

RESEARCH CONNECTION

Combatting racism through film and social media

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Why this research is important

Manitoba is a diverse province, and although racism research in Manitoba does exist, the research is usually focused on specific communities or systems. But racism is not limited to particular groups or places, and

understanding the views of society broadly along with the experiences of individuals are both important. In addition to implications for social action, this research highlights discrepancies in words and actions, highlighting the ways racism impacts people in the province. Our goal was to examine how this racism shifts in response to the real-life stories of Manitobans and to illustrate that the patterns in this pushback can be used to counteract and educate.

How the research was conducted

This was a complex project involving online and phone surveys, scriptwriting, two rounds of focus groups, film creation, a film launch, the creation of a facilitation

What you need to know

After a survey of 500 Manitobans regarding their opinions and experiences of racism, we found contradictions between the province's high levels of racism and overall support for broad themes like diversity or multiculturalism, with key differences related to gender, ethnicity, age, and around who opted to remain 'neutral.' From the open-ended stories that people shared through the survey, we created four films, which we launched on social media. The films were viewed over half a million times, leading to engaged discussions in online comments. After analyzing this online data, we found that key tactics were undertaken to push back against difficult knowledge like racism, and we made suggestions for educators about how to diminish this defensiveness.

guide and toolkits of resources, and a social media comments analysis.

What the researchers found

The survey analysis revealed significant differences along gender, age, and ethnic origins for how people experienced racism, how they viewed multiculturalism and diversity, and how likely they were to choose 'neutral' as an answer. Indigenous women and women from other ethnic identities are more likely than Caucasian/white people, and more likely than men from similar backgrounds, to experience discrimination because of race, culture, or religion.

From the analysis of the films launched on social media, we found that pushback takes different forms, including hatred, defensiveness, stereotyping, fear-mongering, unsolicited explanations and advice, insults, and diminishment of suffering. However, there were significant interruptions of this pushback, including educating, sharing strategies for resilience, raising awareness, and sharing personal experiences.

How this research can be used

Learning to be actively anti-racist involves moving against the ‘flow’ of racism and white supremacy, which is observable in online spaces. Moving against the barrage of defensiveness, blame, fear, and harmful advice can be emotionally taxing and difficult. Yet, as the commenters on these films also showed, they can open up spaces for education, sharing experiences, interrupting hate, and creating awareness. This work is difficult and demanding, and care must be taken for those intentionally moving against the flow of racism, particularly in online spaces. These actions are powerful in resisting and interrupting racism. This knowledge can support educators in their efforts to proactively counter those maneuvers with further education, resources, and relationships.

About the researchers

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Keywords

Mixed methods, arts-based research, racism, anti-racism

Publications based on this research

Lam, M., Spence, S., Mayuom, A., Humphreys, D., & Osiname, A. (2023). Diminishing defensiveness in anti-racist discourse: Common pushbacks to online anti-racism content and suggestions for strategic maneuvers. *Equity in Education & Society*, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/27526461231206407>

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