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“The Squint and the Wail” is an essay by Michael Hsu. Hsu, a Taiwanese American author and editor, wrote this essay in order to express his views on the negative connotations that occur with some of the racially charged objects present in society. More specifically, the essay deals with the stereotypical nature of The Chin Family. The Chin Family is the name of Stefano Giovannoni’s tabletop collection, which includes salt and pepper shakers that have the caricatured facial expressions of Chinese people (Giovanni, 404).

In this essay, Hsu talks about the appalling nature of the stereotypical features and how those features pose a derogatory inference to Chinese culture, but then reciprocates his views on the tabletop collection to a more neutral stance. Hsu’s main claim is that it is derogatory to exaggerate on the racial-specific physical features of a race and to present that exaggeration to the public under the guise of an everyday tool. Hsu’s piece shows race from a particular perspective and then compares that perspective to the perspectives of the individuals he associates himself with. Hsu’s persuasive approach can be broken down and interpreted by viewing his stance through ethos, pathos, logos, and mythos. When looking at ethos, one needs to first ask him or herself whether or not the person who is persuading is credible.

Hsu, being an Asian-American alone, supports a majority of this credibility. Once the reader is aware that the author of the piece is an Asian-American, then the reader will have a much easier time understanding the author’s claims, views, opinions, facts, and rhetoric. This reason alone is enough for one to trust Hsu. This is based on some underlying psychological factors of the reader. Other aspects of ethos that are more latent and implicit are that

Michael Hsu has written for publications such as GQ and The New York Times.

Those publications are very popular and have had many notable contributors. It is because of this ethos that Hsu can comfortably utilize his rhetoric in order to convey his views. Hsu opens up the essay by referring to The Chin Family tabletop collection with the rhetorical question “ Why not call it the Ching Chong Family? ” (pp. 05) It can be observed at this point that the proper acquisition of ethos is important for implementing the other facets of rhetoric, namely pathos, logos, and mythos. The rhetorical question presented at the beginning of the essay imposes pathos. The use of the rhetorical question “ Why not call it the Ching Chong Family? ” appeals to pathos in that it shows the reader the annoyance felt by the author.

This can be inferred because the name “ Chin” is a very common name in China. However, just because the name of the tabletop collection is a common name shouldn’t mean that it should be viewed as stereotypical. That is a common fallacy. This fallacy can be observed when people label many things as stereotypes. There are many cases where a person or group may have a common attribute that is similar their race or social class or construct. This occurrence is usually based on chance or coincidence but there are people that will jump the gun and label those commonalities stereotypes.

It is this illogical reasoning that leads to this fallacy, which in the end leads to the misuse of rhetoric, pathos in this case. Fallacies aside, Hsu’s appeal to pathos is still a generally strong one. It first starts out with the rhetorical

question that enables the reader to see the annoyance felt by Hsu. The reader will then be engaged in the remainder of the essay and will have an easier time accepting the third tier of rhetoric, logos. In this piece, the main instance of logos is seen during the process in which Michael Hsu goes around and asks different backgrounds of people about their views on the racial aspects of the tabletop collection. Many of the European-Americans felt disgusted and appalled while many of the Asian-Americans didn't notice anything disturbing.

Even, when Hsu showed the tabletop collection to his parents, they weren't appalled either. His father even explained to him the historical reasoning behind the facial structure of the salt shaker and the name "Chin" for the Chin family. This instance of logos is very strong for the reader and the author. For the reader, it appeals to the logical aspects of racial identity. It makes one think about how the views of a race from one racial group differ from that of the racial group being analyzed.

It also allows the reader to see race-related material from a different perspective. After reading the piece, the reader should most likely have a different view on racially charged material. As for the author, his comparisons appeal to his logical reasoning. It shows that he shouldn't have jumped the gun and immediately felt defamed or insulted but instead should have done his research more on the significance of the racial symbols of the tabletop collection. Michael Hsu conformed to the general tradition present in writings that pertain to one defending his or her race. The mythos present here can be seen by the initial attitude of the author.

Traditionally, if one is defending his or her race, they may tend to deviate from facts and move straight towards letting out emotions of annoyance or outrage. Although mythos is present in this essay, it does not do a good job in persuading the reader but instead highlights the fallacies present in the author's logic. It is because the mythos highlights the fallacies present that the mythos doesn't do a good job persuading the reader. The Media's Representation of Race in America The media's representation of race in America is a very false and judgmental one. The media as a whole is already controlling society and has been using myriad methods for persuasion such as television, radio, internet, and print media.

Since these sources are widely accessed by the general public, that means there is plenty of room for general assumptions. In actuality, the media doesn't say how race is supposed to be depicted. It's the general public's perception of the media that amplifies race in media. Television news is significantly over representing black males as criminals and under representing them as the victims compared to White males (Mastro, 165). This has been a very big issue for many years.

There are many instances where crimes will be committed by white males but news coverage would instead focus on the crimes committed by black males. Not only does this misrepresent race, but gender as well. The media usually tends to take issues and elevate them to an irregular and misrepresented status. This can be seen with celebrity affairs, one-hit-wonders, and ordinary people who get the occasional fifteen minutes of fame. Most of this actually poses itself as a distraction to the American public. It causes Americans to focus on the wrong things instead of being <https://assignbuster.com/rhetorical-analysis-free-essay-sample/>

independent, logical, and free from the media's control or the sometimes abnormal control from the government.

Abnormal control from the government involves the deceit of the American people. The media is a very important tool for the government because it is the most efficient way to control the masses. Through the media, the government or other high authorities are able to persuade the public and make them believe virtually anything they want. One good example is the negative labels imposed on the nation of Islam. Through the assistance of media, the government has convinced a large number of Americans that many Muslims are destructive terrorists.

This has then constituted to Americans judging Muslims by the color of their skin. Presently, if someone is from the Middle East and is dressed in the cultural attire, that person may have a terroristic label tacked onto them (Ragab, 67). This issue is quite important but where is the attention it deserves? Is the media making any significant effort to curb racial profiling through its use? If the media wasn't trying to label different races then it would have taken more effort in expunging the negative connotations associated with race through media. In "The Squint and the Wail," Hsu had the right position and rhetoric but what he lacked in was logical reasoning. Instead of immediately assuming that the tabletop collection was a racial offense, he should have done his research and tried to find out the history and reasoning behind the facial expressions on the salt and pepper shakers. The main lesson that should be learned from that essay is that one shouldn't conclude that every racially charged component in society has derogatory connotation.

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People should learn how to think outside the box and how to reason and find evidence to support their claims instead of just summing up instant conclusions. As for the media's misrepresentation of class and race, there's not much one can do to change the operation of the media. However, simply ignoring false claims or generalizations and focusing more on factual reasoning is one of the most efficient ways to handle the media's misrepresentation. From both the essay and the brief explanation of the misrepresentation of race through media it should be seen that it is always smart to have an independent mind that is able to utilize logical reasoning. Once society realizes the importance of a logically sound and independent mind then the fight against racial misrepresentation can legitimately commence.

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