

Impacts of bias in the media



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BUSTER**

There is a bias in media that extends well beyond simple stereotypes. It is an insidious and pervasive kind of bias that serves no purpose except to cause subliminal reactions in the minds of the viewers, readers, and listeners of the message. The way the media negatively portrays racial minorities continues fuels the racial biases that hide inside individuals, and therefore keeping the issue of race alive and well within communities. There are so many covert ways that Racial minorities in America still face discrimination despite the institutional and societal changes witnessed in America these past few decades and the news and media plays an enormous role in influencing society with their documented pattern of racial bias, victimizing white people while subsequently criminalizing people of color. People of color are cast in a negative light by the media through various means, such as over-representing Black crime while simultaneously downplaying Black victimization, showing the past conduct, mannerisms, and prior interaction with authority as the reason for crimes against Black individuals, and casting them in negative roles in television and movies. The Hispanic man who plays the role of a criminal. The African-American man who plays the role of a servant. The white criminal showed as the victim, misunderstood by society.

When examining the effects of racism in news media, one of the most significant issues is in visual displays. According to Dukes (2017), " The content analysis of recent media coverage of the deaths of six unarmed Black males (Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Akai Gurley, Tamir Rice, Tony Robinson, and Freddie Gray) by law enforcement uncovered major recurring themes: (1) focus on victims' physical composition (e. g., large stature) and attire, and (2) emphasis on the location where the victims were killed or lived

as crime-ridden and impoverished". At the other end, if a white man commits a crime, like the Churchchrist shooter, they are shown in family photos rather than mugshots, and usually called 'troubled,' or 'distressed.' Both the textbook and a report by Ghandnoosh (2015), points out that " Researchers have shown that crime reporting exaggerates crime rates and exhibits both quantitative and qualitative racial biases. This bias includes a tendency, to exaggerate rates of Black offending and White victimization and to depict Black suspects in a less favorable light than Whites".

Racial bias is a severe issue that can cause many problems in the lives of the group of people targeted, research has found " patterns in portrayals of Black men and boys can be expected to promote antagonism towards them, promote exaggerated views of, expectations of, and tolerance for race-based socioeconomic disparities" (Bell, 2011). When a crime is committed, and a Black person is involved, the media is quick to show how their past behavior was indicative of the crime, whether it's prior arrests, juvenile issues, or even purported 'bad behavior.'

Of all the racial minorities in the United States, Blacks and Hispanics are the most overrepresented minorities in media coverage involving violent crimes, of course, as the perpetrator of said crime. And to no surprise, they are incredibly underrepresented when they are the victim — for example, the portrayal of Mr. Eric Garner who was killed in 2014 by an NYPD officer. The horrific practice of victim blaming has also hit the mainstream media as a way to devalue the life of a minority. As pointed out by Dukes (2017), " New York Post's editor Bob McManus described Garner as a career criminal, arrested dozens of time, but had learned nothing from them." " McManus

went even further and blamed Garner for his own death, by stating that he was a “ victim of himself...it’s just that simple’.”

There have been far too many instances of victim blaming in the media, for example, Trayvon Martin, a 17-year old, Black male who was unarmed and walking home. He was shot by George Zimmerman (a White male), who had been driving saw Martin walking in the rain while wearing a hoodie in the subdivision where he lived. He called the police to report a suspicious person, then got out of his car and followed Martin, even though Zimmerman was instructed by police not to get involved. He wound up in an altercation with Martin and shot him in the chest, killing him. Zimmerman told the police and the media that Trayvon attacked him, and that began the media blame game on Trayvon. Trayvon was only 100 yards from home when shot and killed; then there is 37-year-old Alton Sterling, who was an unarmed Black man was fatally shot by two Baton-Rouge police officers, the Baltimore Sun wrote an article about Sterling's death that begins “ Alton was not an admirable man. His rap sheet is 46-pages long and includes convictions going back 20 years for illegal weapons possession, battery, carnal knowledge of a teenager, possession of stolen property, disturbing the peace, domestic abuse, and, just last month, failing to register as a sex offender” (Baltimore Sun, 2016). Though Sterling was killed without reason, the media was quick to blame the Black victim for his own death. As we can see this type of reporting is not uncommon, and it is often dangerous for the targeted groups. Several research studies have shown that racial minorities are over-represented as criminals or perpetrators, which leads to public hostility toward those minority groups".

Mastro (2018), pointed out that even outside of the news, racial biases are still prevalent in modern media. " Quantitative content analyses of the programming...reveals that the common portrayals of Blacks were as lazy, poor, and jobless." Even though it has started to improve since the 1980s, Black characters are less respected and more disheveled than their peers. Analysts have reviewed the subject of negative images of Black males used for entertainment purposes. , whether through traditional imagery of Black inferiority or by using Black male characters disproportionately to represent both the victims and perpetrators of violence" (Bell).

All in all, analytic evidence suggests that even though positive changes in the portrayal have been made, the number of unfavorable stereotypes seem to persist. Even though there are many positive Black role models in real life, the number of positive Black role models in movies and television is hugely lacking. You can find white superheroes anywhere, but up until recently, there were only a couple of mainstream Black superheroes. Studies have shown that it's vital for children and teens to see characters that look, act, and sound like them. Dobrow (2019), states that: " There's a relationship between low self-esteem and negative media portrayals of racial groups, in addition to an association between poor self-esteem and the paucity of portrayals of a particular group." Movies and television that portray Black characters in a positive light can be helpful in the development of Black children. It shows that people who look like they can be a good guy. This kind of portrayal also allows them to have more positive role models who represent people like them. These are groundbreaking films, and they are essential to help break the racial inequality in the media. Innovative movies

like Black Panther and A Wrinkle In Time are excellent ways to showcase the positive strengths and abilities of racial minorities. Be it a superhero, of the first film directed by a woman of color, help remove the stigma of racial inequality that the media portrays.

While the media pattern of racial bias, victimizing white people while subsequently criminalizing people of color, shining a negative light on Black people and consistently portraying them in movies and TV as bad guys may not end soon. There are some things we can do to help with the onslaught of information the media provides. It begins with teaching our kid's about media literacy, teaching them to read between the lines, to determine who the message is from, and not just believing what they “ want us to believe” but digging through and discovering the facts of a message so they can make up their mind. If we do not educate our future, then our past will have been for not. Demand a form of standard news, where if they speak of a crime, and they show photos of them a victim and accused perpetrator, they need to be equal and like photos. Family photo of the victim = family photo of the accused, a mug shot of the accused = a mug shot of the victim. And of course, the hardest option of all would be boycotting all forms of media that participate in the racial inequality of any kind. A significant decrease in a companies profit margin will either wake them up or put them out of business; either way, it would be a win, win situation for society.

Questions your paper should answer... did you incorporate these ideas into your essay?

Q. What is most concerning about your particular social problem?

A. The most concerning parts of this specific social problem are the unfairness to humanity, the loss of real understanding, sympathy, and empathy of our fellow man, along with the long term damage caused by racial and implicit biases.

Q. What data supports your findings?

A. Several studies on this have been conducted, and I have included a few on my Works Cited page.

Q. What policy efforts have been made to combat your particular social problem?

A. I could not find any current policies that were directly related the reducing racial bias in the media.

Q. Have policy efforts succeeded or failed?

A. Since no policies exist that address this specific issue, I would have to say that is an epic fail.

Q. Do you have ideas for how society can address this problem in the future?
What would
need to happen?

A. I have on ways that we as a society could help put a stop the rampant Racial bias in the media. First and foremost, as I stated in my essay, teach media literacy to our kids. Once we can teach our kids to think critically about the information presented to them no matter what form it may be in,

the better off that generation will be in terms of racial equality — of course, boycotting products and services from all types of media that portray any ethnic group, race, gender, or culture in a bad light. Last but not least demand that the media objectively portray all people: if they show a family photo of the victim, they must show a family photo of the accused.

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