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THE TELEVISION PORTRAYALS OF AFRICAN AMERICANS AND

RACIAL ATTITUDES

by

JONI G. V. DUBRIEL

Under the direction of James Darsey

ABSTRACT

Television often portrays African Americans in unfavorable positions in comparison to Caucasians. Typically these unfavorable depictions reinforce negative stereotypes associated with African Americans. Research indicates that television portrayals can influence people's attitudes toward one another. A question left unanswered by current research: are mass-mediated images as influential at reversing or counteracting stereotypes as they are at reinforcing them? An experiment with undergraduate students was conducted to investigate the relationship between the positive portrayal of African Americans and subsequent racial attitudes. Participants viewed a video clip with either an African American or Caucasian chairman for the Georgia Division of Public Health. The clip included a still photograph of the chairman and was accompanied by a pre-recorded voice addressing treatments for lung cancer patients. At the beginning of each class, professors showed students the video after which the class lecture proceeded as scheduled. Just before the class ended a researcher entered the class and told students he/she was doing a survey on racial attitudes. Students were then given a questionnaire regarding racial attitudes toward African Americans. Between the time of the video viewing and the completion of the survey, students were not informed that one was related to the other. Subjects also completed an evaluation of the speaker in the video and of the health message.

INDEX WORDS: African Americans, Television, Racial Attitudes, Stereotypes and Symbolic Racism

THE TELEVISION PORTRAYALS OF AFRICAN AMERICANS AND RACIAL ATTITUDES

by

JONI G.V. DUBRIEL

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by

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Scholars are intrigued with studying television portrayals and the preconceived stereotypes people have toward minorities. These preconceived stereotypes are related to a number of political and social issues such as historical events (civil rights), economic status (citizens on welfare vs. citizens not on welfare), educational levels (academic achievements, people with or without college and graduate degrees), employment (unemployment rate), etc. Specifically, research that focuses on racial attitudes has examined how African Americans are portrayed on television. Scholars have conducted both quantitative and qualitative studies to analyze the various effects that result from television portrayals of African Americans. Television often portrays African Americans in unfavorable positions in comparison to Caucasians. Typically these unfavorable depictions reinforce stereotypical images of African Americans. Research indicates that television portrayals can influence people's attitudes toward one another. Every day, people use different forms of communication media to seek information. Initially, when a person uses a communication medium to find information, he or she may or may not be aware of how that particular medium can influence one's attitudes toward the world. Though the various forms of communication media messages are highly informative, they also

possess the power to be influential over people's attitudes toward one another (positive or negative). This power of influence has ignited the ever-growing research in relationships between media portrayals and attitudes toward different ethnic groups.

Statement of the Problem

This study examined the various effects that result from positive television portrayals of African Americans. Studies using positive, counter-stereotypical portrayals are rare in the literature, which tends to analyze the effects of negative portrayals. More specifically, this study was concerned with the durability of negative stereotypes even in the presence of positive, authoritative television images of African Americans. In order to take a closer look at the relationship between the race of a source of televised information and racial attitudes, an experiment with 131 undergraduates was conducted.

Significance of Study

Researchers have found that African Americans in many instances are misrepresented on television. Most studies have shown that African Americans are more likely than Caucasians to be portrayed as a criminal suspect. Many of these studies have only focused on how African Americans are portrayed and not on the effects these portrayals can have on viewers. Only a few researchers have proceeded to find out how the portrayals of African Americans influence public perceptions. Evidence shows that whites do not fully support the idea of racial equality (Entman, 1992). They have often strongly opposed policies implementing this general principle, including policies regarding housing, busing, and affirmative action. In addition, black political candidates still seem to have difficulty attracting white support (Sears, Van Laar, Carrillo, Kosterman, 1997, pp 16-17). Because there is evidence to support the notion that Caucasians retain preconceived attitudes toward African Americans, it was necessary to study how these attitudes have been

influenced by television portrayals. The significance of this study lies in the reality that, as our society continues to become more diverse, its social prosperity depends in large part on the success of television in promoting positive media portrayals of African Americans and other minorities, and in particular African American males. Moreover, this study is significant in that it explores the influence of positive media portrayals on racial attitudes thus, contributes to further understanding of their relationship.

Literature Review

*Media and Perceptions of Reality***.** Research reveals that, unlike radio, newspapers and books, television offers viewers a visually active image along with an informational message. Graber, Jamieson, and Postman agree that television is different from other communication media because the persuasive visual grammar in television is not available to any other form of communication (As cited by Peffley, Shields, and Williams, 1996). Empirical research and evidence suggests that television and other media influence people's attitudes and behaviors (Werner-Wilson, Fitzharris, and Morrissey, 2004, p.303). For many Americans, television acts as a means to observe the world around us. Television is able to serve as this outlook on the world in that it shows audiences a range of people, places, relationships, events and experiences. Communication scholars propose that adolescents learn social information from the television programming they watch daily for multiple hours (Wright, Huston, Truglio, Fitch, Smith and Piemyat, 1995, p. 1706). Cultivation theory offers support for this notion in that it suggests that people develop conceptions about the world as a result of repeated exposure to consistent and repetitive images seen on television (p.1706). To illustrate this concept, Wright et. al, found that children tend to recall more readily television portrayals that are consistent with traditional gender roles than they do portrayals of nontraditional roles (i.e., male/athlete vs. male/secretary)

(pp. 1706-1707).

Communicative research continues to establish the idea that what is seen or heard on the media influences perceptions of reality. These perceptions of reality may then begin to influence attitudes and behaviors. A primary example of this type of influence is evident in studies that examine violent television portrayals and aggressive behavior. Researchers have discovered a link between viewing violent television and aggressive behavior. According to many laboratory-based studies, adolescents who were exposed to violent television programming are more likely to exhibit aggressive or violent behavior than those who were not exposed (Cheng, Brenner, Wright, Sachs, Moyer, and Rao, 2004, p.94).

Aside from examining behaviors associated with adolescents, communication scholars have explored how stereotypical images influence people's perceptions. For example, research shows that media coverage of female athletes still trails behind that of male athletes. This research also found that coverage of women's sports often focuses on the female athlete's attractiveness rather than on her athleticism (Knight and Giuliano, 2001, pp. 217-218). In relation to schema theory, the role of a female athlete contradicts the traditional female role, thus media coverage puts emphasis on other aspects of her femininity (i.e., attractiveness) (p.219). These types of media portrayals often become stereotypical, thus affecting people's perceptions.

In a 1991 experiment, Jones found that messages about appropriate gender roles and behaviors infuse our language, academic curriculum, work environments, religion, and the media. The effects from gender stereotypes can be viewed on a societal level in relation to bias in hiring decisions (pp. 231- 232). Interestingly, the study revealed that participants were generally not aware of or had not noticed gender themes on televised advertisements. As a result of this lack of awareness of gender stereotyping, many do not realize how this affects individual

beliefs.

These categories of research support the notion that people conceptualize social learning from television within the domain of schema theory. Fiske and Taylor define a schema as "a cognitive structure that represents organized knowledge about a given concept or type of stimulus" (as cited by Wright et. al, 1995, p.1706). Cultivation and schema theories accompanied by experimental research collectively provide evidential support that the media influences perceptions of reality. These effects are particularly notable with respect to minorities and other groups with whom face-to-face contact may for many Americans be limited.

Many researchers have focused on the impact these visual images have on racial attitudes toward minorities, primarily African Americans. The reason for this focus on racial attitudes toward minorities, according to Romer, Jamieson, and de Coteau (1998), is because media audiences in the United States tend to be largely non-Latino white in ethnic composition (p. 287), and the media tend to reflect the attitudes of this majority Caucasian audience toward minorities. Entman and Rojecki (2000) affirm that, "[m]edia images can promote whites' acceptance of presumptions about blacks without either their producers or audiences realizing it—without overt assertions, without stereotyping" (p. 58). This could be attributed to the fact that many of televisions producers and writers are white and therefore write from their own ethnic perspective. Bruce Helford a writer for several television shows on various networks attests that "I'm white and male, and I tend to write what I know… I'm not black…and I worry about saying something offensive unintentionally" (Goodale, 1999).

African Americans and Crime Stories. At the end of the summer of 1999 there was a dialogue in America over the issue of racial diversity on network television. At this time African Americans and Latinos/Hispanics made up almost 25 percent of the United States population.

Nonetheless, this was not evident on upcoming fall television programming for the ABC, CBS, NBC, or Fox networks. Of the 26 new shows to debut in the fall of 1999, none had a minority as a leading character and few shows had racially diverse casts (Goodale, 1999). Greenberg and Collette conducted an analysis that revealed that lead roles for African Americans have been fairly scarce and in some cases have declined with blacks playing a lesser role when compared to Caucasian characters (1997, p. 2). This information gives plausible reason as to why much of the research surrounding minority television images has looked at programs that are not entertainment based: there is a lack of entertainment media with minorities as lead characters.

The majority of the studies conducted on the effects of the television portrayals of African Americans and racial attitudes have used crime situations. Oliver (1999) found that most individuals report that television serves as their primary source of crime information (p. 46). Entman (1992) reported that African Americans are more likely than Caucasians to be shown in news stories about crime (p. 353). Since crime is a negative act, it appears that these portrayals place African Americans in unfavorable positions, which could then have an impact on how they are perceived. These findings suggest that the source in the portrayal can impact the racial attitude of the viewer. Moreover, if viewers perceive these images as negative then they are likely to perceive African Americans in the same way.

The types of crimes that are portrayed on television are either violent or non-violent acts. In a study that analyzed “reality-based” police shows, Oliver (1994) discovered that across all criminal suspects 58.8% were associated with at least one violent crime in contrast to the 17.1% of non-violent crimes. In addition to the high frequency portrayals of violent crimes, the programs also portrayed a high frequency of successful resolutions on the part of the police officers. This reinforces stereotypes associated with criminals as the “bad” guys and officers as

the “good” guys. Unsurprisingly, 69% of the time the criminals were arrested. The remaining categories included criminals who were killed (3.1%), committed suicide (.06%), were not associated with activities that called for arrest (5.1%), and eluded arrest or were not caught (22.2%) (p. 184). These findings closely relate to research that shows that African Americans are more likely to be portrayed as a criminal/criminal suspect than Caucasians. Therefore, these portrayals further reinforce negative stereotypical images of African Americans since the criminal suspects are associated with violent criminal acts.

Tamborini, Mastro, Chory-Assad, and Huang (2000) found that “[n]ot only are African Americans more often shown as criminal suspects, but television news is also more likely to represent those African American suspects hand-cuffed, poorly dressed, and nameless…”(p. 643). A primary example of this televised behavior was highly visible during the 1992 Rodney King trial. Throughout local (Los Angeles) news coverage of the trial and its aftermath, anchors repeatedly referred to Rodney King by his first name, unlike the white officers who were referred to by both their first and last names. To many viewers this was looked upon as a subliminal denigration of African Americans (Rosenberg, 1992, p.8).

The majority of the existing research reveals that African Americans are portrayed as criminals more than they are as police officers. Oliver’s study revealed that out of police officers shown on “reality-based” police programs, 88.3% were Caucasian and 9% were African American. Among the criminal suspects 54.3% were Caucasian and 29.9% were African American (Oliver, 1994, p. 184). With African Americans being portrayed as criminal suspects more than as police officers places them in an adverse role to viewers. The fact that the majority of the criminals shown are African Americans further perpetuates negative attitudes surrounding them.

Dixon and Linz have completed several studies that have shown relationships between how the news media portrays the accused and the depiction of race. A recent study by Dixon and Linz (2002) is a content analysis of the race of the accused and the amount of prejudicial information in the newscast. The study attempted to understand if the race of the defendant was an indicator of prejudicial information. The results indicated that, across two years of local and network news programming, 19% of the defendants described in crime stories were associated with at least one of the American Bar Association categories for potentially prejudicial publicity. Tests of whether or not race has an impact on the presentation of prejudicial information showed that stories featuring African American and Latino defendants and Caucasian victims were more likely to contain prejudicial information than stories featuring Caucasian defendants and non-Caucasian victims. Consequently, African Americans and Latinos were more than twice as likely as Caucasians to have prejudicial information aired about them on the news (p. 125).

Oliver (1999) conducted an experiment that showed viewers a news story about a murder that featured a wanted poster of either an African American or Caucasian suspect (p.46). Caucasian undergraduate communication students were shown the story two weeks after they had been pretested to determine their attitudes toward African Americans. The subjects were again tested three months later to draw further information about changes in their attitudes toward African Americans. The study found that after a period of time, Caucasians remembered the suspect as being African American even when he had been Caucasian. From the results, Oliver (1999) revealed the Caucasian viewer's endorsement of anti-Black attitudes.

In another study where only the race of the character varied, Peffley et al. (1996) carried out a video experiment that showed either a Caucasian or African American male as a criminal suspect. The news story showed the murder of a prostitute and the suspect as either Caucasian or

African American. The authors reported that the viewer's level of racial stereotyping played a part in their evaluation of the criminal suspect. According to Peffley et al., "the participants that endorsed negative stereotypes of African Americans viewed the black suspect in the crime story as more guilty, more deserving of punishment, more likely to commit future violence and with more fear and loathing than the similarly portrayed Caucasian suspect (p. 309).

Tamborini et al. (2000) conducted a content analysis that examined the portrayals of Caucasians, African Americans, and Latinos in the criminal justice system as representatives of the court and criminal television characters (p. 639). Out of the 103 prime-time television programs 90% of the African American criminal suspects were arrested opposed to the 53% of Caucasian criminal suspects. This further reinforces the negativity surrounding criminals, which could lead to negative attitudes toward African Americans.

The Oliver, Dixon and Linz, Peffley et al. and Tamborini et al. studies all looked at racial attitudes in relation to the source in the program. In the Oliver study, the source was a suspect who had been identified to viewers as either African American or Caucasian. After time elapsed, the majority of the viewers remembered the source as being African American even when he was not. Dixon and Linz revealed that prejudicial information is more likely to be included in newscasts about African American suspects than Caucasian suspects. In the Peffley et al. study, participants were asked to evaluate the source based on his action. In this case, respondents found the African American suspect more deserving of his punishment than the Caucasian suspect who had committed the same crime. Lastly, the Tamborini et al. study examined how African Americans were portrayed in more unfavorable positions than Caucasians. It is apparent that in each of these studies the race of the source could indeed affect the racial attitude of the viewer. In all of these studies, the content of the program was essentially the same with the

prime difference being the race of the source. In several instances these studies allude to the notion that the racial attitude of the viewer affects how a televised source is perceived. Regardless of whether or not the media image influenced the racial attitude or vice versa, in each study the source was a "negative" image. Therefore, the variable of who is the source will serve as the key focus for this study.

Racial Attitudes, Prejudice, Stereotypes. According to Coover (2001), race is portrayed in the media in two ways: through the content of a program or message (actual script/dialogue) and through the racial representation of the source in a program (the race of the character/person speaking). Racism is often viewed as institutional, structured or societal. Different ethnic groups tend to think of themselves in relation to racism in unlike ways. Bonilla and Forman found that "whites primarily think that racism is a belief that a few individuals hold and which might lead them to discriminate against some people" (p. 59).

Many scholars pose that a new product of racism, symbolic racism, has replaced "old fashioned" or "Jim Crow" racism. According to Sears et al. (1997), "the old-fashioned racism of the Jim Crow days focused on the theory of biological superiority of the white race, and on physical segregation of and legalized discrimination against African Americans" (p. 20). In agreement Fredrickson stated:

> Jim Crow racism readily fits within the definition of a racist ideological system. The expressed aim of the ideology was the domination and exploitation of African Americans; it mandated inferior treatment across all domains of social life; and all this was justified on the premise that blacks were inherently the biological inferiors of whites" (Tuch & Martin, 1997, p. 17).

Thus, this overt form of racism differs from the type of racism investigated in recent research studies that examine racial attitudes. Furthermore, "[o]ld-fashioned racism, stereotypes and negative affect have been familiar features of the racial landscape throughout the twentieth century. However, evidence of continuing white resistance to change in an era that has generally renounced biological theories of racial superiority and legalized racial inequality has generated a variety of descriptions of a 'new racism'" (Sears et al., 1997, p.20). While new theories of racism also possess the component of negative attitudes toward African Americans, new racism is more subtle and less overt than old-fashioned, Jim -Crow racism. In much of the recent research, racial attitudes are studied in relation to a new theory of racism known as symbolic racism.

Symbolic racism focuses on the modern, subtle stereotypes of African Americans. A visual comparison of both types of racism is the old-fashioned racist image of "Amos and Andy" opposed to the symbolic racist image of the "dangerous black male" on "Cops" or on the news. Rada (2000) describes "symbolic racism" as the antagonism towards the perception that African Americans are pushing too hard, and moving too fast to achieve equal rights (p. 705). In attempts by researchers to analyze situations where African Americans are "pushing" for equality, they have examined "unequal" television portrayals. Examples of these unequal portrayals are apparent in the cited research that explored African American portrayals on crime related or news programming (Oliver, Dixon and Linz, Peffley et al. and Tamborini et al, and Peffley et al.).

Sears and Kinder have conducted research that illustrates that symbolic racism can be conceptualized in three ways. First, it is described as "symbolic" because it is phrased in terms that are abstract and ideological, because it reflects whites' moral codes about how society should be organized rather than instrumental beliefs satisfying their own interests. Furthermore,

symbolic racism focuses on blacks as a group rather than on individual people. Second, its cognitive content focuses explicitly on blacks in particular and includes the beliefs that racial discrimination is largely a thing of the past, that blacks should work harder to overcome their disadvantages and that blacks are making excessive demands for special treatment and get too much attention from elites, so their gains are undeserved. Third, its attitudinal origins are hypothesized to lie in a blend of anti-Black affect with the perception that African Americans violate such traditional American values as the work ethic, traditional morality and respect for traditional authority (Sears et al., 1997). Moreover, symbolic racism suggests that Caucasian Americans exhibit negative responses to societal-level symbols (i.e., welfare, single motherhood and crime) (Gray, 1994).

The operation of symbolic racism is illustrated in a quantitative study conducted by Neunendorf, Atkin and Jeffres (2000) of one of the largest news stories of the 1990s, the O.J. Simpson trial. This particular study explored the influence of media use on audience responses to the Simpson trial (p. 247). The study revealed that while there may be or has been entertainment television with African Americans in high stations (i.e., *The Cosby Show)*, "news portrayals still focus on a menacing Black underclass that presents a threat to social stability" (Dates & Barlow, 1990). Neunendorf, Atking and Jeffres suggested that the media coverage of Simpson as an African American male murder suspect fits with the longstanding racial stereotypes associated with this ethnic group (Neuendorf et al., 2000). The study pointed out that African Americans were much more likely than Caucasians to believe in the innocence of O.J. Simpson (p.245). In this study, the notion of symbolic racism served as a major premise for the researchers' investigation of the racial divide and ultimately the exploration of the origins of belief about Simpson's innocence or guilt (p.248). The Simpson trial is a classic example of

symbolic racism in that it encompasses the three aspects of symbolic racism. First, there was the strong racial tone surrounding the Simpson trial in that the alleged suspect (O.J. Simpson) was an African male and the victims (Nicole Brown and Ron Goldman) were both Caucasian. Hence, a primary example of the subtle racial image of the African American male (the suspect). Second the trial focused the race of the suspect versus the victims thus implying unfairness. Lastly, Simpson's celebrity status violated the traditional image of the African American male (i.e., economic wealth).

Entman's definition of "modern racism" is similar to symbolic racism. Entman (1992) found that "[w]hites who have modern racist sentiments do not necessarily believe that blacks are inherently inferior or that discrimination should be legal" however they do not view African Americans as their direct equal (p. 342). Moreover, Tuch and Martin (1997) link symbolic racism with self-interest. They affirm that, "symbolic racism is a moral orientation, rather than a self- or group-interested orientation, which generates white opposition to black political candidates, affirmative action…"(Tuch & Martin, 1997, p.47). However, Tuch and Martin have found major criticism regarding symbolic racism and conflicts between groups. They discovered that the proponents of symbolic racism have drawn an unrealistically sharp distinction between symbolic racism and approaches that emphasize racial threat and group conflict. Overall, symbolic racism implies that Caucasians maintain certain negative attitudes toward African Americans and that they may or may not be consciously aware of these feelings.

The term prejudice correlates very much with racism. According to Entman (1992) "the basic understanding of prejudiced thinking is that individuals from the disliked out-group (blacks) are homogenized and assimilated to a negative stereotype by the in-group (whites), whereas those in the in-group see themselves as individualized members of a diverse group

impossible to stereotype" (p. 345). This concept of the in/out-group relates to attitudes and behaviors. One of four functional approaches to studying people's attitudes is the ego-defensive function. As cited by Stiff (1994), Katz found that the ego-defensive function serves to protect people from basic truths about themselves and their environment that they do not want to face or deal with. Furthermore, negative evaluations of people from different ethnic and racial groups allow people to maintain the belief that they are superior to "out-group" members who threaten their egos (Stiff, 1994, p. 17). In summary, both Entman's and Katz's concepts of the in-group versus the out-group constitutes for Caucasians a tendency to categorize African Americans in terms of groups opposed to individuals (also a concept of symbolic racism). In relation to racial threats, the majority of the research conducted regarding African American television portrayals shows them as a threat to Caucasians. Entman (1992) wrote:

> Prejudice is fed by a tendency to homogenize, to assume there are no significant differences among individual members of the out-group. When blacks are not given a name in a picture, it suggests the visual representation can be assimilated to a larger, undifferentiated group, in this case the stereotype of a dangerous black male (p. 350).

Many of the stereotypes African Americans encountered in early television have been replaced by new, subtler representations (Rada, 2000, p. 706). The stereotype of the aforementioned "dangerous black male" serves as a prime example as a subtle stereotypical representation. This stereotype carries a subtle racial connotation in that it is being seen on the news, as a non-overt source of racism. News programming itself is not a form of racism, however the way news stories are framed presents certain images as subtle stereotypical

representations. The Peffley et al. study uses racial stereotypes as a foundation to measure television portrayals in relation to racial attitudes. These types of stereotypes are represented throughout the news. Entman and Rojecki summarize stereotypes in the news as "an inadvertent class bias in local television news…television favors middle- or upper-class persons when they appear in the news, because they have the skills and resources to manipulate its production practices" (p. 84). The use of stereotypical portrayals in the news further instills negativity surrounding the African American community. As suggested by Entman, Rojecki, Neuendorf et al., and Peffley et al. there is an extreme stereotype that encircles the black male. This justifies why this study and previously conducted research have looked at images involving African American males and not females.

The notion of symbolic racism is pertinent for the purpose of this study in that it provides justification for testing racial attitudes toward African Americans. Symbolic racism suggests that Caucasians are likely to have a view of African Americans that involves viewing African Americans as an unequal or lesser group (in relation to Caucasians). The theory of symbolic racism suggests reasons for why it was not necessary to pretest subjects participating in this study since it already points out that people possess racial attitudes toward African Americans. Furthermore, symbolic racism justified why this study was able to use a subtle, rather than an overt television portrayal to test for racial attitudes. According to symbolic racism, using an overtly racist image would not be suitable for the attempts of this study, in that racial portrayals on television have evolved from being overt to subtle. These current subtle racial television portrayals are visible in studies related to racial attitudes as well as in the video that was used in this research study.

Methodologically Relevant Studies. A multitude of studies have been conducted

analyzing the depictions of similar television portrayals with the only difference being the person's race. These studies will serve as the foundation to demonstrate the linkage between the television portrayals of African Americans and racial attitudes.

In a complex content analysis, Atkin and Fife (1994) compared the "frequency and nature of appearances in the news for different racial or gender groups…" The findings of the study were based on local television news coverage in the Detroit area (p. 123). The authors found that both Caucasian and African American males were over-represented on the news. However, this study did not specifically clarify the types of portrayals that were seen on the news other than to classify them as "professionals." Nonetheless, this study does support research that points out that African Americans are over-represented on the news.

Rada (2000) executed an experiment in which Caucasian undergraduate journalism students were shown either a program that depicted African Americans in either a favorable (woman who gives money for a college scholarship and a profile of a middle-class family) or unfavorable (special treatment by the government and race-based scholarships) portrayal (p. 710). Rada measured to see if subjects felt more empathy toward African Americans based on whether or not they saw the favorable or unfavorable portrayal. The results indicated that subjects must view some level of legitimacy toward the recipient's need. This legitimacy entails that the subject must feel that what the recipient received, he/she rightly deserved. Rada discovered differences in viewer's attitudes toward African American television portrayals versus those of Caucasians, and he was able to find a linkage between a person's willingness to help (African Americans) and the portrayals of African Americans. The study supported previous research that attests to the notion that African Americans are misrepresented in television portrayals (Rada, 2000, p.711).

A 1999 study conducted by Fujioka sought out to find out if the media played a significant role in impression formation when one's firsthand information (direct contact) is limited (p. 70). Thus the independent variables of frequency of television viewing and respondents' self-evaluations of television portrayals of African Americans were measured with respect to personal contact with African Americans. A self-administered questionnaire survey was distributed to both Japanese Intensive American Language Center students and to Caucasian undergraduate journalism students. The survey included fourteen stereotype items that were factor analyzed. The results indicated that the media can affect one's impression of other races and suggested that the effects of mass media are more significant when direct information (contact) is limited. Both the Fujioka and Peffley et al. studies suggest that there is a linkage between television portrayals of African Americans and racial attitudes.

A content analysis by Greenberg and Mastro (2000) looked at programs from the fall of 1996 prime time television schedule to find the linkage between social perceptions of minorities and television roles (p. 693). Unlike many of the studies conducted this one excluded the news but it did include crime programs. The study found that 40% of African American roles were on crime shows. This study revealed that African Americans are the only minority group on television with enough visual imagery to examine. According to Greenberg and Mastro, "…no other ethnic group is sufficiently observable to be studied within a traditional paradigm" (p.701).

Overall, the aforementioned research supports the foundation for this study being the linkage between television portrayals and racial attitudes. The research further validates why this study focused on African American males. Moreover, the contemporary literature on crime stories further supports the decision of a non-negative televised image. The use of this type of less overt racial image further enabled this study to make a connection between television

portrayals and racial attitudes.

A study of this nature relies heavily on the preconceived attitudes people possess toward African Americans. According to Tuch and Martin (1997) symbolic racism has been operationalized in survey research through the use of attitudinal items. Examples of attitudinal items include: if someone perceives that the news media treats blacks with more respect than that which he/she thinks is deserved, if someone believes that public officials pay more attention to blacks than to whites, if someone thinks that blacks on welfare could get along without it if they tried, and if it is believed that blacks have more than that which they are entitled. Since people possess their own individual perceptions, attitudinal survey items are able to tap into racial prejudices and stereotypes. The prejudices and stereotypes associated with African Americans differ from those measured by the standards of old-fashioned racism (p.48). According to Entman (1992) "modern racist attitudes are measurable, since most whites do not know about the theory of modern racism…" (p. 343). Therefore, the introduction of new racism has contributed to the development of the symbolic racism scale.

What we do know about the representation of African Americans is that they are often misrepresented on television and that theses misrepresentations are usually negative. These negative representations reinforce preconceived attitudes toward African Americans. Evidence suggests that negative stereotypes, predominantly in television news, might exploit story principles (Atkin & Fife, 1993). Because of the apparent linkage between negative portrayals and negative racial attitudes, this study attempted to discover if a similar relationship exists between positive portrayals and positive racial attitudes.

Overview of Study

The primary concern of this study is to determine if the linkage between the images of

African Americans and the racial attitudes toward African Americans is related to the source. Since people are not very aware of the idea that they may possess "modern" racial attitudes, this study can hope to test for racial attitudes toward the source without having those attitudes diluted by social desirability responses (Frey et.al, 2000, p. 121). The attitudinal item, if someone perceives an African American, as an authoritative figure will be used to determine effects on racial attitudes. In order to do so an African American and a Caucasian were portrayed on the news in an authoritative governmental position in exactly the same way with the only difference being the authoritative figure's race.

A vast majority of the portrayals used in previous studies had either a positive or negative tone. In addition, the bias nature of those portrayals may have contributed in influencing racial attitudes. This study also took a closer look at racial attitudes in relation to the source of authoritative information. Unlike the previous research, the portrayal of Caucasians and African Americans was *exactly* the same. Hence, neither race was publicized in a more favorable manner than the other. Both sources were seen as an authoritative figure with the only difference being the person's race. However, based on the theory of symbolic racism, the race of the chairman appeared to be an influential factor on racial attitudes.

Previous research emphasizes that images of African Americans seen on television can influence the perceptions of viewers, but the focus has been, overwhelmingly, on negative images. This study presents an experiment that explores the relationship between a positive portrayal of an African American and racial attitudes. In the reviewed research, the majority of portrayals that have been examined are images that are either in the news or crime related. In order to better distinguish the relationship between race and television portrayals, a different approach was taken. According to Rada (2000), "crime stories may offer a communication too

overtly racist, thus altering viewers intent of the research" (p. 713). To discover how a non-negative television portrayal affects people's perceptions, a non-crime portrayal of an African American male was used.

RQ1: Will subjects who view an African American in a positive role of authority reflect different views on race than subjects who view a Caucasian source in the same role?

RQ2: Will a message delivered by a Caucasian source have greater credibility than the same message delivered by an African American spokesperson?

This Chapter consisted of an introduction, statement of the problem, significance of the study, an overview of the study and summarized related research studies pertaining to this study. The method and research design used in this study are described in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 presents the results of the study. Lastly, Chapter 4 is devoted to discussion and directions for future studies.

Chapter 2 Method

This study is patterned after the Peffley, Shields, and Williams (1996) experiment cited in the review of literature. In their study the only difference in the two versions of the news clip seen by participants, was the race of the criminal suspect. Following the same methodology as the Peffley et al. study, the two video clips shown to the participants in this study will be exactly the same except for the race of the chairman.

Hypotheses

H1: Students who watch the African American source will have a more positive perception of African Americans than those who watch the Caucasian source.

H2: The evaluation of the health message is more positive when the message is delivered by a Caucasian than when delivered by an African American.

Operational Definitions of Key Variables

The following variables were used for hypothesis testing: the independent variable of the race of the source and the dependent variable of perceptions of African Americans.

Race is the ethnicity/ethnic background of a person. The person in the video, the *source* was either an African American or Caucasian male. *Racial perceptions* are the mental understandings people have toward a race that is different from their own. In this study *racial perceptions* were applied to the perceptions people have toward African Americans.

Research Design

The experimental design for this study was the *Two-Group Posttest-Only Design*. Frey, Botan, and Kreps (2000) describe this design as two treatment groups exposed to the independent variable and then assessed on a posttest (p. 183). Even though more than one group

participated in this study the basic research design involved exposure to treatment and then a posttest. For the purposes of this study, a pretest was not conducted. This option was chosen to control for sensitization (p.120).

Racial attitudes of subjects were not pre-tested. Consequently, not measuring the racial attitudes of the subjects did not permit the results from this study to be compared with preexisting attitudes. Therefore, it is not feasible for the results from this study to show a change in racial attitudes. However, the results made it possible to determine if the race of the speaker (source) had any influence over racial attitudes.

For the experimental phase of this study a video clip of a public service announcement in which reactions to a positive portrayal of an African American male are compared to a positive portrayal of a Caucasian male. There were two video clips: one featuring a Caucasian male and the other an African American male. Each clip featured the spokesperson as the chairman of the Georgia Division of Public Health delivering a public service announcement on lung cancer. The clips were identical except for the race of the chairman. As in previously conducted studies, this one examined African Americans' portrayals on the news but in a less biased or racist situation. This study attempted to explore the influential relationship between African American television portrayals and racial attitudes.

Participants

As in some of the previously conducted experiments, this study also sampled undergraduate students. However, unlike those studies, no upper-class journalism students were sampled. Using junior and senior level journalism students may not have given the best results since these students are being taught techniques to decipher media messages. Additionally, Bonilla and Forman (2000) found by sampling students taking social science course should

exhibit less racist views than other segments of the population (p. 53). This sample has the potential to produce results that will be representative of the general population even though the subjects are college students.

The 131 participants were introductory speech students from Georgia State University (GSU) in Atlanta. Professors teaching Speech 1000 at GSU agreed to the use of their students for this experiment. This introductory speech course is a required core class by the university and the students in these classes generally are not journalism or communication majors. Hence, large lecture classes were used in order for the sample size to be adequate enough for assessment. The sample consisted of 42 (32.1%) males and 89 (67.9%) females ranging from 18-65 years of age *M*=21.47 years and *SD*=5.77; 38.2% were freshmen, 30.5% were sophomores, 22.9% were juniors, 7.6% were seniors and .8% were graduate students. Upon the start of the initial experiment the two group sizes appeared equal however the experiment resulted with two different sample sizes. Due to incomplete surveys, absences, etc. seventy-two subjects watched the clip featuring the Caucasian speaker and fifty-nine watched the African American speaker.

Materials

Message. The message used in this experiment was presented as a public service announcement on lung cancer. The topic of lung cancer is a general subject and though it has racial undertones, it is not overtly racial as the topic of crime. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, an affiliate of the Center for Disease Control, there was improvement (decrease) in the death rates for lung cancer among all ethnic groups, except American Indian or Alaska Natives in 2000. Given that this improvement is applicable to both Caucasians and African Americans should eliminate any racial implications associated with lung cancer.

Each video clip was of either an African American or Caucasian male delivering a public

service announcement for the Georgia Division of Public Health. The male was presented as the chairman for Georgia Division of Public Health, and spoke on specialized treatments for lung cancer patients. It was important for the male in each video to be presented as both an authoritative figure and in an expertise role. Further, the chairman of the Georgia Division of Public Health is typically not a figure recognized by the general public. The public service announcement heard in each video briefly told the function of the lungs, the three treatment options for lung cancer and the importance of patient/physician consultation (see Appendix II).

The variables of race, gender, age, clothing, appearance, voice quality, presentational skills and other characteristics associated with public speakers were controlled to ensure that only the race of the chairman varied. To control these variables and manipulate only the race of the chairman, a still photograph and a pre-recorded voice were used. A photograph of both a Caucasian and African American male who possessed similar physical characteristics (i.e., weight, facial hair, age, amount of baldness, glasses, etc.) was used in the video. The voice that accompanied the picture was pre-recorded and a Caucasian voice accompanied the Caucasian chairman as did an African American voice for the African American chairman. These measures were taken to ensure that the source credibility was essentially equal. The video was then created/edited in the Digital Arts and Entertainment Laboratory at Georgia State University.

Q*uestionnaire/Scale.* The instrument used in this study as a measuring device was the stereotype survey used in the 1999 Fujioka study. Immediately after the students viewed either video A or B, they were given the Fujioka Survey to complete, which measures their racial perceptions toward African Americans, Caucasians and Hispanics/Latinos. In the Fujioka Survey, 7-point semantic differential type questions were asked to measure racial perceptions toward African Americans. According to Frey et al. (2000), semantic differential questions are

used to identify the extent of a person's beliefs, attitudes, or feelings toward some object. Traditional questions ask to what extent a person agrees or disagrees with a statement by choosing one category on a 5-point scale that ranges from "strongly agree to strongly disagree." In the Fujioka study (1999) the directions were stated as follows:

> Please think of African Americans in the United States today. Check a space between each of the adjectives to indicate how you would describe African Americans in general. For example if you thought Group X is "quite hard working" in general, you would check the space between "lazy" and "hard working" as shown below (see Appendix I).

Though traditional semantic differential scales range from positive to negative, the questions used by Fujioka were mixed and randomly arranged from positive to negative (i.e., very educated to very uneducated) as well as from negative to positive (i.e., very poor to very rich). The purpose for using this arrangement of questions in this study was to ensure that respondents were "really" reading the question before marking an answer. In addition, the Fujioka study also asked students to measure "White Americans" and "Mexican Americans" using these same questions. For the purposes of this study, questions about all three ethnic groups were asked in an attempt to control for sensitization. The questionnaires used in the Fujioka study to measure African Americans were also used in this study (see Appendix I). By asking subjects questions on how they viewed African Americans allowed for some type of assessment to be drawn on racial perceptions.

The racism scale uses items that refer explicitly to African Americans as well as the incorporation of the standard themes of: (1) *Denial of continuing racial discrimination*, (i.e., Has

there been a lot of real change in the position of black people in the past few years?), (2) *Absence of positive emotions toward blacks*, (i.e., How often have you felt sympathy for blacks?), (3) *Blacks should work harder*, (i.e., If blacks would try harder they could be just as well off as whites?), (4) *Excessive demands*, (i.e., Are civil rights leaders trying to push too fast, going too slowly or at the right speed?) (Sears et al., 1997, pp.25-26). For the purposes of this study, attitudinal items derived from the symbolic racism scale were used to measure racial attitudes. Symbolic racism discloses that racial portrayals have become subtle. The portrayal used in this experiment maintained the same level of subtleness in that it framed race in a less overt manner.

In addition, students also completed an evaluation pertaining to the public service announcement. The questionnaire included six questions pertaining to the message content of the video and credibility of the speaker. The purpose of the questionnaire was to ensure that subjects were attentive to the video as well as to the speaker (see Appendix III).

Procedure

This was an experimental study involving a convenience sample of 131 undergraduate students to investigate the relationship between the race of a source of televised information and racial attitudes. Subjects saw a video with either an African American or Caucasian (male) posing as the chairman for the Georgia Division of Public Health. The chairman delivered a public service announcement that addressed new treatments for lung cancer patients. On the scheduled day for the video viewing, instructors began the class by telling students they were going to watch a public service announcement from the Georgia Division of Public Health pertaining to specific treatments for lung cancer patients. After the video ended, professors then continued with the class activities as planned and there was not a discussion pertaining to the video. Before the class ended a researcher (not the professor) entered the classroom and

informed students that he/she was doing a survey on racial attitudes. Students were then administered a questionnaire regarding racial attitudes towards African Americans, Caucasians and Hispanic/Latinos. Up to this point students were given no indication that the video and questionnaire had anything to do with each other. After students completed the survey on racial attitudes they went on to complete an evaluation on the public service announcement. Students were not allowed to engage in any type of discussion until after they had completed and turned in both surveys. Further, during the elapsed time between the video viewing and the completion of both surveys students were not made aware that one was related to the other. Once the researcher collected all questionnaires, a briefing was held explaining the purpose of the video and the questionnaires.

For the completion of a study of this nature a specific order had to be followed in order to adequately execute the proposed experiment. First, the two videos had to be made before any type of experiment could take place. After the videos were completed, the sample was gathered. As stated before multiple classes were used to produce a large enough sample. After multiple classes had agreed to participate, dates for the showing of the videos were scheduled with professors. Most of the classes were shown the video on the same day as a precaution in controlling for sensitization. Classes that viewed clip “A” were shown a Caucasian “chairman” of the Georgia Division of Public Health speaking about treatment options for lung cancer, while clip “B” showed an African American chairman giving the same speech.

Chapter 3 Results

The first four analyses examined the variable factors pertaining to racial perceptions. The final analysis examined the evaluation of the health message. The thirteen stereotype items presented in Table 1 were factor analyzed as a means to reveal subjects' racial attitudes towards African Americans. Means and standard deviations were calculated for subject responses to the Fujioka racism scale. Results for subjects viewing the video of the Caucasian speaker (condition A) and results for subjects viewing the African American speaker (condition B) are presented in Table 1. Table 2 presents the results of factor analysis of the data from the Fujioka instrument (racism survey) showing factor loadings and suggesting treatment of the data as four overarching factors. As in the Fujioka (1999) study, the racial attitude questionnaire was used to measure respondents' stereotypes of African Americans and African American television portrayals. The questionnaire (analyzed in Chapter 3) included thirteen attitudinal items. The items were divided into four sets of related factors (factor1, trust; factor 2, drugs; factor 3, violence and factor 4, wealth). The use of this questionnaire enabled this study to measure differences in racial attitudes between the group that watched video A (Caucasian speaker) and the group that watched video B (African American speaker).

Analyses

To test the hypothesis on racial perceptions toward African Americans an independent sample t test was used. The t test is used by researchers to examine differences between two groups measured on an interval/ratio dependent variable (Frey et al, 2000, pp. 345-347). In this study an independent-sample t test was used to look at differences between two independent groups. Students were asked questions regarding African Americans, Caucasians and Hispanics however, each group only saw one video with either the African American or Caucasian

chairman. For the purposes of this study only the results for attitudes toward African Americans were measured. The t test measured subjects' responses to determine if racial perceptions differed on the basis of which video was seen.

In order to effectively examine racial attitudes, a factor analysis was used to reduce the number of variables. In the study four factors were used including trust, drugs, violence and wealth (see table 1). In addition, appropriate items were reverse-coded so that higher scores indicated more positive stereotype ratings.

Reliability

Cronbach alpha was used to test the reliability of each factor (Fujioka, 1999). The results of the factor analysis are displayed in Table 1. This study produced four stereotype factors pertaining to African Americans. The t-test was done factor-by-factor from Table 2. There was no significant difference between condition A and B. Table 2 present the results of t test for the second survey. Condition A was found to be significantly more credible than did the viewers of condition B, confirming hypothesis 2. Table 3 presents the results of t-tests for the hypothesis 1.

The first factor analysis Trust (trust, leadership, contribution to society, success, and education) provided a mean score of 4.15 for the Caucasian speaker and a mean score of 4.29 for the African American speaker with a corresponding Cronbach's alpha of .81. In factor analysis 2, Drugs, (drug dealing, alcohol abuse, and breaking the law) the mean score for the Caucasian speaker was 3.85 and 3.54 for the African American speaker. The Cronbach's alpha for factor 2 was.88. The mean score for the Caucasian speaker and for the African American speaker in factor analysis 3 Violence (hardworking, violence prone, low crime) were 3.97 with .51 as the Cronbach's alpha. Lastly, in factor analysis 4 Wealth (rich/poor) the mean score for the Caucasian speaker was 3.94 and 3.83 for the African American speaker. A Cronbach's alpha

score was not available for this particular factor in that only one stereotype item was used. For all aforementioned factor analyses, the higher the mean score the more positive the perception. This study further used factor analyses to examine the variable factors pertaining to the evaluation of the health message. The evaluation analysis (Evall) included the factors; informative, level of understanding; level of importance, level of interest and credibility. The results shown in Table 1 for the evaluation of the Caucasian speaker were mean scores of 2.42 and 3.14 for the African American speaker with a Cronbach's alpha of .72. Unlike the other four factor analyses the lower the mean score the more positive the response (see Tables 1 and 3.).

Testing of Hypotheses

H-1 predicted that the racial attitudes of the audience toward African Americans would be more positive when the speaker is an African American than when the speaker is Caucasian. An independent-sample t test shows no significant difference in attitudes toward African Americans amongst the two groups. Though there was not a significant difference between the two groups to support hypothesis 1, there is an indication that racial attitudes were influenced by the source. Considering the fact that between the two groups both speakers were evaluated as being virtually equal. Under both conditions A and B the Factor 3-Violence was M=3.97 (see Table 1).However, Factor 2 (which consists of the variables not/likely to deal drugs; not/likely to abuse alcohol and not/likely to break the law) shows that subjects who watched the Caucasian speaker (M=3.85) had a more positive attitude toward African Americans than those who viewed the African American speaker (M=3.54) (see Table 1). Nonetheless, this difference is not significant enough to conclude whether or not the race of the speaker directly influenced the racial attitude of the audience.

H-2 predicted that subjects would evaluate the health message more positively when delivered by a Caucasian speaker than by an African American speaker. An independent-sample t test provides support for this hypothesis. Table 1 shows subjects who watched the public service announcement delivered by the Caucasian speaker evaluated the health message more positively (*M*=2.42) than the subjects who watched the African American speaker (*M*=3.14). Being that subjects in both groups viewed nearly indistinguishable videos enabled this study to attribute race as the differential factor amongst the two groups.

The specific analysis follows:

TABLE 1

Ratings on African American Stereotypes by Condition

Factor	Caucasian Speaker (N=72)	African American Speaker (N=59)	Significance Level
Trust	4.15 (1.14)	4.29 (.99)	.453
Drugs	3.85 (1.17)	3.54 (1.2)	.153
Violence	3.97 (1.01)	3.97 (1.02)	.998
Wealth	3.94 (1.07)	3.83 (1.07)	.548

Df=130

Note: For all stereotype entries, 7= positive stereotype and 1=negative stereotype. The positive stereotype is indicated as "+," and the negative as "-."

Table 2

T-Test Values for Conditions A and B

Factor	Caucasian Speaker (N=72)	African American Speaker (N=59)	Significance Level
Evaluation:	2.42 (.804)	3.14 (.734)	.189
Informative (+)/ Not (-)	2.42 (1.18)	3.18 (1.12)	.352
Easy to understand (+)/ Not (-)	2.57 (1.25)	4.30 (1.04)	.009*
Important (+)/ Not (-)	1.41 (.825)	1.89 (1.08)	.001*
Interesting (+)/ Not (-)	3.35 (1.38)	3.73 (1.18)	.137
Credible (+)/ Not (-)	2.39 (1.12)	2.69 (1.20)	.668

Df=130, * = p<.05

Note: For all evaluation entries, 5= negative and 1=positive.

TABLE 3

African American Stereotype Factors

	Factor 1	*Factor 2*	*Factor 3*	*Factor 4*
Factor 1: Trust				
Trust (+)	.75			
Leader (+)	.73			
Contribute to society (+)	.82			
Tolerance (+)	.56			
Succeed (+)	.79			
Education (+)	.65			
Factor 2: Drugs				
Dealing Drugs (-)		.86		
Abusing Alcohol (-)		.91		
Breaking the Law (-)		.90		
Factor 3: Violence				
Violence Prone (-)			.52	
Lazy (-)			.77	
Commit Crime (-)			.63	
Factor 4: Wealth				
Poor (-)				.84
Cronbach's Alpha: .81		.88	.51	

Chapter 4 Discussion

The results found in this study suggest that the race of a source of televised information can influence attitudes. Hypothesis 1 predicted that participants who watched the African American speaker would have a more positive perception of African Americans than those who watched the Caucasian speaker. Part of the reason this hypothesis was not successful is because groups were only exposed to one treatment. In both the Peffley et. al study and the 1999 Oliver study, participants were exposed to more than one treatment. Also the subjects were post tested more than once. A single exposure to a subtle racial image may not have not have been substantial enough to test for racial attitudes. Though this hypothesis was rejected it still revealed additional findings to the preexisting literature. The findings from testing hypothesis 1 imply that using a positive portrayal did influence racial attitudes. Though there was not a significant enough of a difference between the two groups to confirm this notion the results do indicate that participants' perception were equal. These findings further suggest that positive portrayals can impact people's perceptions of African Americans considering that participants did not significantly rank Caucasians more positively. Also this information leads scholars in the direction of further investigating how positive portrayals can counteract negative racial attitudes. Throughout the previously discussed literature (Peffley et. al, Wright et al., Oliver and Dixon and Linz) revealed that negative portrayals reinforce negative attitudes. Their findings correlate with the findings associated with hypothesis 1 of this study. To accurately justify these implications would require future research that included pre-testing for racial attitudes.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that participants would evaluate the health message higher when it was delivered by a Caucasian as opposed to an African American. In support of this notion, this study revealed that subjects who viewed an almost identical public service announcement

with the only difference being the race of the speaker evaluated the message more positively when the speaker was Caucasian. The symbolic racism theory assumes that socialization leaves individuals with strong, long standing attitudinal predispositions. This study was able to test for these predispositions based on the premise that Caucasians have been socialized to have general negative attitudes toward African Americans (Sears et. al, 1997). Throughout the years these negative attitudes have evolved from a strong Jim-Crow racial viewpoint into a new age modern or symbolic racial viewpoint. The symbolic racism theory has enabled researchers to create and execute studies in which modern day racial television images can be evaluated. Based on the findings in this study it appears that the race of a televised source can influence people's racial attitudes. Unsurprisingly, based on symbolic racism beliefs the data in this study indicates that the influence on racial perception is more favorable towards Caucasians than towards African Americans.

Though hypothesis 2 was confirmed its findings do not extend to general racial attitudes, being that the health message was not directly associated with any racial stereotypes. However, even though the evaluation of the health message was not one with any overt racial implications the findings from hypothesis 2 strongly suggest that the race of the source did influence racial attitudes. The symbolic racism theory further supports why this subtle television portrayal was able to influence people's racial attitudes. This belief proposes that people possess racial attitudes toward African Americans and that once overt racial images have emerged into more subtle images (Entman). Nonetheless, to be able to determine that these attitudes are racial attitudes would call for additional research. This study cannot be used to generalize the notion that the race of a televised source influences racial attitudes however it certainly does point in this direction.

The primary goal of this study was to determine if a positive television portrayal of an African American would influence positive racial attitudes toward this ethnic group. Unlike the majority of the research discussed earlier, this study used a positive or non-negative television portrayal of an African American (authoritative figure) as opposed to a negative television image (criminal/crime suspect). The symbolic racism theory reveals that media images of racism have evolved from being overt to more subtle images. In this study, the public service announcement on lung cancer was a topic that is not directly associated with any particular racial group. Further, the visual image of the chairman portrayed both a Caucasian and African American male in the same non-negative way. The symbolic racism theory provides support for why this study was able to test racial attitudes through the use of a non-racially explicit portrayal (Entman & Rojecki, Tuch & Martin, and Sears et. al). Therefore the findings from this study suggest that the race of a televised source does influence people's racial attitudes and that positive portrayals of African Americans can contribute to positive attitudes toward African Americans just as negative portrayals can contribute to negative attitudes. That any positive effect is found at all is particularly notable in the light of research indicating that negative stereotypes can distort our perceptions of data in ways that reinforce the negative stereotypes (eg, Oliver, 1999).

Limitations and Directions for future research

As is the case with most empirical research, this study had several factors that inhibited its failures and successes. The first factor is that this study did not pre-test for racial attitudes. Previous studies employing symbolic racism theory justified the assumption that people possess preconceived beliefs toward minorities, however, pre-testing for those beliefs would provide more specific data on the precise content and intensity of these beliefs. In addition, a pre-test

that tests the types of portrayals audiences consider to be negative versus positive would provide insight as to how various types of television images can influence people's attitudes.

It is apparent that in this study the race of the source had an effect on subjects' racial attitudes. However, the race of the source may not have been the only factor as to why subjects had a more positive attitude toward the Caucasian speaker. The fact that the pre-recorded voices heard in the public service announcement were different has to be taken into consideration. Participants could have enjoyed the sound of one voice over the other as well as found one to be clearer/easier to understand. In the future researchers may opt to use the same voice or a digitally programmed voice. These factors all lead to larger questions of how voices are associated with race. Hopper and Williams (1973) conducted studies to test listeners' attitudes and stereotyping behaviors towards speakers. Pre-testing indicated that listeners perceived speakers as a representative of Standard English, Black English, Spanish influenced English or Southern white dialect English. The study found that when hiring for white-collar position, employers favored Standard English speakers. However, this study did not specifically explore the role that race/ethnicity played in regards to the job hiring (pp.296-301). Perhaps future research will examine the relationship between the race of a person and voice/diction.

This study showed no indication that seeing a non-negative portrayal of an African American would cause racial attitudes to be more positive towards African Americans. In this study subjects' responses were evaluated after being exposed to only one treatment condition. In this study participants watched the clip and later completed a survey on racial attitudes and an evaluation of the health message. This single treatment was the only time that subjects were exposed to a condition that involved a televised racial portrayal. To further explore this belief future research would have to be conducted that tested and compared subjects' racial attitudes

toward both a positive and a negative television portrayal of African Americans. In attempts to further examine racial attitudes and television portrayals, this same study could be done with the addition of a pre-test that evaluates television portrayals as being either negative or positive. In addition future research could expose subjects to repeated treatments or multiple public service announcements.

As the Hispanic/Latino and Asian American populations continue to grow in the United States it is pertinent that scholars begin to do more research that relates to these ethnic groups. This study was solely interested in studying African American television images however, exploring other minority media images would provide more insight as to how media images affect racial attitudes. In a study conducted for the Children Now Agency in Oakland, California, Adams (1998) found that children (ages 10-17) thought that Caucasian characters on entertainment television were more likely to be shown in a positive way while Hispanic/Latino characters were most likely to be portrayed negatively. The study went on to reveal that children across all races (African American, Latino, Caucasian and Asian American) associated positive characteristics more with Caucasian characters on television and negative characteristics more with minority characters (p.4). The exploration of other minority groups would provide a clearer understanding of how media images can influence racial attitudes.

This study as well as others of that are similar examined a news related television portrayal. Adams (1998) revealed that children agree that news media tend to portray African American and Hispanic/Latino people more negatively than Caucasians (p.4). It is possible that people could have some type of racial predisposition towards the news in terms of race. Therefore, framing images not associated with the news could disclose new findings as to how various types of television portrayals affect racial attitudes. Research of this sort could research

entertainment images versus news media images in relation to racial attitudes.

Finally, it should be noted that this study investigated immediate effects only, thus, the duration of these effects is not known. As is the case with most studies that use college students as subjects depending upon the conditions of exploration these results could be extrapolated to the general population.

Conclusion

Through theory and empirical research we know that people's attitudes and at times their behaviors are a reflection of what is seen on television. As communication scholars we understand the influential power the media has over society. Many may have thought that racism is a thing of the past but in actuality images of racism have emerged into being less noticeable yet still visible. The findings from this study revealed that positive television portrayals of African Americans have the potential to influence positive racial attitudes. As new television programs continue to develop, it will be interesting to see if more programming will place African Americans and other minorities in more positive portrayals. As our society continues to become more diverse it is pertinent for television programming to aid in the positive development of how individuals view one another. The reality is that media images do impact how we see ourselves, others and the world. Historically, these images have capitalized on the reinforcement of negative racial attitudes. Unfortunately, these images have not yet had the opportunity to utilize the media's potential power to counteract existing negative racial attitudes. As the media continues to evolve with society its power to influence the public will strengthen thus affording it the opportunity to become a more positive medium throughout culture. The findings from this study and others with similar purposes provide a gateway for the creation more positive television images.

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Appendix I

Please think of **African Americans** in the United States today. Circle the number between each of the adjectives below to indicate how you would describe **African Americans** in general.

For example, if you thought Group X is "quite hard working" in general, you would circle the number **"6"** in the space between "lazy" and "hard working" as shown below.

very lazy	quite lazy	somewhat lazy	neither lazy nor hardworking	somewhat hard working	quite hard working	very hard working
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**

Lazy	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Hardworking**
Violence Prone	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Not violence prone**
Educated	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Uneducated**
Poor	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Rich**
Not likely to commit Crime	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Likely to commit crime**
Can be Trusted	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Can not be trusted**
Likely to be a leader/ authority	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Not likely to be a leader/ authority**
Likely to Deal drugs	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Not likely to deal drugs**
Likely to Abuse alcohol	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Not likely to abuse alcohol**
Likely to Break the law	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Not likely to break the law**
Likely to Contribute to A society	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Not likely to contribute to a society**
Tolerant of Other races	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Not tolerant of other races**
Likely to Succeed in A career	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Not likely to succeed in a career**

Appendix II

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT:

LUNG CANCER

Most cancers are named after the part of the body where the cancer first starts. Lung cancer begins in the lungs. The lungs bring air in and out of the body, taking in oxygen and getting rid of carbon dioxide gas. The lungs are two sponge-like organs located in the chest. The right lung has three sections, called lobes. The left lung has two lobes and is smaller because the heart takes up more space on that side of the body. Lung cancer is a life-threatening disease since it often spreads to other body parts before it is diagnosed. The treatment options for lung cancer are surgery, radiation therapy and chemotherapy. Surgery is used to remove the tumor and some of the lung tissue surrounding it or a lobe. Radiation therapy is treatment with high-energy rays to destroy or shrink cancer cells. Lastly, chemotherapy is the use of anticancer drugs injected into a vein or given by mouth. This treatment is often used when the cancer has spread to distant organs. There is a lot to consider when choosing the best way to treat or manage lung cancer. It is important to consult with a physician and it is a good idea to seek a second opinion from doctors experienced in lung cancer. This information represents the views of the doctors and nurses serving on the Georgia Division of Public Health Information Database Editorial Board.

Note: This is the public service announcement that was heard by the participants in this study.

Appendix III

Please think about the public service announcement you watched and answer the following questions:

Example:

Good				*Bad*
1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
Very good	*somewhat good*	*neither good nor bad*	*somewhat bad*	*very bad*

1. How informative was the public service announcement?

Informative 1 2 3 4 5 **Not Informative**

2. What type of television portrayal was the video?

Positive 1 2 3 4 5 **Negative**

3. Were you able to understand the speaker in the video?

Easy to understand 1 2 3 4 5 **Not easy to understand**

4. Do you think the health issue discussed in the video was of any importance?

Important 1 2 3 4 5 **Unimportant**

5. Did you find the video to be of any interest?

Interesting 1 2 3 4 5 **Not interesting**

6. How credible was the speaker in the video?

Credible 1 2 3 4 5 **Not Credible**

Appendix IV

Demographics

Race	
African American	33
Caucasian	46
Asian	12
Latino	2
International	4
Other	7
Age	18-65
Gender	
Male	42
Female	89