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Running head: RACISM IN MEDIA

Racism in Media: How Media Shapes our View of People of Color in Society

SeMarial Wilder

Merrimack College

2020

MERRIMACK COLLEGE

CAPSTONE PAPER SIGNATURE PAGE

CAPSTONE SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF EDUCATION

IN

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

CAPSTONE TITLE: Racism in Media: How Media Shapes our View of People of Color in Society

AUTHOR: SeMarial Wilder

THE CAPSTONE PAPER HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.

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Acknowledgements

Thank you so much to my parents, Mary Ann Vivians and Linnie Vivians for always supporting me in everything I do. To my fellowship supervisor Felicia Pierce, for always challenging me to rise to the occasion and to always advocate for myself. To Dr. Melissa Nemon who has been committed to seeing me cross the finish line and for being just an amazing human being that I have learned so much from.

Lastly, thank you to my classmates in the Social Justice in Education capstone course and the entire Community Engagement fellowship cohort. Your support and friendship really made Massachusetts feel like home for me.

Abstract

As a way to increase awareness about racism in the media, research was conducted to showcase the many ways racism is perpetuated against Black people through our everyday media consumption. A workshop was held and analysis of responses from pre-event surveys, activity post-it responses, and post-event surveys were completed by attendees. Using the cultivation theory, attendees increased their overall knowledge about how the media plays a huge part in how they see society. One attendee mentioned, "I learned how the media sets thoughts or images for you without you realizing it." It is clear that the media does a wonderful job at influencing the way society is seen and the people who live in society. Historically, Black people have always experienced racism in the media, but with new technological platforms the reach of racism is very widespread. Because people of color cannot change the color of their skin, society has to do a better job at breaking down stereotypes and the perpetuation of racism in media as a whole.

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Racism in Media: How Media Shapes our View of People of Color in Society

What one exposes themselves to on an everyday basis has a huge effect on how they view society. Large consumptions of shows such as Crime Stoppers, Love and Hip Hop, and other such shows are consuming large amounts of media intake daily that is affecting the way we see each other in society. A 2018 Nielson audience report shows that U.S. adults spend more than ten and a half hours per day consuming media.

Research shows through the Cultivation Theory that long-term media exposure causes people to become more engulfed in a struggle to distinguish media from reality. Researcher George Gerbner (1998), discovered that through the avid portrayal of violence in society mainly at the hands of Black men, society tends to overestimate how dangerous the world truly is and become fixated on a certain racial group to place their fear. Associative Priming Theory refers to the idea that when thoughts or beliefs are brought to mind (or primed) these thoughts play a role in individuals' understanding and interpretation of subsequent information that is encountered (Oliver, 2003). With the over exposure of violent television, society tends to use associative priming to connect the dots between what they watch and the stereotypes they hold.

Given the mainstream media criminalization and stereotyping of African American women and men, we now live in a culture where hate crimes and acceptable discrimination amongst people of color have become commonplace. Although our U.S. population is more diverse than it has ever been, we still remain in a white and Black binary society that draws strict social lines. In 2020, there are certain spaces that people of color still cannot occupy free of discrimination and bias. When people of color start to populate areas that are surrounded in whiteness, they are judged by their skin color based on preconceived ideas and racial stereotypes. TedTalk presenter Baratunde Thurston (2019) used his presentation to teach society how to

deconstruct racism in media headlines as we see it. Thurston noted that in 2018, America saw a rise in public racial profiling and how the world began to really see that racism is still a modern issue that is experienced daily for people of color.

The lack of accurate and diverse representation in media has an effect on how we perceive people of color to be and how we interact with them as a whole. The massive amounts of negative media based around one race (particularly Black people), has divided our society into a predator versus prey society. Racial profiling is commonly known as an act of discrimination based upon one's appearance (specifically race or ethnicity), suspecting them to have committed an offense (Lever, 2017). The act of racial profiling has been imbedded into the fabric of American culture since its inception. The modern criminal justice system, established during the Jim Crow era, helped preserve racial order that kept Blacks in their place (Balko, 2018). This hierarchy of systems since slavery has left Black people often judged and presumed guilty of crimes they did not commit. There has been a false common need amongst white people to know why people of color are living in certain spaces, shopping in certain places, and simply possessing their autonomy. While under the impression that Black people are all common criminals, white people resort to racial profiling that can lead to serious consequences for the innocent. This type of racism then leads to internalized racism and forces many people of color to feel the need to justify their identity or adjust it in a way that is comfortable or non-threatening to white society. Understanding how racism in the media creates a fearful and discriminatory society is beneficial in recognizing how media fuels racial profiling and increases internalized racism.

This project proposes a media viewing and discussion forum in which participants will be able to reflect on subtle and overt racism in media and understand how those images increase

acts of racial profiling and internalized racism. This will be done through a brief introduction of racism and media, and then a viewing of collected racist commercials, photography, films, news stories, and television show clips. Participants will be given an opportunity to engage through activities, break out groups, written prompts, and questioning from invited scholars. This project hopes to increase the awareness of racism in the everyday media we consume, and to create a sense of awareness to question our own personal bias.

Literature Review

There has always been a constant struggle with representation in the media. Due to a limited number of roles for Black actors, a destructive tradition existed early to cast Black's for humiliating, demeaning, and stereotypical roles (Garrett, 2017). In 1915, regarded as the most racist big budget film, "Birth of a Nation" was released and heralded as a success among many (Cripps, 1963). This film glorified the Ku Klux Klan, and portrayed Black people as lazy, dangerous, and morally degenerate. Due to the millions of people who paid to witness the movie during that time, the film was largely credited with perpetuating violence onto Black communities. An African American writer during that time stated that the film did incalculable harm to Black people by creating a justification for prejudice, racism, and discrimination for decades to follow (Cripps, 1963). This open display of racism during this time served as America, and largely the South's, acceptance as the way of life.

Show business is said to project damaging images to audiences through the exploitation of blacks that relies on a patriarchal white supremacist lens, where Black bodies are distorted and commercialized for the sake of entertainment (Garnett, 2017). In the late 19th century, the height of circus popularity, bounty hunters scoured America's backwoods and the world looking for

people they could transform into sideshow attractions (Macy, 2016). The Muse Brothers, George and Willie were a pair of brothers from Virginia who were stolen by a circus promoter who then enticed the seven- and nine-year old's with candy. From 1914 to 1927, circus managers transformed the Muse brothers from scared little boys into world-famous sideshow freaks. George and Willie were not permitted to go to school or learn to read. They were not paid for their work, and to stop them from begging to return home, they were told their mother was dead (Macy, 2016). Transitioning past circus and minstrel shows, Black people began to receive roles that were worthy of being on the big screen. The Motion Picture Production Code, better known as the Hays Code, which is now mostly remembered as a symbol of Hollywood prudishness, played a role in limiting the scope of stories Hollywood could tell about Black life, when a studio actually mustered the ambition to attempt one (Rosenberg, 2015). The 1934 code prohibited the showing of white slavery and declared miscegenation (sexual relationships between white and Black people) forbidden (Bogle, 1973). In 1940, Hattie McDaniel became the first African American to win an Oscar for her performance as "Mammie" in *Gone with the Wind*. Although recognized as an amazing actress, Hattie was only allowed to sit in the back of the award room at a segregated table due to segregation at that time. The struggle for equality from 1946 to 2016, when groups began confronting the absence of people of color in key above and below the line fields in Hollywood is still a movement today (Gaydos & Gray, 2016). Due to only one Black person receiving an Oscar nomination, in 1996 Rev. Jesse Jackson called for a protest due to the lack of minorities in Hollywood and lack of diversity in television and film (Gaydos & Gray, 2016). Trending in 2015 with the hashtag #OscarSoWhite, the revolution to portray and award diversity in Motion Picture Film and Television was at an all-time high. After the Academy awarded all twenty acting nominations to white actors for the second year in a row, this

movement coming shortly after the #BlackLivesMatter movement pushed Hollywood to evaluate their voting systems (Ugwu, 2020).

News and Print

The media portrayals of crime and viewers' responses to such portrayals, play an important role in creating and sustaining the stereotype of Black men as criminals and Black women as angry (Oliver, 2003). A research study was done on network news analyzing the images of African Americans by videotaping segments and breaking down transcripts from stations such as NBC, CBS, and ABC (Entman, 1994). Entman found that the news tends to focus heavily on pushing stereotyped impressions and less on the positive image and roles of Black people compared to Whites. A stereotype is a preconceived notion based out of negative generalizations and assumptions in regard to a person's race and status in society (Edwards, 1940). In this case, the stereotypes being reinforced by the new media included Black people are violent human beings, they are inherently dishonest, and they are highly uneducated.

Although crime statistics do not match, African Americans are more likely to be shown as criminal suspects in the media more than any other race. Despite the fact that network news producing less stereotyping than local news, the images still insinuate that Black people are to be seen as violent or threatening criminals (Entman, 1994). This overrepresentation of Black people and criminality are coupled with the limited positive associations of Black people in the news (Isom, 2017). When Black people are heavily portrayed in the news as criminals this then leads to repeated activation of the stereotype, which strengthens perceptions of race and crime (Dixon & Azocar, 2007). Negative exaggerations associated with mainly Black males as criminals effects the public's attitude in multiple different ways when it comes to interacting with them.

Stereotypes can enforce dangerous hostility and resentment towards Black men and also create a lack of sympathy for them.

Tragic police shootings of unarmed and innocent Black men have increased across America rapidly over the course of ten years (Hall, Hall, & Perry, 2016). “Another Unarmed Black Man Shot Dead” has become the central theme on all media platforms in terms of news. The overused “mistaken identification” of young Black men and women who are murdered is not only used by police officers, but by everyday citizens who believe taking the law into their own hands by murdering the innocent is okay (Oliver, 2003). In February of 2012, an unarmed Black teen by the name of Trayvon Martin was shot dead by George Zimmerman, a self-ordained neighborhood patrol, for looking suspicious in his neighborhood (McCann, 2014). The 2012, acquittal of George Zimmerman for the murder of Trayvon Martin signified a huge turn in the observation of racism in media, racial profiling, and an alarming sense of unrest amongst people of color (Love & Bradley, 2015). After Trayvon, the narrative of shooting innocent Black men continued with the deaths of men such as Philando Castille, Bothem Jean, and Ahmaud Arbery to name a few. Boiling over from these countless deadly situations where people of color has lost their lives by racial profiling, a huge protest campaign emerged with a message of #BlackLivesMatter. Black Lives Matter is a social justice movement that is demanding America to respect and end the violence on Black and Brown people of color (Lebron, 2017). “The occurrence of police stops of citizens of color happen with such frequency that distinct idioms have been coined to identify each, “DWB” “Driving While Black or Brown,” and “Stop-and-Frisk,” respectively” (Dunn, 2016). Another idiom that has been coined when it comes to racial profiling is #LivingWhileBlack. Baratunde Thurston (2019) suggested that these hashtags are based out of the policing of Black people at the hands of white people and has become a

common occurrence in America. Simple instances such as shopping while Black, swimming while Black, campaigning while Black, or barbequing while Black has led to notable media coverage from 2017, 2018, and 2019 (Henderson & Jefferson-Jones, 2019). These central news themes are based around the racial profiling situations where white people called 9-1-1 to issue an emergency for Black people simply #LivingWhileBlack. These news stories stem from videos captured and uploaded to Twitter and Facebook by Black people or surrounding witnesses, to bring focus to an issue that many thought was nonexistent or saw as perpetuated untruth by people of color. These cases helped spotlight injustices that would have never received justice had they not been filmed. On the other hand, it is also important to know that people of color film these situations and post the situation because as a culture the media historically would never air a story of that nature. The narrative to change the way people of color are seen in the media did not start overnight and certainly will not change overnight.

Film and Television

Bogle's (1973) detailed book *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* is a historical lens into how Black people have been seen in film over eight decades. Early portrayals of Black people in film or television were those done by White people in "Blackface". These early depictions and portrayals of Black people were distorted and exaggerated representations of Black people as uncivilized, illiterate, and lazy. "For over 150 years from 1769 to 1927, minstrelsy would become an institution revered by White people for the dehumanizing, yet somehow entertaining characterization of Black people as darkies and White people as ordinary, normal, and cultured ladies and gentlemen.... indicative of both their attitudes about Blacks and their own self perceptions" (Adams-Bass, Stevenson & Kotzin, 2014).

In the late 1960's, primetime television began to depict Black people as social symbols in guest spots on white shows such as *I Spy*, *Julia*, and *Room 222*. These new characters served as progress and a sign of integration in modern television. Only through these portrayals did Black people begin to feel as if they saw themselves accurately portrayed on television, no matter how idealized and evasive some of the representations might be (Bogle, 2015). In the 1970's and 1980's Black people really got a chance to see a diverse portrayal of Black characters through shows such as *The Jeffersons*, *The Cosby Show* and *227*. These portrayals of Black families seemed to start a new trend of showcasing the Black reality and family dynamic that many African Americans associated with. Throughout the 90's, shows like the *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, *Mo'Nique*, and *Living Single* became staples in American culture that showcased the diversity in Black culture.

In spite of social advances, in terms of seeing more representation and people of color on screen, there still remains an issue of portraying Black people in a negative way. There has been a severe imbalance in how Black women are portrayed through reality television and sitcoms as compared to white women. Negative stereotypes such as Black women are angry, Black women are always on welfare, and Black women are prone to teenage pregnancy are continuously perpetuated through the media, leaving viewers susceptible to misinformed beliefs about Black women. "Reality television shows reach millions of viewers each week but are far from reality. These shows are often heavily scripted and then heavily edited to present narratives that yield high ratings by eliciting drama, often at the expense of Black women" (Freeman, 2019). Throughout the early 2000's when reality television was popular on VH1, shows such as *Flavor of Love*, *I love New York*, and *Bad Girls Club* almost instantly helped push the narrative of the always loud, always ready to fight, and always promiscuous Black woman. These images then

continued through shows such as *The Real Housewives of Atlanta*, *Love and Hip-Hop Atlanta*, or *Married to Medicine*. These shows portray a wealthier and popular image of Black character's that are still used as a tool to create a negative image of Black people surrounding violence, drugs, and sex. These portrayals insinuate that no matter how wealthy or popular a Black person can become; they will still involve themselves in illegal criminal activity and indulge in reckless sexual activities. The effects of negative media portrayal for people of color, mainly Black people, has a huge focus on how we process that and view ourselves. Consequently, the spillover affects the behaviors of the target group results in conforming to initial negative perceptions and expectations. Eric Steele (1979) suggests that the more people of color watch negative media shown about them, they will be plagued with the demeaning effects of internalized racism. Internalized racism is when the people who are oppressed through racism, began to accept and model the very racism that oppresses them (Speight, 2007). Modeling the behavior often associated with those on reality television, many Black people fall into the trap of exuding internalized racism that helps to perpetuate a negative image in how society sees all Black people.

A great deal of concern has consistently been expressed by Black parents, teachers, and community leaders on the effects of negative and violent television on Black children (Stroman, 1984). When discussing internalized racism, we must understand that internalized racism is a process that occurs over time. Black children who watch an alarmingly high rate of racism in media, will continue to be influenced by fully adapting internalized racism as they are older. Greenberg and Reeves (1976) research suggests that Black low-income children watched over six hours of television a day, compared to the white low-income children five hours a day. The socialization content made available to Black children on television is frequently negative,

undesirable, and violent while serving no positive behavior model of imitation (Stroman, 1984). The impact of such negative media toward children is that children will then process these messages and ideas in a way that becomes the acceptable actions of Black youth. The portrayal of Black characters in television helps to aid and perpetuate generalized stereotypes and assumptions made from associative priming. “While consensus has grown about the prevalence of negative Black media images, measuring the influence of these images and youth rejection or endorsement of these images is an understudied phenomenon” (Adams-Bass et al, 2014). Clearly, more research needs to be done on this issue.

When negative role models are admired by children of color, it increases the danger of their lives being taken. Children tend to emulate what they see on television, and the effects of this done by Black children could end with them being racially stereotyped, profiled, or worse (Bryant, 2011). The culture of reality television is to make the viewers believe that their actions are acceptable and that they can be duplicated. When children began to model the negative stereotypes they see in the media, such as fighting, selling drugs, or prostitution, it becomes a case of internalized racism at the hands of racism. Furthermore, giving children the tools through media to self-destruct is a form of structural violence. Structural Violence is defined as the systematic way social structures harm or otherwise disadvantage individuals (Burtle, 2013). The process of how racism in media is intricately related to racial profiling and internalized racism, is visibly interconnected.

Social Media

As microblogging platforms that serve to keep the world connected to people such as family and friends, social media has become one of the biggest media platforms to exist. In 2011, 1.2 billion users worldwide - 82 percent of the world’s internet population over the age of

fifteen - logged onto a social media site, up from six percent in 2007 (Van Dijck, 2013). Currently, there are 7.7 billion people in the world, with at least 3.5 billion using online platforms (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). Facebook, the largest social media platform in the world, has 2.4 billion users (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). Other social media platforms including YouTube and Whatsapp also have more than one billion users each (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). Major platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat and Instagram all serve as a world within themselves that have their own distinct identities. Every social media platform has a unique way of interaction amongst its users, and what is allowed and not allowed on the platform. Social media platforms serve as a free speech platform for people to say what they want, when they want. Although social media was intended for society to engage with others virtually, it was never intended to be a breeding ground for racism. On the web people have the added cover of anonymity, creating an environment where individual writers and entire groups of people are abused because of their race or religion; however few have the courage to stand openly behind their statements (Younge, 2012). Researcher Brendesha Tynes (2015) conducted research on adolescent's experience of racial cyberbullying. Respondents said they had been shown a racist image and have witnessed rude or mean things said about a person's ethnic group online (Tynes, 2015). News coverage surrounding racial social media incidents almost always portray the attackers as innocent, educated, and well-respected individuals. At Saline High School in Detroit, Michigan, Black students were targeted with racial slurs on Snapchat by using the N-word featured with two gorilla emoji's and the words "white power" and "the south will rise again" (Neavling, 2020). A college student at Arizona State was caught tweeting things such as the N-word and that they have "jungle fever" (Lilley, 2018). Twenty years ago, public schools and university officials would likely have managed these matters with relative privacy, involving few

beyond the immediate school community; but now an act of social media racial bias at a school can make national headlines within hours (Lilley, 2018). While many institutions value protecting their reputation, oftentimes the Black student's targeted are left feeling unprotected on school campuses. Assistant Professor Meredith Clark at the University of Virginia, who researches the intersections of race, media, and power, struggled to name a university that she thinks addresses social-media incidents adequately. "To date, I have yet to see a university handle essentially a social-media crisis well, particularly one that their students are involved in," Clark said. "I really have not seen a university do that well. If there were one that had done it well...we might not know about it. The problem would've been handled in a way that really didn't draw a lot of attention" (Lilley, 2018).

Racism flourishes on social media by presenting itself in subtle retweets or images that are often seen largely as simple comedy with no ill intent behind it. Subtle racism is often presented as a joke or the questioning of things that are simply understood. For example, subtle racism on social media could come in the form of calling a Black person by a made-up name based on what they think it should be. It is presented time and time again through trending exploitive news clips that play on the educational disparities amongst people in low-income communities of color. Overt racism on social media refers to outright racism that is rooted in the hatred for Black people spoken through posts that say "go back to Africa", "go rob a bank", or comparing pictures of Black people with monkeys.

Representation

Representation is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary (2020) as the way someone or something is shown or described. Children are known to be easily influenced and intrigued by what they see. Representation matters because what children learn and see while they are young,

can have a lasting impact on their life (Gerbner, 1998). It changes and shifts the way people see each other and also how they see themselves. Positive representation can impact how Black people feel about themselves such as their hair, clothing style, and their race as a whole. Positive representation such as showing a positive Black family unit on television, can help other races understand Black culture and the race itself better, while breaking down stereotypes. Negative representation also has the power to cause self-hate amongst other Black people and ones ownself. Negative representation can help increase racial barriers in the workplace, academia, and general society for Black people. For example, the representation of Black women in media that is often shown, leaves Black women in a complex struggle with how they are seen in society. This “double jeopardy” of being both Black and female in society has continued to create and reinforce a U.S. culture satiated with derogatory representations of Black women and girls (Muhammad & McArthur, 2015). Being Black in America is often confusing in representation because there are no clear constant signs of what is accurate. These representations not only make the racial hierarchy appear natural but also give an impression of the world as more inclusive than it is (El-Burki, 2017).

Every few years, the narrative changes and glimpses of positive representation appear. In 2018, Marvel Studios released a character by the name of *Black Panther* that shook the world and became a phenomenon. The message that Black people are as diverse in our cultures, politics and traditions within our communities as the world outside, yet exist within the white imagination as a resource to be mined or a threat to be put down, is one that *Black Panther* effortlessly communicates with subtext that resonates across the diaspora (Domise, 2018). Positive representation in movies like *Black Panther*, TV shows like *Blackish*, and news such as Kendrick Lamar winning a Pulitzer Prize, serves as a gateway to other races seeing the Black

race as more than negative stereotypes. This also serves as a way for Black children to grow up seeing themselves in all facets and knowing that they can become whatever their heart desires. Seeing a positive representation has the power to change minds and aid in the reconstruction of how different people are seen in society.

Project Plan

This project plan is centered around bringing awareness to the racism in our everyday media. This project explores the deep-rooted racism in American media through Film, Television, Print, and present-day Social Media. This project will open eyes to subtle and overt racism that obliviously floats by society daily in the form of racial stereotypes.

Situation Statement

On a daily average, most American's are exposed to at least one form of media representation that is racist or discriminatory. Through advertisements, television shows, movies or YouTube videos, people of color tend to be represented in a negative way that perpetuates stereotypes. A mass amount of negative media consumption for a human-being is dangerous to their beliefs and view of society.

Define Your Goals

The goal is to bring to light the many ways racism in the media is portrayed to us on a daily basis in all outlet forms. I want all my attendees to walk away with an urge to really think about what they are seeing the next time they login to social media, watch a television show, or watch the news. I want the attendees to walk away understanding the origin of racial stereotypes and how those affect the way we see racial groups today. I want people to clearly understand what the Cultivation Theory means and how to apply that to our society and the media we see. I

want all my attendees to walk away continuing to start this conversation with those who did not attend the workshop.

Target Audience and Stakeholders

My target audience is the Merrimack College student body of all classifications. I want students of all ethnic backgrounds to attend. The event will be open to the public as well. The people of influence attending will be local community organizers and nonprofits such as executives from North Shore Community Development Corporation (North Shore CDC) in Salem, MA. The influencers will also be the professors from Merrimack College.

Crafting a Clear Message

Racism in Media is a tough issue that continues to plague our society and how we view the people of color who live in it. The fear and hate rooted in racism can lead to racial profiling and internalized racism. This discrimination and unrest can lead to dangerous outcomes for people of color and could mentally affect the way they see themselves in society. Through education and discussion about racism in media, we can begin to acknowledge and take action against those systems of power that tear us apart as humanity.

Incentives for Engagement

Target Audience: College Students

Incentive: Better understanding of the issue, awareness, Class Credit for attending/ Count for an assignment (Faculty Agreement).

Target Audience: General Public

Incentive: Better understanding of the effects of racism in media, and general awareness of the issue existing.

Stakeholder: Felicia Pierce, CPO, North Shore CDC

Incentive: Visibility of the work being done by North Shore CDC’s point neighborhood

Stakeholder: Professors at Merrimack College

Incentive: Free Social Justice event for their students to attend for class credit

Identify Outreach Methods

I will use Merrimack’s flyer distributor to get flyers out around campus and in residence halls. I will also be sharing the flyer with my guest speaker at North Shore CDC who will post the flyer on their website and in their building. I will reach out to the Rogers Center to see if they could advertise my flyer to their students and post it on their website. I will also be contacting Bryan Landgren who runs the social media page for the community engagement program, so that he can advertise my event through Facebook.

Responsibilities Chart

NAME	ORGANIZATION	RESPONSIBILITIES	CONTACT INFORMATION
SeMarial Wilder	Merrimack College	Create event flyer. Book venue space. Draft pre/post survey questions. Create PowerPoint presentation for event. Buy refreshments for event. Book guest speaker for event.	Email; wilders@merrimack.edu
Melissa Nemon	Merrimack College	Help draft and organize pre/post survey tools.	Email; nemonm@merrimack.edu
Paul Faulkner	Merrimack College	Help set up refreshment table and pick up ice. Help attendees sign in and ensure they fill out pre/post survey.	Email; faulknerp@merrimack.edu
Bryan Landgren	Merrimack College	Help send flyer out to students, faculty, and staff. Help book Cascia Hall for event. Help set up podium and projector screen.	Email; landgrenb@merrimack.edu
Christina McChesney	Merrimack College	Print photos for Activity. Print pre, post evaluation, and sign in forms. Greet and help attendees sign in and fill out pre/post survey.	Email; mcchesneyc@merrimack.edu

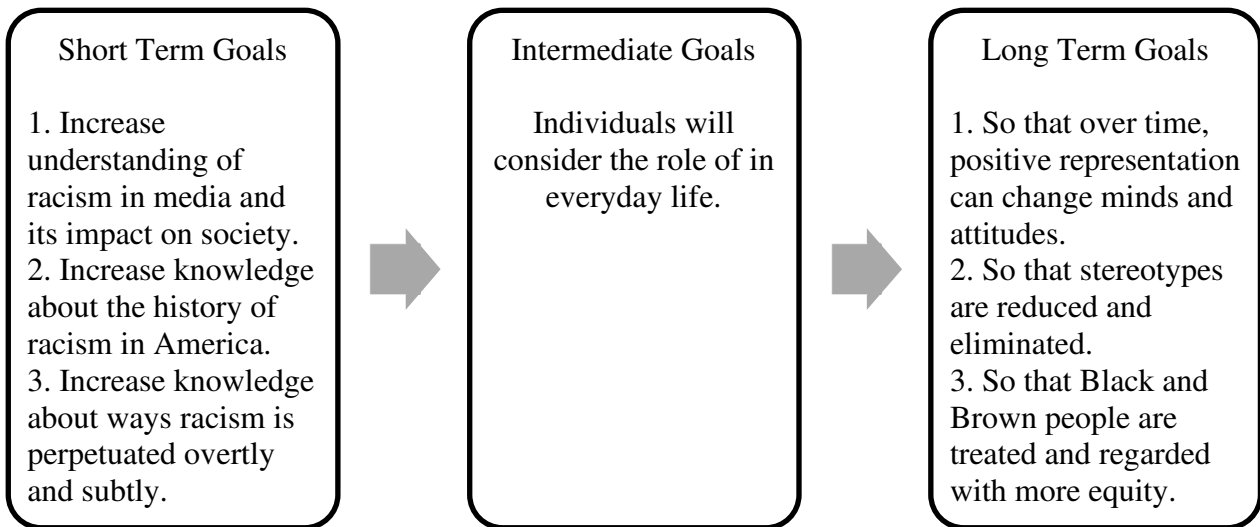
Tools/Measure to Assess Progress

For this workshop, a pre-survey was handed out to guests at the beginning of the event. Throughout the event, various activities were held where participants could write out their thoughts, ideas and questions on post-it notes which were later collected and analyzed. Lastly, a post event survey was handed out to participants before they left. Pre-survey, Post-Survey, Collect post-it reflections from activities and compile into a word cloud.

Implementation Timeline

January 2020	Book event venue space, send out flyer invitations to professors at Merrimack, share flyer invite with Merrimack students and community, invite guest speaker.
February 2020	Draft pre/post survey tool, finalize guest speaker, finalize student attendance from professors at Merrimack, get refreshments for event, finalize Power Point presentation.
March 2020	Analyze data, send thank you notes to professors and guest speaker.
April 2020	Finalize paper.

Logical Framework



Results

The workshop, *Racism in Media*, was held in March 2020 at Merrimack College, a private Catholic college located in North Andover, MA. The workshop was open to the entire campus, but specific invitations were sent to communications and media classes on campus during the Spring term. The workshop was three hours long and consisted of presentations and activities to engage the audience in reflective practice. A total of 13 participants came to the workshop, with 8 completing a pre-evaluation survey and 7 completing a post-evaluation survey. Overall findings suggest that every attendee was at least familiar with the topic of racism in media.

Event Pre-Survey

When event participants arrived, they were handed a pre-survey to collect information on their knowledge and thoughts about racial bias in media. Eight respondents completed a pre-survey.

The respondents ages ranged from 19-year-old (1), 21-year-olds (2), 22-year-old (1), 27-year-old (1), 35-year-old (1), 42-year-old (1) and 68-year-old (1). Three respondents were females and 5 respondents were male. Three respondents were Black/African American and 5 respondents were White/Caucasian. Among the 8 respondents, 5 were Merrimack College students, 1 was a Merrimack College faculty member, and 2 were Merrimack College guests. Fifty percent (n=4) were Merrimack College undergraduate students.

Respondents were then asked to rate their understanding of racism and racism in the media. These were scaled questions with a range of very good (4), somewhat good (3), not very good (2), and none / not at all (1). When asked, “How would you rate your understanding of the topic of racism?” respondents averaged a score of 3.5, between very good and somewhat good


(n=8). Then when asked, “How would you rate your understanding of racism in media?” respondents averaged a score of 3.38, indicating somewhat good (n=8).

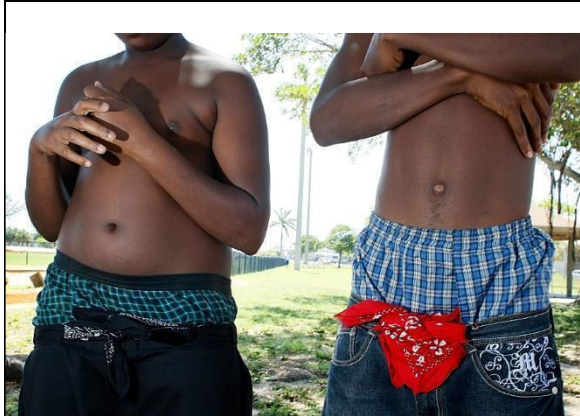
Lastly, respondents were asked in what types of media have they seen racism exhibited. Seven respondents all noted that they have seen racism in movies, television, news broadcasts / newspapers, and social media. Five noted they have seen racism in magazines and two noted other media.

Activity Reflections

During the event, guests participated in two engaging activities. The first activity was a racial profiling activity. When the guests entered the building, there were pictures along the wall of the entire room. The guests were asked to give their honest opinion about what they saw in the photos and to write their thoughts on post-it notes then stick it onto the wall. All reflections were written on post-it notes which were then loaded into a word document.

Table 1: Activity Reflection 1

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A normal woman ● A happy businesswoman ● Woman in art museum ● Business professional ● Bright ● Happy ● I think this image portrays an intelligent businesswoman ● Educated ● Hard-working ● Overcame the odds stacked against her
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- Could look like gang members but could be something else
- Gang related
- Poor
- Low-income
- Criminalistic behavior
- Two shirtless kids who might be gangsters
- Men posing in bathing suits
- This image can be portrayed as thugs by the media
- Strictly hip hop sporting a sag





- A family
- Family
- Strong family
- Well put together
- Chaos
- Poor
- Low-income
- Less privilege
- A family, but with no father figure and many kids
- This shows a family that may struggle



- A normal woman
- This shows a confident woman
- Curly haired
- Girl in front of home
- Fierce
- Educated
- Hard working
- A woman in a dress doing her business
- Business professional
- Intelligent
- Powerful



- Hood
- Intimidating
- A serious guy in a hoodie who has an intense stare going on
- A person wearing a hoodie
- Picture could look menacing to others
- Black
- Hood
- I think look through a historical lens and by the way the picture is taken it shows a shady male

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Plump woman posing ● A serious woman ● Attitude ● Not someone to mess with ● Bold ● Confident ● Strong-minded
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Token African American in corporate environment ● Hard working ● Persistent ● In control ● Business professional ● A businessman ● I see a working professional in a business setting
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A well fashioned man ● dapper/stylish ● Intelligent ● A normal guy ● Looks like in a clothes ad ● Black ● Rapper ● This shows an artsy, intricate man ● Intelligent ● Handsome ● Hard-working

The next activity asked guests to name a TV Show that “Positively Reflects Black People”. The guests were given 10 minutes and during that time I gathered photos of potential shows to upload to the presentation. Results included *Good Times*, *The Cosby Show*, *the Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, *The Jeffersons*, *Family Matters*, and *Black-ish*.

Event Post-Survey

Before event participants left, they were handed a post-event survey to collect information on how they thought the event went and what they understood from attending the event. Seven respondents completed a post-event survey.

The respondents ages ranged from 19-year-old (1), 21 year-olds (2), 22 year-old (1), 27 year-old (1), 42 year-old (1) and 68 year-old (1). Two respondents were female and 5 respondents were male. Two respondents were Black/African American and 5 respondents were White/Caucasian. Among the 7 respondents, 5 were Merrimack College students, 1 was a Merrimack College faculty member, and 1 was a Merrimack College guest.

Respondents were then asked how they would rate the workshop. These were scaled questions that ranged from excellent (4), good (3), fair (2), and poor (1). Six of the respondents rated the workshop excellent, while one respondent rated the workshop good.

Participants were then presented a series of questions which they could rank on a scale of strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). The general themes of these questions were to determine if knowledge was gained during the workshop, if they felt they could use or apply information from the workshop, and whether they would seek out other discussions or workshops on this topic. Respondents were asked, "Thinking about the workshop... I have a better understanding of what racism looks like in various media?" and all seven respondents answered strongly agree (n=7). They were also asked, "Thinking about the workshop... I have a better understanding of the impact that racism has in various media?" and all seven respondents answered strongly agree (n=7). Next, they were asked, "I have considered how I have formed some of my own opinions regarding race as a result of various media?" and six respondents answered strongly agree and one answered agree. They were then asked, "I will

consider how race is portrayed in the media I consume in the future?” and all seven respondents answered strongly agree. Respondents were asked, “I will seek more information on race and the media?” and four respondents answered strongly agree while three respondents answered agree. They were also asked, “I will engage in other, similar race and media awareness/educational events?” and six respondents answered strongly agree and one respondent answered agree. And finally, respondents were asked, “I will have a talk with my friends about what I have learned / my experience from this workshop?” and five respondents answered strongly agree and two respondents answered agree.

Respondents were asked to openly reflect on what were the most valuable things they learned from the event. The respondents identified a few themes including stereotypes are prevalent in our media (n=2), that the media plays a role in how we see things (n=3), and thoughts on how racism is subtle but still apparent now (n=2). Using an opened-ended response option, they were then asked what from the event challenged you or challenged your previously held opinions? One respondent answered by saying photos and preconceived perceptions; another respondent answered by stating how few Black actresses there are in Hollywood; one respondent answered by stating it reminded her to be more aware of subtle and overt racism; and the remaining responses consisted of themes relating to race in media, awareness, and inner-most assumptions.

Respondents were also asked to provide suggestions on how the workshop could be improved. Two respondents mentioned that they would like more activities, one respondent mentioned it would be better with more people, and one mentioned that there should be more discussion on appropriation.

Respondents were asked to rate how many hours of various media types do they consume weekly. When asked about movies/film, 3 said less than 2 hours, 3 said 2 to 4 hours, and 1 said 5 or more hours. When asked about television/episodic shows on streaming services, 2 said less than 2 hours, 3 said 2 to 4 hours, and 2 said 5 or more hours. When asked about print media, 6 said less than 2 hours, 0 said 2 to 4 hours, and 1 said 5 or more hours. When asked about social media, 2 said less than 2 hours, 1 said 2 to 4 hours, and 4 said 5 or more hours.

Table 2: Respondents Amount of Time with Various Media (n=7)

	Less than 2 hours	2 to 4 hours	5 or more hours
Movies / Film	3	3	1
Television / Episodic Shows	2	3	2
Print Media	6	0	1
Social Media	2	1	4

Lastly, the respondents were asked to give their opinion a series of statements using the range very much (4), somewhat (3), very little (2), and not at all (1). The first statement read, “I believe racism is an issue in media.” All seven respondents answered very much (n=7). The next statement was, “I believe stereotypes exist in the media.” Again, all seven respondents answered very much (n=7). The third statement was, “I believe the media often does not depict race accurately” with all seven respondents answering very much (n=7). The last statement declared, “I believe there is something I can do about racism in media” Three responded with very much, another three responded with somewhat, and one responded with very little.

Discussion

The goals of this workshop were to provide a media viewing and discussion forum in which participants will be able to reflect on subtle and overt racism in media and understand how those images increase acts of racial profiling and internalized racism.

The overall findings of this project suggest that every attendee was at least familiar with the topic of racism. However, when it came to their familiarity with the topic of racism specifically in the media, a good portion of the attendees had at least some understanding. Using the Racial Profiling activity was effective as most attendees' responses reflected what they have seen in everyday media. Finally, the majority of the attendees walked away believing there is something they can do about racism in media.

One particularly interesting finding was that a majority of undergraduate students said they spend more than five hours on social media a day, but when asked about talking with friends about race, not as many strongly agreed. This is important because college students spend much of their time communicating through social media but are not willing to hold a conversation about race.

Another interesting finding is when asked if they felt they could do something about racism in media, older respondents (such as faculty or staff) all answered somewhat or very little as opposed to the younger respondents who tended to state very much. I believe this is significant because it shows the difference between multiple generations. I think the older attendees could lack the desire to fight change or lack the tools to do it in a changing technological and digital world. The younger generation live in a society to where social movements have been born from social media, which gives them access to more tools to spark a conversation and create change. The younger generation is very willful in terms of going after what they want, and they live in a different time than those in older generations; a time where it is more difficult to suppress their voice for change.

When asked about the most valuable things learned, one student answered by saying "I learned how the media sets thoughts or images for you without you realizing it." This ties back to

the cultivation theory in terms of how we see things but never question the significant effect it has on us and how we view the world. Through associative priming we unconsciously compare the similar images and language we see, to form a concrete thought process that is not always reflective of reality or the truth.

Having participants walk away more aware of the things they see was the key purpose of the event. It is clear from the evaluation responses that every person in attendance walked away having learned the history of racism in American media. Further, they were able to walk away with enough information to educate others on the power of stereotypes and how we see others in society as a reflection of what we consume in the media. The questions the audience raised demonstrate that they truly came to the event to learn and spark a conversation.

Limitations

When working with outside people such as professors it is hard to guarantee that they will ensure their students attendance at your event. When initially conceiving this workshop, it made sense to connect it with communications and media courses happening on campus. In hindsight, it would have made more sense to ask instructors to make this a required element of their class or offer it for extra credit. Additionally, it may have also been good to expand beyond just the communication department for targeted outreach. If you plan to work with professors to make this event a part of their class syllabus or for extra credit, it is important that professors send a list of students who are committed to attending for a grade well in advance so that you can credit them for attendance.

At the time of this workshop, COVID-19 was just becoming a major issue in Massachusetts. Many organizations within the state had voluntarily begun eliminating

opportunities to convene and reducing event sizes. This may have played a part in the reduced number of participants at this workshop.

Implications for Future Projects

Future iterations of a Racism in Media workshop might focus on adding a discussion on appropriation. The Cambridge Dictionary (2020) defines cultural appropriation as the act of taking or using things from a culture that is not your own, especially without showing that you understand or respect this culture. Throughout the workshop feedback was given that mentioned discussing appropriation. The topic of appropriation also came up in the workshop numerous times during the presentation sections of film and television. There is a strong correlation between racism and appropriation in terms of what is viewed as pop culture versus “ghetto.” An activity could be done during the portions of film and television that would consist of showing images of different everyday Black people wearing a style and then a non-Black celebrity wearing the style. I would be interested in seeing what would be defined as stylish versus “too much” or “ghetto”. Appropriation is accepted and visible through television, so it would make sense that this topic is discussed if planning to do this workshop.

Further, future workshops may want to consider additional activities that explore race in media such as social media, magazines, and art.

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Appendix A: Pre-Event Survey

Thank you for coming to the *Seeing Racism* workshop. This pre-event evaluation is being conducted as part of a student research capstone. The purpose of this survey is to gather some preliminary information about the audience of the workshop. This evaluation should take no more than 3 minutes to complete. Please **DO NOT** write your name on the evaluation; all answers will be kept confidential.

Please tell us about yourself:

I am a:

- Merrimack undergraduate student
- Merrimack graduate student
- Merrimack faculty / staff
- Merrimack guest (not affiliated with the college)

How do you define your gender? *Check all that apply.*

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary / Gender non-conforming
- Prefer to self-describe: _____
- Prefer not to say

What is your age: _____

How would you rate your understanding of the topic of racism?

- Very good
- Somewhat good
- Not very good
- None / not at all

How would you rate your understanding of racism in media?

- Very good
- Somewhat good
- Not very good
- None / not at all

In which media formats have you seen racism exhibited? *Check all that apply.*

- Movies / film
- Television
- News broadcasts / Newspapers
- Magazines
- Social media
- Other (please specify): _____
- I have not seen racism in any media

Do you consider yourself as Hispanic, Latino, Latina, or of Spanish origin??

- Yes, Hispanic/ Latino/Latina/Spanish origin
- No, not Hispanic/ Latino/Latina/Spanish origin

What race do you most identify with? *Choose one.*

- Black / African American
- Caucasian / White
- American Indian / Aleut / Eskimo / Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
- Mixed Race

Please hand your completed survey to a workshop volunteer.

Appendix B: Post Event Survey

Thank you for participating in the *Seeing Racism* workshop. This post-event evaluation is being conducted as part of a student research capstone. The purpose of this evaluation is to gain your thoughts and opinions on the workshop. This evaluation should take no more than 5 minutes to complete. Please **DO NOT** write your name on the evaluation; all answers will be kept confidential.

First, please tell us your thoughts about the workshop:

1. Overall, how would you rate this workshop?
 Excellent Good Fair Poor

<i>Thinking about the workshop...</i>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2. I have a better understanding of what racism looks like in various media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I have a better understanding of the impact that racism has in various media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I have considered how I have formed some of my own opinions regarding race as a result of various media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I will consider how race is portrayed in the media I consume in the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. I will seek more information on race and the media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I will engage in other, similar race and media awareness/educational events.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. I have talk with my friends about what I have learned / my experience from this workshop.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. What were the most valuable things you learned from today’s event?

10. What from today’s event challenged you or challenged your previously held opinions?

11. How could the workshop be improved?

How many hours of the following media types do you consume weekly (*best estimate*)?

	Less than 2 hours	Between 2 to 4 hours	5 or more hours
12. Movies / films	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. Television / episodic shows on streaming services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Print media (i.e. magazines, newspapers, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Social media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please give your opinions on these statements:

	Very much	Somewhat	Very little	Not at all
16. I believe racism is an issue in media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. I believe stereotypes exist in the media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. I believe the media often does not depict race accurately	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. I believe there is something I can do about racism in media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Finally, please tell us a little bit about yourself:

20. I am a(n)...

- Undergrad student Graduate student Faculty / staff Guest

21. What is your age: _____

22. What is your gender? *Check all that apply.*

- Male
 Female
 Non-binary / Gender non-conforming
 Prefer to self-describe: _____
 Prefer not to say

23. Do you consider yourself as Hispanic, Latino, Latina, or of Spanish origin??

- Yes, Hispanic/ Latino/Latina/Spanish origin
 No, not Hispanic/ Latino/Latina/Spanish origin

24. What race do you most identify with? *Choose one.*

- Black / African American
- Caucasian / White
- American Indian / Aleut / Eskimo / Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
- Mixed Race

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this post-event evaluation. Your responses will help our research and give us insight into developing and promoting future workshops.

Please return your completed survey to a workshop volunteer or leave on the table.