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Personal Reflection About My Media Scholars Experience

A year and a half ago, when I chose UMD as my college, I was unsure which Scholars program I wanted to be a part of. I did some research looking into programs which cultivated my interest. I was a prospective math major, but wanted to be a part of a Scholars program that was completely different from my major. The reason why is because I didn't want to overstress with the amount of math work I would have done as an undergraduate student and I wanted to get a new understanding of another subject. When I arrived on the Media, Self and Society Scholars program page, I instantly knew that this would be a program that I wanted to be a part of. The topics that were mentioned on the page such as: "The Decline of Newspapers" and "Violent Video Games" were topics of interest to me and I wanted to learn more about them. Also, the various field trips mentioned such as the Newseum in Washington D.C. as well as the trip to see NBC Studios in New York perked my interest.

My initial intentions about this program was to learn more about journalism and how our society has been shaped by electronic media such as television, radio, and social media. I was also interested in hearing about the debates regarding these new forms of media and wanted to see the world from another perspective. However, I also held some worries regarding the program. As a math major, I do not like writing lengthy papers. Media, Self and Society being a journalism Scholars program, made me fear for the worst. However, I knew that the media would be something that will continue to dominate our lives in the future and I wanted to be more knowledgeable about it.

Back then, my perception of the media was very little to what it is now. I rarely followed the news and barely cared about subjects such as politics, media bias, and false information. I was more susceptible to believing anything I saw on the Internet and rarely questioned it. After three semesters of the colloquium class, I can very confidently say that my perceptions have changed. Now, especially during the 2020 presidential election and the COVID-19 pandemic, I have started to listen more to the news to get a better understanding of what's happening around me and around the world. I also learned a lot about agenda setting and learned how the media can control and manipulate our opinions to comply with their agendas. I've learned the importance of recognizing bias in the media and how to fact check information. I've also learned to not believe in everything that is published in the media.

For example, earlier this year, I was reading an article regarding the conflict between Muslims and the French. The article was displaying a clear bias by attacking the French and was explaining why Muslim nations were boycotting French products. The article kept attacking the French and made statements that they were racists and unethical for their actions. Me from two years ago, would have probably accepted what was stated in the article and moved on. However, after learning about media bias and learning how to critically analyze information in the media, I decided to do more research about the events that occurred. In my research I learned that a

French teacher was beheaded by a Muslim man after the teacher politely told her Islamic students to stand outside of the class due to an offensive topic that was a part of their history curriculum. If I hadn't done my research outside of that article, I would not have learned more about the conflict and why the French government acted in the way that they did.

Media Scholars also taught me to examine different misconceptions about the media and how the media plays a role in our lives. For example, this semester in CPMS225, I had a group presentation about violent video games and their impact on the violent behaviors seen in children. It has been often seen and stereotyped that children have become increasingly violent due to violent video games such as Call of Duty, Battlefield, and Halo. In our research of the topic, we learned that children are more likely to be violent due to their environment around them. Their family problems and surrounding friends and family are more likely to cause them to become violent than violent video games. We did learn that violent video games have shown increased aggression for short periods of time in children, however.

Being a part of this program has taught me a lot about being a critical consumer and producer of media. Being a critical consumer and producer of media is the idea of acknowledging one's own biases and as well as others. It also means to critically question what we read and find out more about an issue before we buy into what we are reading. Throughout the last three semesters, we have learned about the ethics of journalism and learned how to think like a journalist. For example, when Kobe Bryant died, we debated about the ethics of TMZ reporting about his death before it was told to his family. We discussed if journalists have the right to be first in sending out news or if they must wait until they have the full details of a story. Although I don't necessarily think that I will fall under the category of a producer of media in the future, I do know that throughout my life, I will have to write reports or present speeches which are a form of media. It is important to understand my own biases and to present information with an objective manner. I do know that in the future, I will be a critical consumer of media on social media, and when I read the news.

As a Media Scholar, I also had the opportunity to live near other Media Scholars on my floor and my building. I met many people who shared similar ideas and interests as me and others who shared completely different ideas than me. It allowed me to understand issues with a multiplicity of perspectives and to listen to the ideas of others. Discussions with people who shared similar perspectives to me also helped me solidify my own ideas as well.

One thing that I loved about Media Scholars was the fact that we were often given interactive group assignments to do. It allowed me to make new friends and to learn different perspectives about various societal debates. For example, often in class we would split up into mini discussion groups to talk about various events in the news and if we agreed or disagreed with the way that the media portrayed the event. These group assignments also allowed my group mates and I to express our creativity in unique ways. For example, for our final project in CPMS100, we were assigned to make a Scholars video about a day in the life of a College Park freshman. It was a really interesting project and experience as it allowed us to analytically think

about our daily hobbies and schedules and implement it in a creative way. My group mates and I had a lot of fun in discussing and brainstorming ideas for the video and coming up with fun clips.

On top of just learning about media, the impact it has and how to properly analyze media, Scholars meant a lot more as it also implemented community service events. For example, on Scholars Day, us Media Scholars went to D.C. Kitchen- a nonprofit organization that seeks to feed the homeless in D.C. At D.C. Kitchen, we talked to the workers there about their experiences and the people who they served the food to. We also helped prepare a meal for them by opening cans, stirring soup and cutting up vegetables. Media Scholars taught us the importance of community service and about reaching back to help our community. As a result, I think that I've been able to make a significant impact on my Scholars community in the last one and a half years

In sum, I'm truly thankful for the experiences and opportunities provided by the Media Scholars program. I learned how to creatively express topics and ideas in newer ways such as our video project. I learned to keep an open mind and listen to others who share different perspectives than my own. I learned to critically analyze media, to fact check information and to detect biases. I learned the importance of community service and giving back to the community. The various lessons and experiences that I have learned from this program will help me in the future when analyzing media, presenting reports in the workplace, and when detecting my own biases in the media that I produce.