

Jon Williams

Trapani

ENGL 211C

24 November 2018

### The Effects the Media has on Racism

Racism has occurred throughout the years but it seems to have gotten a lot worse due to the media. The media typically shows several stereotypes of multiple minorities in various television shows and movies. Even the news when it covers race and ethnic crimes, the minorities are typically shown with mugshots and handcuffed videos. Meanwhile, the white criminals aren't shown with any mugshots or video when they are being arrested. However, there are some shows that present some progress. There are shows that have a minority lead such as Scandal, Being Mary Jane, Blackish, Fresh Off the Boat, etc. When it comes to the media's influence on racial relations, it tends to be a major influencer on people.

However, there are some people who believe the opposition of racism. Justin Berg, University of North Dakota, states the idea of symbolic racism and the immigration policy. Berg states, "The primary assertion is that symbolic racism represents a latent psychological belief system that disfavors racial minorities and then emerges in dominant group members when they are confronted with certain political symbols, resulting in the dominant group's opposition to various race- targeted policies (Berg)". When it came to President Trump's ban from people immigrating from 7 countries considered Muslim, there was an uproar coming from people say that they should be banned because of what they believed. Berg states, "Thus, native-born Americans who score higher on measures of symbolic racism are predicted to oppose any

pro-immigrant policies, independent of the influence of other individual characteristics and regardless of the impact of the sociodemographic context of their communities” (Berg). So the people who agree with symbolic racism also agree with racism in the media and like the way the media is at this moment in time in the United States. There are content with the way everything is.

As an effect of the media has on race, the people has their only conception on minorities especially African Americans. Most people have a negative conception of African Americans. Damion Waymer, Virginia Tech University, states that the African American struggle although it might not be the same as the next, it is still relatively the same struggle. According to Waymer, “We are two men from two different walks of life who still share, in part, one identity. Before this group of women, men, Blacks, Whites, Asians, Native Americans, Mexican Americans, professors, and students, we shared our perception of Black male identity”(Waymer 969). In the article, there were 25 students and two black men who took part in an experiment. Meanwhile, the two men gave their experiences while one seems like Malcolm X while the other is like Martin Luther King Jr. on the way that something needs to be done. Even though the ideologies are different, the experiences and struggles are the same. The struggles are the what made the authors decide to write this article together.

Besides the United States, there are countless other instances of racism in the media like in numerous countries. Natascha Klocker, University of Wollongong, states interracial couples has changed the way the Australian National Cinema represents interracial issues into the public knowledge. The following plays listed had interracial coupling with stories involving marriage or cohabitation: *Tomorrow When The War Begins*, *Mao's Last Dancer*, and *Unfinished Sky*.

Australia isn't the only countries that had issues of racial problems throughout the years. Rahsaan Maxwell states the comparison between minority athletes are depicted and talked about in the United States and France. They talk about racial minorities very differently than in the US than the French. Maxwell states, "For most of the twentieth century, North American and West European mass media exhibited clear bias against racial minorities. Mainstream media tended to rely on negative stereotypes and depicted racial minorities as inferior to the majority population(Maxwell,pg 656)." The sports industry isn't safe from the racism either but unlike the US, France doesn't tolerate racism in their sports especially tennis. Although some other sports don't get as much issues such as football, baseball, basketball, etc. According to Maxwell, "Professional tennis provides unique insight into racial egalitarianism because it is an elite sport in France and the US (Maxwell,657)." The French have very little racial problems such as the United States with its athletes like with Colin Kaepernick taking a knee to take a stand on racial injustice in America or Ryan Lochte with the Rio gas station incident. Even though you do not really hear about racial issues in other countries like the UK, Canada, Mexico, etc, it is still a prevalent issue that happens in every country all the same.

In the early 2000s, there were television shows that cause controversy with the general public when they were released. Such as the case with the following shows that were shown on FX: Sons of Anarchy, Justified, and The Shield. Michael Wayne, University of Virginia, states that these shows focused on central white anti-heroes that are against other gangs composed of minorities. Another thing about this shows are the minority populace is ignored by the police force. Like in the show, Justified, the white police officer kills a minority and is praised for it. There is one episode that is listed in the article Wayne wrote. According to Wayne, "Call of

Duty”, apparently someone was being called “Black” even though on his birth certificate it is listed that he is Hispanic. Also, they have even mocked the same hispanic named Ortiz who even tried to commit suicide and various other instances of racism just being brushed off” (Wayne).

These shows were very blatant with their racist rhetoric.

The way the news reports racial/ethnic crimes also has a role to play in inciting racial problems. Some people who have mugshots taken of them are typically minorities meanwhile the white criminals don’t have as much mugshots taken at all. Kassia E. Kulaszewicz, St. Catherine University, states “Black criminals are illustrated by glowering mugshots or by footage of them being led around in handcuffs, their arms held by uniformed White policemen. None of the accused violent White criminals, during the week, were shown in mug shots or in police custody (Kulaszewicz, pg.337)”. Although, we expect there to be no racial bias in the news but there is and we can’t deny that. In the article, they decide a major news story about two black girls attack four white girls. The news story dehumanize the black girls starting a citywide search for the girls who assaulted the victim. Kulaszewicz states, “The new media have been accused of perpetuating Whites’ aversive racial attitudes by associating Blacks with a variety of social problems ranging from urban decay and unrest violence and costly social welfare system (Kulaszewicz)”. Although there are some real instances of unrest violence in low income cities like Detroit where the gun violence is the most high even though they the strictest gun laws in the U.S. Most of the violence are the results of gang violence or hits set on rival gangs like the shooting of 116 people at a music video shooting by a rival gang.

Even though there were a lot of African American men being killed by white people in the news, It was more of a big deal in the 2012 shooting of Trayvon Martin by George

Zimmerman when the media painted Trayvon as a bad kid who stole some skittles when he was shot by Zimmerman, who considered him a threat because he was in fear for his life. After that trial, there were more shooting taking in various states like Ohio, Missouri, Dallas, Baltimore, New York, and Louisiana. Kirstin Nicole Dukes and Sarah E. Gaither, *Journal of Social Science*, states that in certain incidents the victim is dehumanized more than. Dukes et al states, “New York Post editor Bob McManus described Garner as a “career petty criminal [who] experienced dozens of arrests, but had learned nothing from them.” McManus blamed Garner for his own death, asserting that he was a “victim of himself...just that simple (Dukes et al).” There have been more instances of news personnel making the victim seen as a criminal that got what was coming to them. Seems like the victim isn't being treated as with the respect they deserve.

However, not all the media show minorities in a negative perspective. There are some shows which depict the lives of people living in various cities in the United States. Cheryl Lambert, Kent State University, states that Olivia Pope, an African American woman, is an example of a minority lead in the most recent years. Lambert states, “The show centers around the life of Olivia Pope, an attorney, crisis management expert, and former White House communications director who owns and manages her own public relations agency. The central scandal is the fact that Olivia is a single, African American woman having an affair with the married, White, Republican President of the United States” (Lambert). There are more tv shows with minority leads like Gabrielle Union in *Being Mary Jane*, Anthony Anderson in *Blackish*, etc. There are countless other shows with other minorities like Hispanic, Asian, Indian, and Middle Eastern.

With all the racial tension going on in the United States, there is some people deciding to open up the conversation with certain result depending on where it talked about. The conversations typically start because of a play production or something. Harrison Long, University of Georgia, states a play called *Splittin' the Raft* which was adapted from Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was shown in two Georgia counties and were discussed during the intermissions. Most people didn't think it was good play to adapt and produce. Long states, "Despite opposition, we believed our production could be meaningful. *Splittin' the Raft* would examine the atrocities of the past and, in the process, uncover some valuable insights about the current age(Long,137)". On the contrary, the productions received bountiful amounts of positive comments from pretty much everyone for the subject matter was handled. This just goes to show that some people are ready to have this conversation with the gentle push of a production.

The media is one of the major influencer when it comes to racism. The media has always presented minorities in a way that white people are presented when it comes to crimes. However there are some thing that have been done to fix this problems. Some officers have been charged with murder like the officer in Greenville, South Carolina who shot a black man who was running away from the officer and planting his taser on him. But there still needs more than to be done about it. There should be more television shows with more minority leads that don't use any stereotypes of any races. The media should do more to be less racially bias when it comes to reporting crimes. If the media isn't racially bias, they can be more neutral when it comes to racial/ethnic crimes. Another way to solve the problem is to not have the news personnel say that the victim got what was coming to them. With the police using body camera to shed some light as to what goes on during this instances when they are already called. The people who wishes for change just have to be the change they want to see. In the end, there are things that needs to be done because if we don't, it could repeat over and over again. The teachings and discussions being done is a huge push forward and needs to happen more often. The healing process is already

happening but it needs to continue. The only way for healing to happen is to just not be so aggressive and to just talk it out. If there was another way is to fix it but this might have to wait and don't give the media a reason to dehumanize the victim. If all these things are achieved, then we can relax and not have to worry about it.

### Works Cited

Dukes, Kirstin and Gaither, Sarah. "Black Racial Stereotypes and Victim Blaming: Implications for Media Coverage and Criminal Proceedings in Cases of Police Violence against Racial and Ethnic Minorities". *Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 73, 2017, pp. 789-807. <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.odu.edu/10.1111/josi.12248> Accessed 08 Oct. 2018

Klocker, Natascha ; Stanes, Elyse Klocker, Natascha. "'Reel love' across ethnic boundaries? The extent and significance of inter-ethnic intimacy in Australian cinema." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol.36,no.12,2013, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.proxy.lib.odu.edu>, Accessed 23 Sept 2018.

Kulaszewicz, Kassia E., "Racism and the Media: A Textual Analysis" (2015). Master of Social Work Clinical Research Papers. Paper 477. [http://sophia.stkate.edu/msw\\_papers/477](http://sophia.stkate.edu/msw_papers/477) .Accessed 28 Sept 2018.

Lambert, Ann Cheryl. " Post-racial public relations on primetime television: How Scandal represents Olivia Pope". *Public Relations Review*, Vol.43,Nov. 2017, pp.750-754. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2017.07.004>. Accessed 14 Oct. 2018

Long,Harrison. The Impact of Socially Engaged Theatre Across Communities: A Tale of Two Slave Cabins.*Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 2015, Vol.19(1),

p.135-153.<http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.proxy.lib.odu.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=>

**M**axwell, Rahsaan. “Racial equality in France and the United States: media coverage of professional tennis players”. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol.40, no.4, Sept. 2015.

pp.656-674. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2016.1181271>. Accessed 21 Oct. 2018

**W**aymer, Damion. “A Man: An Autoethnographic Analysis of Black Male Identity Negotiation”. *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol.14, Sept. 2008. Pp.968-989.

<https://doi-org.proxy.lib.odu.edu/10.1177/1077800408314343>. Accessed Oct 28 2018.

**W**ayne, Michael J. “Mitigating Colorblind Racism in the Postnetwork Era: Class-Inflected Masculinities in *The Shield*, *Sons of Anarchy*, and *Justified*.” *The Communication Review*, vol. 17, 2014, pp. 183-201. *Academic Search Complete*, doi: 10.1080/10714421.2014.930271. Accessed 8 Sept. 2018.