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María Manuela Méndez Da Silveira
DePauw University

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**In the Eye of the Colonizer:
The White Racial Frame of Media Coverage on Hurricane Maria**

María Manuela Méndez Da Silveira

**DePauw University
Honor Scholar Program
Class of 2019**

**Sponsor: Dr. Leigh-Anne Goins
First Reader: Dr. Deborah Douglas
Second Reader: Dr. Mahdis Azarmandi**

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Abstract

Hurricane Maria emphasized the need for journalism. It also demonstrated potential biases present in journalism. At the time that Hurricane Maria made landfall in 2017, I had worked as News Editor for my school's newspaper and interned at a business newspaper in Puerto Rico. The one thing consistently reiterated over and over again? "Objective reporting." Nationally, there is a lot of conversation of what counts as "fake news," a term made infamous by President Donald Trump. The implication in that conversation is that "good media" is unbiased media and therefore any media outlet that has bias is disregarded as "fake news." This form of thinking reveals that what journalism wants all reporters to aspire to and all readers to expect is unbiased reporting. The biases journalists carry, especially when they are dangerously ignorant of such biases, influence the way they present information, impact the tone or tenor of a piece, and affect their word choice(s) (Feagin 2010, Ortega and Feagin 2013, Alamo-Pastrana and Hoynes 2018). Media, specifically news, has the ability to establish what is important; perhaps more importantly, the news media has the ability to advance racist stereotypes, which sustains power dynamics. The impact news media has on daily lives and their ability to influence perceptions of self and others is consistent: we read the news, we watch the news, the news is pushed to our phones, it invades social media. This space, one that engages with unacknowledged biases also creates an overabundance of news, while silencing and erasing the voices of those who are marginalized. I situate my thesis in this space, one of hyper-visibility and invisibility, of cacophony and silence. This project interrogates journalistic frames and narratives that explicitly and implicitly engage racialization and racist frames. A central goal is to illuminate the effects of such discourse and to theorize its affects and effects on the idea of Puerto Rico and its citizens.

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Thank you to the friends that encouraged me along the way and believed in me when I didn’t believe in myself. Especially thank you to Gabriella Mable Marie Hegedorn. Thank you for validating my frustration and all those study breaks that were probably to many but made this process all the more worth it.

Last but not least, to Puerto Rico. This project is far from perfect but if it wasn’t about something I am so passionate about I would have not been able to finish it. Puerto Rico will always be my home and I am grateful everyday to have the privilege of being Puerto Rico.

Forward

It was the silence. After Hurricane Maria and all the chaos it created, there was just silence. As if everything, even nature, needed a moment to recover after the strongest hurricane in Puerto Rico's history made landfall on September 20, 2017. My mom says that it was that eerie quiet that shocked her the most because of the way she could feel the silence. It was a silence that also brought on a forced lull of information because the damage to the electrical grid shut down all forms of communication. I was not in Puerto Rico for the hurricane, and therefore my experience was different to that of my family's. While they always talk about the silence, what I remember is the flood of news stories. I kept refreshing my feed every five minutes, trying to get whatever information I could about what was happening in Puerto Rico. The videos of the 175 mph winds blowing roofs off of buildings, the people on social media sharing their experiences and asking for help, the news stories from local and national outlets, and the few and hasty conversations I was able to have with my parents were the only way I knew what was happening. I was lucky that I was even able to talk to my parents the next day since many people spent weeks without knowing if their family members were okay.

Everyday I would try calling my parents and sometimes we could get a conversation in and other times we couldn't. Moreover, while they were my main way of knowing what was happening in Puerto Rico, I was able to keep them informed over what the news was saying. I would screenshot the articles for my dad and send them through text or I would relay any information I found in our phone calls. I tried to combat the feeling of helplessness that came from not being in Puerto Rico by reading a lot of different articles so that I could keep myself informed. While in the past I had kept up with the news and worked at two newspapers, the

manner in which I saw news changed after Hurricane Maria. The importance of news articles became even more clear when all the information I could get was coming from either news articles or from Facebook posts by people in Puerto Rico. After the first two weeks, during which there were a lot of news stories about what was happening in Puerto Rico, there was a reduction in the amount of news stories and the information in those articles. I was frustrated with the lack of information coming from the news and started getting the majority of my information from Facebook. After what seemed like a cacophony of sounds, the eerie silence crept back. It was not the lack of stories that drove the silence, but the stopping of agency, of voice, of humanity from Puerto Ricans and the place I call home. I situate my thesis in this space, one of hyper-visibility and invisibility, of cacophony and silence. This project interrogates journalistic frames and narratives that explicitly and implicitly engage racialization and racist frames. A central goal is to illuminate the effects of such discourse and to theorize its affects and effects on the idea of Puerto Rico and its citizens.

Introduction

Hurricane Maria not only emphasized the need for journalism, but also the bias present in journalism. At the time that Hurricane Maria made landfall in 2017, I had worked as News Editor for my school's newspaper and interned at a business newspaper in Puerto Rico. The one thing consistently reiterated over and over again? "Objective reporting." Nationally, there is a lot of conversation of what counts as "fake news," a term made infamous by President Donald Trump. While Trump uses this term to refer to media that does not report what he wants, "fake news" refers to media that he or others deem as biased. The implication in that conversation is that "good media" is unbiased media and therefore any media outlet that has bias is disregarded as "fake news." This form of thinking reveals that what journalism wants all reporters to aspire to and all readers to expect is unbiased reporting. However, unbiased reporting, as this project will demonstrate is unattainable because the human beings that are creating the content have their own biases that transfer into their reporting. Further, the narrative of "fake news" is a fallacy itself. News is not fake, whether biased, unfair, or disliked. The usage of the term is an intentional sleight of hand at best, and gaslighting at worst: the claim elides the lies used repositioning blame to those who challenge its legitimacy.

Despite the repeated calls for "objectivity," objective news and objective reporting, similar to fake news, are fallacies. Bias, including implicit bias, is a consistent component of the human existence. The biases journalists carry, especially when they are dangerously ignorant of such biases, influence the way they present information, impact the tone or tenor of a piece, and affect their word choice(s) (Feagin 2010, Ortega and Feagin 2013, Alamo-Pastrana and Hoynes 2018). Media, specifically news, has the ability to establish what is important; perhaps more

importantly, the news media has the ability to advance racist stereotypes, which sustains power dynamics. The impact news media has on daily lives and their ability to influence perceptions of self and others is consistent: we read the news, we watch the news, the news is pushed to our phones, it invades social media.

News outlets choose what news they cover based on what they consider “newsworthy.” The belief that something is ‘newsworthy’ is not universal, it is instead informed by thoughts, perceptions, editors, and biases -biases that shape and are shaped by what a journalist, one in the writer’s room, or even a commentator deems important. Bourdieu establishes in *On Television* that “the very fact of reporting, of putting on record as a reporter, always implies a social construction of reality that can mobilize (or demobilize) individuals or groups” (1998: 21). As journalists create their own, and in turn our realities of the world around us, the journalism industry attempts to erase the fact that journalists are *human* (Alamo-Pastrana and Hoynes 2018). Through dehumanizing the journalistic process, journalists erase the power dynamics that are inherent in the process of creating media content. From the people journalists interview, the ordering of quotes in an article, to how they organize information, journalists prioritize information and present a cultivated and capturing story that informs the reader about (the idea of) the world. Journalists, whether consciously or unconsciously and irrespective of intent, create realities. Despite the ‘sense’ it may make to produce the news in this way -I am a journalist, I produce news- it remains a dangerous endeavor when there is no acknowledgement, or an intentional erasure of bias.

I argue, and through this project demonstrate the danger of elided, erased, or ignored implicit and explicit bias(es). The theoretical frame I use to situate this project explicates the

danger. I begin to outline the frame here as it is imperative to understand why the coverage of Hurricane Maria reflected the white racial frame and accentuated Puerto Rico's unequal relationship with the United States. Journalists' biases became clear in their approach to reporting and understanding the way the white racial frame works explicates the dangerous impact that denying bias can have.

Contextualizing the White Racial Frame

The United States and other countries that participate within whiteness as a structure, or that privilege white bodies and white spaces are bound within, by, and through the White Racial Frame (Feagin 2010, Ortega and Feagin 2013). This is the danger: whiteness as a structure, and in tandem with white nationalistic discourses advance racist policies and language. Historically these discourses and de jure policies were overt and clear: separate but equal, colonies and colonial empires, anti-miscegenation laws. Contemporarily, through colorblind, post-racial, or dog-whistle narratives or de facto policies, it is less clear though equally impactful.

Within the media this has meant that newsrooms in the United States are predominantly white. In comparison to the overall U.S workforce, newsroom employees are more likely to be white, according to the Pew Research Center. In 2018, they released a report that stated that 77 percent of the newsroom employees are non-Hispanic white while 65 percent are non-Hispanic white in all the U.S. workforce. The demographics of newsrooms affects the reporting because when deciding what is newsworthy, journalists "rely upon their own experiences with and feedback from within their social circles" (Alamo-Pastrana and Hoynes 2018).

Though one might argue this clearly means newsrooms in the United States are racially biased, this does not mean those who are not white, or newsrooms in non-white spaces cannot

articulate or engage with a racialized and racially biased frame. Instead, it means that the norms and policies associated with newsroom policies and practices have a foundational frame. Said differently, this foundational frame, “from which a substantial majority of white Americans--as well as other seeking to conform to white norms--view our highly racialized society” influences and impacts the discourses, language, and narratives used within journalism (Feagin 2010: 3). Therefore, what the mainstream media produces come from the perspective of white people, it is created for a white audience, it leaves out other communities and ignores and misrepresents their narratives and experiences. This became clear in the coverage of Hurricane Maria because news stories tended to lack narratives from people in Puerto Rico. Many stories I read focused on what Trump had tweeted and not on what the people in Puerto Rico, their experiences, the effects of (neo)colonialism after Hurricane Maria.

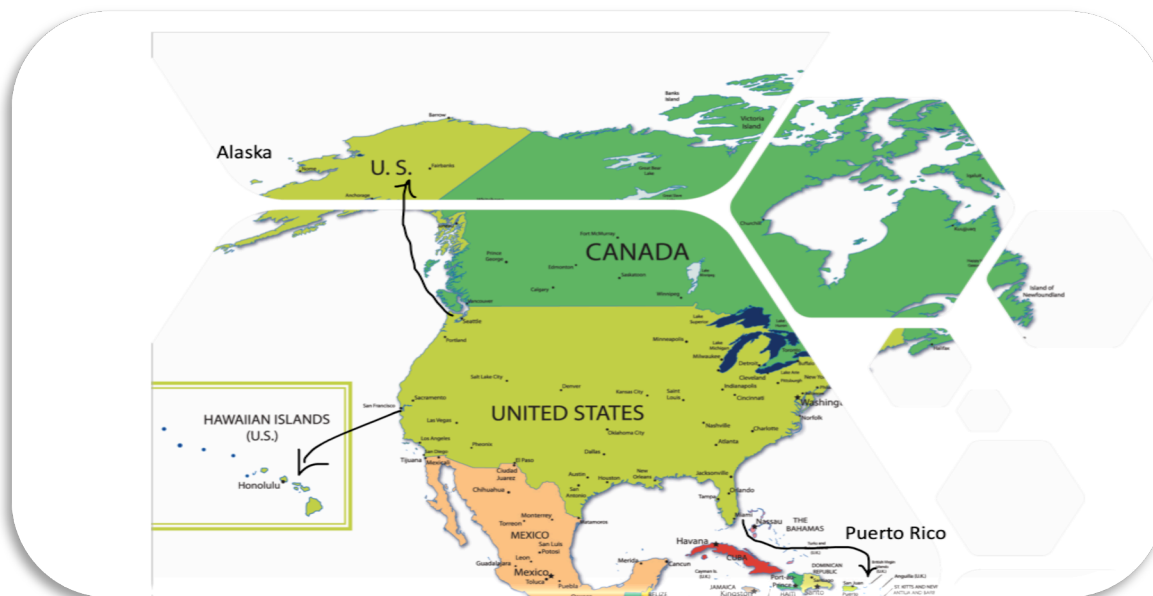
Situating Puerto Rico, Explicating Racialization

Puerto Rico has been a colony of the United States for 122 years. As Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin (2002) argue, imperialism incorporates the practice, theory, and attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory. Colonialism, almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the intentional implanting of settlements on distant territory. The effects of colonialism, even when colonized by a settler nation and not a colonial empire remain. One such consequence is rule without consent, or the inability to vote for the Nation’s leader, while that leader has the potential to impact one’s daily life.

Despite the length of time as a colonial territory, many -including myself- fail to understand its full meaning. I realized what that meant rather late in my life. I still remember the day I fully understood what being a territory of the United States meant. My dad was driving me

to school, listening to the news as usual and they were talking about Obama's 2004 presidential campaign in regards to whether he would visit Puerto Rico. Almost absentmindedly, I asked my dad if he was going to vote for Obama, and I was shocked when he told me that Puerto Ricans cannot vote for the President. I just stared blankly at my dad and then started asking a million questions about how the governing functions were distributed as I questioned a democracy did not allow 3.4 million people to vote for the person who governs them. I would like to say that after this I was always more aware of how colonialism affected daily life in Puerto Rico; however, that is not the case. Going to college in another continent revealed the way that Puerto Ricans are racialized as well as the racism that exists within Puerto Rico.

While many Puerto Ricans may identify as White as they did in the 2000 census, in the eyes of the United States as an effect of the colonial status, Puerto Ricans are seen as the other (Alamo-Pastrana and Hoynes 2018, Santory-Jorge, Luis Aviles, Martinez-Cruzado, and Martinez 2009). In many ways Puerto Rico does not fit into what many imagine or consider "American." This may stem from the distance, that Puerto Rico is an Island, or that its 'inhabitants' did not speak English. The right to dominate takes multiple forms, within a history of imperialism, difference turned in to dominance through racialization of skin tones, of hair types, and of language. Despite claims that Puerto Rico seems 'foreign' and not 'American' due to its non-contiguous nature or its distance. However, as demonstrated in the map below, Alaska is similar positioned as non-contiguous as is Hawaii.



What remains and what lingers in the space of colonialism in the modern era, or neocolonialism, is the effect of racialization. A portion of this results from Puerto Rico's main language, Spanish, while it also surrounds the denigration of Brown and Black bodies.

One tangible and consequential effect of being a territory is that residents of Puerto Rico cannot participate in politics outside of their local government elections because territories do not have that power. While people in Puerto Rico can vote in the presidential primaries, they cannot vote in the main election and only have one non-voting representative in Congress. Both aspects of being Puerto Rican affect the manner in which Puerto Ricans and continental United States citizens engage with each other. People in Puerto Rico view themselves as Puerto Ricans first; their American citizenship is more so about the passport than an identity. Understanding the power dynamics between Puerto Rico and the United States become critical in order to contextualize the effects and media coverage of Hurricane Maria.

Journalists tend to claim objectivity in coverage; however, the reality is that objectivity is often an excuse for not naming power dynamics, erasing, or negating power dynamics. When

journalists refuse to name white supremacy or colonialism they are inadvertently allowing for the continuation of this systemic oppression. In terms of Puerto Rico, some journalists mentioned the fact that Puerto Rico is a territory of the United States in their reporting but did not expand on what that meant, despite the fact that this status directly impacted recovery efforts.

While Puerto Rico's status is indeed a fact, stating this without further explaining what that means or how that affects the way the United States treats Puerto Rico disengages this fact from other facts that add context to the overall situation. For example, discussing the fact that Puerto Rico is an island and using that as a reason to explain the lack of aid but not engaging with the other fact that Puerto Rico can only accept imports from U.S. ships fails to fully contextualize the situation. Due to Puerto Rico's status as a United States territory, the U.S. federal government gets to dictate the requirements for Puerto Rico's imports through the Jones Act. During the hurricane there was a plea from Puerto Rico to temporarily waive this law so that Puerto Rico could accept help from other countries. The law was waived for a little over a week and made it into the news for one news cycle; however, the emphasis on Puerto as an island remained and the mention of the Jones Act was not mentioned again. I acknowledge: there is only so much information that can fit into one article. At the same time, journalists make choices: they frame stories, select whom to interview, they create compelling narratives.

This project centers the historical construction of Puerto Rico as a racialized colony to understand and theorize how that may have influenced or affected media coverage, journalistic responses, and the effects of paternalistic and racialized discourse on perceptions of Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans, and those directly impacted by the hurricane.

Review of Relevant Literature

This project centers two conversations -the White Racial Frame and Racialization- to deconstruct the coverage of Hurricane Maria as well as articulate the potential effects of racialized discourse on journalistic writings. The white racial frame examines the historical construction of, engagement with, and reliance on white supremacist discourse, and outlines how the structure of race, racism, and racialization influence individual engagement and perceptions, mediated representations, and institutional systems and structures. The conceptualization of the white racial frame provides a lens to examine mediated discourse and constructions of Puerto Rico. Though racialization is a component of the white racial frame, I intentionally separate the process as it provides a lens that situates the effects of racialization and discusses the *work* of framing Puerto Rico, those with Puerto Rican citizenship, and the expectation of nationalistic (white centric) assimilation.

The White Racial Frame

Throughout my research I engage with and extend Feagin's (2010) articulation of the white racial frame. In *The White Racial Frame: Centuries of Racial Framing and Counter-Framing* Feagin defines this frame as "an overarching worldview, one that encompasses important racial ideas, terms, images, emotions, and interpretations" (2010:3). This frame perpetuates white supremacy in an attempt to maintain the racial structures of the United States that have existed since colonization. Therefore, the white racial frame does not only exist of a way to understand the world, but also a device to maintain white supremacy. As a dominant frame, the white racial frame permeates structures, systems, laws, regulations, and policies. Further, the discourses and narratives advanced within the frame exist within the media, where

television shows, movies, and news present racist stereotypes, cartographies of knowledge/power, and images of white saviors that empower, embolden and rationalize racism.

The white racial frame does not just exist in words on paper or images on a screen, it, through consistent enactment across society has the power to both elicit and justify discriminatory actions (Feagin 2010). Thus, the white racial frame creates a cycle of generating and substantiating racist ideas as well as actions. Within the literature that examines the white racial frame, there are multiple conversations that range from deconstructing films (Ortega and Feagin 2013), the false narrative of objectivity in journalism (Alamo-Pastrana and Hoynes 2018), to the differing ways that Black and Latinx victims are represented differently to white victims (Slakoff and Brennan 2017).

Mediated Tactics

An important aspect of the white racial frame is the manner in which it manifests itself throughout different forms of media. Frank Ortega and Feagin's article "Framing: The Undying White Racial Frame" discuss the subframes that work to promote white supremacy through focusing on the pro-white and anti-Other subframes. Ortega and Feagin demonstrate how the white racial frame does not always exist in an obvious way as they analyze these subframes in the film *Despicable Me 2* through examining the way the two Latino characters are represented (2013). The film reveals Eduardo, a Mexican restaurant owner and Antonio's father, to be the villain of the film named El Macho. Eduardo's role as a monster who lacks a moral compass but does have a fake Spanish accent creates a caricature of Latinx people as well as perpetuate the narrative that their main motivation in life is to plot against white people (Ortega and Feagin 2016). Moreover, Antonio who serves the purpose of Margo's, Gru's daughter, love interest is

characterized as only wanting a sexual relationship and Gru treats him as a threat to Margo's white purity (Ortega and Feagin 2016). The children's film presents racist stereotypes of Latino men as sexual, sneaky, and dangerous that exposes children of all backgrounds to this racist framing that tells them they should fear Latino men (Ortega and Feagin 2016).

While Antonio and Eduardo are only one representation of Latino men, as Feagin established, the white racial frame is an "overarching worldview" that both perpetuates and creates racist stereotypes (Feagin 2010: 3). Through the white racial frame these negative stereotypes of Latino men get repeated while white people exist throughout the media in differing roles. Ortega and Feagin assert that "white roles range from villains to heroes to saviors without serious repercussions, whereas nondominant groups are perceived in predictably stereotyped roles as criminals, comic relief, and sexual objects" (28). The pro-white and anti-Other subframe clearly promote limiting representations of marginalized groups by presenting white as universal and everyone else as "other."

Part of the anti-Other subframe stems from a process of dehumanization of racialized groups, and Ortega and Feagin exemplify this through the representation of former President Barack Obama in different news media. They point to a specific *New York Post* cartoon that presented an imagery which alluded to Obama as a chimpanzee who had been shot. As Ortega and Feagin discuss, the cartoon operates within the white racial frame through dehumanizing Obama while also presenting him as a criminal (2016). They establish that the "animalistic anti-black framing is integral to maintaining white supremacy in America and this precise framing mechanism continues to scare white America into complicity with white power structures" (Ortega and Feagin: 25). Like *Despicable Me 2*, the white racial frame works to create a fear in

white people by presenting that “overarching worldview” that others nondominant groups through racist stereotypes (Feagin 2010). Apart from the importance that the process of dehumanization holds within the white racial frame, they also point to one of the most integral aspect of this frame: the tactics used to keep this frame alive.

Ortega and Feagin outline tactics utilized white people to sustain the white racial frame and in turn, white supremacy. Two tactics are relevant to this research: fear of the “other” and denial. Members of the news media repeatedly engage both tactics. For example, in Ortega and Feagin’s conversation of this cartoon, they point out that not only did the artist deny that the cartoon is racist, but also did not care about the national black community’s reaction to the racist cartoon (2016). Instead, in an interview on CNN, the artist claimed that the cartoon is about the stimulus bill and he didn’t see how Obama could be connected to the art that he created. The reaction from the *New York Post* cartoon reflects the false objectivity that the journalistic industry uses “to conceal its own long-standing whiteness” (Alamo-Pastrana and Hoynes 2018: 11).

Carlos Alamo-Pastrana and William Hoynes point to the dangers of journalism’s false objectivity in the article “Racialization of News: Constructing and Challenging Professional Journalism as ‘White Media’.” They focus on the emergence of the Black press as “an outlet that also made visible the discrimination experienced by African Americans...” Alamo-Pastrana and Hoynes 2018: 8). While I do not focus on the Black press in my research, I bring this into the conversation to demonstrate that conversation about counternarratives exist as does alternative media. Both of which demonstrate the ability of the journalism industry and journalists to create media coverage that does not participate in the white racial frame and center whiteness under the

veil of objectivity. Moreover, as Alamo-Pastrana and Hoynes demonstrate, the content expressed and used in some Black press center anti-racist discourse, or engage with narratives that actively reframe whiteness and white supremacy as systems of oppression. Their work reveals the intentional erasure of, or perniciously ignorant engagement with the white racial frame; further it becomes clear that such engagements and entanglements maintain inequalities and further marginalize racialized groups.

The challenge to their work argues that paying attention to racism, articulating the effects of white supremacy, and centering the experience of the oppressed challenges objectivity and only tells ‘one side’ of a story. While the much of mainstream (white) media relies on falsely objective journalism that ignore and deny power structures, those within the ‘Black press are more likely to report the effects of racists structures. Alamo-Pastrana and Hoynes discussion of the Black Press exemplifies that pointing to racist systems in news coverage does not mean a news article falls under the opinions section. However, the white media uses the claim of objectivity as a tactic to center whiteness in their coverage and sustain the white racial frame. Mainstream journalism, which is predominantly white, “attempts to erase the traces of the humans that produce journalistic knowledge” (Alamo- Pastrana and Hoynes 2018: 11). Thus, through denying that journalistic knowledge comes from human beings who have their own biases, journalists push an uncritical “overarching worldview” where “worldview” just means white view (Feagin 2010: 3).

José Antonio Padín points to the effect of that “worldview” in “The Normative Mulattoes: The Press, Latinos, and the Racial Climate On the Moving Immigration Frontier” and argues that racism survives “because the symbolic worldview that undergirds it is continually

propagated by the media in general and the news in particular” (Padín 2005: 53). Similar to the previous scholars, Padín emphasizes the effect of the media and the manner it functions within the white racial frame. He discusses how journalism “continues to taint the public reputations of nonwhite populations, not by explicitly expounding outdated racist doctrine, but through a brisk traffic in unwarranted associations between “racial” groups and a variety of objectionable behaviors” (Padín 2010: 53). While the language that Padín uses takes agency away from the people of color whose “reputations” he discusses, the different approach that journalism has to perpetuating the white racial frame is relevant to its impact. The cartoon that Ortega and Feagin discuss does not have Obama’s name anywhere; however, that does not mean that the image of two police officers pointing a gun at a chimpanzee that has been shot is not racist. As Ortega and Feagin argue, the image carries racist and gendered/sexual implications that exemplifies the anti-Other and pro-white subframes within the white racial frame; however, the artist gets away with saying it’s just a cartoon due to journalism’s established foundation of normalizing and praising false objectivity (2013). Therefore, as Alamo-Pastrana and Hoynes demonstrate and Padín points out, part of journalism’s ability to conceal its whiteness as well as perpetuate racist stereotypes lies in the subtlety with which journalists work within this dominant frame.

The lure of the white racial frame in journalism comes from its lack of challenge to the “mental structures” of not only white journalists and readers but also those who benefit from white privilege (Bourdieu 1998: 45). Adding to this conversation, Pierre Bourdieu in *On Television*, examines the impact that journalism has in society and specifically points to the way that it serves as a sort of archive for history. Bourdieu also highlights the privilege that journalism has as an industry due to its “de facto monopoly on the large scale informational

instruments of production and diffusion of information” (Bourdieu 1998: 40). While Ortega and Feagin make it clear that there are alternative media sources that exist within Black Press, mainstream white media has maintained its dominance mostly due to the white racial frame. The “monopoly” that white media has, according to Bourdieu, is dangerous because of the censorship inherent in journalistic practices (1998). Journalism, usually understood as white media, has the power to censor the information for consumers because journalists “retain only the things capable of interesting them and are keeping their attention” (Bourdieu 1998: 47). Therefore, journalism exists in a space where not only is there consistent false objectivity, but the value of the news stories is decided in newsrooms that are predominantly white. Journalists’ ability to decide what is newsworthy is relevant to this research because the white racial frame within journalism is not only the way stories are framed, but also what stories get published.

The censorship that Bourdieu points to also relates to the stories that never make it to the page as well as issues that journalists ignore in their coverage. Especially when it comes to media coverage of stories that pertain to human beings, as coverage of natural disasters usually does, there is a certain de-contextualizing that occurs. Bourdieu argues that in human interest stories, journalists “depoliticize and reduce what goes on in the world to the level of anecdote or scandal” (1998: 51). While I would argue that the act of reducing people’s experiences to anecdote or scandal is anything but apolitical, there is a process of simplification that serves to maintain power structures. I acknowledge that journalists can only fit so much into one article; however, it is also true that journalists reduce articles to anecdotes as a way to make their content palpable to their white reader. When it comes to media coverage of marginalized communities, the process of simplification is usually at the cost of the humanization of the source and the

marginalized community as a whole. For example, although Ortega and Feagin's example of *Despicable Me 2* is obviously not a news article, this film does exemplify the effects of reducing people's experiences to scandal or anecdote. Eduardo/ El Macho is reduced to a scandalous, sexualized, and dramatic character in order to get laughs from the viewers.

Another important tactic of the white racial frame is its ability to place blame on the communities that it excludes. Travis Dixon enters this conversation of relevant literature, pointing to the fact that journalists tend to place blame on racialized communities and portray white people as the heroes or the victims (2017). Dixon identifies the "ethnic blame" discourse in "Good Guys Are Still Always in White? Positive Change and Continued Misrepresentation of Race and Crime on Local Television News," which adds to the conversation that Ortega and Feagin bring forward about the pro--white and anti-Other subframes. Ethnic blame, as Dixon defines it, "posits that White audience members are more susceptible to narratives in which ethnic outgroups are the perpetrators and Whites are either the victims or the heroes (officers)" (2017: 786). Dixon conducted a content analysis of Los Angeles television news programs to examine how the media represented different groups throughout the media coverage and what roles fulfill different groups fulfilled. He found that the majority of Black people are represented as victims, perpetrators, and officers and Latinos are predominantly represented as perpetrators and victims (2017).

Unsurprisingly, however, white people are overrepresented as victims and officers in the media (2017). The term ethnic blame centers ethnicity instead of race because Dixon's research focuses on the way Latinos were represented in the chosen media. Nonetheless, the use of ethnic blame within the white racial frame connects to Ortega and Feagin's discussion of the pro-white

and anti-Other subframes. Therefore, ethnic blame becomes another term for a tactic that the white racial frame uses, carried out through the pro-white and anti-Other subframe.

Bringing the conversation back to the false objectivity within which journalism functions, Dixon introduces the term incognizant racism. While it was Don Heider (2000) who connected ethnic blame to incognizant racism, Dixon defines it as “everyday racism” that journalists participate in but he makes the distinction that they are oblivious to their racial bias (2017: 786). While Dixon emphasizes the journalists’ ignorance, Feagin challenges this argument when he states that “psychological researchers have found that virtually all whites are aware of major elements in the dominant racial frame, especially the age-old anti-black stereotypes, no matter what their personal inclinations to act on them may be” (Feagin 2010: 123). Therefore, while the scholarship holds a consensus that bias in the media exists and journalism reflects the white racial frame, there are still conversations about how aware white people are to their biases and privilege. For this research, however, the effects of the white racial frame as well as how this dominant frame came to be are more pertinent than white people’s awareness to the white racial frame. Throughout my research I will discuss the journalism industry’s false objectivity; however, I will not enter the conversation of whether journalists are aware of their racial bias because the impact of their coverage does not change along with their intent.

Regardless of people’s awareness, journalists’ coverage has an impact on the manner in which people view events and different communities. The cartoon that Ortega and Feagin brought into the conversation is racist regardless of whether the artist acknowledged the impact of the image. Moreover, the artist ignored the people that pointed out why the cartoon was racist and did not sway on his statement that it was just about the stimulus bill (Ortega and Feagin

2013). Thus, while there are conversations about whether white people are aware of the privilege, I will focus my discussion around the structures that uphold the white racial frame as well as its impact, which outweighs intent. Danielle Slakoff and Pauline Brennan discuss the effects of media coverage in “The Differential Representation of Latina and Black Female¹ Victims in Front-Page News Stories: A Qualitative Document Analysis,” in which they examined front-page news stories from four different U.S. newspapers (2017). The purpose of their research was to highlight the differences between the women crime victims and they demonstrate that “...misleading media messages about crime may result in inaccurate perceptions about offenders and victims” (Slakoff and Brennan 2017: 3). Slakoff and Brennan found that the narrative surrounding Latina and Black women victims centered around the lack of safety of their surroundings and depicted them as “bad” women (Slakoff and Brennan 2017).

The relevant literature that I have brought into this conversation has focused on the white racial frame and demonstrated that journalism functions on false objectiveness. Overall, this literature emphasizes that the racial narratives “do more than assist dominant and subordinate groups to make sense of the world in particular ways; they also justify and defend current racial arrangement” (Bonilla-Silva 2006: 76). The danger of what these racial narratives reinforce becomes even more precarious during times of tragic events due to the combination of the pressure of the industry to publish quickly and the “all hands on deck” mentality that leads to inexperienced and uninformed journalists reporting on areas they have no experience in.

As Bourdieu discusses, events “are reduced to the level of the absurd” when readers are “cut off from their antecedents and consequences” (Bourdieu 1998: 7). The events and places

¹ This language is transphobic and excludes non-binary folx; the only moments that I will use this terminology is in direct quotations. See limitations for more information.

only exist in the moment in time that the journalist decides with usually no context before or after the “newsworthy” event happened. The lack of contextualization attempts to depoliticize the event; however, the act of attempting to simplify events is a political act in itself (Bourdieu 1998). The context of any event is important because no natural disasters has simply natural effects or brings about natural change. Padín argues that journalists have the privilege of “writing the first draft of history;” thus, the press needs to consider whose voices they are including in this draft as well as who how they are (mis)representing their narratives (2010: 51). In an effort to avoid falling into the same decontextualization that journalists participate in, part of my relevant literature focuses on the history of Puerto Rico.

Racialization

Puerto Rico’s history is unequivocally connected to colonialism. In fact, the last change to Puerto Rico’s status happened in 1898 when the United States invaded the island and claimed it as theirs. For 121 years Puerto Rico has remained a territory of the United States with few changes to what that relationship means. One of the main points of contention in relation to Puerto Rico’s status has to do with citizenship because Puerto Ricans living in Puerto Rico cannot vote for the President of the United States nor do the 3.3² million people living have a voting representative in Congress. While Puerto Rico has a resident commissioner in DC, the people who have the ultimate say³ in decisions about Puerto Rico were not elected by Puerto

² <https://www.statista.com/topics/2421/puerto-rico/>

³ While Puerto Rico has its own governing system, the federal government has the ultimate say on decisions; especially after the Puerto Rico Oversight Management and Economic Stability Act was passed.

Ricans. Thus, Puerto Rico's American citizenship is an unequal one that denies rights to people based on their geographical position.

Puerto Rico's citizenship is important for this research because it serves as not only a representation of how people in the continental United States view Puerto Ricans differently, but also as an example of the inequalities in Puerto Rico's relationship with the continental United States. Ariana Valle discusses that relationship in "Race and the Empire-state: Puerto Ricans' Unequal U.S. Citizenship," in which she exemplifies the ways Puerto Ricans are seen as "other" and works through the complicated 121 old relationship. Valle makes the argument that "a colonial/racialized citizenship demonstrates how legacies of empire and racialization work together to mark individuals through time, geographic spaces, and generation" (2018: 37). Valle calls to the necessity of acknowledging the influence that the past can have on the present; thus, she is highlighting the importance of contextualizing any discussion of Puerto Rico. "The legacies of empire" that Valle mentions are a key point to why journalists cannot report on Puerto Rico without contextualizing how the United States has treated the island since 1898. Ileana Rodriguez-Silva also brings this to the conversation in *Silencing race: Disentangling Blackness, Colonialism, and National Identities In Puerto Rico*. She argues that "the U.S. invasion and permanent seizure of the island dislocated all components of island society, sparking Puerto Ricans to realign political factions, restructure the economy, and reformulate social identities" (Rodriguez-Silva 2012: 130). The impact that the United States' invasion had and continues to have on Puerto Rico is something that journalists ignored in their coverage and therefore something that I emphasize throughout my research.

Another aspect of Puerto Rico that is continuously ignored by those who benefit from white supremacy, but that Rodriguez-Silva discusses in her book is the way that race and racialization function within Puerto Rico. There is this idea in Puerto Rico that “Puerto Rican” stands in as the answer for race, ethnicity, and nationality; however, when they are prompted to give an answer that falls within the societal constraints for race, there are multiple answers. Jorge Duany found in his research that the majority of Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico identify as White while Puerto Ricans in the continental United States consider themselves “some other race” (Duany 2002: 160). While Duany examines the difference between Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico and those in the continental United States, he also claims that Puerto Rico has historically appeared as “a racial democracy where blacks, whites, and mulattoes lived in harmony” (Duany 2002: 160). However, this claim to harmony comes from the deep racism that exists in Puerto Rico: white Puerto Ricans prefer to avoid labeling someone’s race so they don’t have to acknowledge their own privilege (Duany 2002).

On a similar note, Lusi Santory-Jorge, Luis Aviles, Juan Carlos Martinez-Cruzado, and Doris Martinez present the idea of the “Puerto Rican race.” While they did not actually ask the participants in their research what they defined the “Puerto Rican race” as, this concept points to the racism in Puerto Rico. The “Puerto Rican race,” as Santory-Jorge et al discuss it, imagines nationality as a racial identity because “nationality is placed in a safer place when it is dressed in racial garb” (Santory 2009: 172). The idea of the “Puerto Rican race” is problematic because it ignores the racism that black Puerto Ricans experience both in Puerto Rico and in the continental United States.

The impact of the color-blindness of the idea of a “Puerto Rican race” is one that Maritza Quinones Rivera discusses in “From Trigueñita to Afro-Puerto Rican: Intersections of Racialized, Gendered, and Sexualized Body in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Mainland.” As an afro-Puerto Rican, Rivera speaks to her experience in understanding how her blackness and Puerto Ricanness could exist together as well as the difference between how she was treated in Puerto Rico versus the continental United States. In Puerto Rico there are a lot of terms that are used to replace black, such as *trigueñita*. This word is often used to describe “a wheat-hued color Puerto Rican woman, slightly toasted by the Caribbean sun” and Rivera was referred to as a *trigueñita* in Puerto Rico (Rivera 2008: 165). Through her experience of constantly being reminded that she is a *trigueñita*, Rivera demonstrates what Ramon Gutierrez and Tomas Almaguer point to in *The New Latino Studies Reader: A Twenty-First-Century Perspective*. They make the claim that while Puerto Ricans may not acknowledge different races, they are concerned “with distinguishing various shades of skin color” (Gutierrez and Almaguer 2016: 169). Rivera also discusses the impact of media in her own understanding of her identity: “As far as my own relationship with the media, I recall growing up on the island feeling invisible, not part of the dialogue, nor considered a customer or a target audience member” (Rivera 2008: 167). The impact that the media can have is seen in Rivera’s experience, which also serves as an example of how the white racial frame affects the people it excludes.

While I am not arguing that there is a “Puerto Rican race” as Santory- Jorge, Martinez-Cruzado, and Ramirez argue, the way that Puerto Ricans are perceived by people in the continental United States, specifically white people affects the media coverage. The reality is that Puerto Ricans are racialized in a different way in the United States than they are in Puerto

Rico. Puerto Ricans occupy “a racially ambiguous position” due to the way the term “Puerto Rican” attempts to conflate race, ethnicity, and nationality (Valle 2019: 29). Puerto Rican may literally refer to someone who is from Puerto Rico; however, the term is complicated due to the way this group of people are racialized in the United States as well as the diversity that exists within this community.

Two of the ways that Puerto Ricans are racialized are through language and the term “Puerto Rican.” Puerto Rico’s national language is Spanish and this specific language has been historically racialized in the United States for more than just Puerto Ricans. This form of racialization becomes one of the most effective mechanisms of white supremacy because claims against Spanish are “often hidden under the pretext of non-racial concerns for shared national communication and identity” (Davis 2014: 680). The push for people only speaking English is inherently colonial due to the implicit implication of English as the more “civilized” language that everyone should speak. It is ironic that Puerto Ricans are deemed inferior because their first language is Spanish when that language was imposed on the indigenous groups when Christopher Columbus invaded Puerto Rico in 1493. Regardless, controlling language is another way for white Americans to control people of color because having the ability to speak one’s own language on “one’s own terms creates an element of freedom that is taken away when language use is restricted.” (Davis 2014: 681). That freedom that Davis refers to in “Spanish not spoken here: Accounting for the Racialization of the Spanish Language In The Experiences of Mexican Migrants In the United States” is dangerous for white Americans because it challenges their idea of what an American should talk, act, and look like. Continental white Americans’ inability to control Puerto Ricans identity is why the other way that Puerto Ricans are racialized

is through the separation of Puerto Ricans as American citizens. Even though Puerto Ricans have the same passport that continental Americans have, Puerto Ricans are treated as “other” (Valle 2019: 29).

The relevant literature presented in this section focused on the white racial frame and racialization, both of which are ideas that will ground my own media analysis. The works in this review will frame my discussion on the white racial frame in connection to Puerto Rico. The literature that I read about Puerto Rico did not mention the white racial frame, but this research works to bring these two conversations together. In addition, within this literature, there was a lack of discussion on how the type of events also affects the media coverage in ways that may emphasize the white racial frame. Through my media analysis of the media coverage I will also examine how media coverage on natural disasters affect the way journalists approach their reporting. In addition, apart from Rivera, this literature neglects to include black Puerto Ricans in their discussion of what it means to identify as Puerto Ricans. In my media analysis I highlight how the media coverage of Hurricane Maria reflected the consistent attempt to present Puerto Ricans as a lighter skinned group. After all, whitening an entire population functions within the white racial frame because it promotes whiteness through praising those who “pass” and other the ones that don’t. Moving forward in this project, the conversation will shift to solely Puerto Rico and the white racial frame, but the literature in this review will serve as the base for that discussion.

Methods

As Tukufu Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva (2008) and Norman Fairclough (2003) indicate, to understand the media one must engage with a critical lens that deconstructs ideologies, names systems and structures, and works to elucidate the work of discourse. The critical discourse content analysis that I performed required a publication date between October 4, 2017 to October 18, 2017, approximately two weeks after the Hurricane Maria made landfall. I drew the sample from five different news outlets: El Nuevo Dia, The New York Times, Fox News, CNN, and the Orlando Sentinel. To narrow the scope of the media coverage, the sampling frame required news outlets to have a wide reach and impact (measured by notoriety and readership). For example, in December of 2017, The New York Times announced through twitter that they had reached 3.5 million paid subscribers and 130 million readers; thus, showing its wide, national reach and readership. While the number of subscribers does not correlate with or cause a particular form of coverage, it does demonstrate the importance of their publication and associated world commentary.

Dissimilar from the New York Times' readership, Fox News has a strong reach and impact as the current President, Donald Trump, has repeatedly elevated this outlet as the only legitimate news source. While Trump's praise does not define the quality of the news outlet or the media coverage, it does mark its importance. As opposed to Fox News, CNN has been called "fake news" by Trump multiple times and thus has received similar, though at times negative, attention. The attention that CNN receives from Trump and its standing as Fox News's main competition led to its inclusion. The other two outlets, the Orlando Sentinel and El Nuevo Dia, provide coverage from organizations with a more focused reporting. The Orlando Sentinel is the

primary newspaper in Orlando, which had become home to many Puerto Ricans even before Hurricane Maria (Pew Research Center 2015). The Pew Research Center found that Florida transcended New York in terms of the amount of Puerto Ricans who chose to move there. With the rise in Puerto Ricans directly impacted by Hurricane Maria, it seems likely that the newspaper would have a vested interest in covering stories and unpacking the effects of the Hurricane. El Nuevo Dia, the main newspaper in Puerto Rico offers the perspective of Puerto Rican residents, as a majority of their journalists are from the Island and live in PR. I argue the increased attention and stories surrounding the hurricane for El Nuevo Dia would be similar, if not greater than, The Orlando Sentinel.

Although there are apps that combine news from different outlets into one place (i.e. Apple News and Flipboard), people continue to visit selected news outlets to understand the world around them. Part of their decision to visit a site may be their desire to read news that confirms their world view (Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008), or to find stories related to their lived experience. The five sources selected for the media analysis provide a space to ascertain if certain news agencies have clear biased coverage, specific frames used to discuss the hurricane and its impact, or to describe the effects of journalistic gaze on readers.

The criteria for article selection required: longer than a paragraph, fall within the date range, and be written by a journalist(s) instead of a wire service. This created a sampling frame to attempted to minimize personal bias or ‘cherry picking’ of articles to prove a point. For four of the news outlets I entered the search term “Puerto Rico Hurricane Maria,” while for El Nuevo Dia I only entered “Huracán María” because it is a Puerto Rico based outlet that focuses on news about Puerto Rico. I intentionally avoided Opinion articles as the purpose of the research is to

analyze how journalists reported on the effects of Hurricane Maria. Finally, I excluded articles that did not have either Puerto Rico or Hurricane Maria.

Once I set the limitations of the search engines and based upon the search criteria, I chose the fourth article after the first article for 5 papers. In the sample there are two from each of the news outlets, except for The New York Times from which I chose three articles due to its reach. Due to the limitations of the search engines of two news outlets, the mode for article selection varied. This resulted in two distinct searches. Fox News had the most advanced search and provided the ability to filter the dates as well as restrict the search to articles that fell under the Politics, U.S., Entertainment, Tech, Science, Health, Travel, Lifestyle, World, Sports, Archive, and Story. With the restriction, this brought the total number of Fox News articles to 4,905, with very few that specifically focused on Puerto Rico or Hurricane Maria. After completing this search, I added the requirement that the headline include either Puerto Rico or Hurricane Maria. When conducting the search on the New York Times database, where restrictions existed by date, I had to manually skip Opinion articles, resulting in 67 results. El Nuevo Dia had 723 results; I further refined the list further to avoid outside pieces or opinion articles. With these criteria in place, I chose every fourth article after the first that met and repeated this procedure twice for Fox News and El Nuevo Dia, and three times for The New York Times. Unfortunately, both CNN and Orlando Sentinel did not have date restriction, which required an organization of articles by date to ensure the parameters remained. This resulted in 588 results for CNN and 1,031 for the Orlando Sentinel results. With the date range requirement, this fell to 86 and 102 respectively.

In total, I analyzed 11 articles across five major news agencies. After sample selection, I printed the articles and hand-coded before creating a coding table. The coding scheme, drawing from Slakoff and Brennan (2017) and Travis (2017), examined headline, quotes, visuals, and overall content, with the addition of examining the journalist's biography and past coverage. I counted repeated words within each article and cross-referenced these words in addition to discourse used between/across articles.

The form of media analysis used throughout this project drew from Fairclough's approach to discourse analysis in which he focuses on the language and syntax of the text. This approach to data analysis provided a space to examine, deconstruct, and situate language within larger socio-historical processes. As Fairclough (2003) argues that "language defines a certain potential, certain possibilities, and excludes others" (24). Said differently, this approach allows me to examine the word choices journalists made and to ascertain their potential effect on a reader, their understanding of the story, and in turn their perceptions of government, of Puerto Rico, of Puerto Ricans, and of agency. To accomplish this, I center the language that journalists chose throughout the analysis as means to highlight biases and to outline the potential effects of racialization and dehumanization present throughout the media coverage of Hurricane Maria.

Fairclough also emphasizes the effect of syntax due to the power dynamics the order of words can emphasize through who the writer gives agency to in the sentence. To attend to power, syntax, and agency in this discourse analysis I ground the analysis in Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva's approach to research. Their work extends power and syntax creating clear linkages to Feagin to examine logics, specifically white logics. They define white logic as "a context in which White supremacy has defined the techniques and processes of reasoning about social facts" (2008: 17).

I analyzed each article line by line three times, the first time to understand the overall focus of the article, the second time to look closely at language, and the third time to note what themes I saw. While quotes were part of my content analysis, in my second reading I especially focused on what sources the journalists used in the articles. When it came to sources, I looked at their placement within the article, length of the quotation, and the identifiers journalists used for them. I also researched the journalists who wrote the articles in order to see if they had reported on Puerto Rico before or after their article in my sample. Moreover, I checked their social media bios and whatever their outlet had as their description to contextualize how they identify in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, etc. In addition, even though my analysis focuses on language, I analyzed all the visuals that accompanied the articles. If the visual was a video, as it was for six of the articles, I watched it twice, once for content and the second time for analysis. For the five articles that had images, I focused on whether there were people pictured and if the image related to Puerto Rico or the article. After repeating this process 11 times I specifically looked at what themes the language, the sources, and the visuals reflected and narrowed down my themes to three themes: X, Y, Z.

The following table features the 11 articles that I analyzed as well as the themes present in each article. In my discussion I only focus on a few articles per theme, but this table reflects how prominent the themes were throughout the sample.

Writer	Date	Title	Outlet	Themes
Keila Lopez Alicia	October 17, 2017	González destaca que varios pueblos ya recibieron los fondos de FEMA	<i>El Nuevo Día</i>	Decontextualizing

Chris Ciaccia	October 11, 2017	Zuckerberg blasted for VR of hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico	<i>Fox News</i>	Decontextualizing, Decentering, Distancing
Marian Diaz	October 17, 2017	The Mall of San Juan reanudara sur operacions este jueves	<i>El Nuevo Día</i>	Decontextualizing
Clarisse Dickerson	October 12, 2017	Finding water in Puerto Rico: An endless game of Cat and Mouse	<i>New York Times</i>	Distancing
Clarisse Dickerson	October 16, 2017	Stranded by Maria, Puerto Ricans Get Creative to Survive	<i>New York Times</i>	Distancing
Peter Gillespie	October 18, 2017	Puerto Rico's cash crisis: 35% of banks still closed	<i>CNN</i>	Decontextualizing, Decentering, Distancing
Peter Gillespie	October 5, 2017	Puerto Ricans to Trump: Don't focus on debt, we need water	<i>CNN</i>	Decontextualizing, Decentering, Distancing
Steven Lemongello	October 17, 2017	Bill Nelson: 'Our fellow Americans are dying in Puerto Rico.'	<i>Orlando Sentinel</i>	Decontextualizing, Decentering, Distancing
Bianca Ocasio	October 4, 2017	Scenes from Puerto Rico: line bursts into river	<i>Orlando Sentinel</i>	Decontextualizing, Decentering, Distancing
Brennan Singman	October 12, 2017	Trump warns post-hurricane Puerto Rico, says FEMA won't stay 'forever.'	<i>Fox News</i>	Decontextualizing, Decentering, Distancing
Keila Thomas and S Kaplan	October 4, 2017	Hurricane damage in Puerto Rico leads to fears of drug shortages.	<i>New York Times</i>	Decontextualizing, Decentering, Distancing

Taken together, this discursive analysis examines how the language, sources, and visuals that journalists used affected the way they (mis)represented Puerto Rico. The following analysis examines the tactics, such as the anti-Other and pro-White subframes as well as false objectivity,

that journalists use to maintain the white racial frame (Ortega and Feagin 2013). Through this discussion it becomes clear how the white racial frame functions within this media coverage to other Puerto Rico and the people in Puerto Rico. I present the findings in the following section, and then provide a brief discussion of the findings and the impact of the overall media coverage.

Media Analysis

One of the most notable aspects of the media coverage on Hurricane Maria, and a primary finding of this project was the manner in which journalists reported on Puerto Rico in a way that decentered Puerto Rico as well as people in Puerto Rico. There was a consistent erasure of Puerto Ricans' narratives and agency as well as an emphasis on Puerto Rico's geography that reflected the white racial frame throughout media coverage, including this sample. Although this sample (n=11) is particularly small in comparison to the number of articles published during this period, the findings remain impactful and demonstrate the negative effects of paternalism, racialization, and dehumanization on perceptions of Puerto Ricans and Puerto Rico, an effect of racial framing. Further, the counting of repeated words and phrases, when deconstructed within the theoretical framing for this paper demonstrates that the different news outlets use similar language to frame their reporting. In the following three sections I outline the thematic analysis of the project and describe its relation to the larger field of study. I begin with Decontextualizing Puerto Rico, which focused on how journalists did not discuss Puerto Rico further than the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

Decontextualizing Puerto Rico

The first theme surrounds erasure; I focus on what journalists chose to exclude as a means to understand what is left out, what remains invisible. Journalists, across all 5 media outlets failed to contextualize the situation in Puerto Rico and only focused on Hurricane Maria, as if the disaster it caused was only related to nature. Bourdieu describes the act of isolating events from their historical context as censorship and declares that doing so reduces events to "the level of the absurd" (Bourdieu 1998: 7). If journalists would have contextualized the

aftermath of Hurricane Maria, readers would know how Puerto Rico's status affected recovery efforts more than its geographical location. Readers would have also known that Puerto Rico's financial crisis is currently in the sole hands of the federal government due to a law that Obama passed. These are just two examples of information that was not present in the media coverage, but did impact Puerto Rico's existence after Hurricane Maria.

While solely focusing on Hurricane Maria may seem like a necessity due to word limits, a journalists' job is about more than giving the reader an article with just facts on it. Fairclough makes the point that representing a social event means recontextualizing it within the context of another social event (2003). Therefore, journalists are supposed to bring multiple conversations to one space and make it coherent, not palpable. Because that is the reality of why journalists did not discuss the Puerto Rican Oversight and Management and Economic Stability Act⁴ or delve deeper into the coverage of the Jones Act did not have to do with word count. Journalists did not engage in those conversations because they would challenge their own biases of the United States as well as their readers and doing so would counter the white racial frame. Therefore, whether knowingly or unknowingly, journalists reflected the white racial frame in their lack of contextualization throughout their reporting.

Under the guise of objectivity, journalists presented a "universal" view that really only gave voice to those in power and took away agency from the people most affected by Hurricane Maria. In this sample, none of the articles in this sample discussed what exactly Puerto Rico's status means in terms of taxes or ability to vote. Even though the 11 articles came from different

⁴ A U.S. federal law, that passed in 2016 during Obama's presidency, which instituted an oversight board in Puerto Rico tasked with the job of restructuring the debt.

news outlets and only two journalists wrote more than one article within the sample, none of their reporting even attempted to challenge the narratives that centered whiteness and the continental United States. Through not discussing this power dynamic, journalists failed to fully contextualize what was happening in Puerto Rico and therefore gave more value to arguments of how Puerto Rico's geographical location made it difficult to deliver supplies. They also made way for the argument that it was Puerto Rico's debt crisis that made it impossible for federal funds to make an impact. In reality both of these arguments are based in colonialism but by journalists ignoring how Puerto Rico has historically been treated as well as current United States laws that prevent Puerto Rico's recovery, they promoted the marginalization of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans.

While all of the articles participated in this lack of contextualization there were three articles where it was most apparent. All three articles are from different media outlets and they all focus on some form of help that the United States has given to Puerto Rico. The reason I chose these three articles is because none of them discuss Puerto Rico's status a territory or how that affects the relief efforts or the damage the hurricane was able to cause in the first place. While all journalists should have contextualized Puerto Rico's historical treatment and current position, these three had the most potential to enter that conversation and did not do so.

Decontextualizing The News

The majority of journalists in this sample mentioned Puerto Rico's debt and overall the word "debt" was used 10 times. However, not once did a journalist bring up the debt and also mention PROMESA or contextualize how it was colonial laws such as the Jones Act that led to the debt itself. In a CNN article by titled "Puerto Ricans to Trump: Don't focus on the debt, we

need water,” Peter Gillespie describes Puerto Rico’s financial crisis as the “island’s financial woes,” which demeans the effect of the debt. The term “financial woes” makes it seem as if Puerto Rico’s debt is minor, has no effect on the economy, and that Puerto Ricans are being whiny in needing help. By referring to a \$70 billion debt as “financial woes,” Gillespie denied Puerto Rico’s financial crisis the seriousness it actually holds. In an article that was also published for CNNMoney, one would expect a discussion of the actual debt and the connection between the debt and the recovery. Instead, Gillespie centers the article around Trump’s visit, Trump’s views on Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans’ views on Trump. Thus, rather than providing context of the debt within Hurricane Maria, he ignores both events and focuses on Trump.

Moreover, Gillespie calls the debt ‘financial woes;’ however, he does not discuss PROMESA or the Jones Act. There is no discussion within the article of how Puerto Rico’s status as a territory contributed to its debt. In addition, he only mentions that Puerto Rico is a United States territory and the way he frames the statement denies any hope of serving the function of contextualizing. After a Puerto Rican resident, Yvette Nevares, calls Puerto Rico a country, Gillespie states: “Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory, though many on the island refer to it as a country.” While the first half of his statement is true, the way he frames it patronizes Nevares rather than contextualize Puerto Rico’s situation. The journalist chose to include this quote and to follow it up with his correction; however, he does not offer any information of what it means to be a territory. One of the main reasons that explaining Puerto Rico’s relationship with the United States is vital is due to the lack of knowledge that people in the continental United States have about not only Puerto Rico but all of the territories that the United States owns. The reality is that Puerto Rico has historically been pushed to the side and changing what it is referred to as

will not change its colonial status; however, acknowledging that it is a colony conceptualizes the reality of Puerto Rico for residents.

Steven Lemongello's writing also lacks any explanation of Puerto Rico's status in his article "Bill Nelson: 'Our fellow Americans are dying in Puerto Rico'." The article focused on Bill Nelson's speech in Congress about his visit to Puerto Rico. His speech, as referenced in the headline, meant to emphasize that "our fellow Americans are dying." While Nelson's statement is factually correct. Lemongello does not contextualize why there would be a question of whether Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens nor are there any quotes by anyone that is not Nelson. The article centers Nelson's view of Puerto Rico and his visit to Puerto Rico in a way that does not actually tell the reader what is happening in Puerto Rico. All that the reader can gather by the end of the article is that Puerto Rico is an island that Nelson visited and that you should care because there are "fellow Americans" there. The journalist does not contextualize what Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States has been and there is no detailed explanation of why exactly people are dying apart from the one reference to Hurricane Maria. By not contextualizing Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States, the journalist also leaves room for interpretation of what Americans Nelson is referring to. The depth of the disassociation between Puerto Rico and the United States could lead to the interpretation that Nelson is referring to non-Puerto Ricans living in Puerto Rico.

Some journalists claim that the lack of contextualization has to do with the limits of time and space that dominates journalism now. I acknowledge that the pressure to produce content quickly is real. However, *The New York Times* article "Hurricane Damage in Puerto Rico Leads to Fears of Drug Shortage Nationwide" challenges the idea that journalism cannot be thorough

and timely. Katie Thomas and Sheila Kaplan give an in depth description of the pharmaceutical industry in Puerto Rico as well as the individual companies that exist in Puerto Rico. The article was particularly informative when it came to giving a background on the pharmaceutical industry in general and the benefits it provides for Puerto Rico. Thus, there was research and effort put into explaining the pharmaceutical industry in this regard; however, the information fell short when it completely centered Puerto Rico. While the two other articles were shorter, this one more so demonstrates that journalists choose to put their time and energy into certain aspects and that decision is based on their biases. If articles are used to bring attention to important events, this article shows that the aftermath of Hurricane Maria has worth because it affects the continental United States not because of the people in Puerto Rico who were affected. The journalists centered and contextualized Puerto Rico's usefulness to the United States more than the Puerto Rican employees or the way the pharmaceutical industry has taken advantage of tax cuts and workers.

Thomas and Kaplan alluded to the history of this industry's place in Puerto Rico, but they don't delve deeper into it and the paragraph is at the end of the article. Moreover, the language that they uses attempts to reverse the power dynamics: "Puerto Rico has been a hub of drug manufacturing for decades — companies were lured to the island because of tax breaks and its access to the United States market, along with skilled employees who worked for lower wages." The use of the word lured insinuates that Puerto Rico or the federal government tricked these companies into coming to Puerto Rico as if they were not taking advantage of cheap work and tax breaks. In addition, this sentence is followed by a quote from the executive director of the Puerto Rico Industrial Development Company saying that "these are some of the best jobs."

Throughout the article there is an emphasis on how amazing the pharmaceutical industry is for the “island’s economic future.” They, however, do not go deeper into the conversation; instead, always leading the conversation back to the struggles that the companies were facing. While I do not dispute that this industry does offer many jobs to Puerto Ricans, the repetition of the industry’s benefits to Puerto Rico followed by the constant mention of how terrible it would be if the companies had to leave centers the companies and not the people in Puerto Rico.

Through these articles it becomes clear that the lack of contextualization not only reflects the white racial frame because journalists are writing their stories in a way that does not threaten their privilege or that of their readers, but also because it allows them to decenter entire communities. In addition, no matter how the journalists referred to Puerto Rico, they never explained the details of the relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico was referred to as an island, commonwealth, and territory; however, not one of these journalists discussed what that meant. In this sample, there was not one article that stated how Puerto Rico is an unincorporated territory and how that means that residents are not able to vote for the President of the United States. Journalists may have to condense a lot of information into a limited number of words, but what they choose to include and exclude shows their individual biases and usually the biases of individual outlets. By not acknowledging what Puerto Rico’s status means, journalists feed into the United States’ continuous denial of present-day colonialism as well as the federal government’s role in recovery efforts.

Decentering Puerto Rico

Failure to contextualize is dangerous. The (un)intentional consequence of this failure, born out through this analysis, was the lack of interviews with those directly impacted by the

hurricane. When journalists did not contextualize Puerto Rico's status, what it means to be a territory, or the narratives of its current residents, they silenced the people most affected by Hurricane Maria. In lieu of including the voices of Puerto Ricans, journalists centered Trump and the United States in general. Part of the white racial frame is the use of the anti-Other and pro-white subframe that Ortega and Feagin discuss (2013). When journalists centered whiteness they promoted white people's opinions, such as Trump's to be more valuable than the historically racialized Puerto Ricans. Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva argue that white logic "classifies 'others' as people without knowledge, history, or science, as people with folklore but no culture" (2003: 17). When journalists did not interview Puerto Ricans they implied that Puerto Ricans cannot intelligently comment on what is happening in Puerto Rico. In addition, if they did interview Puerto Ricans, they framed their quotes with clarifications that insinuated Puerto Ricans need journalists to interpret what they said.

The decentering of Puerto Ricans happens most obviously through the lack of actual Puerto Ricans interviewed or quoted as sources throughout the sample. There are only six news articles that included interviews with Puerto Rican residents and within those six articles the placement and length of the quotes gave precedent to non-Puerto Rican sources. In multiple articles within this sample there was a clear emphasis on what Trump said about Puerto Rico, while narratives of people in Puerto Rico were left at the end of the article -unnoticed, unframed, and positioned as unimportant. For example, in a Fox News article by Brooke Singman titled "Trump warns post-hurricane Puerto Rico, says FEMA won't stay 'forever'," Trump's tweets are the main source in the article. Most of the article is focused around his tweets and Singman does not challenge what the tweets say and simply quotes the series of tweets word for word. The

sections of the article that are not just pictures of Trump's tweets or his tweets in text centers federal politicians' opinions of Trump's tweet. The reporter gives Trump yet another platform to present his opinions instead of reporting on what FEMA is doing in Puerto Rico or providing information on any specifics of what is happening in Puerto Rico. Instead, the journalist situates Trump in a position of power over Puerto Rico throughout the article, as she does in the headline. The statement "Trump warns post-hurricane Puerto Rico" gives Trump power as not only the agent of the sentence, but also as someone with the ability to "warn" Puerto Rico. Trump as someone who has the power to "warn" in contrast with Puerto Rico that exists simply as "post-hurricane" assigns all agency to Trump and strips Puerto Rico of any independence from him or from its current situation.

Not only does the article exclude the narratives of Puerto Ricans, the only mention of a Puerto Rican politician is the mayor of San Juan, Carmen Yulin, but Singman does not even mention her by name. Yulin is only referred to as "the San Juan mayor" who Trump "had an intermittent feud with." While that is what she was most known for in the continental U.S., her entire summary as a person should not be given in relation to Trump. While journalists within this sample did not tend to include quotes by the governor of Puerto Rico, whenever they mention him his name follows his title. In addition, for all the men politicians in this article they use their titles and background on their involvement with Puerto Rico; however, the journalist does not even name Yulin even though she is the only source who is a resident in Puerto Rico.

In an article titled "Zuckerberg blasted for VR⁵ tour of hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico" by Chris Ciaccia from Fox News. Instead of focusing on the reasons why the VR tour was

⁵ Virtual reality: a way to virtually visit places without having to physically go to that place.

insensitive or what is happening in Puerto Rico, the article serves as an outlet for Zuckerberg to explain himself. Through describing Zuckerberg's actions as "what many perceived as a tone-deaf move." The use of the past tense verb "perceived" the journalist makes it seem as if people are overreacting for saying that Zuckerberg's VR tour dehumanizes and invades Puerto Rico and those who suffered the effects of the hurricane. The journalist repeatedly mentions how people were offended but never gives them a platform nor did he interview people in Puerto Rico about their perceptions of the VR tour.

Naming is often associated with worth but if the journalists does not name these users or interview people who saw these posts, then it is easy to dismiss the comments. Not only does not naming the commentators deny their existence, it also emphasizes that this space is for Zuckerberg to explain himself not for any discussions of the colonial resemblance of VR as well as detailed (or any) information of what is happening in Puerto Rico. Through using words such as Zuckerberg "blasted" or "lambasted" to describe people's reactions, the writer victimizes Zuckerberg instead of presenting the narratives of actual victims. This article clearly centered Zuckerberg and not only decentered Puerto Rico but also incorrectly referred to it as a country. Naming things becomes particularly important in terms of power dynamics, and apart from it being incorrect to refer to Puerto Rico as a country, this wording also denies the power the U.S. has over Puerto Rico.

In a CNN article titled "Puerto Rico's cash crisis: 35% of banks still closed" Patrick Gillespie focuses on the number of banks that are still closed; however, there is very little actual description or comment on Puerto Rico apart from statistics. Instead of focusing on the people in Puerto Rico who have to deal with the effects of the cash crisis, Gillespie focuses on objects and

structures such as banks and the economy. The article only has two interviews by Puerto Rican residents, Puerto Rico governor Ricardo Rossello and “37 year old mother of two” Cely Rivera. Rossello’s interview is from the beginning of the month and Rivera’s is at the end of the article, barely giving her space in the conversation to share her narrative.

Apart from Rivera’s one quote and a short-outdated quote from the Puerto Rico governor, the journalist mentions Puerto Ricans once in this article. The following sentence recenters the banks. The subject of the first four paragraphs are not people; instead, the sentences start with “banks in Puerto Rico are,” “banks are,” “gas stations are,” and “ATMs are.” The information is factually correct; however, the way that the sentence structure works it centers the banks, the ATMs, the gas stations, etc. While all of these business are important to people, the focus on the structures themselves instead of the people who have to deal with the consequences of these structures gives agency to things rather than people. The journalist does not concern their reporting with the people in Puerto Rico or how they are dealing with the cash crisis. In addition, the limited number of sources from Puerto Rico and the lack of space given to them, limits the scope of the perspective he is presenting. There is no context The only actual description of Puerto Rico is in the lede when he states

More so, even when journalists did interview Puerto Ricans, they were not the focus of the article and many times journalists would frame quotes in a way that patronized what the people in Puerto Rico said. In Gillespie’s article titled “Puerto Ricans to Trump: Don’t focus on debt, we need water” he paraphrased a quote from Puerto Rican resident Wilma Colon. After a quote by another Puerto Rican resident describing how people have lost their houses and don’t have food, the journalist stated, “Wilma Colon was offended by Trump’s visit to a donation

center where he chucked paper towels into the crowd in a playful manner.” The language in this sentence demeans Trump’s act of *throwing* paper towels at people in Puerto Rico. Using the language such as “chucked” and in a “playful manner” infantilizes the experience of Puerto Ricans because it takes away from the offensiveness of the action and adds a “cuteness” that was not present. This was not a playful moment; this was the President of the U.S. “chucking” paper towels at survivors after telling us that this natural disaster has “thrown his budget out of whack.” Even though Colon is the subject of this sentence, the verb is in the passive form; thus, this syntax takes agency away from Colon. The person in the sentence with the power is Trump because the verb that refers to him is active, and this syntax reflects the power dynamics that this article perpetuates. Earlier in that same article Gillespie stated that “President Donald Trump again called out Puerto Rico’s debt crisis.” In this sentence Trump again has the agency and the verb “called out” makes it seem as if Puerto Rico is a petulant child that needs to be put on a time out. This patronizing language works to other Puerto Rico and the people in Puerto Rico while also centering Trump.

Decentering people, centering destruction

Within the theme of decentering Puerto Ricans, journalists also did this through the visuals that accompanied the articles. Every article had a visual of some sort, but the majority (6) of them had videos while (5) had images. However, only one of the videos featured people in Puerto Rico, and the video did not even relate to the article. In Lemongello’s article about Nelson’s speech he included a video about the garbage and the rubble that lines the streets of Puerto Rico, and it includes interviews from Puerto Rican residents sharing their opinions on the effects of the garbage. However, the video was filmed a year after the article was published so

there is no way to know what visual originally accompanied the article. In terms of images, there were 5 articles where the first visual in the article was a picture in Puerto Rico. However, only one of the articles features a Puerto Ricans as its main photo: *El Nuevo Dia* had a headshot of the resident commissioner Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colon in an article titled “The Mall of San Juan reanudara sus operaciones este jueves.” All the other images that were featured as first in the article were of buildings or destroyed infrastructure.

The effect of emphasizing the destruction and excluding the people is the same as not interviewing Puerto Ricans. When journalists present Puerto Rico as simply destroyed infrastructure, they dehumanize the people in Puerto Rico. It is more than the place where Hurricane Maria landed, it is a place with people whose lives were uprooted by both this natural disaster and then by the poor recovery efforts. While journalists may have been attempting to show the destruction of Hurricane Maria in order to get people to care, that intent in itself and their approach shows the white racial frame. Through creating an image of Puerto Rico as destroyed journalists accentuate Puerto Rico’ need for help; therefore, engaging in a pro-white subframe (Ortega and Feagin 2013). It is normal that any place would need help after a Category 4 hurricane, but when journalists present Puerto Rico as needing help and the agents in the continental United States as having the ability to do so they are centering and praising the people who help as well as decentering and chastising the people in Puerto Rico.

Distancing Puerto Rico

There are many different ways to refer to Puerto Rico, all of which point to its colonial history. Even the name Puerto Rico, which translates into rich port serves as a reminder of how Puerto Rico was used by Spain and later the United States for its natural resources as well as its

geographical location. Journalists also referred to Puerto Rico as a commonwealth and a territory, both of which are terms that serve as stand-in for “colony” in an attempt to erase the power dynamics. Those power dynamics are illustrated by the United States’ control over Puerto Rico’s shipments as well as its budget due to PROMESA. Journalists emphasized other factors that impacted the recovery efforts such as the debt and Puerto Rico’s geographical location, but did not stray away from acknowledging those power dynamics. This tactic pushes readers to place blame on Puerto Rico and the people in Puerto Rico rather than any structure related to the continental United States.

By doing so the journalists promote the white racial frame as they maintain their privilege as well as their positions of power, and their readers get to do the same. They make use of the anti-Other and pro-white subframes by distancing Puerto Rico as “other” and through demeaning the people in Puerto Rico. Thus, through the white racial frame and its subframes, Puerto Rico becomes this far away land with a lot of destruction, which journalists and readers alike can

Slakoff and Brennan discuss how “crime stories that highlight negative environmental conditions, readers tend to believe that crime cannot be avoided, which diminishes a story’s shock value” (Slakoff and Brennan 2017: 19). The most common way that journalists referred to Puerto Rico, within this sample, was as the “island.” While Puerto Rico is in fact an island, the reference to Puerto Rico as such predominantly happened when journalists were describing the lack of resources in Puerto Rico as well as the resources that were imported from the continental United States. Thus, the use of the word “island” becomes a reminder for readers of how Puerto Rico is not in the continental US and distances the people and the struggle happening on said island. Moreover, the word island and its connotations makes it seem as if the damage brought

by Hurricane Maria was both unavoidable and Puerto Rico's fault for being an island. Overall, journalists used the word "island" 47 times, which was more than they used the word Puerto Rico (41).

In their article about how the damage caused by Hurricane Maria led to drug shortages "nationwide," Thomas and Kaplan refer to Puerto Rico as an island 8 times and mostly in reference to the physical isolation that being an island causes. Twice the article refers to how the pharmaceutical industry is the only savior for "the island's economic recovery." This language makes it seem as if the continental United States does not have anything to do with Puerto Rico's debt. In reality, due to PROMESA, Puerto Rico's debt is being handled by an oversight board that was selected by members of Congress and Obama. Therefore, while it is Puerto Rico's debt, Puerto Rico is a territory of the United States and thus separating the two does not correctly represent the situation. If the journalist were discussing the debt of a state would they still use such distancing language? In addition, Gillespie states that "returning the drug and device industry to its feet, however, is crucial for ensuring the island's economic recovery as well as safeguarding the supply of medicines and devices to the rest of the United States." The use of the word "island" and "rest of the United States" in the same sentence demonstrates the tension of Puerto Rico belonging but not quite. Not only is the island's economy separated from that of the United States, it is what matters the most. The article emphasizes how Puerto Rico needs to recover its economy; however, when it mentions the people in the United States they emphasize the well-being of the people who need their medicine.

In the *New York Times* article titled "Finding Water in Puerto Rico: An Endless Game of Cat and Mouse" Caitlin Dickerson refers to Puerto Rico as an island 9 times. Mostly in reference

to the difficulty of getting bottled water to the island. Through emphasizing Puerto Rico's geographical location, journalists maintain the narrative that the recovery was difficult because Puerto Rico is an island rather than because the federal government did not handle it well. Moreover, the journalist states that "People here engage in a perpetual game of cat and mouse, scouring the city for any hints of places with water to sell." Referring to Puerto Rico as "here" distances the story from people "there," insinuated to be the continental United States. A form of "us" and "them" language, this reference not only others Puerto Rico as a place but also the people.

Distancing Through Demeaning Language

Words such as "devastated," "ravaged," "destroyed," "pummeled" etc. shaped the media coverage of Hurricane Maria. This language may have been an attempt by journalists to humanize Puerto Rico; however, the effect was the opposite. While there is no doubt that Hurricane Maria caused unprecedented damage as a Category 4, the context within which this language was used demonstrates how the white racial frame is at work within the media coverage. Through repeatedly victimizing Puerto Rico in their own narrative but demeaning what Puerto Ricans were saying, journalists prime the reader to look at Puerto Rico as the "other." As journalists write their articles they may not be thinking about the biases those words hold; however, that does not lessen their impact. As Bourdieu claims, "words do things, they make things- they create phantasms, fears, and phobias, or simply false representations" (1998: 20). Therefore, when journalists use words such as "ravaged" or "pummeled," they are affecting the way readers view Puerto Rico. The use of reductive language has the effect of erasing the

very people they sought to humanize. Further, Puerto Rico as a narrative form and not a place becomes barrenness, unpeopled.

Journalists used the word “ravaged” to describe Puerto Rico multiple times. This word alludes to a Puerto Rico that has been left bare. Singman used this word in the first sentence of her article when she states that “President Trump issued a warning Thursday to hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico.” This type of language strips Puerto Rico of its agency because Trump that has the agency to “issue a warning” while Puerto Rico is presented as at the will of Trump. While in terms of legislature Trump may have power over Puerto Rico as the President, the people in Puerto Ricans are human beings with agency over themselves. In the other article by Fox News, Ciaccia refers to Puerto Rico as “ravaged” in the headline, “Zuckerberg blasted for VR of hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico” and in the article. Using the word “ravaged” in the headline has more power than using it in the article because headlines are what journalists use to engage the audience. Therefore, Ciaccia using this language in the article demonstrates that he believes this violent language will get him more views. In addition, he uses this language in the article as well when he describes Puerto Rico as a “ravaged country.” First of all, Puerto Rico is not a country and a Fox News writer referring to it as alludes to a political independence that does not exist. Ciaccia also refers to Puerto Rico as the “devastated island of Puerto Rico.” This description of Puerto Rico clearly emphasizes that it is not physically connected to the United States while also limiting its existence as only a “destroyed” one. Moreover, the syntax of the phrase is wrong because it is not an island that belongs to a bigger country rather the island is Puerto Rico.

Discussion and Conclusions

Although the sample for this thesis is small, the general tenor of findings were supported by existing literature, which demonstrate the relative exclusion and decentering of Puerto Rican voices as well as a clear racialization of Puerto Ricans. In their media coverage, journalists decontextualized, decentered, and distanced Puerto Rico and the people of Puerto Rico and reinforced the white racial frame. The articles within this sample exemplify the anti-Other and pro-white subframes that Ortega and Feagin (2013) discuss as well as the false objectivity that Alamo-Pastrana and Hoynes point to (2018). However, the danger of the white racial frame comes from its impact as well as its existence. All three themes shaped the way that Puerto Rico was viewed by the readers, and in this section I will discuss the impact of their coverage.

Throughout the three themes there is a clear avoidance in dealing with Puerto Rico's status as a territory. All 11 articles find a way to not contextualize and decenter Puerto Rico and the people in Puerto Rico. The anti-Other and pro-white subframes function to center whiteness and exclude Puerto Ricans from a conversation where they are the ones with the first-hand narratives. As a way to almost make up for their avoidance of the topic, they overcompensate with almost theatrical language that reduces Puerto Rico and the people in Puerto Rico as "ravaged" or "pummeled." The emphasis on Puerto Rico as destroyed not only defines Puerto Rico as only destroyed, it also reduces Puerto Rico's existence to Hurricane Maria. In complete contrast to this reductive language, both articles from *El Nuevo Día* refer to Puerto Rico's current situation as an "emergency." While this language may seem obvious, none of the other 9 articles in this sample used that word to describe Puerto Rico. Using "emergency" makes a difference because it emphasizes that the destruction that Hurricane Maria did cause is not normal. The

word “emergency” demonstrates that Puerto Rico may be currently recovering, but it has not and will not always be in that state.

The nine other outlets did the opposite of what both articles from *El Nuevo Día* did because instead of presenting Puerto Rico’s current situation as an “emergency,” they tried to normlize it. Fairclough states that “news reports disturbances of normality, but also their rectification” (2003: 74). Hurricane Maria was definitely a disturbance of “normal” and therefore news coverage of the event should reflect that. Any danger to “normal,” the journalist corrects by the end of the article through writing around power dynamics, distancing the destruction, or dehumanizing Puerto Rico. The consistency to “rectify” back to “normal” is the white racial frame recentering whiteness. After all, whiteness is what has been universalized while people of color have been racialized; thus, what is “normal” is what is white.

The lack of contextualization of Puerto Rico’s status gave readers permission to ignore the United States colonial past and present for that matter, a history that Hurricane Maria accentuated. At the same time, through decentering Puerto Ricans white journalists and readers were able to recenter themselves and what is pertinent to them. In addition, the patronizing tone in the articles allows for the belief in the superiority of whiteness to persist in a moment where a racialized group was resilient.

A person that was present in the majority of the news articles was Trump. While he has his own relationship with the media, journalists consistently mention his tweets in their coverage. Specifically in the case of Puerto Rico, journalists . Fox News especially gave a lot of agency to Trump in their coverage of Hurricane Maria, but both articles in this sample did not go further than describe Puerto Rico as “ravaged.” While Fox News may not be considered ‘real news,’

people are still reading their articles and getting information from them. Therefore, the news they present does have an impact.

After all, the reality is that even if news articles do not have a lot of information, they can affect people's perceptions. A main aspect of the media coverage of Hurricane Maria is the information that was missing. The absence of any conversation of PROMESA or what Puerto Rico being a territory means influenced the way readers contextualized their understanding of both Hurricane Maria and Puerto Rico. Within this sample, few articles from national media outlets offered information that would be useful to people in Puerto Rico since the majority were written for white continental United States residents. Nonetheless, regardless of who journalists were writing their articles for, the way they framed the stories reflected the white racial frame as did the clear focus of who they were writing for.

The media coverage of Hurricane Maria did not only accentuate the way Puerto Rico has been mistreated by the federal government, but also how Puerto Rico is racialized as a whole. Journalists, supposed unbiased parties, demonstrated that Puerto Rico is seen as other in the continental United States. However, the real danger is that the (mis)information that journalists distributed cost the lives of people in Puerto Rico. Instead of centering the people who were affected by Hurricane Maria journalists were too focused in maintaining the white racial frame.

Limitations

As I hope this project has shown, everyone has their biases that influence their opinions and the way they interpret information. As a white-passing Latina I acknowledge my privilege in not having my body racialized the moment I walk into a room. As a cisgender woman I acknowledge my privilege in not having my gender questioned everyday of my existence. The privileges that make up who I am a person limit my ability to contextualize events.

A limit of this project is the lack of discussion on how the way Black Puerto Ricans were excluded from the images and narratives of Hurricane Maria. This exclusion not only points to the racism of the continental United States, but also the racism in Puerto Rico. In addition, I did not discuss gender as much as is necessary to fully contextualize the media coverage. In my analysis I did notice that women were quoted more about their feelings and men about logistics. However, I did not include this in my findings and further research should examine this.

Due to time restrictions I was unable to complete interviews with Puerto Ricans or journalists as well as include more articles in my analysis. I did go through the process of getting my project approved by the Internal Review Board, and I was able to complete one interview. This interview did reflect that journalists struggle to acknowledge their biases; however, time did not permit for further interviews.

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Appendices

A. Words and Phrases

✓	WORDS AND PHRASES
10	Maria
2	Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens
10	Debt
3	Poor
8	Donald Trump
	Violence
2	Ricky Rossello
	Death toll
2	Trump tweeted
47	Island
1	Territory of the United States
2	Commonwealth
2	Tax
5	Hurricane
	Financial Crisis
3	Victim
6	Struggle/ing
	U.S. citizens
4	Devastated

✓	WORDS AND PHRASES
	Carmen Yulin Cruz
41	Puerto Rico
2	Destruction
15	San Juan
	Mayor
1	Mainland
15	Hurricane Maria
1	Financial woes
15	Storm
2	Debt crisis
2	Bankruptcy
4	Damaged
	Second-class citizens
22	People
12	Puerto Ricans
3	Pummel
3	Hurricane-ravaged
10	Residents
1	Continental U.S.

B. Media Analysis Form

WRITER:

Question	Answer
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What do they identify as?*	
Is there use of Spanish in the article?	
Who did they interview?	
Did they visit the island in their reporting?	
Did they write additional articles on Puerto Rico? What were they about?	
What time did their coverage span?	

HEADLINE WORDS AND PHRASES:

✓	WORDS AND PHRASES
	Puerto Rico
	US citizens
	Destroyed
	Trump
	Hurricane
	Financial crisis

HEADLINE QUESTIONS:

Questions	Answers
Who does the headline mention? (Trump, PR, either government, US citizens)	
Is there a sub headline?	
How much does the headline relate to the article?	

VISUAL:

Question	Answer
Number of visuals?	
What do they show?	
Who do they show?	
What does the description of the visual say?	
Where are they placed?	
Who took/recorded the visual? (Are they from a stock visuals provider?)	
How large are the visuals? Where are they located?	

CONTENT:

Questions:	Answers								
What is the focus of the article?									
Did the article emphasize the effects of Hurricane Maria? In what way?									
Quotes	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="946 703 1404 768">Number of sources</td> <td data-bbox="1404 703 1437 768"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="946 768 1404 871">Who was directly quoted? What about?</td> <td data-bbox="1404 768 1437 871"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="946 871 1404 936">Additional comments:</td> <td data-bbox="1404 871 1437 936"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="946 936 1404 980"></td> <td data-bbox="1404 936 1437 980"></td> </tr> </table>	Number of sources		Who was directly quoted? What about?		Additional comments:			
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