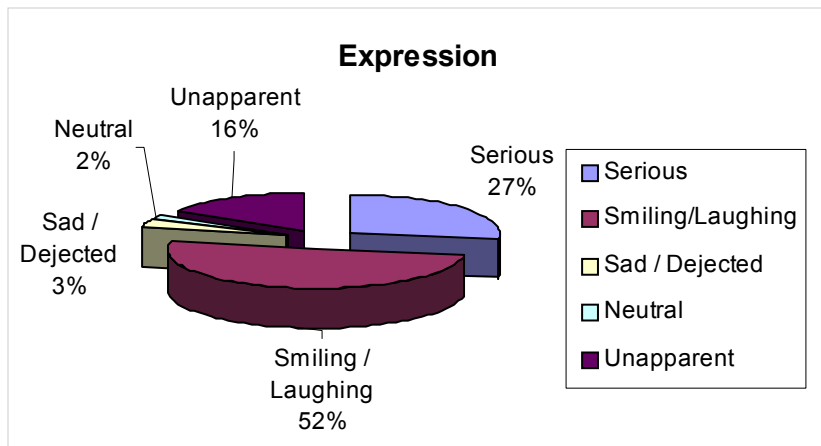


- The most commonly represented race was black (34%), with white coming in second (26%). The high percentage of white subjects is likely due to the portrayal of partnerships between Canadian organizations and those in other countries. That heightens the likelihood of Canadians being present in the images across the board. Latino/a representation was a close third (20%), followed by Asian (11%), and a small 1% of Arabic subjects. 8% of the images were not classified into race, as it was difficult to accurately classify one's race from a photo.



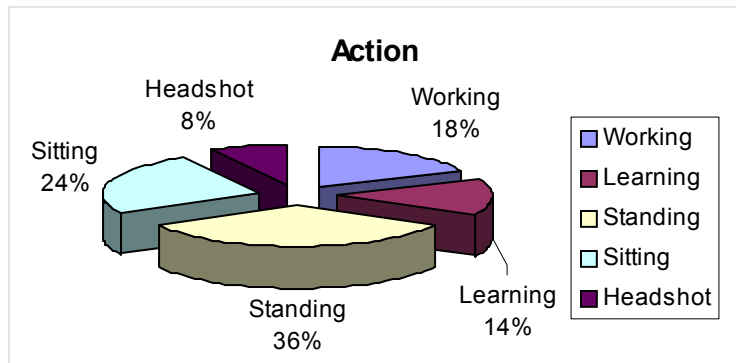
- Of the large representation of black people in the images, they were mostly from Africa. Africa was the most commonly represented region, with 30% of the subjects photographed in Africa. Once again, region was an ambiguous category, with 28% not discernable.

- Facial expressions were often positive; 52% of those photographed were smiling or laughing. These smiling photos were often those in which subjects looked directly at the camera, cogniscent of a picture being taken. No pictures portrayed crying subjects, and only 3% appeared sad or dejected. 27% appeared serious, mostly those who were photographed while working or learning.



- 50% of the images were outside, often amongst sunny conditions. Those that were inside were mostly in classrooms.

As personal observations, we saw that most of the images were not the famine stricken, shocking pictures that are common in representation of the South. Often, people were in smiling, diverse groups and involved in projects, often amongst aesthetically pleasing surroundings. This, likely, is due to the fact that many of our member organizations work with Southern partners and send Canadians to work on volunteer or intern projects. It would thus be advantageous for organizations to promote positive working relationships and desirable surroundings. In contrast to this, a newsletter that depicts the humanitarian crisis in Sudan is very serious, in a desert setting and with no white people present.



In fact, the number of white people in the pictures portrayed a trend – the white people tended to be teaching, or helping the people of the particular region, portrayed as leaders in development. Interestingly, many successful international projects are formed within communities and interns and volunteers are sent to work on a project that has already been initiated. Surely, many interns and volunteers who have worked in southern countries will attest to having learned immensely. Despite the diverse representation of cultures and often, a dignified presence of individuals, do these pictures have an underlying, neo-colonialism? Is the white race our only hope? Is this better than representing hopelessness?

Certainly, most of the promotional materials we have examined can be deemed ethical. However, I think it is crucial to examine them carefully, to see where they belong in the ethical spectrum. Elements of even these images must be considered and evaluated, from a culturally objective perspective, before we can truly and accurately present images of other cultures without embedding the notion of “us” (often superior) and “other.” Without this careful attention to detail when presenting the South, we may in fact find that our promotional material is counteractive to the positive change we are working towards.