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BLACKNESS AS A WEAPON: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE
ANALYSIS OF THE 2009 HENRY LOUIS GATES
ARREST IN NATIONAL MAINSTREAM MEDIA

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Communication Studies

by
Ashley Ann Jones

June 2011


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6/10/11
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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the *New York Times*, *Boston Globe*, and *USA Today*, and *Wall Street Journal's* contribution in cultivating racial stereotypes related to the 2009 Henry L. Gates arrest. This study utilizes Stuart Hall's cultural studies and critical race theory as its theoretical framework. Predominately, this study focuses on assessing the portrayal of Henry L. Gates within media coverage after his arrest.

In a critical discourse analysis of 100 online news articles, the study found stereotypical language and derogatory statements directed at Henry Louis Gates, Jr., the nation's most distinguished African American Studies scholar, and found evidence to support Hall's theory and critical race theory, which focuses on uncovering racism and racial inequality throughout elite news discourses.

The study's research questions included: (1) How is race constructed in the selected publications? (2) Do the selected texts present stereotypical content related to Gates as a black American (*New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Boston Globe*, and *USA Today*)? (3) If so, what types of stereotypes are reinforced? Throughout the

research, I found stereotypical content related to Professor Gates in all of the publications (*New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Boston Globe*, and *USA Today*). The types of stereotypes that were reinforced were: blacks being less human than whites, blacks don't hold good jobs, blacks don't live in predominantly white neighborhoods, Blacks as generally rude and loud-mouthed, black male aggression, blackness as equivalent to powerlessness and distrust, and the assumption that blacks use discrimination as an excuse for everything.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr. is one the most pivotal figures in African and African American studies criticism in the world. He describes himself as a literary critic and teacher but above all, he has the most enormous influence of all scholars in this area of literary studies in the United States. By way of scholarship, research projects and published works, he has transformed and brought much attention to black literary studies in the United States and across the board, or across other cultures and races. His audience ranges from Hollywood entertainers to intellectuals to students. He challenges cultural and literary critics to consider critical theory as a foundation for understanding African American culture.

Henry L. Gates, who is currently a professor of African and African American Studies at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts (Harvard University, 2010), is also editor-in-chief of the Oxnard African American Studies Center and director of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute, a research center dedicated to preserving the history of Africans and African Americans (Harvard

University, 2010). He is the author of a collection of scholarly texts including *Faces of America, Figures in Black: Words, Signs and the "Racial" Self* and *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (winner of the American Book Award in 1989). Gates earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in English literature from the University of Cambridge, and his B.A. *summa cum laude* in History from Yale University, where he was a Scholar of the House (1973). Prior to Harvard, he taught at Yale, Cornell, and Duke Universities (Harvard University, 2010).

Many of his writings discuss the ways in which European and American discourse oppress the African American heritage. For that reason, he believes it imperative for African Americans to produce their own set of literary work to uniquely express their heritage. His work builds upon that of black intellectuals such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Booker T. Washington and Frederick Douglass. His book *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* is among his most celebrated works. In this book, he celebrates the African influence on life in the diaspora and at the same time challenges the white hegemony and Eurocentric culture that continues to contradict and absorb black creativity.

He has also written extensively on black male life in America. Gates asserts that the twentieth century black man has become heir to a set of anxieties. For one, he has the "burden of representation" meaning he represents his race and he has the power to honor or betray it. In Gates' (1992) essay, "The black man's burden," he claims that, "many black intellectuals are acutely aware of the hazards of falling out of favor with the thought-police, whether in white-face or black."

In his essay, "The black man's burden," He refers to novelist/playwright Langston Hughes as the most "representative negro" of his time, citing that he was the "poet" of his race. He also gives credit to Frederick Douglass, who was known as the "representative colored man of these United States" during the 19th century. Douglass had a reputation as a phenomenal writer and speaker (Gates & Jarrett, 2007). Similar to Hughes and Douglass, I can easily say that Gates has demonstrated that he is the most "representative negro" of his time. Which brings me to my next point; Gates has once confessed that his greatest fear is "having to go before the criminal justice system (Gates, 1997a)."

Well, on July 15, 2009, he became a victim of racial profiling and was arrested in front of his Cambridge home (CNN, 2009a). Immediately prior to his arrest, Gates had just returned home from a long trip across seas. He approached his home and had difficulty getting inside his house. A neighbor of his (who didn't recognize him) called 9-1-1 to report what she thought was an attempt to break and enter the home. During his testimony with CNN (2009a), Gates described the event like this:

Gates: I had just flown back from China. I came from New York to Boston and my driver picked me up. We got to my house in Harvard Square, and the door was jammed. The door wouldn't open. To make a long story short, I asked my driver to just sort of push the door through. I gave him his tip, he left.

Gates: I called Harvard Real Estate, which does the maintenance on my house because they own the house and while I was on the phone, a Cambridge policeman showed up on my porch. I walked with the phone still active to my porch and he demanded that I step out of my house onto the porch. That's all he said, he said I would like you to step outside. I said, absolutely not. I said why are you here? He said I'm

investigating a breaking and entering charge. I said this is my house, I'm a Harvard professor. I live here. He said, can you prove it? I said just a minute.

Gates: I turned my back, walked into the kitchen to get my Harvard ID and my Massachusetts driver's license, he followed me without my permission. I gave him the two IDs and I demanded to know his name and his badge number.

Soledad O'Brien, CNN news correspondent: And when you demanded that, what did he say?

Gates: He wouldn't say anything. He was just very upset. He was trying to figure out who I was, he was looking at the ID. He didn't say anything. I said, why are you not responding to me? Are you not responding to me because you're a white police officer and I'm a black man?

Gates: He turned, walked out, turned his back on me, walked out, I followed him onto my porch. Looked like a police convention, there were so many policemen outside. I stepped out on my porch and I said, I want to know your colleague's name and his badge number, and this police officer said, thank you for accommodating my earlier request, you are under

arrest. And he slapped handcuffs on me, and they took me to jail

(<http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/living/2009/07/23/bi.a.henry.gates.cnn?iref=videosearch>).

Once Gates was released from jail, the incident went viral and caused a media frenzy (CNN, 2009a). The charges against Gates were dropped. His arrest became a national conversation among black scholars, professionals and news personas (CNN, 2009b). It influenced U.S. citizens to think about the status of race relations in our society, post-racism, criminal injustice, and lack of fairness in the current law system (CNN, 2009b). How could Henry Gates, a pioneering literary critic, get caught in a situation where he is made an example of his own writings and observations about black life? After all, Gates has confessed many times before that his life is dedicated to improving black and white relations (Jan & Ryan, 2009).

A fellow colleague of Gates, Professor Robert Putnam, described Gates as, "One who is known for putting people of all backgrounds at ease." Further, Professor Putnam said, "He makes white folks feel comfortable about talking about race. The notion that he's some kind of racial firebrand that is always looking for a chance to bring race into it

is not true." With a description like that, you wouldn't imagine the words, 'Why? Because I'm a black man in America?' coming from Gates' mouth. I think it's very crucial to explore this event and gather something important from it.

Statement of the Problem

A defining moment for Gates was the point at which he was handcuffed (after proving that he was in fact the owner of his own home), taken to police station, fingerprinted, and forced to undergo mugshots (CNN, 2009a). He said in his testimony with CNN, "I realized how vulnerable all black men are, how vulnerable all people of color are and all poor people to capricious forces like a rogue policeman. And this man clearly, was a rogue policeman (CNN, 2009a)."

Additionally, Gates spoke about filing a lawsuit. He said, "This is not about me. This is about the vulnerability of black men in America (CNN, 2009a)."

Therefore, this analysis is important because it will contribute to our understanding of how racial profiling oppresses the black population and showcases the vulnerability of black men regardless of class and income. This study confronts different forms of oppression such as the number of times Officer Crowley asked Gates to identify

himself in his own home, to the physical force that was imposed upon him, to his incarceration, and to his detainment, which was caused by a profile (Risse & Zeckhauser, 2004).

Racial profiling is the practice of generalizing behaviors associated with social groups based upon race, nationality, ethnicity, hair texture, and dress (Last, 2007). Gates' situation is unique because usually racial profiling is problematic for blacks in low-income neighborhoods whereas Henry Gates, who possessed upper-middle class status, was arrested in front of his Harvard home (Last, 2007). Social class is normally the most important dividing line, but in Gates' situation, skin color may have had more weight than his prestigious status (judging from Crowley's public statements).

In his own testimony about the incident, Gates said, "He (Officer James Crowley) was responding to a profile; two black men with backpacks were breaking and entering into my home and when he saw me, he just presumed that one of them was me (CNN, 2009a)." Understanding the effects of racial profiling is important because it teaches us how to improve relations between people of color and law enforcers.

Furthermore, investigating Gates' incident will be very valuable because it addresses the debate on race relations in the United States (CNN, 2009a; CNN, 2009b). Race relations is defined as "the relations between members of different races within one country." In other words, the way people of different races act toward each other (Scott, 2003).

In a sense, the discourse about the Gates incident plays a major role in explaining the relationship between blacks and whites, which has historically been described as extreme dominant-subordinate (Scott, 2003). The relationship between blacks and whites has been that whites have controlled high-level positions and organizations in the social, economic, political, and cultural sectors; they have tried to force their culture on blacks; and they have controlled the disproportionate number of blacks in the lower income sector (Scott, 2003).

As I mention later in this study, black men in particular have had an historical struggle with law enforcement. In a conversation with Larry King regarding the Gates arrest, Gen. Colin Powell addressed the issue of blacks and the law enforcement system, he said:

"This kind of problem still exists in this "post racial" America. It isn't quite post racial, we still have conflicts between African American citizens, especially males, and the police department and we shouldn't wave that away or any way minimize that kind of problem (CNN, 2009c)."

Purpose of the Study

This study analyzes the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Boston Globe*, and *USA Today's* contributions to portraying the 2009 Henry L. Gates arrest. This study is interested in finding out how nationally circulated mainstream dailies and weeklies framed the incident and Gates' image within their news coverage. This study also seeks to find out how the media constructed race. Most importantly, this study seeks to uncover racial stereotypes as they relate to race and social status. A stereotype is defined as, "a view, or understanding, of a group or a category of people based on the generalization of some perceived or alleged characteristic or distinctive feature (Tomlinson, 2010)."

In other words, stereotypes are widely spread views or assumptions about particular groups. Stereotyping can have a vast effect on how people perceive and experience the

world. And the media is widely known for providing its audiences with a way of viewing specific groups and identities (Branston & Stafford, 2010). Aside from uncovering race construction and stereotypes, I'm very interested in using the findings of this study to promote better race relations among blacks and whites. From reviewing the Gates arrest in the mainstream media, I offer some suggestions on how to improve race relations at the end of the Discussion Section.

This paper will use cultural studies as its theoretical framework to explain how the news media presents images and representations of society, constructs social reality, presents information as if it were normal or reflective of reality, and ultimately serves the purpose of supporting the preferred interpretations of the dominant culture. Although cultural studies originated within a British context, its premises have been widely accepted in the United States. This theory will be useful in explaining how the media constructs the concepts of race and class in relation to the Gates arrest.

Much of my theoretical research will highlight Stuart Hall as a major contributor, and I will also address the origins of cultural studies as interpreted by Karl Marx and

the Frankfurt school of theorists. Aside from Hall, I will highlight black American scholars who have offered their knowledge and critique of cultural studies as it relates to African Americans. For example, Cornel West and Manthia Diawara offer their ideas about expanding cultural studies to reflect race as its focal point.

In addition to cultural studies, I have also adopted critical race theory as a theoretical framework to support my argument that Gates' arrest (the action of arresting Gates and the relationship between Crowley and Gates) will contribute to our understanding of race relations and the oppression of blacks. This theory also helps explain racial inequality and the function of race in our society. Critical race theory borrows tenets from the critical theory of the Frankfurt School. Critical race theory has been used to analyze media representation of race (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Gotham, 2007).

This study utilizes critical discourse analysis as its methodology to analyze the news articles from the selected weeklies and dailies. In conducting a critical discourse analysis, I analyze several news articles from national news periodicals to assess how each source contributes to the portrayal of the Gates incident. By analyzing language,

signs, and other discourse elements, as well as elements of visual images, I will uncover ideological messages (Gee, 1999).

Critical discourse analysis is a valuable method for this study because it provides a critical standpoint for evaluating the abuse of power and dominance by the majority group, it focuses on social problems and political issues such as racism and inequality, and it aims to show that racism is reproduced by elite news discourses. In my critical discourse analysis review section, I provide a short literature review of other scholars who have used critical discourse analysis for the purpose of demonstrating how language is constructed and how it presents different views of our society concerning race and class.

My research questions are as follows: (1) How is race constructed in the selected publications? (2) Do the selected texts present stereotypical content related to Gates as a black American (*New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Boston Globe*, and *USA Today*)? (3) If so, what types of stereotypes are reinforced?

The next section of this paper is the literature review. The literature review is divided into five

sections. The first section addresses cultural studies as it relates to media studies. The second section covers critical race theory as it relates to media studies. The third, fourth and fifth sections review critically acclaimed studies on race and racial stereotypes by Henry L. Gates. And as for the fifth section, I provide a brief review on the 1991 Rodney King beating in order to assess the degree of consistency over two decades' time within these two categories of representation.

I justify my review of literature produced by Gates by saying that his writings provide an understanding of the history of race relations in America. His classifications of the "Old Negro" and the "New Negro" provide an historical background of racial challenges faced by black Americans. He provides an explanation of the racial stereotypes that have been used against black Americans. He also presents concepts and ideas (e.g. blacks presented as an inferior race) that support some of the ideological messages that arise from my research. His research very much supports my analysis in the Findings Section of this paper.

I also assert that my review of the Rodney King beating is important to look at because it targets long-

term consistencies within the problem of racial profiling. I have literature to support that racial profiling is relevant to both the Henry L. Gates arrest and the 1991 Rodney King beating (Boston Globe, 2010). Both incidents provide an example of how the power of profiling overcomes social class, which is the most significant divider of our society. In other words, it doesn't matter how well off Gates is, he's still a black man before any other status he's achieved. Therefore, I will cover the Rodney King beating in our nation's media. Mainly, I'm interested in finding out how race was constructed in the mainstream media at that time. I'm interested in uncovering King's image portrayal. I believe Gates and King

Lastly, I'm interested in knowing the role of racial profiling concerning the case. I believe it is important to cover the Rodney King beating because both Gates' and King's incidents have encouraged society to examine the nation's criminal justice system and question if power outweighs fairness. The last section of the literature review will take a look at critical discourse analysis as a method and offer some studies that have used the method to understand how race is constructed in the media.

Limitation

One limitation to this study is that most of my data was collected from news articles found on newspaper websites (with the exception of one YouTube news clip from CNN). Ultimately, this means that I missed other types of media that could have contributed to my study. This study did not analyze television clips, video clips, or any broadcast programs.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural Studies and Black Cultural Studies

Stuart Hall, a black British scholar, is nationally recognized for his vast contribution to the study of race, culture, media, and society (Goldberg, 2009). Over the years, he has managed to lead the way in developing theories concerning society and its ever-changing environment and culture (Goldberg, 2009). His work has deeply contributed to our understanding of society in relation to race, culture, crime, politics, and post-colonization (Goldberg, 2009).

Cultural studies addresses the relationship between society and its culture (Hall, 1989). It examines cultural forms, practices, and life (Hall, 1989). Cultural studies has been applied to a number of disciplines including popular culture, ethnography, communication, anthropology, and sociology (Henry, 2001). This section will review Hall's cultural studies in reference to media studies. Cultural studies is rooted in Marxism. According to Karl Marx, our society is divided by social class (Kendall,

2010). The capitalist class represents the wealthy who own and manage the means of production. The working class represents those who work for the capitalists and the capitalists often exploit the working class members (Kendall, 2010). Marx predicted that the working class members would rebel against the capitalist class. However, by the end of World War II, it was clear that the working class revolution did not break any bonds of oppression nor did the capitalist class depreciate (Griffin, 2006).

Marx's ideas were further developed by the Frankfurt School of theorists (Griffin, 2006). According to Frankfurt School of theorists, Marx failed in the area of predicting capitalist takeover of public discourses. The Frankfurt School of theorists argued that the working class members did not rebel against the capitalist system because the corporate- owned media was so successful at shaping messages that supported the capitalist system. News and entertainment media often focused on presenting a world in which capitalism is normal, eternal, and unchangeable.

Hall (1989) exclusively studies culture, race, and communications. Within that breadth, he studies the nature of racial stereotypes, the negative image of blacks in the media, and the lack of black representation in the media.

In Hall's (1997) essay "Representation and the media," focuses heavily on the concept of representation in the media (1997). In other words, this and other essays in his body of work contribute to the field of cultural studies by explaining the practice of representation in the media. According to Hall, the media represents different types of people, topics, events, and situations.

Hall uses the relationship between state elected officials and their constituents as a metaphor to break down his explanation. Figuratively speaking, legislative leaders represent their publics. They may or may not do a great job of it, but they are *supposed* to represent the public. In keeping with that, they *stand in* for us in our absence. Ultimately speaking, the media gives meaning or 'representation' to different types of people, topics, events, and situations (Hall, 1997).

Hall argues that the primary role of discourse is to make meaning (Griffin, 2006). Meaning is derived from words and other signs. Meaning must be illustrated through discourse. However, it is not enough to recognize meaning by words and other signs, we also have to look at the source of discourses, including who's speaking (Griffin,

2006). We must concentrate on what people are saying, what they are not saying and who is saying it (Griffin, 2006).

Cultural studies emphasizes a relationship between language and power. Language is a major source of determining meaning (Griffin, 2006). Ideologies are derived from language and can represent social groups to their advantage or disadvantage. Hall's argument is that every message in nature has ideological content (Griffin, 2006).

In his work, Hall (1997) has tried to analyze the gap between what we believe to be the true meaning of an object, versus how it is represented in the media. For example, Hall discusses a photo of the black British Olympic champion Linford Christie wrapped in a British flag after winning the 100-yard meter. Christie does not 'represent' what most people think of when they picture Britain. The public predominantly thinks of white people when it thinks of Britain. Hall questions, but why does the public think that? That is why *absence* is just as significant as *presence* (Hall, 1997).

Further, Hall (1997) analyzes how Christie is represented. In this case, Christie is portrayed as a winner. And it's not often that blacks are portrayed as winners (Hall, 1997). This is what Hall (1997) meant by the

practice of representation, it allows the media to fix and eventually create meaning. The media has the power to say 'this is the meaning of Britain today; it doesn't mean anything else; it's never going to mean anything else; it's the same today, yesterday and forever more.'

Therefore, the media tries very hard to fix meaning so that the person (event, situation, etc.) could only be understood as this identity (whatever identity that may be). And whenever you see that person (event, situation, etc.), you'll automatically assume they possess those characteristics (Hall, 1997).

The media's attempt to 'fix' meaning of something is what Hall (1997) identifies as stereotyping. According to Hall, the media presents a very limited image of women, people of color, and members of the lower class. The media limit what they can do, the types of opportunities that are available to them, and their general nature. According to Hall, the media produces a biased reality that serves the dominant groups (Griffin, 2006). In other words, the media serves the Bill Gateses, Steve Forbeses and the Ted Turners, but they take advantage of the poor and powerless audiences (Griffin, 2006).

Hall uses the word hegemony to describe the media's cultural role. Hegemony speaks of the media's subtle ways of employing messages to separate the haves from the have-nots. Media hegemony is not a conscious plot nor is it openly persuasive (Griffin, 2006). The media presents several ideas but at the same time, gives particular favor to messages that support the approved depiction of reality (Griffin, 2006). Hall believes that the role of the media is to convince their audiences that they share the same interests of those who have the power (Griffin, 2006).

Hall (1989) understood that certain practices are commonly found across the globe. Racism is one of them. However, the characteristics of racism are distinct from one society to the next. Nonetheless, despite the fact that cultural studies stems from a British perspective, its premises about media representation of race have been widely accepted in American culture (Hall, 1989).

Cultural studies has played a dominant role in communication theory and studies of mass media and has been institutionalized in many academic programs. American scholars have offered their take on cultural studies as it relates to American life, and I will discuss one area in particular; it is called "black cultural studies."

Black cultural studies combines both cultural studies and African American studies. Black cultural studies emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s and offered an African American perspective on black politics and identities (Henderson, 2000). Like cultural studies, it investigates the practice of representation in elite news discourses, specifically black representation. It investigates how Black representation has changed and which images have remained. It looks at how gender, class, and nationality help structure representations of African Americans.

Further, it investigates identity politics in the construction of race, class, gender, and nationality (Joseph, 1999). Similar to cultural studies, black cultural studies has been applied to media, literature, history, sociology, African American, and gender studies (University of Washington, 2010). This approach to cultural studies will guide my analysis by offering a local perspective in terms of racial construction in elite discourses, or in this case, newspapers.

Black cultural studies asserts that Hall, Marx and the Frankfurt school of theorist were negligent in the area of emphasizing the significance of race in cultural studies

(Joseph, 1999) Furthermore, black cultural studies attempts to fill that gap. Black scholar Cornel West has often spoken about cultural studies as it relates to African American studies. In his essay, "The postmodern crisis of black intellectuals," West (1992) acknowledges the need to emphasize race in cultural studies. He said, "How can the reception of cultural studies in the United States not give race a tremendous weight and gravity if we're going to understand the internal dynamics of U.S. culture?"

Black scholar Manthia Diawara (1993) asserted that black cultural studies focuses on race and metaphors of racial construction to uncover the lives of oppressed groups. It seeks to study the oppression of black men, black women, black family, and so forth. Black cultural studies combines elements of "oppression studies" which is "the exclusion of blacks from the inventions, discourse, and emancipatory effects of modernity (Diawara, 1993, p. 263)."

The following studies have been employed to demonstrate the use of Hall's cultural studies and black cultural studies as a way of defining and constructing race and to show evidence of racial inequality between blacks and whites in our media sources.

Dan Berger (2009) used Hall's concept of cultural studies to explain how the U.S. media maintains status quo, or the preferred views and ideologies of the dominant group. Berger (2009) examined the news media's representation of African Americans and criminology following the Hurricane Katrina tragedy in CNN, New York Times, and the Times-Picayune. During the crisis, the media targeted young black men and immigrants with looting, which is stealing of goods. Berger (2009) claimed the news media transformed the verb 'looting' into a noun. For instance, news reports would say, "the looters broke windows to enter stores," which means, one broke a window because one was a looter, rather than for the purpose of looting.

He claims the news media created a looter class, completely depraved, extremely poor, and black. The reports indicated that disaster relief was delayed because of the threat of 'gangs and armed looters.' Further, looting was characterized as a form of anarchy. The looters were described as hard, crazed, armed men who beat back police, targeted tourists, and tried to rape women. CNN correspondent Chris Lawrence said, "Anyone who walks the streets of New Orleans (predominantly black) is taking their life in their own hands(Berger, 2009, p. 501)."

Katrina Bell-Jordan (2008) relied on Hall's cultural studies and Paul Gilroy's approach to black cultural studies to explain the construction of race on the MTV reality show, *The Real World*, CBS's *Survivor* and FX's *Black.White*. *The Real World* places diverse young adults (who have no acquaintance with each other) in a designated house in an exotic city and expects them to get along (or not). *Black. White.* invites black and white families to trade lives and try to function among all the differences. Using high quality makeup, the white families are painted black and the black families are painted white. The purpose of the show is to promote racial understanding.

Survivor segregates black, white, Asian, and Hispanic characters into teams and places them on a deserted island and expects them to survive without essential resources. Bell-Jordan (2008) found several different themes in her analysis: 1. the different shows dramatized race and racial issues, 2. they promoted conflict related to racial issues, 3. they used concept of hegemony (my culture is better than yours) to provoke conflict, and 4. they didn't resolve conflict and contradiction at all.

Bell-Jordan (2008) reviewed all episodes within the 2006 series of *Black.White*, *The Real World: Denver* and

Survivor. She even reviewed the short "teasers" that aired to promote the consumption of the shows. She found that all six episodes of *Black.White.* focused on racial tensions; six of twenty-eight shows of *The Real World: Denver* focused on racial conflict; and, surprisingly, only three of the fourteen episodes of *Survivor* were focused on racial tensions. Overall, Bell-Jordan found that the shows promoted racial differences, emphasized racial conflict and dramatized situations that reinforced racial and cultural stereotypes.

For example, the one of the first activities for the Marcotullis family(white) and the Sparkses (black) were to visit a convenience store with the makeup on and see what kind reactions they would receive. Bruno Marcotullis (the man of the family) denied the idea of being treated differently just because he was wearing black makeup. This angered Brian Sparks (the man of the family) because he felt as if Bruno were insisting that racism doesn't exist. Bruno said, "'If you're lookin' for it . . . if you've got this resentment, and expectation of prejudice, it's gonna find you . . . You see what you want to see (Bell-Jordan, 2008, p. 358)."

This observation is interesting because a lot of white folks assume that white privilege does not exist (Smith, 2007). Many white persons argue that ethnic people have the same opportunities as they do. Therefore, they say they only view ethnic people as lazy or lacking in ambition when they don't measure up to the white person's higher status. However, the problem is, white privilege affects a great number of people negatively.

In another situation, Carmen Marcotullis (the woman of the family) shouts "Yo b**tch!" to Renee Sparks as part of an exercise initiated by her dialect coach. Renee, in real shock, responds, "Whoa, where did that come from?" Carmen Marcotullis defends her actions by saying, "I really had thought that, that was an affectionate name between blacks." But Renee denied the incident and said, "She deliberately called me that, because, come on, who can be that stupid?" When both families sat down to talk about it, Carmen came to the conclusion that she was wrong and that she hadn't reached that level of familiarity with Renee to call her such a name.

Additionally, the way in which the show structures race between the Sparks and Marcotullis children is vastly different. Both Rose Marcotullis and Nick Sparks are close

in age (16) but have large differences between one another. For example, Rose is college-bound but Nick is a high school dropout. Nick is less mature, articulate and self-motivating compared to Rose. Rose is more concerned about enhancing her learning experiences but Nick is more concerned about "where da party at?" While Rose is more concerned about understanding racial issues, Nick couldn't care less.

In *The Real World: Denver*, there are two African American characters, Tyrie and Stephen. Tyrie and Stephen come from different backgrounds. Tyrie is very pro-black but not anti-white. Stephen is a conservative black Republican who graduated from Harvard. When Tyrie was having a conversation with one of their white roommates, the white roommate called Stephen a "white-black guy." Tyrie objected and said, "No, it's just that he's the more accepted Negro." In a confessional, Tyrie defined "acceptable Negro" as a black guy that everyone gravitates to, because they have more in common with him. In a conversation between Tyrie and Stephen they said:

Stephen: I want to know what you really think of me dude. 'Cause quite frankly, I thought you and me [were] cool . . . Do you think I'm white washed?

Tyrie: Stephen, I have no problem with you at all . . .
. But with that, I have to tell you. If it comes up to me and you, you are the more acceptable Negro in this house. Okay? I have never once thought or said that you were less black than me.

Stephen: But you did say that I was uppity.

Tyrie: (Pausing) Yes . . . and the same way that you said that I was 'hood' . . . you put it in a way that everything 'hood' is bad . . . And you've meant that man (Bell-Jordan, 2008, p. 360).

From this situation, Bell-Jordan (2008) concluded that the "acceptable Negro" versus the "hood Negro" is a reflection upon how the media interprets reality. However, the problem is, the media only conveys two types of interpretations. You are either a "hood-rat" or an "integrated Negro," which is not fair because that leaves out any other interpretations that may follow blacks. To place people into one of two categories is hardly valid.

As for *Survivor*, the very structure of the show is questionable because the teams are segregated and their considered "opponents" of one another. In Bell-Jordan's analysis, a lot of racial stereotypes are reinforced. For example, the character Rebecca (a black woman) reinforces

the stereotype of black people not knowing how to swim.

In another situation, Nate (a black man) attempts to form an alliance with Stephannie (a black woman) and reasons with her, saying she is best to join him because he believes the other black women of the tribe will stand against her because she is dark-skinned and they are light-skinned. The "skin color paradox" is the most recent form of discrimination among blacks (Terkildsen, 1993). The "skin color paradox" is the act of being discriminated against due to skin tone.

Lorraine Fuller (2005) also based her study on Hall's cultural studies when she analyzed the black image throughout *WLBT News* in Jackson, Mississippi. According to Fuller (2005), *WLBT* lost its broadcasting license over 30 years between 1949 and 1987 for not meeting obligations to the black community as enforced by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). It was a common procedure for *WLBT News* to ignore black perspectives. For instance, civil rights issues were essentially blocked from all television programs.

For years, blacks protested the injustice but they didn't receive the support they needed to end the gate-keeping process. Eventually the support grew and caught the

attention of the FCC. *WLBT's* broadcasting license was taken away and handed to a community group in Jackson. In the present study, Fuller (2005) takes a look at *WLBT News* program years later and its contribution to race portrayal. In a six-week period between June 1, 2003 and July 11, 2003 she evaluates on-air broadcast of *WLBT News*. In her findings, she states that *WLBT* reinforced the stereotype of blacks as the "unfortunates" more so than it did their white counterparts.

She viewed many stories. Here is a short description of what she found: One of the news stories she viewed featured a "poor black family" buying its first home with the assistance of a federal program. In the interview, a Black woman tells her story about living in the projects for the last 28 years. In another story, a newscaster covers a summer camp for at-risk youth featuring a room full of black boys. The reporter states, "The majority of these boys are running from the law." There was one white boy within the group. She also reviewed a report on a government-owned apartment complex (Section 8 Housing), which only featured blacks living in extreme conditions with visible raw sewage and roaches.

Fuller (2005) also found that blacks were negatively targeted in crime-related stories even when they did not commit the crime. For example, she reviewed a story about a policeman committing suicide. The footage included a photo of the officer, his house and the scene of the "crime."

The news station also ran footage of a black female (looking distressed) being escorted by a cop. The video footage of the black female ran every time that the news station ran the coverage of the suicide story (Fuller, 2005). Her presence was never explained during the news program (Fuller, 2005). In contrast, the other news stations in Jackson didn't run her video alongside the suicide coverage. In addition, Fuller (2005) reviewed a story that claimed Jackson as the fourth leading city in auto-theft. A newscaster interviewed three black males from Jackson on the auto theft occurrences and later interviewed a white male from the city of Byram (a predominantly white neighborhood) who said he just moved from Jackson (a predominantly black neighborhood) to Byram because of the auto-theft outbreak.

She also analyzed a story concerning Jackson city council. Councilman Ken Stokes made accusations of bribery against the council members. All of the council members

denied the accusation. However, the story linked Stokes' drama with a scandal that occurred four years ago when Councilmen Louis Armstrong and Robert Williams (both African American males) were sent to prison for charges of bribery.

In addition, Fuller (2005) found stereotypical imagery to reflect racist stereotypes. One story depicted a young toddler being rescued from a dog cage by a neighbor. The child's mother claimed that she was asleep when the child ventured out and locked itself herself in a cage. According to Fuller (2005), the news video footage was altered and portrayed the mother in a relaxed mode (ultimately signifying negligence) sitting on her front porch with her ankles crossed with a cigarette in her mouth, blowing smoke in the lens.

The news story also spoke about an unrelated charge against the mother where she was arrested for assault but released on bail. Fuller (2005) argues that this imagery reflects the stereotype of the "bad, single, black welfare mama" who does not care about her child.

In another story, a white man is interviewed about moving from Jackson to a predominantly white neighborhood. He said, "It wasn't six months after I sold my house to him

that the neighborhood was going down." This quote channels the old racist stereotype of "the neighborhood going down once the black family moves in." Another quote taken from an interview featured a white male saying in reference to scam artist Robert Meeks (who is black), "We need to tie him to a tree or something to keep him from doing this." As referenced by Fuller (2005), this quote takes us back to the old negro lynchin' days.

In summary, the above-referenced media sources in each of these studies have constructed the African American image to be poor, lazy, ghetto, narrow, crime-ridden, and irresponsible. The results of these studies will support my analysis of the Henry Gates arrest because they will help to identify the types of stereotypes that surround African Americans in the media, they will also help to reveal the types of literary strategies that media use to subconsciously construct race, and it demonstrates the practice of racial hegemony. This information will help me as I decode language to reveal stereotypes and assumptions about race. Further, my explanation of the keywords and phrases will be derived from the abovementioned studies in media discourse about race. The following section will address critical race theory as a theoretical framework.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory focuses on racial inequality and how race functions in society (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Critical race theory is derived from critical legal studies (CLS), which emerged in the mid-1980s (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Critical legal studies builds on the critical theory of the Frankfurt School and asserted that legal language is a discourse that continues to create hierarchies - male over female, rich over poor, whites over blacks (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Critical race theory examines racial inequality and acknowledges the following system of belief (1) Racism is normal, (2) storytelling can help us explore race and racism in the society, (3) critical race theorists critique liberalism (the belief that everyone is entitled to freedom and equality), and (4) they explore the emphasis on racial realism (the depiction of race as it relates to reality). The following studies have been employed to show evidence of racial inequality between blacks and whites in our media sources and to show how race is constructed.

Joao Vargas (2004) examined news coverage surrounding the 1992 riots as fueled by the Rodney King injustice. He examined the *Los Angeles Times* between April 30, 1992, and

May 4, 1992, and found stereotypical language regarding blacks and criminology. Blacks were consistently portrayed as 'irrational wrong-doers.' They were portrayed as solely responsible for all the looting and arson occurrences. In an article titled: "Reform, not violence, is the answer," the opinion piece basically targets African Americans as the group most concerned about the Rodney King beating. The article basically conveys that blacks are permitted to feel sad and angry but there's no need for any action to be taken. Many of the articles examined how blacks were indirectly associated with irrationality. They would discuss how to behave and control immediate impulses.

In another *Times* article, a white business owner talked about the invasion of his coffee house. He said:

"And . . . in South Pasadena, a black man pitched a table through a plate glass window screaming 'The party's over!' Terrified white patrons cowered behind ice cream freezers and under tables while the man smashed mirrors, neon signs, the espresso maker and the counter, said Collette Richards, the shop's 28-year-old owner (Vargas, 2004, p. 218)."

This type of description appeared many times in the paper. Blacks were described as invading private property,

fueled by racial hatred or, as LA Times put it, irrationality. However, white citizens were portrayed as civilized and willing to forgive the blacks, willing to understand their outrage, and re-establish good race relations.

Kevin Gotham (2007) used critical race theory to explain the construction of race in the media concerning Hurricane Katrina. In his analysis of media coverage and websites, he found that Katrina coverage showcased the growing impoverishment of poor African Americans and discovered that racial and class divisions in the U.S. are deeply rooted and consequential. They showed images of an on-the-street 'reality' of black storm victims who were seen as responsible for their own troubles.

Mainstream newspapers presented a false sense of urban reality and ignored the real information such as the structural forces of capitalism inequality that urbanized poverty and restricted the advancement of the individuals who were stuck and stranded in New Orleans. Media coverage of distressed blacks on rooftops of homes crying for help made the Katrina disaster an urban race problem. In a poll by the Pew Research Center, Gotham (2007) noted that 85 percent of blacks and 63 percent of whites believed that

President Bush did not do all he could to get relief efforts going quickly.

A Gallup/CNN/USA Today poll showed 6 in 10 blacks agreed that class and race played a major role in the government's slow relief effort while only 1 in 8 whites confirmed that to be true. An ABC News/Washington Post poll found that a majority of whites were saying the problems were not an indication of racial inequality, although majorities of blacks disagreed. This finding also led many black people to believe that Bush didn't care about the fast recovery of blacks.

In addition, the Pew poll found that more than 66 percent of blacks felt that the recovery response time would have been quicker if most of the victims were white. Only 17 percent of whites confirmed this opinion. In all, critical race theory will be useful for my study because it will take a critical standpoint and explain how race and racism functions in our society (Society for social work and research, 2009). Critical race theory is known as a "discourse of liberation" because it calls attention to racism by uncovering hidden racist practices. I expect to demonstrate how critical race theory functions as a "discourse of liberation" in this study.

The New Negro

As previously mentioned, this review of literary works produced by Gates provides an understanding of race relations in America. The "Old Negro" and the "New Negro" provide an historical background of racial challenges faced by black Americans and his research very much supports my analysis in the Findings Section of this paper.

Gates' literary works have transformed the face of African and African American studies. A majority of his writings has spoken about white hegemony and black life, and have ultimately defined our sense of race in the United States. He has often been recognized and acclaimed for his interpretations of the "New Negro," and "Old Negro."

In his book, *Thirteen ways of looking at a black man*, Gates discusses different perspectives on race and gender. He builds these perspectives by using narratives of black life. In the introduction, the first perspective he discusses is the "New Negro," also known as the black bourgeois. The New Negro is black, smart, elegant, and from elsewhere (Gates, 1997). The New Negro has studied science, theology, history, and economics. The New Negro transitioned from the "Old Negro," which is traditionally attributed with black enslavement and illiteracy (Gates,

2007). The New Negro emerged in the late nineteenth century. The New Negro sought to "reconstruct" the image of the Old Negro and replace it with images of leadership, entrepreneurship and dignity (Gates & Jarrett, 2007).

In Gates' (1988) essay *The Trope of a New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black*, he begins by defining the term (re)construction, "Construction, moreover, is 'the action of framing, devising, or forming, by the putting together of parts.'" Construction signifies as well "the manner in which a thing is artificially constructed or naturally formed; Construction, finally, is a thing constructed; a material structure; a formation of the mind or genius (Gates, 1988, p. 130)."

The Oxford English Dictionary informs us that reconstruct means "to construct anew in the mind; to restore (something past) mentally." Reconstruction, it tells us, consists of "the action or process of reconstructing," or "an instance or example of this; a thing reconstructed (Gates, 1988, p. 130)." According to Gates (1988), blacks have aimed to reconstruct their image since the first day in 1619 when they arrived in boatloads heading to Virginia.

In Gates and Jarrett's (2007) book *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture*, the New Negro is described as:

"manly, bold; if necessary, defiant. He apologizes to no one for his existence, feeling deep in his inner being that he has just as much right to be on earth and in all public places as anyone else. He looks the whole world searchingly in the eye, fearing or worshipping nothing nor no one. Self-possessed, he makes himself at home wherever circumstances place him. In a word, he respects himself, first of all. (Gates & Jarrett, 2007, p. 165)."

Other definitions of the New Negro as referenced by Gates and Jarrett (2007) include: "A class of colored people, the 'New Negro,' . . . who have arisen since the war, with education, refinement, and money. In marked contrast with their enslaved or disenfranchised ancestors, these New Negroes demanded that their rights as citizens be vouchsafed by law (p. 10)."

Significantly, these New Negroes were to be recognized by their "education, refinement, and money, with property rights strongly implied as the hallmark of those who may demand their political rights. 'Property,' in this sense,

is only one of a list of 'properties' demanded of this New Negro. 'Education' and 'refinement' to speak properly was to be proper- would ensure one's rights, along with the security of property. (Gates & Jarrett, 2007, p. 10)."

Education is a major contributing factor to the image of the New Negro. (Gates, 1997; Gates & Jarrett, 2007). Blacks have strived to reconstruct their image since the time they learned how to write. Gates saw the period between 1895 and 1925 as the height of the black intellectual reconstruction. During that period, black writers published at least sixty- four novels (Gates, 1988).

Formerly, whites predicted that blacks were incapable of acquiring basic skills in education. And they laughed hysterically at the idea of blacks in higher education (Gates & Jarrett, 2007). They tacitly assumed they formed the United States education system and for white children and from their perspective, it worked just fine. United States history draws upon experiences of whites; but blacks, on the other hand, have no place

Despite the discouragement, blacks were eager to learn (when they were allowed to) and devoted themselves to education (Gates & Jarrett, 2007). These blacks were

considered "free Negros." Early black educators included Rev. Daniel Alexander Payne of South Carolina, Rev. J. W. Hood of North Carolina, Rev. John Peterson of New York, George B. Vashin of Missouri, and General O. O. Howard. Many of them laid the foundation for blacks in educational work. General O. O. Howard contributed 3,000,000 to building schoolhouses and paying salaries for the purpose of promoting education among black children.

The reconstruction of the New Negro identity was also depicted in various literary works. For example, authors both white and black were challenged with moving away from former empty images of blacks as plantation uncles, mammies, slaves, and black samboes (Gates & Jarrett, 2007; Briggs, 2009). It was considered a sin against God to produce superficial generalizations of blacks as plantation workers and such. Dr. Stephen Mayo, a black scholar, offered his opinion of the superficial depictions of African Americans in books:

Among these women are as many gardens of native, intellectual, moral and executive force as among the white people. The plantations of the Gulf, the Atlantic coast and the Mississippi bottoms swarm with negro women who seem hardly lifted above the brutes. I

know a group of young colored women, many of them accomplished teachers, who bear themselves as gently and with as varied womanly charms as any source of ladies in the land. The one abyss of perdition to this class is the slough of unchastity in which, as a race, they still flounder, half conscious that it is a slough---the double inheritance of savage Africa and slavery (Gates & Jarrett, 2007, p. 165).

Ultimately, these images were seen as an attempt to lower the black race and elevate the white race.

Gates and Jarrett (2007) conclude the construction of the "New Negro" by referencing its continued formation during the Renaissance period. As mentioned, many black writers had emerged during the reconstruction period (1895-1925). However, the black arts movement came into being during the Renaissance period (1919-1933). At this time, blacks continued to reconstruct their image through African American art and literary works.

For example, Gates provides some interpretations of black art and literature in his essay, *The Trope of a New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black* (Gates, 1997). The term "New Negro" was a highly political term during the Renaissance period. The use of the term

created tension among blacks and random fascist mobs as referenced in a cartoon named "The New Crowd Negro" illustrated by Allan R. Freelon. The cartoon featured two black men riding in a motorized vehicle with the words "New Negro" tattooed to the side of vehicle, who were firing guns at a white mob. One of the blacks firing said, "Since the government won't stop mob violence, I'll take a hand."

During the Renaissance period, blacks sought to show a "progression" in the sense that they were slaves of men but are now sufficient and capable. However, for many African Americans, acknowledging the progression meant denying their roots. For example, in an essay written by Fannie Barrier Williams, *Club Movement Among Colored Women*, Gates (1988) criticizes her for attempting to "displace her heritage." She said, "To feel that you are something better than a slave, or a descendant of an ex-slave," she writes, "to feel that you are a unit in the womanhood of a great nation and a great civilization, is the beginning of self-respect and the respect of your race."

In other interpretations, blacks continued to define the New Negro by his attitude, character and physical shape. For example, civil activist A. Phillip Randolph published an essay in the *Messenger* concerning his view of

the New Negro, "The New Negro's social methods are: education and physical action in self defense. That education must constitute the basis of all action, is beyond the realm of question. And to fight back in self defense, should be accepted as a matter of course. No one who will not fight to protect his life is fit to live." Nonetheless, Gates (1997) concludes blacks were successful at conveying new meanings of the Negro. They replaced traditional images of "Sambo," "Zip Coon" and "Mammy" with images of beauty and respectability.

The Old Negro

In their book, *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture*, Gates and Jarrett (2007) talk about the transition from "Old Negro" to "New Negro." According to Gates and Jarrett, the Old Negro was considered a member of an inferior race. They endured hardships born of their economic standing and were exposed to many inequalities, including the denial of equal rights, education, a right to vote or hold an office, discrimination by white labor unions, the horrors of lynching, and legalized segregation (Gates & Jarrett, 2007). Blacks would dress, talk and act in ways that were inferior to the white race.

In his essay, *Authority, (White) Power and the (Black) Critic: It's All Greek to Me*, Gates (1987) speaks of an experience of Alexander Crummell, a prominent black statesman and missionary, who spent most of his career as a minister and philosophy teacher. Crummell told of a time when he worked as an "errand boy in an anti-slavery office" in New York City. He overheard a conversation between the office secretary and two lawyers from Boston. Apparently, the two lawyers just came back from a business trip in Washington D.C. to meet with state Senator John C. Calhoun.

At the time, slavery, civil rights and nullification were hot issues and the Senator said, "That if he could find a Negro who knew the Greek syntax, he would then believe that the Negro was a human being and should be treated as a man (Gates, 1987, p. 21)." In other words, for Senator Calhoun, a black person's humanity is determined by his or her mastering the essence of Greek syntax, of all things. Gates argued that white people would respond in this way because of the long racist tradition of demanding that blacks "prove" their humanity, a tradition of which, Calhoun would inherit.

Whites would also pose claims that suggested that blacks did not have the intellectual ability to create

literature (Gates, 1987). As a result, the African American literary tradition was enacted. Africans in Europe and in the New World felt compelled to write literature as a way to "prove" their humanity and to demonstrate that blacks were intellectually capable of writing literature art. Ultimately, they sought to resolve the issue of black mental equality, which remained a questionable thought in European literature for about 200 years.

In those days, the western culture equated blackness to "absence." They attributed blackness with dehumanizing and simplicity. Moreover, "blacks were less than human, yet more than brute (Gates, 2007, p. 33)." In their view, blacks were mentally and morally disadvantaged. However, black scholars stepped in and established blackness as "presence." Black scholars reconstructed the traditional "Sambo" image of blacks, as depicted by white folks, and transformed the image into the New Negro, an image of abundance and truly reconstructed presence. They were able to redefine who and what a black person is and what he or should is capable of accomplishing.

In his book, *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Man*, Henry L. Gates speaks of on-going concepts concerning blacks. For instance, he claims if you are a black man, you

are a hundred times more likely to be sent to jail than to be sent to college. If you are a black man in your twenties or thirties, you are more likely to be unemployed and/or underemployed.

The death rate among black men is appalling. Gates says black men are more likely to contract AIDS and become homicide victims (most often by the hands of another black man). Black men are fifteen times more likely to skip the "middleman" and commit suicide compared to black women (Gates, 1997, p. xv). He argues that black women have ultimately separated themselves from black men. The dropout rate, incarceration rate and drug abuse statistics among black men are far beyond the statistics reflected for black women. Black men do worse in school than black women and eighty percent more black women enter into graduate programs compared to black men and black men are less likely to achieve middle class status (Gates, 1997).

He argues that blacks—particularly black men—share their police encounters like "war stories" and very few black men have minimal encounters with the law enforcement. As executive editor of Pantheon (publishing company), Erroll McDonald offered his testimony about being stopped by a policeman in New Orleans after renting a Jaguar. He

said the encounter happened simply to "show cause why I shouldn't be deemed a problematic Negro in a possibly stolen car (Gates, 1997, p. 110)."

Jazz musician Wynton Marsalis also gave an account of his experience. He said he was slapped across the head by a policeman when he was in high school. He was not famous at this point, so he was just another black guy to slap around for no reason. Author Walter Mosley said, "When I was a kid in Los Angeles, they used to stop me all the time, beat on me, follow me around, tell me I was stealing things." And William Julius Wilson (a prominent sociologist) couldn't figure out why he was stopped near a small New England town by a policeman who wanted to know why he was driving around those parts of town. Gates (1997) asserts that Wilson was stopped for a moral violation most black men are familiar with, DWB or driving-while-black.

In summary, I have included a detailed account of the "Old Negro and the "New Negro" to provide an historical background of racial challenges faced by black Americans. In the next section I will review analyses of news coverage of the 1991 Rodney King beating.

The 1991 Rodney King Beating: A Brief Review

In *The Presumption of Guilt: The Arrest of Henry Louis Gates and Race, Class, and Crime in America*, Dr. Charles Olgetree, Professor of Law at Harvard University, addresses racial profiling as it relates to Henry Gates, Rodney King and other black professionals (*Boston Globe*, 30, June, 2010, p. 1). The reviewer of his collection of essays, states that Olgetree proves that class does not exempt the black man from being racially profiled.

I have selected to review literature on the Rodney King beating because it was a significant event that contributed to national understanding of race, race relations and corrupt practices in law enforcement. I argue, just as Olgetree does, that both of these incidents (Gates and King) have encouraged citizens to take a look at the United States criminal justice system to question if power outweighs fairness (Williams-Pum, 2010).

Rodney King, a former resident of Los Angeles County, became involved in the 1991 police brutality case when he was stopped by several Los Angeles police officers for speeding and severely beaten within an inch of his life. The Rodney King beating was caught on tape by a witness within close proximity of the incident (Fox News, 29,

November, 2007). King's case was brought to trial but many of the charges brought against the Los Angeles Police Department were cleared (Justice Unseen, 1993). Neither of the prosecutors tried to make a case for racial bias as a motive for the King beating (Justice Unseen, 1993). This is largely because racial bias is extremely hard to prove (1993). In response to the injustice, the Los Angeles riots broke out, which led to federal intervention resulting in a second trial. However, the second trial was not seen as a form of justice, but was seen as a form of politics (Justice Unseen, 1993). Similar to *Mississippi Burning*, the jury and law enforcement members acted as collaborators. Many of them stated that something had to be done to address the horrific riots in Los Angeles (Justice Unseen, 1993). The riots resulted in 55 deaths and one billion dollars in damaged property (Fox News, 3, March, 2011). The videotape of the King beating was constantly played as a symbolic message conveying that police brutality is commonly found but seldom confronted (Justice Unseen, 1993).

One of the officers involved in the Rodney King beating was Officer Powell. According to media coverage conducted by the Courtroom Television Network, about 20

minutes before King was stopped by Officer Powell, Powell tapped in the quote, "Sounds almost as exciting as our last call, it was right out of the 'Gorillas in the Mist' (Feldman, 1994, p. 409)," into his communication device His statement was referring to a domestic feud between members of an African American family. However, in the courtroom he denied any racist implications in the statement. Subsequently, all members of the courtroom failed to recognize the racial symbolism in his statement. The "Gorillas in the Mist" reference represents the wilderness and the jungle (Feldman, 1994).

The history of comparing blacks to apes has dated back to the mid-19th century book by Josiah C. Nott et al. (1854) titled *Types of Mankind*. The authors produced misleading illustrations that ranked Blacks between Europeans and monkeys. They suggested that blacks are less evolved than Europeans, thus comparing blacks to monkeys. They also compared physical characteristics of blacks to monkeys, including the shape of the nose and the color of the skin.

In the courtroom, Officer Powell described King as "bear-like." This led Officer Powell to believe that he was

responsible for "taming" and "caging" Rodney King (Feldman, 1994). Powell offered the following testimony:

I yelled at him (King) to get down on the ground, to lay down on the ground.... He repeated the motion again, getting up again.... I stopped and evaluated whether he was going to lie there on the ground or whether he was going to get up again. It was a continuing series of him getting back up on his arms, pushing up, sometimes raising to his knees, sometimes getting on his haunches. I commanded him to get down on the ground, and when he wouldn't go for it, I hit him in the arms and tried to knock him back down (Feldman, 1992, p. 409)."

When Officer Powell was asked why he continued to beat King, he said he did not want King to get up.

Apparently, King was a "Gorilla in the Mist" a "black bear" who continued to rise to his "haunches." King was struck 100 times before he was admitted to a hospital (Feldman, 1994). Upon his arrival, Powell chastised King. Powell said to him, "We played a little hardball tonight. Do you remember who was playing? We won and you lost (Feldman, 1994, p. 410)." This act of Powell, demanding that King recall the incident, symbolizes a display of

hierarchy (Feldman, 1994). Powell is asking him to recall "who won" and "who lost," suggesting that King recall the hierarchy order and identify his lowly position in it.

In this nation, race is socially constructed and is similar to a caste system (Smith, 2007). White privilege can be found in every aspect of social, economic, and political involvement in the United States. According to Smith, white privilege suggests that white people live longer, are paid higher wages, have better health care and better housing, enjoy a better quality of life, and are portrayed more positively by television, newspapers, movies, and other media.

Stemming from the slavery days between 1619-1860, Blacks were not considered free citizens. Blacks were prohibited from running for office, from testifying to bear witness against a white person, from "lifting a hand against a white person," and so on (Smith, 2007). Consequently, Blacks were considered the lowest members of the "hierarchy." The next display of humiliation occurred in the courtroom when the prosecutor examined Officer Powell again. The prosecutor asked Officer Powell if he thought King was an animal and Officer Powell said, "King

was acting like one because of his uncontrollable behavior."

In other words, Office Powell acted as if his actions were justified because of King's "uncontrollable behavior," especially since King couldn't be reasonable or law abiding. King was "trapped" in a resistant body without senses or good judgment. The only option was to beat him close to 100 times before his body could no longer stand to resist the temptation to rise up.

When Lerner and Kalof (1999) studied animal symbolism in television ads on NBC between June 23-29, 1998, they found various connections between animal symbolism and culture. For example, they found a mixture of "good" animals and "bad" animals in the television ads. The good animals were able to "fit in" and play their expected roles in society. The good animals, such as family pets, were useful tools and they accepted their inferior status. The bad animals, such as vermin or aggressive dogs, did not accept their inferior status in society and were likely to be killed because they were identified as threats to social order (1999). In such a way, King's fate was demonstration of this imagery. His act of defiance demonstrated a threat

to social order; therefore Officer Powell and others behaved as if King had to be terminated.

Another witness, Sergeant Duke, described King's body as a "spectrum of aggressive movements," reinforcing the stereotype of black male aggression. For years, African American men have been targeted as aggressive beings (Thomas, 2007). The stereotype of black male aggression resulted from higher rates of black imprisonment (2007). In other words, the public generally viewed African American men as aggressive because they go to jail more often than any other race.

Gates (1997) argues that these views are harmful to the African American man. He speaks of an experience told by a colleague, historian Robin D. G. Kelly, who has written books on his experience of being mistaken for a criminal. In one instance, Kelly was rushing to see a movie in extreme weather. He had a baseball cap on and scarf around his mouth and he approached the ticket counter and the young white woman behind the counter was terrified and said she didn't have any money inside the cash register.

To her embarrassment, all he wanted was a ticket so he could join his wife and daughter as they watched *Little Women*. This instance was just one of many. In fact, Gates

said he does not know one black man who has not experienced this type of humiliation. Every black man has at least one story to tell of his so-called ability to use blackness as a "weapon."

Another thing to consider is that during the first trial when the LAPD was acquitted, King never appeared in person to testify against the police. The white police appeared in the flesh but the only part of King that appeared in that courtroom was the video displaying his beat down. The lack of his presence represents the stereotype of African Americans as a muted group. As previously mentioned, the stereotype of blacks as muted group was derived from the Western view of blackness equating to absence (Gates, 2007).

According to social reality, the white cops have the privilege of giving their account and supporting their side of the story but when it comes to the black man, why doesn't he deserve to have a voice? In summary, I have tried to provide a brief summary of the language and imagery captured by the mass media surrounding the Rodney King beating. This analysis of coverage of the Henry L. Gates arrest will produce similar results.

Within the media coverage of King, Feldman (1994) found a number of stereotypical instances including: The stereotypes of blacks and monkeys, animalistic symbolism, African Americans on the low end of racial hierarchy, black male aggression, and African Americans as a muted group.

The next section of the study will explore critical discourse analysis as a method for uncovering ideological meaning. In addition to providing an historical background, I will provide a brief literature review to demonstrate critical discourse analysis as a powerful method for decoding language and explaining how dominant groups abuse their power by reproducing racism in their discourses.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Critical Discourse Analysis

One way to analyze media content is by using critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA is a type of discourse analysis that specifically studies the way social power abuse, dominance and equality are facilitated in text and speech (Van Dijk, 2003). CDA takes a position and ultimately aims to understand, expose, and contest inequality (Van Dijk, 2003).

CDA is rooted in critical theory and the Frankfurt School of theorists (Van Dijk, 2003). CDA theory is distinguished from other approaches of discourse analysis (conversational analysis, narrative analysis, sociolinguistic analysis) because it provides a more critical standpoint in terms of evaluating the abuse of power and dominance by specific social groups. CDA researchers understand that discourses are influenced by social structure and social interaction. They do not deny this claim, but they plead that discourses be studied and accounted for (2003).

CDA scholars focus their research on social problems and political issues such as racism and inequality. They try to point out how discourses facilitate, confirm, justify, reproduce and challenge the relationship between power and dominance in society. CDA researchers ask questions that relate to power, dominance, hegemony, ideology, race, gender, class, discrimination, interests, institutions, reproduction, social order and social structure (Van Dijk, 2003).

I will now address some basic concepts of CDA as constructed by Van Dijk (2003). CDA researchers study the use of language through discourse and verbal interaction. All communications belong to the micro level of the social order. CDA researchers also study power, dominance, and inequality between social groups. This is known as the macro level of social order. CDA researchers have the task of combining both levels in their research.

CDA researchers are also concerned about social power and control. It is evident to CDA researchers that certain social groups have more or less power compared to others. A group has more power if it is able to control the acts and minds of other social groups. This power may have been gained through social, symbolic or material resources such

as money, fame, information, status, force, knowledge, and control of public discourses and literature (Van Dijk, 2003).

The power of the dominant groups may be incorporated in laws, rules, norms, and habits. Dominated groups more or less tolerate, accept, condone, or even acknowledge these types of inequalities as 'normal.' This example describes the process of hegemony, or the dominance of one social group over others. Sexism, classism and racism are common forms of hegemony. (Van Dijk, 2003).

CDA researchers acknowledge the relationship between power and discourses (Van Dijk, 2003). Dominant groups control the topics, the content in terms of meaning, form and style, and the structure of text that appears in discourses. CDA researchers assume that if dominant social groups can influence the way people think, their opinions and their knowledge through discourses, it is likely that they can indirectly control their thoughts and actions.

Controlling the minds and actions of others is a way to produce hegemony. Therefore, CDA researchers tend to ask the following questions: How do dominant social groups control public discourses? How do the discourses control the mind and actions of vulnerable social groups? What are

the consequences of this control and social inequality? Controlling discourses accounts for more than just controlling the minds of others. For example, people who read discourses tend to trust and confirm the knowledge they've acquired is true unless it goes against their personal beliefs. And at times, the recipient may not have the knowledge that is necessary to refute the information they've consumed. Discourses act as a form of persuasion.

Dominant groups generally present their ideas in a way that they are not forcing you to adopt them, nor are they leaving room for you to challenge them. However, it is difficult to assess how much of their ideas actually effect the mind of the recipient (Van Dijk, 2003).

CDA has been widely applied to the field of media studies (Van Dijk, 2003). Many scholars have used this approach to understand the relationship between race, social identity, and the media (Phillips and Hardy, 2002). Various scholars have found stereotypical language, derogatory statements, racist images and text (Van Dijk, 2003).

The major point of CDA is to show that racism is reproduced by elite news discourses (Van Dijk, 2003). In other words, CDA aims to uncover how elite news discourses

exercise their power, promote the dominant (white American male) group, and manipulate its audience into thinking its ideologies are normal and acceptable. The consequence of stressing the so-called 'inferiority' of minorities influences their social representation (Van Dijk, 2003).

Minorities are often cast as the 'other' in elite news discourses (Van Dijk, 2003). The 'other' is perceived by the majority group as not belonging to or unlike the norm (Zingo, 1998). They are not only characterized as being different but they are considered deviant, disobedient, and threatening (Van Dijk, 2003). I have employed the following studies to demonstrate how critical discourse analysis decodes language concerning race and inequality and forms ideologies about race and our society.

Johnson, Sonnett, Dolan, Reppen, and Johnson (2010) used critical discourse analysis to examine racial inequality in terms of media coverage of Hurricane Katrina. They used Lexis Nexis to locate transcripts of television news series dated September 5-11, 2005 on *CNN*, *CBS*, *Fox News*, and *MSNBC*. Johnson et al. (2010) found racial ideological messages in 10 out of 65 news stories. The first occurrence took place on *Fox News* during an interview with Bill O'Reilly and African American publisher Eleanor

Tatum of The Amsterdam News. Tatum and O'Reilly had just begun a conversation about Kathleen Blanco, Louisiana's Governor, who ordered that any Katrina survivors participating in looting was to be shot and killed. Most of those participating in looting were predominantly black. In the conversation between O'Reilly and Tatum they said:

O'Reilly: You know, I don't care that [entertainer Kanye] West said that President Bush doesn't care about black people. I mean, so what? He says that - Bush gets hit all the time with that stuff. But I did care that he said authorities were ordered to shoot black people. That was grossly irresponsible to say . . . You don't think people were ordered to shoot black people, do you?

Tatum: I believe that people were ordered to shoot to kill.

O'Reilly: Well, looters, that's what happens.

In this statement, not only are blacks associated with crime, but O'Reilly's statement reveals that those who were looting (African Americans) were responsible for their own deaths. His statement further separates Us (white people, the state) from Them (the blacks, looters). Even though O'Reilly denies that the "shoot to kill" order

as imposed by Governor Blanco has nothing to do with blacks, ultimately he seems to compromise because many of the looters were black.

In another news program on MSNBC, program host Tucker Carlton interviews news correspondent Rita Cosby. Cosby and Carlton said:

Carlton: Well, for all the latest news coming from the Gulf Coast, let's turn now to MSNBC's Rita Cosby, who's on the scene in New Orleans, and also Joe Scarborough, who is live in Biloxi, Mississippi. Rita, we were in New Orleans Saturday night... What's the situation there tonight? Is it better?

Cosby: Tucker, I just arrived here in New Orleans just a few hours ago, and it truly looks like a ghost town. ...Trees are down everywhere. ...Many homes and businesses are boarded up. It is truly an ominous sight, and it's also a dangerous place. Some deviants are clearly walking around in certain pockets of the city, looking for trouble, looking to wreak havoc. But separate from that, there are also lots of glimmers of hope, particularly the military men and women that I've run into... They are incredible. They are determined to keep

this city safe, to keep it clean, to get the looters out, to get these— everyone out...

Carlton: Thanks, Rita. Rita Cosby right on Canal

Street, New Orleans, Louisiana. Well, Joe Scarborough in Mississippi. What's going on right now in Biloxi?

Clearly, Cosby's use of the word 'deviant' is stereotypical language. She could have used the word youth, teen or young man but instead she chose the word 'deviant' to describe the young black men walking down the streets apparently looking to 'wreak havoc.' This reinforces the stereotype of young black men looking for trouble. Black men in urban areas are often associated with danger, especially to white women, such as Cosby. Her description of the area as 'a dangerous place' continues to reveal her bias. And she seems to catch herself before releasing a racial slur in the first paragraph, last line. Johnson et al.'s (2010) study seems to reveal the media's reinforcement of blacks as crime ridden and black men in particular as troublemakers.

Carbado (1997) used critical discourse analysis to evaluate the O.J. Simpson trial for racial and gender stereotypes. Carbado (1997) argued that Simpson was portrayed as a racial victim, meaning his race was often

targeted. In addition, Nicole Brown-Simpson was genderless while O.J. Simpson's gender was often emphasized. Carbado said:

Simpson represents what is black, and blackness is essentialized to represent who and what he is. He became the black race and a symbol for racial injustice. In this context, black people view Simpson as another black man being put down by the system, or another famous black man being put down by the system (Carbado, 1997, p. 11).

Simpson was persecuted because of or despite his class. Like Michael Jackson, who was accused of child molestation, and Mike Tyson, who was accused and convicted of rape, Simpson was targeted specifically, perhaps by the media, the police, or both because he was an economically successful black man. (Carbado, 1997, p. 11).

Carbado (1997) asserts that the expressions "another black man being put down by the system" reinforces the stereotype of the historical struggle between black men and law enforcement and is also sexist because it's not a statement against black women being persecuted by enforcement but a statement concerning black men.

Also, Nicole Brown-Simpson was often portrayed as the innocent victim, while Carbado (1997) asserts that very few media sources spoke about her "wild side" and late night partying, multiple sex partners and consistent drug usage. Instead, America sought to keep her private life covert and protect her against her sexually aggressive and abusive black husband. Gates (1997) also included some reactions from the black community concerning the O. J. Simpson trial in his book, *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Man*. Erroll McDonald, executive editor at Pantheon, for example, offers his insight concerning Simpson and sexual racial politics. He said:

People forget that less than a century ago, black men were routinely lynched for merely glancing at a white woman or having been thought to have glanced at a white woman. Now we have come to point in our history where a black man could, potentially, have murdered a white woman and thrown in a white man to boot—and got off. So the country has become far more complex in its discussion of race (Gates, 1997, p. 109).

In summary, this review of critical discourse analysis studies demonstrates how the media produces racism and inequality throughout elite news discourses. It also

demonstrates how the media confirms racial stereotypes about people of color. The next section of this chapter is the methods section, which goes into great detail about how I will use critical discourse analysis to demonstrate how the media produces racial stereotypes and ideologies.

Data Collection

As I reiterate, there are different approaches to discourse analysis (conversational analysis, social semiotics), but I am focusing on critical discourse analysis as an approach to uncover ideologies. In using critical discourse analysis as a tool, this study reviewed semantic content, which is the structure of words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs within news discourse (Van Dijk, 1985).

Of Van Dijk's (1985) semantic elements of discourse, this study relied on the following to uncover stereotypes: Rhetoric strategies such as metaphors used to refer to specific racial groups and expression of certain words to constitute ingroups and outgroups like "us" and "them;" lexicalization strategies such as assigning distinct traits to specific racial groups and associating them negative concepts like criminality, animality and victimization;

As for this study, I collected news articles featuring the Henry L. Gates arrest from a number of elite news discourses including: *New York Times Online*, *Wall Street Journal Online*, *Boston Globe Online*, and *USA Today Online* between July 15, 2009 and October 15, 2010. The publications were selected based on their region, high readership figures, distribution and elite audiences. The dates were selected for the purpose of collecting a rich sample. Although the arrest occurred in July 2009, it made such an impact that it received coverage beyond October 2010.

I assessed Gates' "image," and "stereotypical content" by searching for keywords and phrases that connoted specific ideologies about race and social class. For example, earlier it was mentioned that Johnson et al. (2010) found that *Fox News* Anchor Rita Cosby used the word 'deviant' to describe a young black man walking down the streets of New Orleans. She also described black men as looking to 'wreak havoc.' her choice of terms that appeared in the report reinforced the stereotype of young black men looking for trouble and black men in urban areas being associated with danger. This study will use this same

technique to uncover Gates' image in the news as well as any stereotypes that were presented against him.

In addition, I explained the meaning of keywords and phrases that appeared in the online news articles. My assessments were derived from scholarly research about race. For example, in the King review, Officer Powell confirmed in court that he felt King's behavior during the confrontation was considered "animalistic." The term animalistic has often been associated with black persons. Historically, blacks have had to prove their humanity to whites. Blacks were considered less evolved (Nott & Robins, 1911). Similar to this, I defined keywords or phrases that reinforce stereotypes against Gates as a black man.

Text and Unit of Analysis

As noted, the sample texts used for this analysis originated in several online issues of the *Boston Globe*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today*. The unit of analysis were the individual articles. A hundred articles were analyzed. *Boston Globe*, based in Boston, Massachusetts, is a daily publication that is circulated throughout Massachusetts and the rest of New England (<http://www.bostonglobe.com/advertiser/newspapers/audience/>

[default.aspx?id=12726](#)). *The Boston Globe* has a daily circulation of 313,395 and a readership of 1.84 million.

The Boston Globe covers local, statewide, and national news. *The New York Times*, based in New York, is a daily publication that is distributed nationwide

(<http://nytimes.whsites.net/mediakit/>). The average distribution is 1,039,031 Monday through Friday. *The New York Times* is the largest daily paper in the U.S., followed by the *Los Angeles Times*.

Wall Street Journal, based in New York, is published six days a week covering local and international business news(<http://wsjmediakit.com/>). The publication has a readership of 1,063,000. *USA Today*, based in McLean, Virginia, is a daily publication that is circulated internationally

(www.usatoday.com/marketing/media_kit/usat/brand.html). The publication has a circulation of 2.3 million and a readership of 3.6 million. *USA Today* covers news from across the board including the United States, Canada, Asia, Australia, Europe, Africa, and Latin America.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Findings

In this section, I will use the Critical Race Theory storytelling method to answer the following questions: (1) How is race constructed in the selected publications? (2) Do the selected texts present stereotypical content related to Gates as a black American (*New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Boston Globe*, and *USA Today*)? (3) If so, what types of stereotypes are reinforced?

Stereotypes

In a review of the 2009 incident entitled "911 Tape Raises Questions in Gates Case," *New York Times* reported a detailed account of the day in question (Goodnough, 2009). The article reads, "Six to eight seconds into their chance encounter last year, a Cambridge, Mass., police sergeant and a black Harvard professor became hardened adversaries." This statement reaffirms the stereotype of Negroes and their historical struggle with law enforcement officers. This stereotype is typical of Gates' literature and Hall's (1989) cultural studies.

Gates speaks of this struggle in his book *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Man*. In this work, he speaks extensively on the fact of "very few black men having minimal encounters with the law enforcement (Gates, 1997, p. 109)." Instead, detainment statistics are so high in the black community that even white people are suspicious about the way police officers treat African American citizens (Walker, 2003). This stereotype is also reflective of Hall's (1989) theory, because it demonstrates the media's consistency in dividing the society into US and THEM, black and white, light and dark, civilized and primitive.

The article then shifts the reader's attention to a witness, Gates' neighbor Lucia Whalen. Whalen opens up her side of the story by denying the accuracy of the police report generated by Officer Crowley. Apparently, the police report was exceedingly different from Whalen's account of the incident via telephone. On the day in question, Whalen confesses, she called 9-1-1 because she saw "the backs of two men outside Gates' house;" however, she says she did not identify their race! According to the police report, Crowley claimed that Whalen said she observed what appeared to be "two black males with backpacks on the front porch" of the house.

Whalen's lawyer Wendy Murphy steps in and counters the claim by saying her client had no formal conversation with Sergeant Crowley. Murphy says, "The only interaction between Whalen and Crowley occurred at the scene of the incident when she gestured to him and said she was the 9-1-1 caller and he told her to stay where she was (Goodnough, 2009, p. 1)." Further, Murphy says, "Another officer asked for her identification, but no officer interviewed her at the scene. Whalen stayed about five minutes and then left."

Why did Officer Crowley even mention race in his report? He didn't hear it from Whalen, so where did that come from? Hall (1997) has speculated that we as society members have an assumption about race. We already know what to expect, so to speak. This is because of the limited characteristics we assign to groups, originally disbursed to us through the media. On a variety of levels, this report reveals the practice of racial profiling, or generalizing behaviors associated with social groups based on race.

The article goes on to say that Cambridge police released the official 9-1-1 call and police radio transmission involved in the case. Further details of the 9-1-1 call dictated that Officer Crowley said, "Professor

Gates is being uncooperative and to keep the cars coming." This mirrors the Rodney King tragedy. Since when does it take four police men to control one man with a walking cane? Is he an animal or a beast?

In summary, the report said, "Whalen, who works in the Cambridge neighborhood, was on her way to lunch when she saw two men with suitcases in what appeared to be a break-in." Murphy further argued that Whalen called 9-1-1 and reported the incident but didn't mention race because the men had their backs toward her. When the 9-1-1 dispatcher questioned her about the race, Whalen said she didn't want to speculate but she said one of them might have been Hispanic. So, not only is Gates being profiled as an African American, but now Whalen is participating by associating Hispanics and burglary crimes.

According to Walker (2003), The American law enforcement system relies on racial identity as a major descriptor in crime situations (the law enforcement system defends it and denies that it is a form of racial profiling). However, the negative result of this practice is the acceptance of discrimination against racial groups. Discrimination results in the fear and alienation of certain racial groups. Additionally, this doesn't help the

poor relationship that exists between minority groups and law enforcement members (2003).

In a *New York Times* article, Joan Vennochi (2009) opens with a comparable situation related to the Gates incident. She delivers the alleged facts regarding the Gates arrest and then she compares and contrasts his arrest with other local arrests. She references the arrest of a 57-year-old white businesswoman from Wellesley, Massachusetts, who was parked illegally at the Logan International Airport. When she was asked to move to her car, she refused and then sped off, hitting the arresting officer with her side mirror. After being charged with assault and battery with a dangerous weapon, she got off with 200 hours of community service.

Similarly, Vennochi tells how former WHDH-TV general manager Randi Goldklank, a white woman, went on an alcohol and prescription drug binge and terrorized Logan Airport. She was charged and taken into custody. Gates, on the other hand, had no physical contact with the arresting officer, nor was he engaged in an alcohol or drug abuse scene. He allegedly shouted at Officer Crowley, but he was in his own home. What's wrong with Vennochi's picture?

Further, another article in the *New York Times* by Wilson and Moore (2009) entitled "As Officers Face Heated Words, Their Tactics Vary" summarizes various reactions to the Gates arrest from police officers across the nation. A Los Angeles police officer who served LAPD for 25 years said taking verbal abuse from citizens is a normal practice. He said if an officer doesn't have tough skin, he or she should not be a police officer. He said he recently confronted a woman who was walking in the middle of the street and when he asked her to move out of street traffic she refused and became loud-mouthed, using a grip of cuss words and ethnic connotations. He said he wrote her a ticket and went on his way.

New York Senator Eric Adams, a retired police captain echoed by saying, "If it's their house, they're allowed to call you all sorts of names. A man's house is his castle. If they're in the street, and they don't listen to the officer's warning you can lock them up at this time (p.2)." Michael J. Palladina, president of the Detectives Endowment Association in New York, said, "We pay officers to risk their lives every day. We're taught that officers should have a thicker skin and be a little immune to some comments (p.1)."

In Atlanta, Officer M. Tate said he was trained to keep calm over name-calling. The person in question is only worthy of arrest, if he or she has committed a crime. Other than that, the police officer has no business arresting that individual. A detective in Queens, New York, said:

"If you locked everybody up that was technically disorderly...you've got to know which battles to fight. If this guy is causing commotion, there's a scene, you look for the level headed person who's a friend of his. Say, 'Look, we're out here cleaning up you block.' When you leave, they're going to talk to him (p.3)."

Reflecting on Ron Weitzer's (2000) notes, this is another example of African Americans receiving harsher and unnecessary treatment from police officers. Weitzer concluded in his study of police treatment among black and white individuals from neighboring areas in Washington DC, that race is a determining factor in how police officers treat individuals and that blacks are treated far worse than whites regardless of class position. Seven out of ten whites believed this statement to be true. It was no less for black respondents.

In a *USA Today* article entitled "In a switch, police invite scrutiny of racial profiling" by Maloney (2009), a racial profiling researcher commented on the Gates arrest. "Law enforcement's willingness to confront issues of race represents a huge shift in modern policing," said Church Wexler from the Police Executive Research Forum. Further, Wexler said, "I think you would be hard-pressed to find another institution in America more challenged by race than police (p.1)."

As a researcher, Wexler collects data and reports statistics concerning racial encounters and the law enforcement system. He has found that Hispanics were disproportionately arrested for public intoxication in the City of San Jose. Fifty-seven percent of the arrests were Hispanic but San Jose's Hispanic population is only 32 percent. In a 2008 city audit, Wexler found that blacks were disproportionately involved in stun gun attacks.

Following Gates' release, he immediately addressed the public and requested an apology from Officer Crowley. In a *USA Today* (2009b) article, Officer Crowley declared he would not apologize for his actions toward Gates. He said he was disappointed by the national debate of the incident and claimed that he did his job and followed proper

procedures in arresting Gates for what he interpreted as disorderly conduct. Similarly, the police officers who had handled Rodney King said they were doing their job too, acting in self defense because King was too aggressive and resistant (Since when does four against one qualify for self defense?)

Officer Crowley did however, express regret. He said, "I apologize, I wasn't aware of who he was." Translation: I didn't know Gates was a preeminent scholar. I thought he was a 'regular' black guy. Crowley further said, 'I am still just amazed that somebody of his level of intelligence would stoop to such a level, berate me, accuse me of being a racist, of racial profiling (*USA Today*, 2009b, p. 1)." At this point Crowley demonstrates how to talk maliciously about Gates as a black man without sounding like a racist.

Upon hearing the news about Gates' arrest, President Obama commented on the situation by saying the Cambridge Police Officers "acted stupidly." His remark appeared in *New York Times*' "Obama wades into a volatile racial issue" by Seelye (2009). The comment received a substantial amount of media attention, causing dissension between him and the Cambridge Police Department. As a side note, I think it's

worth questioning, why his remark received so much opposition and crazed media attention (After all, wasn't he just calling it as he saw it)? If Obama were the typical image of a (white) American president, would it have mattered so much? In response to the opposition against his comment, President Obama said:

I think it's fair to say, number one, any of us would be pretty angry. Number two, that the Cambridge police acted stupidly in arresting somebody when there was already proof that they were in their own home. And number three, what I think we know separate and apart from this incident is that there is a long history in this country of African Americans and Latinos being stopped by law enforcement disproportionately, and that's just a fact (p. 1).

Despite President Obama's comments, Officer Crowley continued to defend his position. In another *New York Times* article entitled "Officer defends arrest of Harvard professor", Robbins (2009) explains how Crowley appeared on WBZ-AM radio and summarized the event and claimed Professor Gates showed him his Harvard ID but didn't show his driver's license. He said, "That would have been helpful (p. 1)." However, Gates said in his interview that he

showed Officer Crowley his Massachusetts driver's license along with his Harvard ID. Gates said, "He asked me if I could prove I was a Harvard professor. I thought that was unusual (p. 2)." This statement confirms the stereotype of blacks having to constantly 'prove' themselves to white folks. It also suggests that blacks don't hold good jobs (Button, Rienzo, and Croucher, 2009). Why else would Professor Gates have to 'prove' himself?

Crowley continues to say that he warned Professor Gates to lower his voice and to calm down. Black people are just so rude and loud-mouthed (Button et al., 2009)! Sound familiar? During the radio interview, Crowley recalled a time in the past when he tried to revive the body of African American basketball star Reggie Lewis with CPR after he fell out and collapsed over a heart failure in 1993. By the way, he did not successfully revive him. What is Crowley's strategy in recounting an age-old situation involving the life of another African American public figure? Perhaps he's trying to soften the reader's impression of him by pulling the 'I'm not a racist. I assure you, some of my best friends are black' card (Harker, 2002).

Professor Gates had initially said in this *New York Times* story that he believed Crowley harassed him because he couldn't conceive that he (a black man) could live in such an upscale house. This statement confirms the stereotype that black people do not live in predominantly white neighborhoods (Button et al., 2009). According to Crowley, he said he came by to investigate a possible break-in and he said Gates responded, "Why, because I'm a black man in America?" and accused him of being a racist. This statement confirms the results that Bell-Jordan (2008) found in her study, "You only see racism because you're looking for it." This provides an example of how elite news discourses exercise their power and manipulate their audiences into thinking racism doesn't exist or that African Americans use discrimination as a means of getting out of everything.

Many of the news reports vary in how they detail the Gates arrest. For example, a *USA Today* (2009a) article titled "Scholar's arrest raises racism questions" speaks of the incident completely contrarily to what Gates confessed during his CNN interview with Soledad O'Brian. The article describes the situation in this way:

Police say he refused to come outside to speak with an officer, who told him he was investigating a report of a break-in. "Why, because I'm a black man in America?" Gates said, according to a police report written by Sgt. James Crowley (p. 1).

In his CNN interview with Soledad, Gates said when Officer Crowley followed him into his house, he showed him his ID and demanded his name and badge number. Officer Crowley was silent and according to Gates he was "very upset" and didn't respond to him. At that point, Gates asked him "why are you not responding to me? Is it because you are white police officer and I am a black man?"

The *USA Today* article goes on to say Crowley said, "Gates continued to yell at me, accusing me of racial bias and continued to tell me that I had not heard the last of him." He also said Gates talked about his mama. In a follow up interview with the *Wall Street Journal*, Gates denied making any references to Crowley's mother (Hechinger & Levitz, 2009).

Hall (1997) would have something to say about this exaggeration of Gates' alleged behavior. It shows how the media takes the representation of a person and a situation, and distorts its meaning or offers its preferred view. It's

all a part of Hall's (1997) theory that the media represents people and situations in such a way that tries very hard to 'fix' meaning. Ultimately, the media is trying to tell us 'this is how you should understand the situation to be.'

In a number of the articles, Gates is characterized as one who "exhibited loud and tumultuous behavior." In a *Boston Globe* article, Crowley described him as "belligerent" and "uncooperative." These images reinforce the stereotype of black male aggression. This particular stereotype of black male aggression results from higher rates of black imprisonment (Thomas, 2007). The public generally view African American men as aggressive because they go to jail more often than any other race. Similarly, black men beyond the slavery period were characterized by white men as "black beasts." This image caused so much fear within the white culture that lynching became a regular practice (Leiter, 2010, p. 3).

Although Gates is often portrayed as loud, belligerent, and defiant, we do not once encounter an in-depth descriptions of Officer Crowley's behavior or character portrayal. His display is virtually invisible. This is similar to Carbado's (1997) results when he found

that O.J. Simpson was heavily portrayed in media as sexually aggressive and abusive, while very few media sources spoke about Nicole Simpson's "wild side." Officer Crowley's lack of characterization also fall in line with critical race theory that suggests that elite news discourses produce racial inequality and ultimately dictate how race functions in society.

Jan (2009b) reported that the Gates incident is one of many racial profiling cases in Cambridge, according to accounts by other black professors. In another situation, Allen Counter, a professor of neuroscience at Harvard, was released by Harvard police officers in 2004 after being pulled over and mistakenly accused of being a robbery suspect. In a *New York Times* article entitled "Professor's arrest tests beliefs on racial progress," Ralph Medley, a retired professor of Philosophy and English, recalls the day that he was arrested on his own property (Saulny & Brown, 2009). The article said, "Like countless other blacks around the country, Mr. Medley was revisiting his encounters with the police as a national discussion about race and law enforcement (Saulny & Brown, 2009, p. 1)." By analyzing that statement alone, I can confirm the press is

substantiating the stereotype of the black male as guilty until proven innocent.

Continuing with the story, Medley said he was doing some repair work for his tenant when he was arrested. A 'concerned' neighbor called the police department because they saw a 'suspicious character.' He said the police showed up and frisked him. He also said this was not the first time he was mistakenly detained at his own property. As indirectly conveyed through this statement, blackness equals powerlessness and black men in America are generally suspicious.

In the same *New York Times* article, Wayne Martin, an official at the Atlanta Housing Authority said, "It seems to me that Dr. Gates was simply arrested for being upset, and he was arrested for being upset because he's a black man (p. 2)." Martin said he changed his Facebook status to: "Wayne Martin is wondering when it became illegal to be angry at a law enforcement official." Indeed, Martin's statement reflects the stereotype that black men are treated more harshly due to discrimination.

After reviewing the Gates arrest throughout popular media, Al Vivian (same *New York Times* article), who is a diversity consultant in Atlanta, also shared his police

encounter. He said he was wrongfully pulled over by a policeman but survived confrontation by obeying certain "unwritten codes." Vivian said Gates did not follow those codes. Vivian said the number one rule to surviving racial profiling incidents is to exercise quiet politeness followed by frequent use of the word "sir." Yeah, and I guess Gates could follow that up with "Yes'm, whatever you say, master."

In a *Boston Globe* article by Jan (2009a), Gates' colleagues echoed the same information, "This run-in proves that even in a liberal enclave like Harvard Square, even with someone of Gates' accomplishments, a black man is a suspect before he is a resident." This goes back to Gates' *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Man* when he declares that black men are more inclined to be sent to jail than to be sent to college and that black men are often associated with criminology.

Rev. Al Sharpton described the Gates arrest in a *USA Today* (2009a) article entitled "Scholar's arrest raises racism questions" as "indicative of a best police abuse of power or at worst the highest example of racial profiling I have seen. "I've heard of driving while black and even shopping while black but now even going to your own home

while black is a new low in police community affairs (p. 2)." Cambridge's long history of racial conflict began in the 1970s when the court system ordered the desegregation of the public transportation system. This led to whites throwing rocks and bricks at buses carrying black passengers (Johnson, Gomez, & Bello, 2009).

In a New York Times article entitled "Race matters," National NAACP president Ben Jealous described the arrest as a form of racial profiling (Solomon, 2009). Jealous said, "It's hard to be in your house, told you're a burglary suspect and then when you are no longer a suspect, told you are the problem." This is a strong statement made by the National NAACP president. His statement suggests that Gates would have ended up as the victim no the matter circumstance. The notion of African Americans involved in crime as the perpetrator and the victim has been widely studied (DeLisi, Hewitt, & Regoli, 2009; Potter, 2003).

Some weeks after the arrest, media frenzy began to rise again as reporters found out that a local police officer was involved in derogatory email scandal. In an article from the *Boston Globe* (2009), Boston police officer Justin Barrett was ultimately fired for a racist email he distributed describing Gates as a "banana-eating jungle

monkey." To address the definition of the phrase, I will refer to some studies that have attempted to define it.

The term monkey traditionally dehumanizes blacks and associates their physical features with primates such as apes, baboons, porch monkeys, jungle bunnies, and tree swingers (Scott, 2007). It is also used to refer to blacks as ninnies or simpletons (Herbst, 1997). The term "jungle" symbolizes a wild native, savage or jungle cannibal. Ultimately, it suggests that blacks are inferior to whites (Ukadike, 1994). The term "banana" also connotes stupidity, worthlessness or simplicity (Green, 2005).

Once the email was discovered, Barrett was placed on paid administrative leave beginning July 2009. Following a disciplinary hearing in January 2010, Police Commissioner Edward Davis officially terminated Barrett from the force in February 2010. Barrett later filed a suit against the City of Boston claiming that his civil rights were violated.

Even though the Gates arrest occurred in July 2009, it continued to be a national debate for a year and a half. In another *Boston Globe* (2010), the article recalls the Gates incident that occurred one year prior. He describes the incident as "the arrest that sparked the hullabaloo

happened one year ago today." The term "hullabaloo" is defined as a noise or uproar. It takes us back to the 1965 NBC television show called "*Hullabaloo*."

"*Hullabaloo*" was a rock n roll show that featured a variety of recording artists such as Dionne Warwick, The Supremes, The Marvelettes, The Rolling Stones and Sonny & Cher (Fearn-Banks, 2006). The (multi-racial) "*Hullabaloo*" dancers also performed regularly. "*Hullabaloo*" featured a mixture of prominent (black and white American) hosts every week. The show only lasted for two seasons due to its lack of high television ratings.

"*Hullabaloo*" was interesting because it integrated races. During the '40s and '60s, music variety television shows were widespread but segregated, such as Don Cornelius' "*Soul Train*" and Don Kirshner's "*Rock Concert*" (Fearn-Banks, 2006).

Along with the national debate, the state of Massachusetts made a considerable effort to address the Gates arrest. In response, the state of Massachusetts formed a twelve-member committee to analyze the Gates situation. In an article by Valencia (2010) titled "Sergeant, Gates both to blame, report says" from the *Boston Globe*, she reported the results of a report

generated by the committee comprised of race relations and conflict resolution experts. The twelve-member committee spent seven months interviewing and collecting data from the witnesses involved in the Gates incident. The report indicated that both Gates and Crowley were at fault. They both had chances to lower the tension but chose a different path. Surprisingly, there was no mention of race throughout the entire report.

Criticism of the report came from Cambridge City Council members Leland Cheung and Kenneth Reeves (who is black) in a Boston Globe report titled "Reports on Gate's arrest renews anger" by Guilfoil (2010). Cheung said, "Frankly, I thought the report was trying too hard to convince us that we should all join hands and have a 'Kumbaya' moment, instead of really taking the bold steps to address something that was traumatic to a lot of people (Guilfoil, 2010, p. 1)." Reeves said:

"I don't know how they could discuss this incident and not mention race. The community is also very concerned about the First Amendment, because they're Americans and they don't believe that people can't come into their homes and arrest them for no particular reason. Many of my constituents aren't even particularly

interested in professor Gates, because he has more resources and clout than they do. They just want to know, going forward: Can I sit on my front steps? Is that OK (Guilfoil, 2010, p. 1)?"

In response to the report, Crowley said, "I certainly don't expect anyone to fully understand the dynamics of the encounter when they weren't there, but I was pleased that the committee took time to speak with me and give my account of the arrest. No one that knows me thought that the arrest was based on race in any way (Guilfoil, 2010, p. 1)."

Crowley's immediate denial of racial implications in the arrest and the committee's negligence in not incorporating race in the final report reinforces the typical pattern of white American denial. Whites tend to have a deep denial of racism and its existence. Collecting evidence to support the claim is often difficult. However, inevitably, people make assumptions that are influenced by a racially-challenged society; so to refuse to admit that is complete denial (Harker, 2002).

The situation between Gates and Officer Crowley began to cool down once President Obama intervened. He graciously offered to host Officer Crowley and Professor Gates at the

White House for a drink or what media identified as a 'beer summit.' Crowley and Professor Gates accepted the invitation. Gates went on record to say that he was determined to make this "a teachable moment." The Crowley and Gates families were also invited to attend the "Brew-Ha-Ha" event at the White House. The families went on a tour of the White House as President Obama and Vice President Joe Biden met with the two men. During the meeting, the two men discussed how they 'agree to disagree;' they also talked about how they could move on from the event. The meeting between Gates, Crowley, Obama and Biden was deemed a success. Later, Gates and Crowley scheduled a follow up meeting during their own time at a local pub in Cambridge.

In summary, the types of racial stereotypes that were enforced include: the stereotype of blacks and their historical struggle with law enforcement officers, the assumption that blacks are heavily associated with crime, and the stereotype that blacks don't hold good jobs or live in predominantly white neighborhoods, the stereotype of black male aggression, the notion of blackness as equivalent to powerlessness and distrust, the image of blacks as generally rude and loud-mouthed, the assumption

that blacks use discrimination as an excuse for anything, and the comparison between blacks, monkeys and lack of civilization.

Construction of Race

In order to examine the construction of race in the selected news sources, I asked myself what have I learned about race? Throughout the articles, I have noticed a re-occurring pattern, Black vs. White and Hispanic vs. White. This comparison is apparent in several ways, such as the technique of using race cues to refer to the individuals involved in the situation. For example, a number of times, Officer Crowley was acknowledged as the "white police sergeant" or the "white police officer" and Gates as "the black scholar" denoting separation between the two men.

This was also found throughout coverage of the Rodney King beat down. King was often referred to as the "black motorist" and the police officers were known as the "four white Los Angeles police officers." Some articles also use phrases to indicate tension between the groups such as how "a Cambridge, Mass., police sergeant and a black Harvard professor became hardened adversaries." This pattern is also recognized by Hall's theory (1989). As I mentioned before, the media separates the haves from the have nots,

blacks and whites, the civilized and uncivilized.

Additionally, polls on the incident reveal how white and black viewers have totally different perceptions of the incidents. In a *Wall Street Journal* article titled "Teachable moment observed with beer," Williamson and Hechinger (2009) reported results of a poll that stated thirty percent of African American audiences blamed Officer Crowley for Gates' arrest and thirty-two percent of the white audiences believed Gates was at fault. Additionally, many of the African American commentators perceived the incident as a racial profiling issue while many of the White commentators felt Officer Crowley was just doing his job (which is odd because seven out of ten whites believe blacks are treated more harshly by police officers). For example, in a CNN interview, CNN correspondent Richelle Carey interviewed African American scholars James Petersen from Bucknell University and Boyce Watkins from Syracuse University and former police detective Steve Kardian on the Gates arrest (CNNb, 2009).

Petersen spoke very strongly against the arrest of Henry Gates while former police detective Steve Kardian defended the actions of Crowley. CNN Correspondent Carey asked Kardian at what point would an officer have the right

to arrest someone in their own home? Kardian said, "Once there was difficulty in dealing with Mr. Gates. And Seargent Crowley warned him that his behavior was out of order, there comes a point in a police officer's timing during a situation like this where he makes the decision to effect the arrest." In response Petersen said,

I can't believe we're going to try and have this conversation as if black people aren't racially profiled on a regular basis. His response is contingent on that history, and the kind of behavior that we've seen in the past from certain police departments. Not to excuse his behavior, but let's keep it in context. I mean Officer Crowley, if as Professor Watkins is saying, 'Officer Crowley made a discretionary decision.' I think he made the wrong decision in this particular case. If he's supposed to be such a well received and well respected officer I would want officers of the law to make better decisions (CNNb, 2009).

It is not by accident that the majority of the white commentators opined that Sergeant Crowley was just 'doing his job.' According to cultural studies theory, Hall believes that the role of the media is to convince their

audiences that they share the same views of those who have the power. According to Hall, the media produces a biased reality that serves the dominant group, which is, in this case and most every case, white Americans (Griffin, 2006).

It is therefore the media's role to convince audiences that Gates overreacted, Gates was crabby that day, his emotions got the better of him, Obama shouldn't have said the Cambridge Police Officer acted stupidly, Sergeant Crowley is a genuine and nice man, he was just doing his job, Crowley isn't a racist, in fact he's a racial profiling expert and he tried to save a black guy once before, race wasn't an issue in this case, and racism doesn't even exist for that matter.

I have also learned that race can have an enormous impact on how a person is viewed by society and how others treat that person. Gates is definitely portrayed as a 'typical' black male. Not the good kind of black either, but rather the 'hood negro.' The articles identify him as a leading scholar of African American studies but he is characterized as tumultuous, berating, loud, angry, disorderly, threatening, and too black to live in a white neighborhood or hold a decent job. Gates was repeatedly

referenced for 'playing the race card' when in confrontation with Officer Crowley.

It appears the sample news discourses are insinuating that he got carried away and was looking for a reason to call Officer Crowley a racist but had nothing to support his argument. Further, he was using race as an excuse to get out of the situation. In a *Wall Street Journal* article titled "Two unlikely protagonists in a racial confrontation," Evelyn Higginbotham, a colleague of Gates, commented on his character portrayal by saying, "He's a very easy-going person. Although he's an intense scholar, he's not one to be quickly offended so the image of him being portrayed is not one that I know or that his faculty knows (Hechinger & Levitz, 2009, p. 1)."

There's vulnerability that's attached to a person of color in America regardless of education and class. Although every black male featured in the articles had a professional background (black professors, police officers), the black male image was consistently portrayed as suspicious, defiant, powerless, crime-ridden, ignorant, and unfortunate while the white male image was portrayed as having all the power. These findings are consistent with critical race theory, which suggests that discourse

continues to create hierarchies - male over female, rich over poor, whites over blacks (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Black men experience trauma from all sides of the scale. They are disproportionally caught driving while black, shopping while black, and even standing while black! Campbell (2000) describes 'standing while black' as a situation where a black man is passed up by a taxi driver in urban cities and streets. Even if you walk with a cane (such as Henry Gates) you are subject to harassment and abuse. No matter how non-threatening a black man appears to be, he is still vulnerable.

There appears to be no deviation in this sample of elite news stories from white power and white domination because the sample reinforces ideological propositions of white dominance and black powerlessness. In different examples, Gates is dehumanized by comparing him to all sorts of crawling or swinging life form. And the fact that Crowley won't even offer an apology to the "black man" nor take accountability, is unfortunate and resembles facets of white supremacy. It just shows that Crowley holds all the power.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

My first research question was (1) How is race constructed in the selected publications (*New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Boston Globe*, and *USA Today*)? Overall, I argue that white hegemony is promoted throughout the texts. I found that this because Officer Crowley is portrayed as the major source of power and Gates as the victim of Crowley's power. Crowley was accused of abusing his "power." As Gates described it, "I realized how vulnerable all black men are, how vulnerable all people of color are and all poor people to capricious forces like a rogue policeman (CNN, 2009a)." Gates even admits to being vulnerable to Officer Crowley.

Additionally, the coverage shows that the media continues to construct major differences between races that often lead to major tension between the groups. Some of the patterns I mentioned were White vs. Black and White vs. Hispanic patterns. These patterns constitute in-groups and out-groups. It appears that people of color are considered the out-groups. They are not accepted as they are. They are

crime-ridden. According to media, these racial groups initiate all the crimes. White people are not targeted for committing crimes at these rates.

According to the white interviewees featured in the articles, racism doesn't even exist. Racism is not even relevant to the Gate's arrest. Yet racism is a consequence of the differences that exist between races, so how does it not exist? In the practice of racism, people tend to rank themselves superior to other races according to those differences that exist. Officer Crowley knew he was superior to Gates. He knew Gates was vulnerable. Officer Crowley had the power to arrest him for whatever reason.

Lastly, society constructs race in such a way that race can determine how others treat and respond to you. I believe the news articles reflect this notion. Obviously, there's vulnerability that's attached to people of color in America regardless of education and class. Throughout the articles and one television news text, I read about the disproportional treatment between black and Hispanic men in relation to white men. They are disproportionally portrayed in a number of crime situations.

My second research question is (2) Do the selected texts present stereotypical content related to Gates as a

black American? Yes, and the most obvious example was featured in the *Boston Globe* when Officer Barrett was fired over a racist email that described Gates as a "banana eating jungle monkey." Gates was also racially profiled because Gates' neighbor claimed she didn't even mention race when she telephoned the police about a possible break-in. She couldn't even describe the appearance of the "suspects" because they had their backs to her. Although, at one point she makes an assumption that one of the men was Hispanic. However, when Officer Crowley and his team showed up to the house, Officer Crowley said he was investigating a possible break-in by two black men with backpacks.

Moreover, many of the articles in-directly indicated that Gates was treated harshly compared to his white counterparts who actually committed real crimes. For example, earlier I mentioned the *New York Times* article that talked about the 57-year-old white businesswoman from Wellesley, Massachusetts who was parked illegally at the Logan International Airport, refused to move, and when she did move, sped off hitting the arresting officer with her side mirror.

Also, this article notes that former WHDH-TV general manager Randi Goldklank, a white woman, went on an alcohol and prescription drug binge and terrorized Logan Airport. She was charged and taken into custody. The article pointed out that Gates had no physical contact with the arresting officer, nor was he engaged in an alcohol or drug abuse scene but he was arrested in his own home. That indicates that Gates was treated more harshly than (white) people who actually committed crimes worthy of an arrest.

My final question was (3) if there was stereotypical content, what types of stereotypes were reinforced? Officer Barrett's comment about Gates as a "banana-eating jungle monkey" reinforced the stereotype of blacks being less human than white. Gates talks about this concept in his literature. He said, white folks have had a long racist tradition of demanding that blacks "prove" their humanity. Blacks were considered inferior and less evolved than whites.

The articles also reinforced the stereotype of African Americans and their historical struggle with law enforcement officers. In his literature, Gates argues that black men are a hundred times more likely to be sent to jail. He also argues that there are very few black men have

not encountered the abuse of a police officer. Also, I mentioned earlier that white power is reinforced because Crowley is portrayed as the one with power while Gates is portrayed as the vulnerable one.

Other stereotypes that were reinforced include: The assumption that blacks don't hold good jobs, blacks don't live in predominantly white neighborhoods, Blacks as generally rude and loud-mouthed, black male aggression, blackness as equivalent to powerlessness and distrust, and the assumption that that blacks use discrimination as an excuse for everything.

Overall, I was not pleased to find some of the results of this research. I anticipated that racial profiling would be an issue in the Gates arrest and I knew that race relations was definitely an issue in the Gates arrest. I was pleased to know that a twelve-member committee was formed in Massachusetts to attempt to analyze the Gates arrest and find solutions to resolve some of the major problems that aroused between the two men.

However, I was NOT pleased when I found out that the committee didn't even acknowledge race as an issue in the Gates arrest. I believe the first step to improving race relations in the U.S. is to establish that racism does

exist. I believe we can't attempt to fix the problem if we can't acknowledge there is a problem.

Effective listening should also be considered as an approach to improving race relations. Being open about listening to others instead of dismissing their words can have a positive impact. I believe if Officer Crowley had LISTENED, he would have not pre-judged Gates. Gates speculated that Officer Crowley presumed he was a criminal.

Another thing to consider when attempting to improve race relations is learning to control emotions. I argue that both Gates and Crowley were guilty of being quick-tempered that day. Controlling anger is easier said than done but individuals should work on improving their ability to do that. I'm not saying people should try to do it, I'm saying they *ought* to do it. Gates and Crowley shouldn't have allowed themselves to spin out of control once they were challenged. I think it's better to drop the issue before a big dispute emerges. In this case, not in every case, this situation could have been 'de-escalated.' These are some of my thoughts on improving race relations as a result of reviewing the Gates arrest in popular media.

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