

News media in the US: a contrastive study of racial representation in CNN and Fox News articles from 2020 and 2022

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Abstract

This study investigates how racial terms were used in news articles by *CNN* and *Fox News* from 2020 and 2022. It analyzes in a longitudinal and mixed method approach a corpus of 120 articles to discover any tendencies in the representation of race. Apart from some studies on race in the US and the media, the framework of this paper uses Corpus Linguistics for quantitative data, and Critical Discourse Analysis for qualitative study. The quantitative results found that racial terms about Black people had much higher frequencies than other racial items. The qualitative findings discovered plenty of violent contexts in which Black people are depicted. The results of this study show that there is an unnecessary and abundant use of racial terms about African Americans in *CNN* and *Fox News* articles which can have a negative impact on the public perception of this minority. The findings also show that these two networks of opposing ideologies have similar tendencies in the ways they represent race.

Keywords: African Americans, *CNN*, *Fox News*, Critical Discourse Analysis, Corpus Linguistics, race, racial phrases, Critical Race Theory.

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1. Introduction

Throughout the year 2020, protests against racial injustice significantly increased in the United States (US), the effects of which are still felt nowadays (HRW, 2021). This increased amount of protests could be said to have originated from years of police brutality and discrimination suffered by minorities (West, 1996; Douglas et al. 2021). In fact, in 2020 Black Lives Matter (BLM) rallied their supporters, spread awareness, and called for action against a seemingly constant oppression. (West, 1996; HRW, 2021). Although studies on race and minority representation in news media have been conducted in the past (Van Dijk, 2001; Drid, 2019; Kumah-Abiwu, 2020) the year 2020 presented drastic events, apart from COVID-19, that could be analyzed through the scopes of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) for a better understanding of social attitude towards race and minorities. This was the tragic death of George Floyd and the following Black Lives Matter protests that shook the US and many other countries of the world (HRW, 2021). Coincidentally, African Americans were the main focus of many news publications, in which evidently race was involved. This increase of news publications involving African Americans appears significant for study, as were the analysis of news about Barack Obama, or Colin Kaepernick, since they were considered trends that news networks adopted to publish heavily about people of color, sometimes even promoting stereotypes (Kumah-Abiwu, 2020).

What is more, the way news media represents racial topics is often debatable (West, 1996; Van Dijk, 2001; Douglas et al., 2021). Therefore, this paper intends to conduct a longitudinal study to show the ways in which people of color are depicted in news media. This is done with the intention of understanding how the social changes influenced by BLM in 2020 affected the American media and measure whether the progress has changed in 2022. In order to do so, this study focuses on the analysis of news articles involving race, in specific

the Black minority, from relevant news sources in the US, such as *Fox News* and *CNN* (Jurkowitz & Mitchel, 2020). It should be noted that progressive attitudes towards social changes were evidenced in both of these networks through the implementation of a stylistic change that was intended to show support for the BLM movement, that was the capitalization of the letter “B” when discussing Black people (Effelson, 2020; Flood, 2020). As to the reason behind selecting *CNN* and *Fox News* as main sources of data for the study, it is because these networks are said to be the most influential in the US (Jurkowitz & Mitchel, 2020). Furthermore, these networks are known to be of opposite bias. This is due to the fact that *Fox News* was created by a member of the Republican party seemingly in order to challenge the Democratic media of *CNN* (Williams, 1996). This suggests that the two networks were inclined in favor of their respective ideologies since their very beginnings. In addition, recently, the majority of their audiences have confirmed a distrust for the opposing network (Jurkowitz & Mitchel, 2020).

Lastly, the language analyzed in this study will be English in the US, a country that appears to have specific ideologies working and using the media as conduit for their agendas (Van Dijk, 2001). Moreover, the US is a country where the topic of race tends to be controversial (West, 1996; Brown & Harlow, 2019), which confirms the need to conduct a study on this topic. Thus, a mixed research method has been implemented in this study, since it combines a qualitative analysis, from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, and quantitative data, from a Corpus Linguistics (CL) perspective. This being a combination of approaches that has provided interesting findings in many studies (Romero-Trillo & Cheshire, 2014; Romero-Trillo & Attia, 2016). Additionally, the topic of the news that were analyzed was regarding racial matters, specifically articles about the African American minority.

1.1 Research questions and structure of the study:

RQ.1 Are there any similarities or differences between the tendencies that *CNN* and *Fox News* have to represent race in their articles?

RQ.2 Did the stylistic change made by US news networks correspond to positive tendencies to represent Black people in the media?

RQ.3 Has the stylistic change been maintained over the years?

In order to discuss the main points of this research, first, in the next section the literature about African Americans in the US, racial injustice, and race representation in news media was covered. Apart from this, CDA, CL, and some relevant studies regarding these frameworks were reviewed for the sake of explaining the theoretical approach of the present study. Then the data and methodology section briefly discusses the ways the study gathered data for the formation of a corpus and how it analyzed the data. After that, the section labeled “Results and Discussion” was divided into quantitative and qualitative analysis, each containing a discussion about the findings of the different periods gathered in the corpus of this study. Finally, the conclusion of this study summarizes the main findings and concludes the study with the answers to the research question, and suggestions on further research.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The next section includes some History regarding African Americans in the US, some background on racial struggle concerning Black people, and then theoretical approaches that

were implemented in the study, along with some reviewed studies that were useful in providing guidance for this paper.

2.1. Race in the US

In a seminal work about African American history in the US, Cornel West (1996) describes the History of Black people in a country which has repeatedly mistreated and oppressed them (West, 1996). Thus, he argues in his book *Race Matters* (1996) that African Americans suffer not only from historical restraints and unprecedented violence against them, but also their progress in the North American country has been halted several times by laws, economic and even psychological violence directed at them. He further states that this was built through centuries of oppression by White colonizers and Americans who sought to take advantage of Black and other minorities. It is said that Jim Crow laws and lynchings, or what he labels as “American terrorism”, were part of a white supremacist culture that evidently lashed out against Black people, for many reasons other than racism, such as fear or envy (West, 1996). These broad and intense hate and control mechanisms had certain lasting consequences in American society, some of which were seen over the years through the many cases of hate crimes or violence against minorities in America, for instance, Rodney King’s brutal beatings (West, 1996), or the more recent tragedies, like Breonna Taylor’s or George Floyd’s death (HRW, 2021).

Nevertheless, it is not all about race and racism in America. Indeed, West (1996) argues that much of the faults for minorities being held back in social progress is due to bureaucratic and economic differences. West (1996) attributes these disparaging inequalities to the heavy influence of capitalism and market culture in the US. In fact, he claims that the main attitude that capitalism fosters in American society is that of high individualism that

constricts and downplays public progress, often endorsing hierarchical social ladders in which any person can take advantage of others for the exchange of monetary gains (West, 1996). As a consequence of this culture, Black life has been controversially undermined and exploited (West, 1996). It is also claimed that the influx of market and drug invasion ruined many African American communities by transforming neighborhoods into hoods and slums (West, 1996). This is influence of market forces and white supremacist stereotypes about minorities also shaped and reshaped Black culture and their public image (West, 1996). As a matter of fact, as evidenced by some studies (Kosla, 2014; Carter, 2015; Drid, 2019), the influence that affected Black image has been carried out over the years up until recent times.

Furthermore, West (1996) states that another problem that African Americans face is the lack of self love and excess of self loathe. This means that their social conditions and lifestyles have been so damaged and manipulated by the people in power that there is a tendency in Black communities to regard themselves as inferior, or less worthy of the systems that mostly favor White people. Not only that, but self contempt goes along with social poverty since it holds back any efforts on the part of minorities that want to change (West, 1996). Certainly, at the time West (1996) published his book these were the increasing problems that minorities in the US had to deal with on a daily basis. Although some changes have been enacted, it can be noticed through the constant cases of hate crimes and police brutality towards minorities that more needs to be done. (HRW, 2021; Douglas et al. 2021).

In addition, Critical Race Theory (CRT) has been a key theoretical approach that provided some interesting guidance with regards to race in the US (Ford & Airhihenbuwa, 2010). CRT is a body of studies that originated in law studies and expanded to many other areas, including the social sciences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Therefore, CRT involves the study of the relationship between race and power. Then, it considers aspects such as the law, economics, History, and other aspects of society that lead to the systemic oppression and

disadvantages that certain minorities struggle with in the US (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). What is more, one of the most interesting concepts explained in CRT is the fact that “Race is a social construction, not a biological reality” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, pp. 17). This statement seems puzzling considering the ways in which race is so prevalent nowadays. Incidentally, this is due to the fact that contemporary racism and discrimination is rather subtle and rooted in ordinariness (Ford & Airhihenbuwa, 2010; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In other words, race and racism are such big influences in our communities that we have grown accustomed to them and fail to perceive them consciously. Thus we feel race and racism, on a daily basis, influencing our behavior and thoughts towards each other without us noticing it.

Lastly, it should be important to consider and clarify the fact that, for the sake of analysis and research, throughout this study the term “race” or “racial” will refer to the ethnicity of any community or person involved, and it will often be a matter of the color of a person’s skin. Thereby, certain uses of the term “Black” or “White” as skin colors, or “racial terms”, will be seen in this study. This is considering the common use of the term “race” nowadays, even though it disagrees with CRT notions of race.

2.2. Racial injustice in the US

Among the reasons why the 2020 protests by BLM took place, were the death of George Floyd and the increasing number of racial injustices suffered by minorities in the US (HRW, 2021). Unfortunately, events like the death of George Floyd are not unique in the US. As a matter of fact, almost 20 years ago the brutal beatings suffered by Rodney King also moved people into marching in social protests against police brutality and racism (West, 1996). Similarly to the outcomes of Floyd’s death, with regards to King’s suffering, West (1996)

argues that people mobilized against the ever increasing cases of inequality and unfair treatment towards African Americans, and that his beating was just another cause added to the list of mistreatment that originated during the Jim Crow segregation era and beyond. Not only that, but in 1955 another fatal event took place in which Emmet Till, a 14 year-old-boy, was lynched to death due to accusations of alleged flirting with a white woman (History, 2010). His death, controversial to this day, was yet another case in which African Americans suffered unjust and violent treatment in the US, coincidentally, by the hands of White Americans (History, 2010). Unsurprisingly, Till's death was said to have been one of the main reasons behind the mobilization against Jim Crow laws and starting point of the Civil Rights movement (History, 2010). It could be argued that these violent and unreasonable treatments of African Americans by the hands of White Americans happen continuously and that mobilization against them is often imminent due to the lack of social change in the US.

Such was the case of Floyd's death. It inspired millions of citizens to unite and march against oppression (HRW, 2021). However, some of these marches were not always successful nor peaceful, likely because of the intervention of radical and violent groups, or the depictions that the marches received in general from some news networks (HRW, 2021; Douglas et al. 2021). Certainly, it could be said that some networks made publications highlighting the devastating effects of the protests, whereas others applauded them as peaceful marches towards a more progressive American society. This could be stated considering research of protests, such as Brown and Harlow's study (2019), which concluded that anti-Black racism protests were often negatively represented and criticized by news media. What is more, these portrayals of protests against injustice are framed in negative and violent ways (Brown & Harlow, 2019), apparently harming not only the public opinion of African Americans, but also of their very efforts to combat negative stereotypes and oppression in what seems to be a vicious cycle of misrepresentation that halts societal progress. Oddly

enough, it is the media itself that is often responsible for creating negative stereotypes and shaping public opinion about African Americans (Carter, 2015; Brown & Harlow, 2019; Kumah-Abiwu, 2020). Owing to the negative public opinion of Black people, economic hardships, and their historically constant oppression by White Americans, it seems that hate and violence continues to happen in America targeted at African Americans and other minorities. In fact, one could argue that news media tend to portray African Americans in negative views that the media itself is responsible for creating and enforcing over the years. This means that news media may be considered as a problem or hurdle against the progress that African Americans are trying to achieve. Therefore, unfortunately, news media may be blamed for creating and circulating negative racial stereotypes that are halting progress (Carter, 2015; Kumah-Abiwu, 2020), progress that is key and is being misrepresented (Brown & Harlow, 2019).

Lastly, it should be noted that Carter's work (2015) and Kumah-Abiwu's research (2020), both on racial representation in the news media, evidence the pervasive lack of sensitivity towards African Americans by news creators, in other words, news media insensitivity towards minorities. Carter (2015) showed that during or after certain trials where Black victims and their killers or murderers were being convicted, some news networks deliberately published negative or stereotypical, possibly unnecessary news, relating to the dead victims. For instance, after the death of Trayvon Martin, there were several news publications in which he was depicted as a "weed smoker" or a criminal of some sort, whereas his killer went often unnamed (Carter, 2015). Such depictions also happened after the death of George Floyd, during the period of his autopsy, networks that also made negative publications about Martin, namely *Fox News* (2020), published yet again incriminatory and condescending articles that promoted Black stereotypes about the deceased victim of racial injustice.

2.3. Race and the media.

Some of the aforementioned studies (Carter, 2015; Drid, 2019; Kumah-Abiwu, 2020) support the idea that negative stereotypes of Black people have circulated news networks for years. Moreover, this constant negative depiction has made a public opinion that is certainly averse to African Americans. This claim may also be supported by research on Discourse Analysis, namely Van Dijk's research over the years (as cited in Drid, 2019) that showcases the power of the news to shape public opinions. Nonetheless, this is not to say that all the news relating to Black people are negative. In fact, during the BLM protests of 2020, many North American news networks, such as *CNN*, *Fox News*, or *The New York Times*, decided to change the way they represented race in their articles (Izadi, 2020; Coleman, 2020). In order to do so, they made the stylistic decision to capitalize the letter "B" whenever it referred to people of color. This was claimed to be an effort to show support for the BLM movement (Coleman, 2020). Yet one can not easily claim that this change has helped shape or deconstruct the negative perception of Black people. As a matter of fact, it could be stated that this seemingly progressive gesture on the part of news makers may simply be giving more attention to race, further alienating them and increasing stereotypical views by highlighting any topics related to that minority. In this case, one could hypothesize that a possible solution to stop the spread of stereotypical or negative news relating to minorities could be to avoid mentioning race or color in general when describing people. That would be done to avoid the audience's cognitive association of certain topics, such as violence or drug abuse, with a minority. It could be argued that this, instead of possibly alienating or highlighting a minority, could potentially include everyone fairly into the different topics of news articles.

Furthermore, even though research on race representations in the news media has been conducted over the years in many different fields, there are studies that suggest the need to

analyze this representation of race because of consistent tendencies in the media to portray African Americans in negative stereotypes (Kumah-Abiwu, 2020). For instance, the constant publication of articles that mainly focus on violence between people of color (Kumah-Abiwu, 2020, pp. 14). Additionally, Wilcox et al. (as cited in Kumah-Abiwu, 2020) proposed an increase in news media representation of Black people caused by factors, such as the presidency of Barack Obama, which they label as the “Obama factor”, and similarly Michelle Obama, the First Lady at the time, was yet another factor. They prove that despite some of those articles favoring the representation of Black people, there were others that were promoting some stereotypes due to a constant use of misleading headlines, passive voice, fronting and similar methods that relate people of color to violent events, among other issues. On the other hand, the killing of unarmed Black men, which incite protests and riots against injustice, also can be said to cause an increase in articles involving people of color. This was the case in 2020, the year in which the factor that increased media coverage of Black people was the death of George Floyd (Douglas et al., 2021). What is more, Wilcox et al. (as cited in Kumah, 2020) raised the possibility of these stereotypical reports of race in the US to be influencing the widening racial injustice that people of color face in the country, such as social and economic inequalities. In addition, Carter’s (2015) also shows that even though there is an effort to provide a fair representation of race in the media, some tend to be the mediums through which stereotypes are being promoted (pp. 46-48). Additionally, it could be stated that the constant publication of news that focuses on events such as death, violence, killing, murdering, drug dealing, and in general involve Black people or another minority, are not positively influencing the public opinion that a society may have towards those subjects.

Apart from this, it should be noted that not all of the publications about people of color are detrimental. That is to say, according to Kosla (2014, pp 67-68), since the 1960s there has been a continuous effort to change language in a way that focused on being more

inclusive and welcoming to those considered as foreigners or minorities, namely through Political Correctness (PC). As proved by Kosla's study (2014, pp. 88-90), language has changed significantly favoring this attitude, for instance, with the inclusion of Politically Correct terminology in the media or everyday language use. Thus, it could be said that there was an effort from social networks to embrace people of different backgrounds, and it was implemented before the 2000s. This might have been a view held in American society, yet not as realistic overall, since violent hate crimes continue to happen to this day. Nonetheless, it seems that this gradual change in language and the inclusion of PC, similarly to the BLM protests, was significant because it represented an attitude in society to improve relations with different communities and promote equality and fairness. Furthermore, all of these changes and attitudes favoring progress may also reflect the fact that language goes along with social change. Therefore, the changes in language, be it in favor of Political Correctness or the capitalization of some letters when referring to people, are not as trivial as they may seem, since they indicate an important attitude in society, one in favor of a fair and equal treatment of minorities.

2.4. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a multidisciplinary analytical approach to the study of language that focuses on the different ways that power abuse, inequality, or dominance are constituted, enforced and reproduced (van Dijk, 1993; van Dijk, 2001). These reproductions tend to be done in spoken or written forms. CDA intends a position through which the relationship between language and society can be understood (van Dijk, 2001). What is more, CDA is often aimed at opposing certain ways of oppression and negative attitudes towards any minority group that is being enacted through language (van Dijk, 1993; van Dijk, 2001).

It should be noted that CDA is merely an approach to the study of language that can also accommodate other theoretical views in order to gain a more advantageous point of analysis (van Dijk, 2001). Furthermore, the reason why CDA seems to be so effective for the study of language is because it considers that language and society should be studied together and not separately (van Dijk, 1993; van Dijk, 2001). This is to say that CDA deals with the social interactions and structures constructed through language. Therefore, CDA is often used to discuss social and political issues (van Dijk, 2001).

Moreover, within the analytical reaches of CDA there are aspects that help expose and understand public discourse, such as context, ideology, and action (van Dijk, 1997), elements that are key for the present study. With regards to context, it refers to the environment or the setting in which discourse appears, for instance the physical place and time; but other aspects, such as voice tone, attitudes, and participants, are also considered within the context of discourse (van Dijk, 1997, 10). It could be said that context is the background upon which discourse is painted. Thus, due to the fact that people need context in order to understand some fragments of discourse, it is often assumed that written text or spoken discourse are situated within some context that help us recognize and further understand language (van Dijk, 1997). With regards to ideology, it is an extensive, complex and influential aspect of discourse. It is usually the case that ideologies are formed by dominant groups or those in power, and often serve to further enhance the control or influence of some people over others (van Dijk, 1997, 20). Consequently, the influence of ideology over discourse seems to be that of a cyclical formation of ideology through the discourse of those in power, which leads to the creation of public discourse through this ideology. Therefore, it is said that the legitimacy of an ideology is chiefly defined through the discourse of those in power (van Dijk, 1997, 22). Nonetheless, ideology is not framed and only determined by those in power, since it can also be created by minorities as a rebellion towards higher powers (van Dijk, 1997). Apart from

this, ideologies are known to influence the way we regard each other, and also how we behave in society (van Dijk, 1993; van Dijk, 1997). Such is apparently the unavoidable sway that ideologies have on us, that within CDA it has been described in the principle of “ideological square” that consists of “positive self-representation and negative other-representation” (van Dijk, 1997, 33). In order to illustrate this principle we may use the news media as an example, since it is common to portray those of the same ideology in a positive view, while enhancing the negative traits of the ideological counterparts (van Dijk, 1997). This principle could be possibly taken as the cause behind racism and other types of discrimination, and not just misrepresentation. What is more, it could be argued that an ideology can be the founder of equality and fairness in a society, but it can also be the influence and reasoning behind terrorist bombings or mass shootings. That is why in CDA studies of news media or social discourse ideologies are key, since these can be uncovered by determining the way people represent, discuss, or interact with other members of society (van Dijk, 1997). In fact, as previously mentioned, many studies show that certain news editorials with right leaning ideologies tend to undermine and misrepresent minorities (Carter, 2015; Drid, 2019; Kumah-Abiwu, 2020). Lastly, with regards to action, it tends to be evident that when someone does an action that person is responsible for its effects (van Dijk, 1997, 8). Nevertheless, the actions of some people, especially in news media, are often blurred, vaguely depicted, or seem misleading due to the way news language is constructed (van Dijk, 1997). For instance, the use of passive voice or the fronting of topics may be the reason why some headlines seem controversial to us, since they do not evince a clear actor or agent behind an action (van Dijk, 1993). It should be therefore noted that whenever there is an action or a verb, there is a purpose, agent, or intention behind the action (van Dijk, 1997) that news language is not facilitating for diverse reasons. It is assumed that some news editorials tend to do it for the sake of not incriminating or blaming people, yet others may do it following their ideological

square principle, such as when they misrepresent minorities (Carter, 2015). Additionally, the study of action can also include the study of perspectives, in other words, how different meanings are perceived or conveyed depending on one's ideology, culture, or even age and gender (van Dijk, 1997). For instance, the portrayals of BLM protests in news media were diverse, some news networks considered them as positive whereas other networks represented them as violent (Douglas et al., 2021), this could be due to different perspectives or even ideologies. In addition, the matter of perspective leads to the issue of responsibility, that is who might be responsible for something, and also the fact that different perspectives on the same topic may yield different implications, interpretations, consequences or even participants (van Dijk, 1997). Again, this can be shown in the ways that BLM was represented in the media, some blamed them for causing or inciting violent riots, others praised them for their efforts towards progress and justice (Douglas et al., 2021; HRW, 2021). Evidently, news that involve minorities often show the detrimental representations that minorities receive. It could be stated that depending on their perspectives or ideologies, news networks can vaguely depict a person as they please. For this reason, it could be said that some news editorials indirectly signal things by merely ordering their headlines or texts in certain ways, as in the fronting of phrases, since this appears to indicate their interests or what matters more to them. Additionally, the perspectives that news articles may use are the ones that influence social cognition, since the information that we obtain from the news often shape our world view and opinions (van Dijk, 2001). Therefore, it is necessary to conduct CDA research on this specific issue and expose the many detrimental effects that the media has on people.

Next, it is supposed that CDA offers an objective and useful method of analysis for language in general, and also news language (Drid, 2019). Hence, considering its multidisciplinary facet, that is the fact that CDA respects and considers theories from social sciences and other fields of studies (van Dijk, 2001), CDA has been applied in combinations

with many approaches. For instance, one study in the field of social sciences (Duffy et al., 2018) offers the evaluation of tourism, by observing the different products or adverts they offer in certain areas, through the application of CDA. It was found that tourists often desire more diversity in the places they choose to visit. Thus, the use of CDA may help with the construction of proper touristic guides for those requesting a cultural and honest travel experience (Duffy et al. 2018).

Nonetheless, where CDA seems to be particularly useful is in the study of news language, such as in the study by Graver et al. (2020). In this complex study of newspaper language, some symbolic and modern ways of racism were studied in order to show how racism is pervasive in modern times and appears to be hidden or avoided by deliberately selecting different topics to discuss in the media, rather than assessing the main problem that is racism. The study also shows how discourse about racial injustice or violence is constructed in a way that is not entirely focused and tends to be undermined (Graver et al., 2020). Thus, it seems that racism in the US is a recurrent topic that some news networks indirectly acknowledge but they do not intend to address, instead they subtly avoid it. Furthermore, another study that deals with race was conducted by Phelan (2009) which discussed certain news editorials in New Zealand. The analysis of the language in those news articles show a clear tendency towards portraying a separation between the national and the Maori minority (Phelan, 2009). Moreover, this study evinces a favoritism for governmental laws and a negative representation of Maori people, certainly shaping the public perception of how politics should be received in that country and how some minorities appear to be slowing progress (Phelan, 2009). In general, these examples of the use of CDA show how the narrative constructed by news media or other outlets seem to have an impact on real world affairs. Lastly, it could be said that it was with the effective use of CDA that some of these

findings were accessible, considering that most people often overlook the impactful role of language.

2.5. Corpus Linguistics

Next, with regards to Corpus Linguistics (CL), it is often considered that CL is a popular and useful way of studying language, for instance from a historical perspective or a stylistics perspective (Gries, 2009; McIntyre, 2017). CL consists of studying and analyzing large amounts of data, often involving written or spoken text, depending on the corpus and data gathering method, assisted by an application or a website specialized in corpus research. It is not surprising that this approach to the study of language has influenced a variety of corpora studies and gained such prominence. As a matter of fact, different branches of linguistics have used CL, for instance stylistics, as shown in a presentation by McIntyre (2017) in a CL conference. In his presentation, McIntyre (2017) claims that corpora can be useful not only for the study of linguistics but also for the study of literature, for example he argues that CL can help with challenging and verifying research in literature since it can gather vast amounts of data. McIntyre (2017) also explains the importance of quantitative research and that CL is very effective in this regard.

In general terms, most CL researchers conduct their studies in similar ways, that is based on frequencies (Gries, 2009). This valuable quantitative data can be interpreted through different theoretical approaches. Moreover, in CL frequency lists, that is the repetition of certain elements throughout a corpus, for instance a keyword, or a phrase, can be used to determine the relevance of certain words. Apart from this, a corpus can also be used to determine the different contexts in which a word is being used and offer a clear structure for comparisons, such as the distributions that can be seen in the *AntConc* corpus toolkit.

Thus, studies that use CL often include data that is used to test hypotheses. An example of this can be found in Dobric's study (2018) in which he presents the hypothesis that discrimination in a society is related to the number of repetitions that some discriminatory terms receive in discourse. This means that the frequency of discriminatory terms is related to real life discrimination. In order to test his hypothesis, he uses a corpus of different European languages. Interestingly, his findings show that some countries tend to discriminate based on age, whereas other countries tend to discriminate against people with disabilities or based on gender (Dobric, 2018). What is more, the author seems to be aware of the limitations of his project. He claims that the corpus for his study must be extensive and representative of its society, since some of the languages included in his study lack an appropriate spoken corpus, a fact that is reflected in his results (Dobric, 2018). This type of limitation could be found in some studies based on CL that intend to measure language or prove hypotheses based on it (Gries, 2009). This could be due to the fact that language is often considered as a changing and evolving phenomenon, as exemplified by the news media stylistic change or with the inclusion of PC terms (Kosla, 2014; Coleman, 2020), hence why it is difficult to find a corpus that is updated with the latest changes in language.

2.6. CDA and CL

Considering the multidisciplinary aspect of CDA, it seems efficient to combine it with CL. Thus, this kind of combined study could not only be intended to measure language and test an hypothesis, but also to objectively review a corpus and show the ways in which language impacts a society. It seems that a study that uses both CDA and CL can encompass high amounts of data and analyze them to explain social or political issues, for instance Romero-Trillo and Cheshire's study (2015). Therefore, the combination of CDA and CL can

be effective in the study of news language. Actually, as shown in Romero-Trillo and Cheshire's work (2015), their study gathered printed press about the Scottish referendum of independence and implemented CL for the study of lexical frequency of certain keywords, and CDA in order to determine ideological perspectives used to define national identities. Their findings show how Scottish news media tended to use the ideological square principle in a way that framed the Scottish national struggle as positive and in favor of independence; alternatively, British editorials included a more Anglocentric view (Romero-Trillo & Cheshire, 2015).

In addition, yet another study that combined CL and CDA was done by Romero-Trillo and Attia (2016). They conducted a longitudinal study that uncovered the ideological tendencies of Arab and Western media involving the Tunisian Revolution. Interestingly, their findings showed the different topics and focus that each news media presented, for instance, Arab media tended to exclude the topic of youth or mentions them as problematic, whereas the Western media relates their struggles in the revolution (Romero-Trillo & Attia, 2016). Thereby, their findings exposed the preferences of each network, and showed their support or opposition to the revolution, and their support of religion or the people. Interestingly, there were evidences that English media and Arabic media agreed in depicting Islamist parties as terrorists (Romero-Trillo & Attia, 2016). This seems to be an example of the effects of ideology on the news, and also how taking different perspectives changes the way people view and represent the world.

2.7. Summary

To conclude this section, with regards to the social struggle and hardships that Black people have suffered in America, it could be said that it has often been acknowledged and some have

tried to fight against this disparity. Nonetheless, the pervasive effects of decades of oppression and misrepresentation can be seen daily in the US. The crude reality that minorities are exposed to can be sensed in some of the portrayals that news media deliberately publishes about them, which influence social interactions and perceptions through distinct perspectives and ideologies. But it is worth noting that many studies have exposed how these issues and ideologies influence American society, yet little has changed. Therefore, more needs to be done to keep the fight for justice and equality moving forward. That is why the aim of this study is concerned with the representation of race in North American news media. Furthermore, this study will demonstrate the effectiveness of CDA, since it is a critical approach that helps us understand social interactions and the ways language affects our perceptions, supported by the extensive data that can be managed through CL. Accordingly, in the next section the data gathering process and methodology will be discussed to explain how this study was constructed.

3. Data and Methodology

The present study involved the analysis of large amounts of data in a mixed research method. On the quantitative side, the data was collected following CL methodology inspired by some of the studies mentioned in sections 2.5. and 2.6. On the qualitative part, the data was analyzed considering the CDA literature shown in section 2.4. In addition, this study observed and compared in a longitudinal fashion the different ways in which race is depicted in North American news media, namely *CNN* and *Fox News* articles concerned with racial topics. The following subsections discuss the processes of gathering, annotation and analysis of data.

3.1. Data gathering and corpus

To begin with the process, up to 120 online news articles were collected from *Fox News* (60) and *CNN* (60) assisted by their own websites, that is [foxnews.com](https://www.foxnews.com) and [cnn.com](https://www.cnn.com) respectively. The articles were found by searching certain keywords in these sites, meaning phrases that included “Black”, such as “Black man” or “Black person” which showed articles that were concerned with this minority. These phrases were selected because of the stylistic change that consisted of the capitalization of the letter “B”, and also because they evince a clear reference to race in the news article that they are found. However, some PC words taken from Kosla’s study (2014), such as “African American” or the term “People of color”, were also alternatively used for searching data since they also refer to the African American minority.

Interestingly, the results were ambiguous and mixed, since some articles contained examples that were capitalized phrases and some were in lower case, and therefore the gathering process required manual selection and a brief overview. Thus, after an overview that ensured whether the articles discussed racial matters and if there was a stylistic change present or not, the chosen texts were classified by formatting them into plain text and saving them in three different documents that functioned as subcorpora, and then they were fed into *AntConc*. This was considering the longitudinal aspect of this study that required the differentiation of the periods that were compared in this study. The classification was done twice since the gathering process included articles from *Fox News* and *CNN* that were saved separately in three different subcorpora for each network. During the gathering process, the dates that the study was limited to were the years 2020 and 2022. The year 2020 was split into the first two categories for article classification. Firstly, articles that did not involve the stylistic change were gathered, and classified under the subcorpus named (1) “pre-stylistic change”. Considering the dates when the stylistic change was effected (Effelson, 2020; Flood,

2020), in the case of *CNN* this involved articles published before June; and in the case of *Fox News* the articles selected were the ones published before July. Secondly, the articles published after the stylistic change were gathered according to the aforementioned date, and classified under the subcorpus named (2) “post-stylistic change”. After that, the third and final classification involved articles published in 2022. These articles were gathered from any month of that year and grouped under the subcorpus called (3) “Racial terms in 2022”.

3.2. Quantitative data

As mentioned above, the software that was implemented for the quantitative task in this study was *AntConc*. As proven by Romero-Trillo and Attia’s study (2016), it seems like a useful corpus toolkit, and it comes with the advantage of being completely free of charge to download and use (Anthony, 2022). Therefore, among many options, *AntConc* can be used to measure texts and compare data through frequencies, that is the number of times that a word has been used. After the texts were classified according to the different periods of research, the study began with the use of *AntConc*. In the first place, the pre-stylistic change period was observed. To do so, the texts from *Fox News* and *CNN* articles that were fed into the corpus software and a list of racial terms, that was “black, Black, white, White, African, color” were introduced in the search mechanism within the “Word” tab (Anthony, 2022) that showed the number of times these terms were used. The raw frequencies of each word were observed, in addition to their normalized frequency to a thousand words. For this search and the ones from the remaining periods, the same method was used while also enabling the options that distinguishes between capitalized terms and non capitalized, that is “Case” sensitive search (Anthony, 2022). Thus, the results that could be obtained from this process showed the total number of times that each word or phrase was used. In the case of any special uses of these

terms, for instance if “Black man” appeared capitalized at a time when the stylistic change was not yet implemented, or whether the color “black” referred to race or an actual color, were reviewed through the “KWIC” tab, or keywords in context tab (Anthony, 2022). This tab allowed the observation of each word, or keyword, as shown in the real texts. This meant that any words could easily be observed whenever it required. Lastly, the results of the three different periods that were analyzed were illustrated through graphs and tables, the latter facilitated by *AntConc*.

3.3. Qualitative data

In this part of the paper, the analysis was concerned with implementing CDA (see section 2.4) in order to understand the use of racial terms in the articles. One of the main concerns was the context in which race related lexical items were used. This meant that the analysis mostly used the observation mechanisms that KWIC tab permits, since the entire context in which a word or phrase appears needed to be considered. By using this method, racial terms were closely examined and their uses were annotated for a later comparison. Within the contextual framing, the way action and responsibilities were presented was considered. Moreover, the use of perspectives, such as the way the headlines were composed, was important at the time of understanding the ideological tendencies of each network. In other words, sentence structures of each network were observed in order to find any ideological square representations that could potentially prove ideological bias in play. To conclude, the way the qualitative analysis was organized consisted of firstly analyzing some of the articles from each network separately and observing any tendencies in them. Then a comparison was made between the ways each network portrayed the African American minority in their news in

each period. Finally, the study advanced from the comparison of each period to the overall changes between the two years.

4. Results and Discussion

For the sake of order and brevity, the following subsections were each divided into the three different periods presented above in subcorpus format. Each period was first separately analyzed and findings that coincided with previous periods were highlighted. Then, the overall results were summarized and discussed at the end of the quantitative and qualitative analysis.

4.1 Quantitative results

The corpus of this study was composed of 69,029 words, or tokens that were counted by *AntConc*, as shown in figure 1. It can be seen that the amount of words in each subcorpus is similar, except for *Fox News* in their post-stylistic period. Nonetheless, the results that this data afforded were justifiable, as will be shown later. The following subsections discuss the numeric data in each subcorpus and compare them. Additionally, the frequency of racial terms has been normalized per thousand words (ptw) and included within tables for each period. Lastly, the findings of this section will be summarized and compared.

	Pre-stylistic change	Post-stylistic change	Race in 2022
<i>Fox News</i>	12,161	8,879	11,481
<i>CNN</i>	11,001	12,631	12,876
Total	23,162	21,510	24,357
total tokens: 69,029			

Figure 1: table of total words in each subcorpus.

4.1.1 Pre-stylistic change

Firstly, in this period of study, it can be noticed that both networks used significantly more racial terms referring to people of color than other races, which are mentioned less frequently. They have also opted for the use of a few PC terms, yet *CNN* appears to have used them with a higher frequency. There were occasions when capitalized racial terms were used, but a closer inspection of the words in context revealed that these terms were placed either at the beginning of a sentence, likely as the main topic of the sentence, or they were references to proper names of organizations, such as “Black Lives Matter”, or “White House”. Therefore, the capitalized form of racial items in this period is not related to the stylistic change which happened later. Moreover, some of the capitalized terms were found within quotations, therefore they were considered to be a form of emphasis given to the quoted words. Based on the results, it could be said that *CNN* places significantly more importance on the use of racial terms compared to *Fox News*. In other words, references to both black and white people seem to appear with a higher frequency in *CNN* than in *Fox News* articles (see Figure 3). Lastly, considering their frequencies, there seems to be much more representation of people of color than other races in both networks, this could be seen as an overrepresentation of Black people in the publications of these networks.

	Tokens	B/black (n=)	Others (n=)	Politically Correct (n=)
<i>Fox News</i>	12,161	69	23	2
Frequency (ptw)		black + (55) 4.523 Black + (14) 1.151	white + (20) 1.645 White + (3) 0.247	African American (2) 0.164 person of color (0)
<i>CNN</i>	11,001	98	53	14
Frequency (ptw)		black + (91) 8.272 Black + (7) 0.636	white + (44) 4.000 White + (9) 0.818	African American (11) 1.000 person of color (3) 0.273

Figure 2: table of racial terms in pre-stylistic change subcorpus.

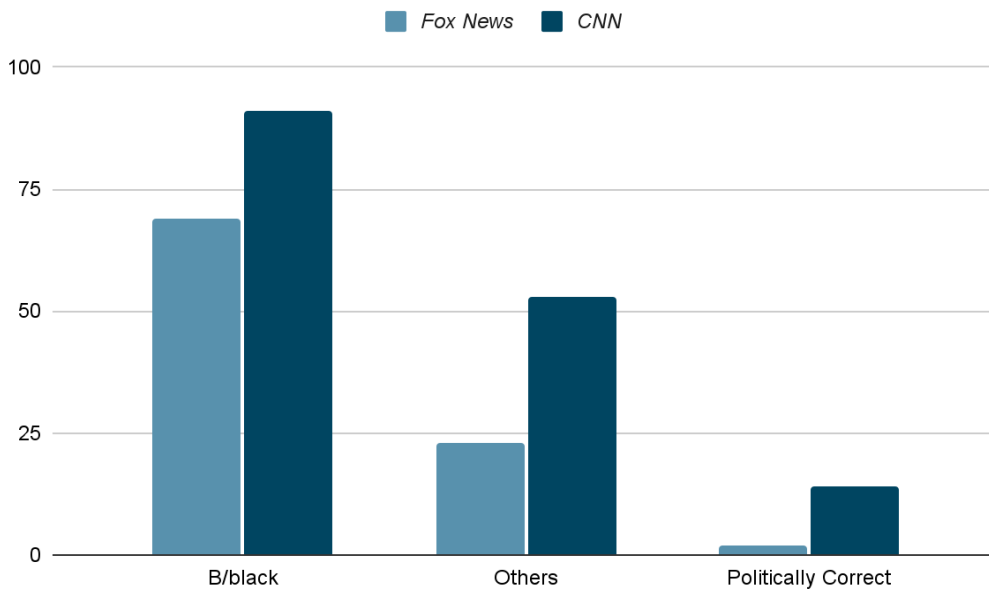


Figure 3: graph of racial terms in pre-stylistic change subcorpus.

4.1.2 Post-stylistic change

With regards to the second period of the study, as shown in figure 4, it appears that *Fox News* significantly increased their amount of representation of Black people in contrast to the

previous period. What is more, the frequency of racial terms has also increased exponentially. This could be due to the increasing importance of Black Lives Matter protests after the stylistic change was promoted. Thereby, these protests could have impacted the increase of the representation of people of color in *Fox News* articles. Alternatively, in this period *CNN* appears to have used a similar amount of racial terms as in the previous period. Albeit, the frequency of racial terms for *CNN* is less than the one of *Fox News*. In general, the majority of racial terms appear to be capitalized.

In addition, despite their stylistic change, a few mentions of “black” or “white” that were not capitalized were found in this period. Nonetheless, after reviewing those terms within the KWIC tab, it was confirmed that the majority of lexical items were evidently being used as real colors and were not within race related phrases. Yet a few instances were found where racial items were not capitalized. One example of lower case “white” was found in reference to a woman in a *Fox News* article, which was published on the exact date that the stylistic change was implemented. This could be due to the fact that the change was put in place that day that this term is not capitalized, or because this term does not relate to people of color. What is more, one instance of “black” in lower case as racial term was found within a quotation in a *CNN* article that also contained “Black” in upper case in a racial phrase, which seemed like an inconsistent depiction of race. Additionally, a more disputable finding was that “black” or “white” were used in lower case but to refer to “community” or “neighborhood” in *CNN* articles. It could be argued that this use implicitly refers to race and people, that is the community of people, but since the term does not appear to be in a phrase accompanying a personal subject or referencing a previously mentioned person, it seems justified to be in lowercase. Surprisingly, this phrase was found in a *Fox News* article in a capitalized form, which shows a clear stylistic difference between the ways in which the two networks present race. Indeed, it also confirms that these networks have different perspectives. Moreover, some

Politically Correct terms were used in both texts, yet in this case *Fox News* showed a higher frequency of PC terms in their articles, compared to the less frequent use of PC terms in *CNN* articles during this period.

Finally, once again both *CNN* and *Fox News* tend to convey an overrepresentation of Black people in their news. This is considering that the frequencies with which they used racial terms about Black people is higher than the frequencies of racial terms used for others (see figure 5), the latter frequencies being comparatively as low as in the previous period. Additionally, the increased frequency of PC terms in *Fox News* articles can also be considered as an overexposure of the Black minority, due to the repetition of “African American” in their articles.

	Tokens (n=)	B/black (n=)	Others (n=)	Politically Correct (n=)
<i>Fox News</i>	8,879	108	15	15
Frequency (ptw)		black + (3) 0.337 Black + (104) 11.713	white + (1) 0.113 White + (14) 1.577	African American (15) 1.689 person of color (0)
<i>CNN</i>	12,631	93	32	7
Frequency (ptw)		black + (4) 0.396 Black + (88) 6.967	white + (1) 0.079 White + (22) 1.742	African American (3) 0.238 person of color (4) 0.317

Figure 4: table of racial terms in post-stylistic change subcorpus.

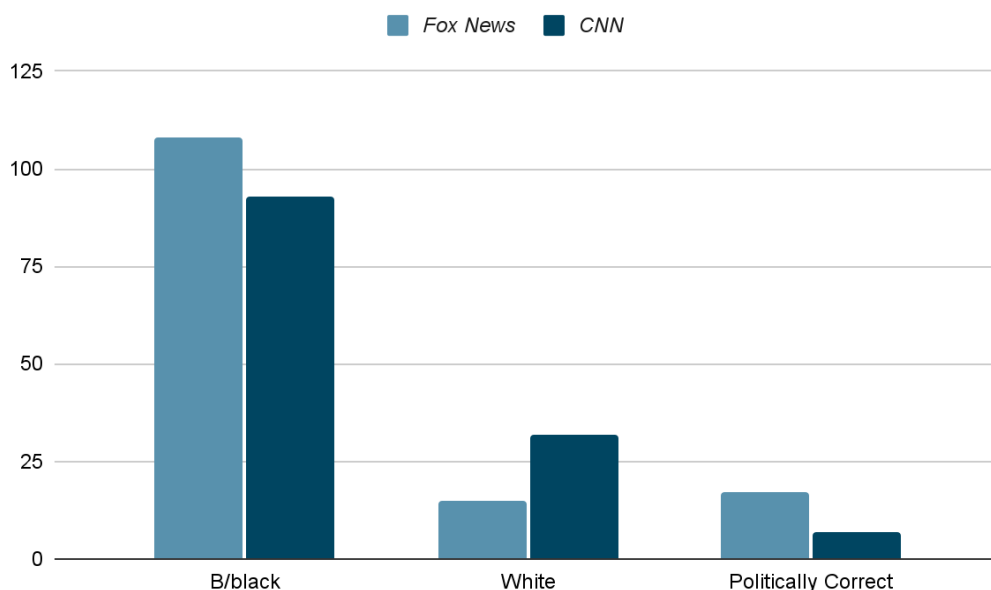


Figure 5: graph of racial terms in post-stylistic change subcorpus.

4.1.3 Racial terms in 2022

Next, the analysis of the subcorpus that contains more recent articles yielded interesting results (see figure 6 and 7). For instance, there was a case in a *Fox News* article where they did not use capitalized terms. As in the previous case in a *CNN* article, the reason for the racial term to be in lower case seems to be the fact that it is found within a quotation. Yet again, some instances of lower case color words were found in the corpus, but after reviewing these words within their contexts, they were proven to be used as real colors and not as race denoting terms. Nonetheless, in other examples it is clear that these networks are not using capitalized versions of racial terms. This was the case of a *Fox News* article headline, “Nevada prosecutor asks state Supreme Court to reconsider 2019 decision in black man’s conviction” (*Associated Press*, 2022), which shows a lower case use of a racial phrase. Strangely, within this article the text does contain capitalized racial phrases like “Black man”. Likewise, *CNN* also showed racial terms in lower case, but only in one instance. This was

when using “white” clearly relating to a person, Shane Brown (Ebrahimji & Jones, 2022). Considering these examples, it seems that both networks give a contradictory importance to race. In other words, they have an inconsistent depiction of racial terms that shows a lack of effort on the part of both networks.

In addition, other interesting findings in the 2022 subcorpus where lower case terms were used are in articles that review and summarize the specific reason that in 2020 inspired them, and others, to make a stylistic change. This was in articles about the death of George Floyd, which contained the use of lower case racial terms, such as “black man”, specifically referring to Floyd. As a matter of fact, this depiction of Floyd happened in two separate articles. Apart from this, the term “white” in lower case was also found as racial term. This example was reviewed with the KWIC tab and found in a sentence that, oddly enough, contained “Black” capitalized but not “white” capitalized. This was in a *Fox News* article, “Rittenhouse shot two Black men when instead he shot two white men” (*Fox News*, 2022). It seems to be a sentence that apparently mocks the racist double standard that people in the US are facing. Additionally, there was significantly less use of PC terms in the case of *Fox News* articles, but a slight increase in the frequency of PC terms used by *CNN*. It should be noted that some of these examples were also reviewed within the following qualitative analysis.

To conclude, bearing these findings in mind, and based on the lack of effort to capitalize a single letter in racial phrases, it could be said that *Fox News* and *CNN* could have dedicated more efforts to be more consistent at the time of depicting such an important matter in the US. Even though *CNN* only appeared to use a lower case racial term once, it could be said that this should not have appeared even once considering their supportive stances towards social justice and equality. Lastly, considering the frequencies of racial terms (see figure 6), it appears that both networks are still overexposing Black people in their networks, as shown in

figure 7, often giving them more prominence than White people receive in their articles, since they would capitalize “Black” but not “white”.

	Tokens (n=)	B/black (n=)	Others (n=)	Politically Correct(n=)
<i>Fox News</i>	11,481	69	14	5
Frequency (ptw)		black + (3) 0.261 Black + (66) 5.749	white + (1) 0.087 White + (13) 1.132	African American (5) 0.436 person of color (0)
<i>CNN</i>	12,876	75	24	11
Frequency (ptw)		black + (0) Black + (75) 5.825	white + (1) 0.078 White + (23) 1.786	African American (8) 0.621 person of color (3) 0.233

Figure 6: table of racial terms from Racial terms in 2022 subcorpus.

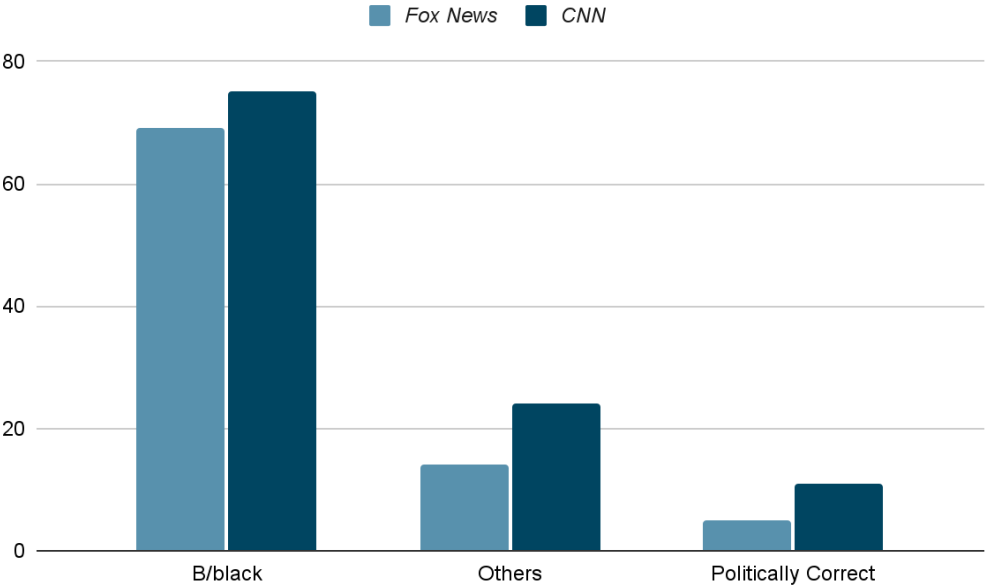


Figure 7: graph of racial terms from Racial terms in 2022 subcorpus.

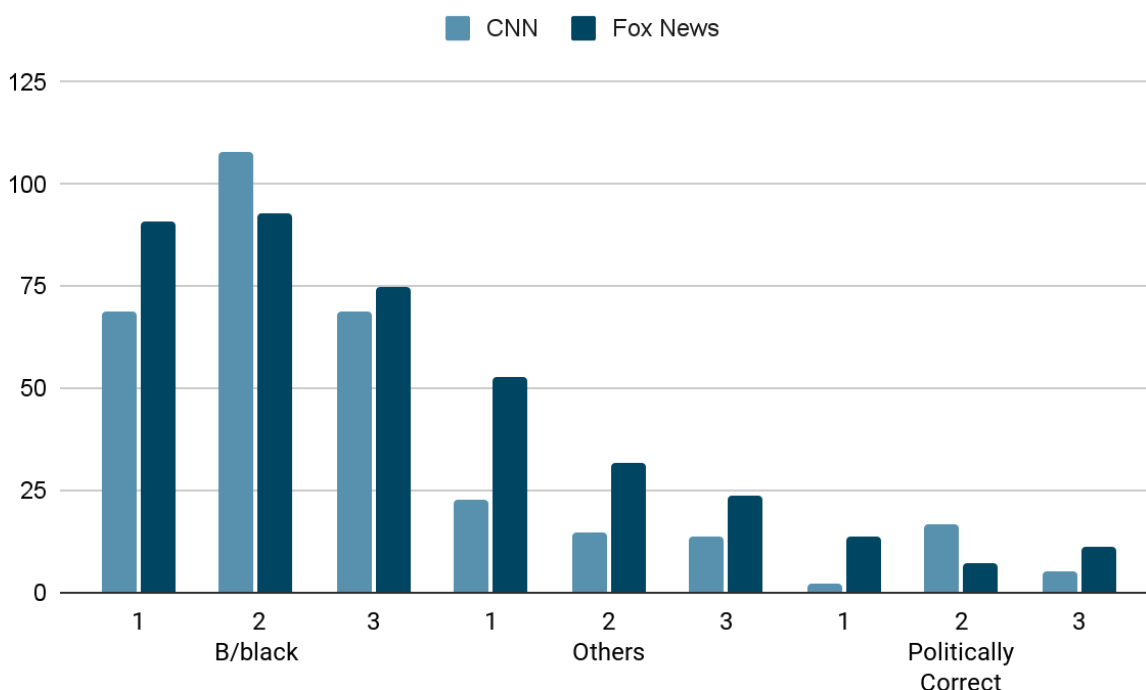


Figure 8: graph of racial terms in (1) pre-stylistic change, (2) post-stylistic change, and (3) Race in 2022 subcorpora.

In sum, it was found in the quantitative analysis (see figure 8) that during the pre-stylistic change period both *Fox News* and *CNN* articles tended to use racial items referring to Black people with higher quantities and frequencies than other racial terms. During the second period, the same tendency was also found, with frequencies just as high as the previous period. In the last period of the study, Race in 2022, overexposure of Black people was yet again found. Moreover, during the pre-stylistic change, it appeared that *CNN* mentioned more racial terms about African Americans than *Fox News*. Alternatively, in the next period this was inverted, since *Fox News* depicted racial terms regarding Black people with a much higher frequency than the previous period, and also a higher frequency than *CNN* (see figure 4). Interestingly, in the last period of the study, it was found that both networks had a similar frequency of the different racial terms that they used. Nevertheless, apart from the

inconsistent use of racial terms, that is the existence of lower case racial items in post-stylistic change periods, it could be stated that throughout the quantitative analysis the only consistent finding was the fact that Black people are being overrepresented in the news media (see figures 2, 4, and 6). Furthermore, the use of PC terms relating Black people also adds to the high frequencies of overexposure that African Americans receive in the media, since no PC terms relating to any other minorities were found in the quantitative analysis.

To conclude this section, it has been stated earlier that supporting racial matters through a stylistic change could be to follow the trend of positive social progress, but then this trend seems to have been overlooked within a certain amount of time, that is 2 years from the perspective of news makers. This could be said to evince a lack of effort and commitment to the cause of racial equality on the part of news networks. Even though *CNN* and *Fox News* were dedicated for a period of time to the capitalization of racial terms, it was found in the previous subsection that they are in fact inconsistently capitalizing racial terms, which may be detrimental for the public perception of race. Indeed, it could be argued that the constant overexposure of Black people, or the capitalization of “Black” and not “white” seems problematic. Additionally, it could be stated based on CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) that the capitalization of racial terms emphasizes racial differences or inequalities, since it seems to point at race instead of the real problems affecting minorities. What is more, the inconsistent capitalization of racial terms may have negative effects on the public opinion of the African American minority, since it highlights them and not any other people involved in the article. This was evidenced by studies of news media and race that discuss the effects of the news on public perception, specifically about Black people (Carter, 2015; Dobric, 2018). Nonetheless, their decisions to promote and to a certain extent maintain a stylistic change in favor of minorities, seems to agree with a positive attitude found in other studies that show an interest in the US to be more inclusive and fair towards minorities (Kosla, 2014).

4.2. Qualitative analysis.

A closer look into the context in which racial terms appear will be afforded in the following qualitative analysis. In order to find any linguistic tendencies within each subcorpus, the analysis will be done assisted by CDA and the KWIC tab within *AntConc*, which allows the observation of racial terms in their context. Hence, the next section was divided into the three different periods of study and discussed separately. Furthermore, to conduct a more effective qualitative analysis, the results from the quantitative section were consulted. Therefore, examples in which lower case racial terms appeared in the “post-stylistic change” period were addressed; this was also done in the last period of the study, “race in 2022”. The findings of this section were later summarized and compared.

4.2.1. Pre-stylistic change.

Firstly, the most frequent use of racial terms in *Fox News* articles observed in this period seem to be for descriptive reasons. In other words, racial lexical items are merely used to convey extra information, for instance in examples 1 and 2. These terms were used to describe the people involved in their articles. Thereby, it could be argued that race appears as unnecessary contextual information. Interestingly, example 1 evinces a recurrent tendency that will be seen throughout the corpus, the omission of the name of police officers.

- (1) “Four Minneapolis police officers linked to the death of George Floyd, a black man”
(*Fox News*, 2020)

(2) “federal authorities will monitor the investigation into the death of Fuller, a black man” (*Fox News*, 2020)

What is more, example 3 is a headline in which an African American is involved, but his race is not mentioned. Oddly enough, his race appears to be mentioned several times in the text of the article. This seems to be an inconstant, sometimes even unnecessary, form of depicting race. In fact, some of the contexts of these sentences only provide racial information about Black people, and not any other people involved, even if other people involved in the events are also of a certain skin color, it is not being mentioned. Nonetheless, it was found in some examples that other races can also be mentioned, as in example 4 and 5; yet Black people often appeared topicalized, that is they were placed as the main elements of a sentence, like example 4. It seems that “black” is not the only racial term used in *Fox News* articles, since “white” does sometimes appear in their texts, in some cases it is even seen in the same sentence as “black”, for instance example 4 and 5. Additionally, example 5 seems to use a racial term to denote a person, instead of the name of the person, black seems to be used as a term to identify specific people.

(3) “Georgia shooting of Ahmaud Arbery spurs outcry.” (*Fox News*, 2020)

(4) “George Floyd, a black man who died after a white officer pinned his knee against the suspect's neck” (*Fox News*, 2020)

(5) “The case of a black man in Georgia who was fatally shot in February after being pursued by two armed white men” (*Fox News*, 2020)

Still, the use of different races in the same article disagrees with the examples where race is more inconsistent. Next, another tendency that was observed in *Fox News* articles was the use of long phrases in addition to the descriptive use of racial terms, for instance in example 6 and 7. It can be noticed that racial phrases relating Black people are accompanied by more information than other racial terms. As a matter of fact, it can be observed that the contexts surrounding “black man” seem extensive or even superfluous, such as example 8 and 9. Certainly, the necessity of words such as “homeless” may be supported by context. However, the extent to which words such as “unarmed” or “handcuffed” are needed can be disputed, especially considering the context in which they appear, since most of these additional words are only present in phrases about Black people.

(6) “Floyd, another unarmed black man, died in police custody after a white Minneapolis officer” (*Fox News*, 2020)

(7) “the death of George Floyd, a handcuffed black man in police custody” (*Fox News*, 2020)

(8) “a black homeless man named Malcolm Harsch, 38” (*Fox News*, 2020)

(9) “Arbery, an unarmed 25-year-old black man studying to be an electrician” (*Fox News*, 2020)

(10) “death of Elijah McClain, a 23-year-old black man put into a chokehold by police” (*Fox News*, 2020)

Moreover, action and responsibility are often connected to the perpetrator, for instance in example 4, “a white officer pinned his knee against the suspect's neck” (*Fox News*, 2020); or example 10, “man put into a chokehold by police” (*Fox New*, 2020). In contrast, the use of passive voice in other contexts shows ambiguity, as in example 5, “was fatally shot” (*Fox News*, 2020). This ambiguity is more evident in some headlines, such as example 3, “Georgia shooting of Ahmaud Arbery spurs outcry” (*Fox News*, 2020), which usually discuss the perpetrators within the text of the article. Furthermore, it is often the case that only the names of Black people are mentioned, and the names of police officers are nowhere to be found.

In the case of *CNN* articles of this period, similarly to the *Fox News* use of racial terms, race seems to be mentioned often to clarify or even differentiate people, like in examples 11 and 12. Likewise, there were several articles in which only certain races are mentioned, that is the African American minority. In some of these examples, other races are also mentioned, usually in the same context in which Black people are mentioned, for instance in example 13 or 14. It can also be seen in example 14 how racial expressions are used to identify a person instead of their names.

(11) “woman was captured on camera calling the police on a black man who was bird-watching in Central Park during” (*CNN*, 2020)

(12) “The current crisis was triggered by the killing of George Floyd, a black man” (*CNN*, 2020)

(13) “a white Minneapolis police officer with his knee on the neck of a black man who was gasping” (*CNN*, 2022)

(14) “in the wake of a 2015 shooting of a black man by two white officers.” (*CNN*, 2020)

Indeed, the similarities between the way *Fox News* and *CNN* present African Americans in their articles include other tendencies, such as an apparently clear collocation of actor and action within the same context, for instance example 15; or the use of extensive descriptive phrases for only Black people, as in example 16 or 17, in which extra information is added to racial phrases concerning people of color.

(15) “a white police officer pressed a knee into his neck.” (*CNN*, 2020)

(16) “Ahmaud Arbery, the 25-year-old unarmed black man shot while taking a jog in rural Georgia” (*CNN*, 2020)

(17) “justice for Floyd, the unarmed and handcuffed black man in Minneapolis” (*CNN*, 2020)

As can be seen in the examples above, the addition of items like “unarmed” appear in many sentences accompanying racial terms about African Americans. Additionally, some of these articles, such as example 17, contain a racial phrase that is specifically used to provide context about the race of a person, yet it does not seem clear why it is relevant in this and other articles to involve and specify race in cases of police brutality, or crimes, or deaths. Both networks seem to be constantly portraying race in these contexts.

Overall, it appears that both networks have a tendency to be repetitive, for instance whenever they use race instead of a proper name to refer to or describe a person. Additionally,

race is often used for extra contextual information that does not seem relevant as to the events that are shown in the articles. This is to say that mentioning race does not seem to help explain or describe why a person died. Furthermore, it could be stated that knowing that a person is handcuffed or unarmed does not inform or give useful contextual information as to why they are shot, killed or murdered. Certainly, these depictions of race in such violent contexts with inconsistent mentions of racial terms may have a negative impact on the public perception of Black people. This is because most of these articles tend to relate deaths, or crimes and represent African Americans as vulnerable and guilty victims. For instance, when using the phrase “handcuffed Black man”, this seems to be signaling the fact that this person is a criminal of some sort. Lastly, the networks did not seem to have different perspectives, even though their ideologies are known to be different, they seem to represent race in similar ways.

4.2.2. Post-stylistic change.

During this period, *Fox News* showed a few changes in the ways they used race related terms. As can be seen in example 18 and example 19, racial terms are still implemented as contextual information regarding the people involved in the articles, or as a term to identify a person instead of using a proper name. Additionally, as shown in these examples, some articles only contained mentions of the Black minority, similarly to the representation in the previous period. These examples also only mentioned the names of Black people and omitted the names of police officers, such as in example 18, 19 and 21.

- (18) “the death of Walter Wallace Jr., a Black man who was killed by police in Philadelphia” (*Fox News*, 2020)

- (19) “police officer was charged Friday with first-degree murder in the fatal shooting of a Black man” (*Fox News*, 2020)
- (20) “white woman walking her dog who called the police during a videotaped dispute with a Black man” (*Fox News*, 2020)
- (21) “A White former Philadelphia police officer was charged Friday with first-degree murder in the fatal shooting of a Black man” (*Fox News*, 2020)
- (22) “A Black man carrying an American flag stood outside Portland’s Federal Courthouse” (*Fox News*, 2020)

Nevertheless, articles that portrayed Black people and at the same time mentioned White people were also found, such as example 20. Surprisingly, example 20 and 21 seem to topicalize White people, as opposed to the topicalized Black person in many other cases, like example 22. Additionally, examples 20 and 21 also show racial terms relating White people that appear in extensive contexts, something that *Fox News* often does for racial terms about Black people. Furthermore, examples like 19 or 21 show a key aspect necessary in police brutality cases, that is police officers being charged for crimes they have committed. This is certainly a shift in the way *Fox News* portrays race. Moreover, racial items relating White people were used in isolated contexts, such as example 23. In this case, even though the article did contain mentions of Black people, the extended and isolated context in which a racial term appears is now for a White person.

- (23) “The officer who conducted the original traffic stop is White, police said.” (*Fox News*, 2020)
- (24) “the police shooting of Jacob Blake, a Black man, in Kenosha, Wis.” (*Fox News*, 2020)
- (25) “recent deaths of Black Americans like George Floyd at the hands of police” (*Fox News*, 2020)
- (26) “Protests erupted in Southern Los Angeles on Monday night after the fatal shooting of a black man by police.” (*Fox News*, 2020)
- (27) “Biden says 'no excuse' for looting in Philadelphia after Black man killed by police” (*Fox News*, 2020)

In addition, some of the articles that contained violence or police brutality appeared to have responsibility contextualized, such as in examples 21, 24 and 25; actions were also attributed to some people, like examples 26 and 27. However, it can be noticed that the names of the police officers are missing. Additionally, the fact that “black” is in lower case in example 26, denotes inconsistency. Although these sentences seem vague, they help expose police brutality through the shift of perspective in which formerly Black people were victimized or poorly represented, to now depicting police officers being held responsible for their crimes. Nonetheless, as can be seen in these examples, *Fox News* mostly includes the race of Black people. At the very least, there seemed to be different types of racial phrases and not just repetitions of “Black man”, unlike in the previous period. Moreover, example 27 presents a

headline that apparently covers the protests that took place after the police killed a Black man. This headline is clearly ambiguous and misleading, since it undermines a protest against racial injustice, and at the same time it implies that what truly happened were lootings or riots instead of protests, consequently linking lootings to the death of Black people.

(28) “making her the first Black woman ever on a major party's presidential ticket.”

(*Fox News*, 2020)

(29) “Cunningham was elected in 2017, becoming Waukegan’s first Black mayor.”

(*Fox News*, 2020)

(30) “pitching an economic renewal for Black Americans” (*Fox News*, 2020)

(31) “new jobs for the Black community, creating 500,000 new Black-owned businesses” (*Fox News*, 2020)

Next, a tendency that did change was the constant depiction of violent topics or deaths of Black people. Instead, some of the articles by *Fox News* focused on progress or achievements of Black people, like examples 28 and 29. *Fox News* also discussed politics and economics involving African Americans, like example 30 and 31. These examples show that *Fox News* intended to discuss Black people in a healthy and relevant way, certainly promoting a better depiction than just portraying violent topics related to the African American community.

With regards to *CNN* articles during this period, some different tendencies were found. For instance, example 32 shows both White and Black as race terms in the same context as items to identify people instead of using proper names. Furthermore, a White person seems to

be the main topic, indeed a White man is the one being charged with a crime. Yet there are also cases of older tendencies, such as example 33 and 34, in which only Black race is depicted, but here the responsables for crimes or offenses are related to their actions in a clear way. Apart from this, example 34 presents a strange and inconsistent use of racial terms. Here we can see that a White woman is only described with her proper name, not her race, whereas the Black person that was involved in the story is only mentioned with a racial phrase. In addition to this, example 35 includes racial phrases for both Black and White people, but only the former is capitalized, whereas the latter is referring to a “neighborhood”. Arguably, as was mentioned earlier in the quantitative analysis of the same period, this is an instance of racial phrase about White people being used in lowercase, which can be considered as an inconsistent use of their stylistic change that was clearly made in racial phrases about Black people but not for White people.

(32) “A White officer is charged in the fatal shooting of a Black man” (*CNN*, 2020)

(33) “Wisconsin police shoot a Black man as his children watch from a vehicle”
(*CNN*, 2020)

(34) “Prosecutors say Amy Cooper lied about a Black man assaulting her.”
(*CNN*, 2020)

(35) “A Black man jogging in the predominantly white neighborhood of Deltona”
(*CNN*, 2020)

Moreover, another old tendency is the fact that racial phrases for Black people are often used as descriptive terms and tend to appear as extended contextual information, such as examples 36 and 37. It can be noticed in example 38, apart from a racial term to describe a person, the term “unarmed” is also present, like in many examples earlier, it is arguably unnecessary extra information. Oddly enough, example 39 includes a reversal of the descriptive use of a racial term, since in this case the added contextual information seems to be the name of the Black man “Trayford Pellerin”, typed between dashes in a way that seems to clarify who might be the Black man that *CNN* intends to discuss. This appears to give unnecessary attention to race.

(36) “the death of Ahmaud Arbery -- a Black man who was shot and killed while jogging” (*CNN*, 2020)

(37) “new examination into the death of Elijah McClain, a 23-year-old Black man” (*CNN*, 2020)

(38) “two officers who killed Stephon Clark, an unarmed Black man” (*CNN*, 2020)

(39) “Police killed a Black man — Trayford Pellerin, 31 — outside a convenience store.” (*CNN*, 2020)

(40) “Georgia State Patrol trooper charged with murder after shooting a Black man” (*CNN*, 2020)

Furthermore, example 38 shows another tendency in *CNN* articles. This is the fact that police brutality is clearly the context of the article, which can be considered as a shift in perspective

since it no longer focuses on violence regarding Black people. Consequently, it could be said that *CNN* also considers violence from a White perspective, like some of the articles by *Fox News*. In this case, police officers are being charged for their crime, which can be seen as an exposition of how police officers can also be punished for their crimes. Therefore, this example represents the fact that this type of injustice does not go unpunished. Similarly, example 39 exposes an enforcer of the law being charged with murder, which also shows that these and other entities are not exempt from the law. Besides, as can be noticed in examples 38, 39 and 40, the names of the police officers are not mentioned. Moreover, there are other instances where racial injustice or police brutality or injustice are being addressed, for instance example 41 and 42.

(41) “Wrongly arrested Black man sues a Georgia city and police officers for excessive force and injury” (*CNN*, 2020)

(42) “Fatal police shooting of Black man sparks protests in Los Angeles” (*CNN*, 2020)

Even though these headlines seem violent or grim, they show evidence of the injustices that happen in the US. It could be said that the coverage of these articles may move people into action. In fact, they may inspire people to speak against police brutality, since it is shown that the average person can fight back. Lastly, despite the fact that there has been a shift in perspective and which may include a call for action for citizens, most of the contexts in which racial phrases tend to appear seemed violent, repeating the tendency that previous articles also had.

In general, regarding the post-stylistic change period, once again both networks showed similar tendencies, and also repeated some of the tendencies of the previous period.

That was the case of the use of race terms as if they were names, or as descriptive terms that are often added extra information, or the use of racial terms in extensive phrases. Nonetheless, there certainly appeared to be a change in perspective, if not a major shift in the way race was depicted in the news media. This was the case of articles from both *CNN* and *Fox News* that denounced, exposed, or simply showed the violence generated by police officers and the consequences that come from committing them. In some of those articles, the actions of each perpetrator were shown. It could be said that some of these articles may serve as inspiration for those who are willing to fight against oppression or injustice. If in the previous period there seemed to be too many articles discussing violence surrounding Black people, it seems to be a positive shift in perspective that occurred in this period where blame, responsibility, and punishment are properly shown, especially regarding police brutality. Indeed, instead of the repetitive publication of ambiguous and violent articles about Black people, the repetitive publication of articles that show or denounce injustices, such as police brutality, might be much more favorable for society.

4.2.3 Race in 2022

To begin with this section, the quantitative results from *Fox News* were consulted since these showed a noticeable inconsistency with the way *Fox News* used racial lexical items in 2022. Therefore, example 43 illustrates a lack of stylistic consistency. What is more, as mentioned earlier, it is surprising to observe that the person that is being described with the phrase “a black man” refers to George Floyd. In addition, this use of a lower case racial phrase occurred up to three times, twice in the same context, and once in a headline, that is example 44. Moreover, within the text of example 44 the use of uppercase “Black man” can be found referring to the same man that in the headline is described with a lower case racial term.

Article 44 is particular in the sense that it portrays a criminal but also one who has been damaged by racist stereotypical comments. It certainly seems like an ambiguous publication, since it depicts a stereotypical case of a Black man as a criminal, but also exposes the fact that this person is being treated unfairly because of his race.

(43) “to protest the death of George Floyd, a black man who died after being restrained by Minneapolis police officers” (*Fox News*, 2022)

(44) “Nevada prosecutor asks state Supreme Court to reconsider 2019 decision in black man's conviction” (*Fox News*, 2022)

Next, there seemed to be various tendencies, old and new ones, in the ways *Fox News* used racial phrases. As can be seen in example 45, even though the name of the person is public, *Fox News* has replaced it with a racial term to refer to him, which was a common tendency in previous periods. In example 46, the descriptive function of racial items is used inversely, that is the fact that race comes first and then the name of the person is used to further clarify which “Black man” the article is discussing. Alternatively, example 47 presents another tendency, the inversion of the use of racial terms. It can be seen in number 47 that only the race of an unidentified White man is mentioned, and instead of a name this person is signaled as “the officer”. Interestingly, only the name of an African American, Patrick Lyoya, is used to refer to him and not his race, which is later mentioned. Thus, only the victim is revealed and the criminal goes unmentioned. It could be argued that this instance of name omission of the police officer is justifiable because his identity was not accessible to the public, but this would support the idea that the names of apparently criminal police officers are often intentionally hidden, either by the press or by another power in charge.

- (45) “The Florida murder trial of a Black man that ended in a mistrial” (*Fox News*, 2022)
- (46) “off-duty Cumberland County Sheriff’s deputy, who is accused of fatally shooting a Black man named Jason Walker.” (*Fox News*, 2022)
- (47) “The officer, a White man who has not been identified, pulled 26-year-old Patrick Lyoya” (*Fox News*, 2022)
- (48) “Louisiana gov posthumously pardons Homer Plessy, man behind from 'separate but equal' Supreme Court ruling” (*Fox News*, 2022)

Moreover, another case in which a headline contains no race is in example 48, where the name of a man is discussed and apparently celebrated. Obviously, the race of this man is mentioned in the text of the article. Apart from this, there were plenty of cases of police brutality or killings depicted in *Fox News* articles. Some headlines like example 49 and 51 mention victims in a seemingly ambiguous context, since no responsibilities for the deaths are directly attributed to the perpetrators; also, the names of the police officers appear to be missing. Furthermore, example 50, shows another ambiguous context in which the actions of the police officer is still not clear and seems misleading since it appears to give responsibility to a shooting rather than to a person. What is more, example 50 shows the only instance in the entire corpus of this study where the term “armed” is used within the context of “Black man”. This seems to be an interesting finding considering that no other mentions of Black persons were ever found to be accompanied with the descriptive term “armed”, but instead the term

“unarmed” was found several times in all the periods of the study. Still, this example can be argued on the same basis as before, that is the fact that every descriptive term used in the deaths of Black people seemed to be as unnecessary as the mentions of race itself. In this case, “armed” seems to imply some guilt on the part of the person that was shot and killed.

(49) “Amir Locke shooting: Minneapolis police release bodycam footage showing officer opening fire” (*Fox News*, 2022)

(50) “Officer-involved shooting results in death of armed 22-year-old Black man” (*Fox News*, 2022)

(51) “Michigan police release footage of officer shooting and killing Patrick Lyoya” (*Fox News*, 2022)

Nonetheless, these articles tend to show the real world difficulties that Black people face whenever they encounter police officers. Even though some actions are not clear, some responsibility can be attributed. This is implied due to the presence of “police officers” in most of these contexts. In addition, example 52 shows another difficulty that Black people in the US often have to face. This is the case of hate crimes, violence or injustices against minorities. The fact that these harsh realities are being addressed in the articles is an important step towards dealing with them. As can be seen in example 53 and 54, it is fortunately proven that fighting against these injustices can result in proper justice. Therefore, the publication of these articles may have a positive impact on society.

(52) “Florida man charged with hate crime for 'racially-motivated attack' on Black driver” (*Fox News*, 2022)

(53) “White Kansas City detective convicted in killing of Black man leaves police department” (*Fox News*, 2022)

(54) “Colorado city settles nearly \$3M lawsuit in fatal police shooting of 19-year-old Black man” (*Fox News*, 2022)

On the contrary, there are still frequent publications of ambiguous or even misinformative articles about race that can be detrimental for the public image of African Americans, like the publications mentioned earlier. Such is the case of example 55. The article deals with the unjustified arrest of a Black man who was misidentified as a White felon. Due to the ambiguous structure of the sentence where the term “Black man” can be considered the main topic, and the poor use of the word “as”, it can be noticed that a Black person seems to be depicted as a criminal whereas the real criminal, a White person, is apparently suing him or the police.

(55) “Black man arrested in Las Vegas as White felon twice his age looks to sue police” (*Fox News*, 2022)

(56) “Will Smith wasn't removed from the Oscar's ceremony following his on-stage assault of Chris Rock because he's a Black man.” (*Fox News*, 2022)

Lastly, most of the contexts in which racial terms appeared were similar to the ones from the previous periods, like injustice, justice, crimes, or deaths. Although example 56 does indicate a newer and unique theme, that is celebrity gossip, more specifically what Will Smith did during the 2022 Oscar's ceremony. It could be argued that this kind of gossip related to celebrities is a factor that influences the increase of news, in this case news about Black people. Evidently, the violent action by Smith on that night (Gillespie, 2022) could have influenced the emergence of articles about Black people and violence. Furthermore, tendencies that were also found in previous periods were that most of the articles still implemented racial terms as identifiers instead of names, but these were also used inversely. It was observed that many names of police officers were missing, and they were merely mentioned with the same repetitive term, "police officer" or "officer". Additionally, some examples contained mentions of race as if these were substitutes of the names of people.

With regards to the use of racial terms in *CNN* articles of this period, the only instance where a racial phrase was found in lower case was in example 57, as mentioned in the quantitative discussion. It can be seen that "white" is clearly being used as a racial term, but it is not in upper case as it should be.

(57) "mug shot belonging to the older, white 'Shane Brown' named in the warrant"
(*CNN*, 2022)

At first glance, it was found that within this period many *CNN* articles were concerned with police brutality or cases of injustice, such as example 58 and 59. In these articles it was common to see the race of Black people used instead of the names of the people. Once again, the names of the police officers involved in the events were missing or purposefully omitted. This tendency appears to be so common that even the public demanded for the names of

police officers to be disclosed, as can be seen in headline 60, the lack of police names seems prevalent and noticed by everyone. Even though *CNN* and *Fox News* may hide the names of police officers, or they may not have this information, here it seems that *CNN* is trying to reveal a problem that could bring some justice to society. This would be the publication of the names of those responsible for the deaths of Black people, who often happen to be police officers, and are constantly being reported in the news through hidden or unknown identities.

(58) “Former police officer sentenced to 6 years for killing a Black man while responding to a 2019 traffic incident.” (*CNN*, 2022)

(59) “Body camera video shows Minneapolis officers shooting Black man during no-knock warrant.” (*CNN*, 2022)

(60) “Rev. Al Sharpton calls for authorities to release the name of police officer involved in Patrick Lyoya's death” (*CNN*, 2022)

Furthermore, a new tendency was found in a few articles where it was evident that they discussed racial matters, but the headlines, such as articles 61 and 62, did not present racial terms. This was the case of trials or settlements by the families of those affected by injustices caused by police brutality, like in article 61. Unlike these cases, example 63 offers the coverage of a similar scenario, but here a racial term “Black man” seems to be used as a name, instead of the real name of the person that was killed. Moreover, just as seemingly unnecessary as previous cases, example 63 contains the word “unarmed”, a very common term that throughout this study accompanied racial phrases for Black people.

(61) “Family of Manuel Ellis reaches \$4 million settlement in his death” (*CNN*, 2022)

(62) “Fayetteville releases some of the police body camera video in the Jason Walker shooting case” (*CNN*, 2022)

(63) “Family of unarmed Black man fatally shot during traffic stop in Michigan calls for prosecution of officer” (*CNN*, 2022)

In addition, other contexts are also involved, such as articles where injustices or hate crimes are exposed, like example 64 and 65. It can be seen in article 64 that only Black race is mentioned, but responsibility of actions is clear, since the accused appears to be charged with hate crime. Besides these contexts, there were some articles that showed and discussed African American struggle and hardships, such as Hollywood actor Sidney Poitier and his career, shown in article 66. Furthermore, example 65 shows racial justice being served, but it could be said that in the headline race is unnecessarily introduced and poorly worded. Additionally, old tendencies are still present, such as example 67, where race is used as a descriptive term in a violent context.

(64) “Woman who attacked a Black teenager while falsely accusing him of stealing her phone pleads guilty to hate crime charge” (*CNN*, 2022)

(65) “Ahmaud Arbery's killers sentenced to life in prison for 25-year-old Black man's murder” (*CNN*, 2022)

(66) “Poitier said being a Hollywood star did not shield him from the struggles a Black man in America” (*CNN*, 2022)

(67) “Greene, a 49-year-old Black man, died in 2019 after what the police described as resisting arrest and a struggle with officers.” (*CNN*, 2022)

Lastly, it was found that some articles by *CNN* discussed the same events as ones by *Fox News*, these are examples 68 and 69. In example 68 it can be seen that the racial term “Black man” is used in capitalized form to refer to George Floyd, unlike the lower case use that was found in the *Fox News* article. This seems to be a clear contrast as to the stylistic choices of each network, and a lack of effort on the part of *Fox News*. Likewise, example 69 presents the case of the Black man that was misidentified as a White criminal. Unlike the ambiguous headline by *Fox News*, the headline by *CNN* seems rather clear and informative, since it shows properly that a Black person was innocent but was treated unfairly.

(68) “George Floyd came into the world as poor, Black boy from the South”
(*CNN*, 2022)

(69) “A Black man was misidentified, arrested and held for 6 days in place of a White felon twice his age” (*CNN*, 2022)

To conclude the qualitative analysis, the different tendencies found in 2022 were summarized and compared with the earlier periods of the study. In general, it is evident that in both *CNN* and *Fox News* articles some old tendencies were found. This means that the ways in which racial phrases were used in previous periods of the study were yet again found in articles published two years later. For instance, the use of racial terms as merely descriptive or as substitutes of names; an inconsistent use of racial phrases; the omission of the names of police

officers involved in the deaths or killings of Black people. The latter tendency was perceived by citizens and denounced so that in the future we might see more often the names of police officers responsible for the deaths of African Americans, or other minorities. Additionally, some racial phrases were found connecting Black people with violent contexts. Nonetheless, to a certain extent, there has been a shift in the contexts that racial phrases were found, such as cases that exposed racial injustices, hate crimes, or showed evidence of victories against police brutality cases. This shift in perspective, from the constant depiction of violence related to Black people, to the justice that their struggles deserve, was seen in an earlier period and has been accordingly maintained in the news media of 2022. This seems to contradict previous findings that depict the news media poorly representing social struggle (Brown & Harlow, 2019). What is more, it could be argued that even though in 2022 African Americans seem to be winning trials and cases against police brutality or other injustices, the seemingly repetitive portrayal of the aftermath of the deaths of Black people may be both negative and positive. This is because the mention of an unfortunate event that appears to gain a modicum of justice does not seem to help stop the hatred and racism behind the cases. Therefore, this supports the findings of other studies on race and the media in which stereotypical or constant negative publications are said to affect the public perception of minorities (Carter, 2015; Kumah-Abiwu, 2020), since this study proves that negative publications, or contexts, are still prevalent.

In addition, with regards to the constant or inconstant use of racial phrases in *CNN* and *Fox News* articles, even if their use of race related terms does not seem repetitive, it could be said that it was redundant. This is because two years later some tendencies have not changed much. Actually, examples were still found in some articles that used race where arguably it could have been omitted. Furthermore, the terms “unarmed” and “armed” were found in this period of the study, in *CNN* and *Fox News* respectively, which were presented like in

previous periods as additions necessary to understand why a person was killed. Certainly, it could be argued that whenever these terms accompany racial phrases, they seem like a justification for the actions of some people, which has been proven to have affected minorities in the past. Lastly, notwithstanding their ideological positions, the ways *CNN* and *Fox News* contextualized and represented Black people in their articles were quite similar, but it could be stated that *CNN* would often appear to be more clear and less ambiguous.

To conclude, since there has not been significant changes or drastic shifts in perspectives, if future cases of injustice happen, it can be hypothesized that the depictions of those cases and events might be with similar tendencies as the ones found in this study, where “Black” could appear within seemingly outrageous contexts.

5. Conclusion

This study analyzed the ways in which North American News media represented race in their articles from 2020 to 2022. It did so in order to investigate the ways in which *CNN* and *Fox News* implemented a new stylistic change that was meant to show support for the African American minority’s struggles in the US, and to confirm whether this change was favorable or not. The study was longitudinal and organized into a mixed method research approach, that implemented CL for the creation and study of a corpus for the quantitative side, and the use of CDA for the analysis of specific examples for the qualitative part. Thus, in the quantitative results it was possible to discern the frequency with which racial terms were used in the different periods of study. It was found that there was a higher frequency and quantity of the use of racial terms for Black people, compared to other racial terms. This means that throughout the quantitative analysis an overexposure of African Americans in *CNN* and *Fox News* articles was constant. This supported the qualitative analysis, where it was found that

the contexts where racial terms about Black people are used are mostly violent. Therefore, in general, the representation of race by these two networks could have a negative influence on the public perception of the African American minority in the US. What is more, despite the stylistic change being promoted and implemented in both *CNN* and *Fox News* articles, it was found on some occasions that these networks were inconsistently using uppercase and lowercase racial terms, which shows a lack of effort on the part of these networks to provide a proper and constant representation of race. In addition, other inconsistencies were the ways in which racial terms are used instead of proper names, or the fact that these terms appear often for only certain minority groups and are not mentioned for others involved. Furthermore, there were some instances of PC terminology being used, but these also mirror the overexposure that racial terms give to Black people. Apart from this, the quantitative study was mainly concerned with the tendencies of these networks to contextualize racial terms. Thereby, the results of this study found a repetitive tendency that these networks have to use racial terms. This involved the use of racial terms as descriptive items or as a factor that helps distinguish people, which were often used instead of the proper names of people. It was also found that racial terms for Black people were often accompanied by extra information, in ways that seemingly justified or apparently contextualized their presence in the article. Indeed, racial terms and the added extra information was often unnecessary to understand what the context of the articles required. Besides, it was found that many names of police officers involved in police brutality cases were not mentioned or omitted. This could be the fact that some powers behind the publication of news are responsible for hiding the names of police officers. What is more, there was a significant shift in both networks, since over the periods of the study it was noticed that towards the later periods, both networks published more articles about racial justice or police brutality, instead of the previous constant depiction of Black people in violent or deadly contexts. Even though the latter contexts are still present,

the different topics that can be found nowadays evince a change in the ways Black struggle is viewed. Lastly, it could be argued, based on the findings of this study, that the main change promoted in both networks was simply the capitalization of racial terms, since the tendencies that they showed in earlier periods are still found nowadays. Nonetheless, the fact that they did implement the stylistic change and that there has been a shift in perspectives and contexts, it could be said that the grounds for promoting more changes in favor of minorities have been established and it is only a matter of time to find more changes in the media.

To conclude, an interesting observation was made with the help of the keyword in the context tab within *AntConc*. In this tab an option can be enabled to hide the keyword that is being searched. This was especially useful to hide the keyword “black” or “Black” in the entire corpus of this study, which showed that often the mentions of “man”, “women” or “person” are equally understood without the extra information that racial terms seemingly confer. This tool was relevant with regards to proving a hypothesis made in section 2.3. which states that the mention of race could be avoided in some cases. It has been stated that race seems redundant and repetitive if not altogether unnecessary in many instances throughout the corpus. Therefore, instead of the use of racial terms it is suggested that news articles should implement other descriptive or more substantial information about people, that is if racial terms are not entirely required. Instead of race, terms referring to family, job, experience, community, or professional positions could be used in order to promote a fair and equal representation of minorities. This would not overexpose African Americans by inconsistent use of racial terms or highlight them in violent or vulnerable contexts. It could be argued that this change could effectively shape in a positive or neutral way the public perception of Black people that is gathered through the news media, since it would no longer expose a community for the singularities attributed to its racial term.

5.1 Addressing the RQs

RQ.1 Are there any similarities or differences between the tendencies that *CNN* and *Fox News* have to represent race in their articles?

There have been several similarities found between *CNN* and *Fox News* articles throughout the study. For instance the inconsistencies with which they used certain racial terms, like “Black man” and not others, like “White man”. Additionally, there was an almost constant omission of the names of police officers in both networks. What is more, the repetitive use of racial terms about Black people in violent contexts, or Black people involved in police brutality cases where only Black racial terms are used. Nevertheless, there were also some differences, for instance, *CNN* was less ambiguous in some cases that clearly depicted blame and responsibility for actions, whereas *Fox News* seemed misleading in some scenarios. It has been stated that despite their ideological differences, these networks have a similar depiction of race in their articles. As a matter of fact, their tendencies appeared to be more similar than different.

RQ.2 Did the stylistic change made by US news networks correspond to positive tendencies to represent Black people in the media?

It could be argued that the stylistic change did not influence a big shift in the ways in which race is presented in the media. Indeed, as was seen in the qualitative analysis throughout the different periods, little change was made in the tendencies of these networks. It could be seen that until the 2022 period *Fox News* and *CNN* mostly seemed repetitive and redundant in their use of racial terms, especially since they used these terms in negative contexts. Even though it

could be said that the stylistic change evinces a positive attitude towards equality and progress in a society that intends to accommodate minorities and treat them fairly. In contrast, the contexts in which items representing Black people appeared seemed violent and damaging for their public perception.

RQ.3 Has the stylistic change been maintained over the years?

It has been proven that the stylistic change has been maintained, to an extent. Nonetheless, as shown in the quantitative findings, the stylistic change has also been found inconsistent in some cases, since there were uses of lowercase racial phrases in post-change periods. Moreover, the lowercase instances of racial items seemed debatable, considering that certain color terms were not referring to people directly. In fact, the use of capital forms for every racial item, regardless of context, would have been more suitable after the stylistic change was promoted. In other words, every color term used in any racial context should have been capitalized so that it would not elicit the inconsistent use that was proven in this study.

5.2 Further research

Considering the research that has been done in the present study, in this section some recommendations for further research are made. It seems important to develop more studies including CDA or a mixture of CDA and CL, since these allow the investigation of big amounts of data in a critical way, as was exposed in this study. This is bearing in mind the ideological consequences that news media has on society, since it has a significant impact on the way people behave, think and communicate with each other, and even how people treat others. Therefore, CDA and CL can be implemented in not just studies in linguistics, but also

in social sciences. Moreover, studies on CRT could also be used as theoretical frames for these investigations since they provide an ample historical background to understand present day relations between race and power. Further research on key factors influencing news media representation of race, for instance George Floyd's death, or Will Smith at the night of the 2022 Oscar's ceremony, could also be conducted. Lastly, the effectiveness of racial terms is also something that needs to be analyzed more critically.

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