

The blind side - secrets of good people

[Philosophy](#), [Personal Philosophy](#)



Representations can be produced through different forms such as; images, spoken words, music or written text. The representations enable individuals to give meaning to the world, impacting how society, identity and space are valued as media is able to influence people's minds. Discourses, however, are a way of processing the representations produced. "The way we act on the basis of that thinking". In other words, multiple representations of the same context can be built up to create a discourse. This essay will be discussing how discourses and representations, legitimate, reproduce or challenge relations of power and dominance in society. This will be illustrated through a film case study called 'The Blind Side'. The essay sets out to argue how the blind side reproduces stereotypes of African Americans and space in a negative way, whilst idolizing the white Americans. Representing how you can only become successful through the help of the white and through white practices as they're seen as 'normal'. This film therefore links to the identities of both race and class.

'The Blind Side' is a film which was produced in 2009 and made in Atlanta, USA. John Lee was the director of the film, who is a white American who grew up in a small town, in Texas. His social profile is very different from the main character of Michael Oher who is a low-class African American, which could mean he doesn't have much knowledge on African American culture so his representations could therefore be to other groups. John Lee is best known for making sport drama films such as, 'The Rookie' and Saving MR Banks. The Blind Side is a sport and drama genre which is based on a true story about Michael Oher, a lower-class black American boy who is traumatised by his childhood growing up in an urban area. This urban area is populated with

African Americans, represented as a dangerous, gang populated 'hood'. Michael has no idea who his dad is and has a mother who is a drug addict, leaving him homeless. Life then changes for Michael when an upper class, affluent white family take him in, away from the urban area and their practices. He moves schools, now has a loving family, gets a car, becomes educated and succeeds in a career in American football.

The film is described as a boy who went from " rags-to-riches". The Blind Side was also produced in the same year the first African American, Baraka Obama became president. Potentially influencing the making of the film, showing how everyone can become successful, creating a discourse of equality. Throughout the film, White Americans are represented as affluent, normal, hardworking, generous and sympathetic. Whilst Black African Americans are the opposite: lazy, reckless, uneducated and criminals living in urban hoods. At the start of the film Michael Oher, the main character was represented as an uneducated, childlike character who doesn't have a plan in life and is following the path of his drug addict mother. Whilst towards the end of the film he was transformed into a successful, loving, inspiring, caring boy; with the help of the white society taking him away from the urban space and practices. Lianne Tuohy, another main character is a strong independent empowered woman who took Michael under her arms and lead him to success. She is described as the ' hero' in the film who takes on a motherly role to Michael. The cost of the film was €29 million and ended up being an Oscar-winning Hollywood movie which earned €309 million in ticket sales with an additional €102 million in DVD sales. Revealing the success of the film and how popular it was. The production of the film aimed

to inspire others with the true story of Michael Oher, however, some individuals felt as though it was racist and represented African Americans in a bad way.

At first watch the Blind Side could potentially represent the 'American dream', which is a national ethos of the United States that all should have equal opportunity to be able to succeed regardless of social differences. In which the Blind Side portrays, through how the African American boy from a low-class area becomes very successful. Nevertheless, this representation of the American dream is represented in a dubious way, due to the fact that Michael Oher can only succeed in life through being taken in by a white family, getting introduced to their space and learning their practices. Suggesting inequality exists as the lower-class African Americans can't succeed the American dream without the higher-class white Americans. This therefore leads to the master code which can be seen throughout the Blind side of White Superiority.

A sub code of the blind side is 'white hero'. A scene which represents this is when Lianne Tuohy sees Michael wondering on his own at night with nowhere to go, so lets him stay at hers for a night. Showing how Michaels community has neglected him and how he has been let down by the state as he is homeless. This is where the 'white hero' of Lianne plays a role. The taking in of a poor homeless boy away from the urban ghetto and into the affluent rural neighbourhood shows how Lianne can overcome problems in which society cannot, by providing Michael with somewhere to sleep. The one night stay then results in the adoption of Michael by the Tuohy family.

Michael therefore starts to learn the 'norms' and practices of white Americans, such as how to dress and the importance of education which results in Michael succeeding in a career of football. This can be linked to the social constructionism theory, how identities are not fixed but can change depending on social constructions that surround them. Once Michael left the ghetto he started to be influenced by the white community, which therefore enabled him to succeed as he wasn't stuck in the ghetto with ghetto practices which held him back, such as violence and crime. This shows that the essentialism view of how identities are fixed is challenged, as it shows how Michael's class has changed from a lower-class boy to a middle-class boy, through social constructionism.

This representation of how Lianne's family have had to help Michael 'escape' from the ghetto to succeed could be portraying a message that you can't succeed whilst living in the ghetto. Due to how the urban practices hold them back such as; gangs, violence and crime. This can be seen as no other African American who lived in the ghetto was represented as successful. The message which the blind side portrays can also be seen in a film called Coach Carter, this is also about lower class Black Americans who are taken away from ghetto practices. Once their backs are turned on this life, they become successful in basketball. This can potentially help to building a discourse of how you cannot succeed if you are involved in the ghetto life. It is said that the more control someone has the more the audience will be influenced, making the discourse more powerful, especially with two films portraying the same knowledge.

This film therefore reproduces relations of power and dominance in society. This is because marginalised groups such as African Americans could take the representation of white superiority in a negative way making them feel disempowered. This representation can therefore influence them to believe this is true, resulting in self-hatred towards themselves, creating a mindset in which they believe they aren't good enough and they have to rely on the higher-class white Americans to succeed the American dream. Allowing the dominant group which are the white Americans to stay dominant as they are empowered by their representation that they are of a higher position in society. However, this representation doesn't help society solve social problems of inequality, as although the story is showing how inequality can be fixed, it's only at a very small scale. By taking just one lower class person out of the ghetto inequalities between class aren't going to change, as there is still inequalities between everyone left in the ghetto.

The blind side represents how urban places and identities are dangerous, with individuals who are in gangs and have no motive in life to succeed. This relates to space, place and identities as the film has essentialised all African Americans to the lower-class urban ghettos whilst all the white Americans are fixed to the upper-class rural neighbourhoods, linking to the master code of white superiority and how once again white Americans are seen as superior through class. Another scene which represents African Americans having no motive and how they are gang orientated, is when Lianne drives up to the ghetto with Michael. Here they are confronted by a gang, who try to intimidate Lianne by using sexual comments and staring at her as she drives up as seen in figure..... This gang was sat at the front of their

neighbourhood in the middle of the day, suggesting that they do not have jobs as they have nothing better to do than hang around on the streets intimidating people like Lianne. First recipients tend to accept beliefs, knowledge and opinions, unless they are inconsistent with their personal beliefs or experiences". Meaning people who haven't experienced these urban spaces and culture's before will be influenced that this is what all urban spaces and people are like. Thus, then will create a resistance towards these places and people as they are deemed as dangerous. This consequently reproduces stereotypes that African Americans are all lazy, dangerous individuals who have no motive in life. The stereotyping of identities can affect how people react and respond to these groups therefore could lead to discrimination as they're represented as dangerous. Potentially being othered by non-African Americans. Which is a theory that refers to an identity not being able to relate with another identity.

Normally happening to the less powerful identities through socially marginalizing them. Therefore, this reproduces relations of power and dominance in society as the African Americans are being stereotyped in a negative way which disempowers them. Potentially leading to segregation of race, as non-African Americans will more than likely live in a space in which they are able to relate with an identity. However, in the film there are also representations which challenge the stereotypical thinking about African Americans. Such as Michael Oher, who is portrayed as a kind hearted, motivated and successful. Therefore, representing how not all African Americans fit that stereotypical discourse. This therefore challenges relations of dominance and power in society as African Americans can become

empowered by this representation of Michael showing that it is possible to succeed the American dream. Consequently, Michael has only learnt these morals and become successful by moving out of the ghetto. Therefore, still portrays that you must 'escape' the urban ghetto to succeed. To conclude the Blind side reproduces relations of power and dominance in society. This is seen through how the White Americans in which are the dominant group, are empowered throughout the film, being represented to be of a higher social class and how the African Americans rely on them to succeed. This dominance of society can be seen further through how the film only portrays how to save a person in need of help and not fix the social inequality problem at hand. This therefore enables for white superiority to be maintained as the inequality gap is preserved, which therefore makes the saving of the lower class possible in which makes a white superior.