

## **NAACP Media Research project with BU Spark!**

### **Motivation & Background:**

The broader goal of the NAACP is “to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality and rights of all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination.” In this project, we will be working to analyze Boston media outlets and their coverage of black people and black communities in order to assess if and how coverage has changed over time. Hopefully, the results will lead us to possible ways in which Boston media can do its part to encourage elimination of racial hatred and discrimination.

### **Goals of the Project:**

#### **Overall Goal:**

To understand the coverage of Boston Media in covering Black people and Black communities in Boston, specifically to assess if and how coverage has changed over time in different news outlets.

#### **Preliminary Goals (Before our second meeting, October 16th at 7pm):**

- (1) Using collected Census Data for Boston, look at the racial breakdown of neighborhoods to determine what proxy we can use to search for black neighborhoods. We will aim to use geographic identifiers at a level more granular than the city's 'official' neighborhoods for quantifying communities of color, since reporting often references smaller areas within those neighborhoods.\*
  - What percentage of African American people makes a community a black community?\*
- (2) Compile a list of terms that may be used as a proxy to determine when an article or video is discussing black people; terms such as 'Black woman', 'Black man', 'African-American', etc. to allow us to better search the media to identify race within articles later on.
  - What language have academics of the past used to identify race?
  - What language do we see ourselves when observing articles?
- (3) Compile a list of keywords or phrases that may give us insight into sentiment analysis. This will allow us to better analyze the tone of stories the media is telling later on.
  - What words convey positive versus negative tone?
  - What language have academics of the past used for sentiment analysis?

#### **Goals further down the line:**

- (4) Collect news media such as print, [radio](#)\* and television articles from 2014-2019 from a variety of news outlets to later analyze for their portrayal of black people and black communities.
  - Use a variety of sources such as [The Boston Globe](#)\*, Boston Herald, [WGBH](#)\*, [WBUR](#)\*, local TV stations, etc. making sure to get both liberal and conservative media
- (5) Analyze the articles using the proxies determined from our preliminary research to answer a set of sub questions we have regarding how communities and people of color are being represented in the media.
  - Which outlets are covering black people and communities?
  - What is the volume of media discussing black people and communities?
  - How are outlets distributing their coverage of black people and communities?
  - What topics are being covered in relation to black people and communities?
    - Are there more news reports and current events (such as a fire or robbery) or more feature and community stories?
    - Are these articles mainly related to business? Sports? Housing? Crime? etc.
  - What community members are getting covered?
    - Is it the same people being included over and over?
    - Who gets covered in missing persons reports? Obituaries? Etc.
    - Has there been an increase in diversity in experts on topics being covered by the media?
  - When are black communities being covered?
    - Are there spikes throughout the year? Throughout the 5 years?
  - What tone is being used when describing black people and black communities?
    - Is it mostly positive? Mostly negative?
- (6) Establish a list of specific questions for our finalized analysis.
  - What should we be looking at that supports our overall goal?

## **Hypothesis and Other Possible Outcomes:**

Personally, we presume that black community members are less likely to be featured in the media as experts on topics or in feature and community stories, but that they are more likely to be featured in news reports and current events. Additionally, we presume that black communities are more likely to be spoken about in a negative tone in comparison to white communities.

Other possible outcomes are that black communities are talked about just as highly and as much as white communities in regards to feature stories and educational topics. This would

be lovely to see, however with our current and past political climate it seems likely there are injustices in the way the media portrays black communities.

### **Non-goals & Out of Scope Topics:**

A few non-goals and out of scope topics that could later be explored are similar questions comparing other communities of color: middle eastern communities, asian communities, native american communities, etc. Additionally, a similar project could one day be to do a similar analysis on writings, television shows, and radio that are for entertainment rather than for news.

### **End Product:**

The final product we hope to create is a set of data that identifies primary topics covered in articles about black people and black communities, identifies the key members being discussed and in what light they are being brought up, and identifies how predictive is a neighborhood's black population of certain language in coverage.

### **Open Questions:**

There are still some open questions with the project such as what final questions will we decide to use for our ending analysis, as well as if the breakdown between groups will remain as is or if it makes more sense for us to break up the work in a different way.

\*Items in blue are goals currently assigned to our adjacent team whose results we will be using as well; we are trying to equitably break down the work to provide the most for the client while keeping things reasonable for us students to complete.