St. Catherine University
University of St. Thomas

5-2015

Racism and the Media: A Textual Analysis

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by

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MSW Clinical Research Paper

Presented to the Faculty of the
School of Social Work
St. Catherine University and the University of St. Thomas
St. Paul, Minnesota
in Partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Social Work

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Abstract

The topic of media influencing racism in our society is significant in research. It targets media bias, and therefore it is wise to explore how media contributes to racism in explicit ways. During the beginning stages of film and media, African Americans struggled to represent their own stories, beliefs, opinions and identities because White people controlled the entertainment industry and chose what images of Black people to portray. This study incorporated an understanding standing of Bandura's Learning Theory to gain understanding of how media messages impact our belief and value system. This study examined what information was available to readers and viewers of the news media and how that information impacts our beliefs, emotions, and behaviors towards others. Specifically, as it relates to racial differences, stereotypes, racial micro-aggressions and perceptions of African American males. Major findings include examples and information related to racial micro-aggressions and the impacts as it relates to media exposure. The research also recognizes "identifier" word patterns using "black" and "white". The research offers a conclusion, that on average, "black" is used three times, more in news reporting than "white". The over usage of the word "black" becomes a racial micro-aggression because it can condition the mind to associate the word with negative connotation. Patterns of criminalization and justification are exposed. Black men are often criminalized and represented as violent is the media. As contrast, in the event of a White officer as the shooter of a Black man, the officer's actions are justified or supported regardless of the criminality of the officers own actions. In consideration with how race is presented in the media historically, it seems that this research would show a correlation that racism is likely still reinforced through news media whether conscience or not.

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"The media's the most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that's power. Because they control the minds of the masses." -Malcom X

Introduction

This research examined the impacts that media has on racism and considered the question of whether or not media reinforces racism in our communities. More specifically, this research looked at how the media impacts the portrayal of African American men by asking how African American male shooting victims are portrayed in the media.

In one form or another, media influences the majority of the population in the United States. With the advancement of technology, the impacts of mass media are profound. Most people utilize some form of media in their everyday lives. Media impacts our beliefs, assumptions, public ideology, as well as our experiences. Happer and Philo (2013) documented the following in their research:

> … [we] found a relationship between the prior exposure to information, often related to strength of attitude, on the subject and the degree to which the information impacted on beliefs and opinions. Those who had been least exposed to either subject were most open to adjusting their views and conversely those who arrived at the groups with most exposure were least likely to have their opinions changed by the new information. This was the case even if the information they had been exposed to was polarized, or inaccurate. (p. 332)

Media educates people, with and without credible knowledge. School of Social Work Dean Larry Davis from the University of Pittsburgh was quoted saying that, "One of the most

important things any group of people can do is to control the image of themselves" (Barlow, 2011, paragraph 3). This research looked at some of the impacts of media and supported the argument that media does reinforce racism.

Day (2009) who wrote the sixth edition of <u>A New History of Social Welfare</u> defined racism by noting that "racism is prejudice with power against people of color: African-American, Hispanic, Asian American, and Native Americans" (p.20). Day (2009) went on to say that "American values make us assume that race determines human trade capacities and that white people are inherently superior to people of color" (p.20). It is important to understand that racism is not always a conscious effort or act.

There are many unanswered questions regarding racism. Do we learn racism? Do we learn how to perpetuate racism? Is it intentional? Is it unintentional? Is racism different than racial prejudice? The answer to all of these questions is that it's complicated. "Racism is one of the most complicated and profoundly important issues in the Nation's history" (Racism in America, n.d., p.2). In order to start to dissect whether racism exists in the media one must have a good understanding of the definitions. For the sake of this research, racism is defined "As any attitude, action, or institutional structure which subordinates a person or group because of his/her or their color" (Racism in America, n.d., p.5).

Gaining a greater impact of how media affects our society can contribute to the way people understand messages that are received, past as well as present. Happer and Philo (2013) documented that "the media – television, the press and online – play a central role in communicating to the public what happens in the world. In those cases in which audiences do not possess direct knowledge or experience of what is happening, they become particularly reliant upon the media to inform them" (p.321).

During research conducted by Happer and Philo (2013), it was established that media can also play a role in shaping behavior, legitimizing certain courses of action but can also insert doubting confusion into debate. Happer and Philo (2013) stated,

> News may appear as sometimes chaotic flow of information in the bait but it is also underpinned by key assumptions about fulfill relationship and how they are to be understood. At the heart of these are beliefs about motivations, cause-and-effect, responsibility and consequence. (p. 323)

Media holds significant influence in our daily lives and it infiltrates our perceptions and understanding with continuous messages that impact our belief and value systems. It becomes important to look at whether or not media also impacts race and racism in our society. President Clinton's race advisory board concluded that "racial inequality is so deeply ingrained in American society that they are nearly invisible and White Americans are unaware of the advantages that they enjoy in the society and how their attitudes and actions unintentionally discriminate against persons of color" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 271).

This paper is going to also discuss media representations of Africa American men. This research will also examine the impacts that media has on racism and it will also consider the question, does media reinforce racism in our communities and how, and more specifically, this research will look at the impacts on African American men.

Literature Review

Historical Context

Bias, disempowerment and discrimination in regards to race have been longstanding issues within several aspects of mainstream media, including television news, entertainment, and advertising. During the early years of broadcast media, which date back to the debut of television in 1939, racial segregation was becoming a heated topic in the United States, shortly followed by a very robust civil rights movement for racial equality (Gay, 2014). It soon became apparent that with the advent of more sophisticated advertising, news reporting, and entertainment programming, racial inequality would continue to play out in these mediums.

During this beginning era of television, the population of those who worked in advertising, news and entertainment was predominantly White. As in most other non-menial employment in the United States, and likewise the perceptions and values held by this influential population, were reflected in produced media. How media content was formed, selected, and presented was heavily subjected to the opinions of those involved in the industry. Advertisement for products that were being marketed universally to the American public would still depict Caucasian people, leaving only the advertisements for products marketed for Black Americans to depict people of color (Luther, Lepre, & Clark, 2012 and Wilson, Guiterrez, & Chao, 2013 and Gray, 1995).

Since the early utilization of media, the impacts on how people are represented are imperative to understand how racism is perpetuated within our society. The media provides a greater understanding of historical context as well as patterns, influences and beliefs around generational media impacts:

Throughout history the mass media, in various forms, have tended to support the power of the dominant group by presenting to the general public highly negative, emotion-evoking images of minority groups. (Luther et al., 2012, p. 322)

In very early films, such as Birth of a Nation from 1915 (which was originally called The Clansman) and the Tarzan series from 1932, African Americans were represented in the films as "savage, ignorant, thieves, interlopers and potential rapists" (Luther et al., 2012, p.59). Even early film distortions, such as African Americans being played by White people who painted themselves to look Black, sent strong symbolic messages. These symbolic messages conveyed that Black people were not "good enough" to represent themselves, and were seen as lacking talent to fill a character role that only Whites could make up for. White people taking over these roles sent a subconscious message to public viewers that the White race was the "preferred," and the only "capable" group to participate in mainstream media (Luther, et al., 2012). These actions and messages were problematic in terms of influencing institutional racism as explained in the following excerpt:

> The harmful depiction of Blacks was problematic because these films were successful and often provided a segregated society the only glimpse into Black life available to White Americans. (Luther et al., 2012, p. 59)

During the beginning stages of film and media, Blacks struggled to represent their own stories, beliefs, opinions and identities because whites controlled the entertainment industry and chose what images of Blacks to portray.

During the early 1970's, African Americans starred in "Blaxploitation" films. These were films attempting to show the public that African Americans could be a story's protagonist and be

successful in overcoming the racism placed on them by the White population. The films were generally directed by African American men; however the contracts for the films were held and dictated by entities such as Columbia Pictures and the Motion Picture Association of America (Bausch, 2013), both of whom were founded and regulated by white men. "Blaxploitation" films were not embraced by the dominant White audience, and failed to make substantial profits. Therefore, the films stopped being created, which meant the media continued to be controlled by the White population (Luther, et al., 2012). Below is a section that reiterates this perpetual cycle of control within the media:

> The people targeted in the mass media were white, many of them European immigrants looking to the media to learn about the people of their new nation. Men and women of color were treated by the media as fringe audiences, not large enough in number to influence the content directed to the mass audience". (Wilson, Gutierrez, & Chao, 2013, p. 37)

The next shift within Black representation in the media happened during the Civil Rights Movement. Footage of protests and speeches by Black people started being shown more on television and printed in newspaper (Luther, et al., 2012). In order to identify the importance and significance of media and its history, one must have an understanding of who controls most media.

> Historically, and generally continuing into the 21st century, nonwhites and women have not been gatekeepers in American news media organizations news coverage of people of color and women have been and remains a reflection of the attitudes held by gatekeepers and those who influence them. (Wilson, et al., 2013, p. 128)

Gray (1995) wrote, "It is my contention that television representations of Blackness operates squarely within the boundaries of middle-class patriarchal discourse about 'whiteness' as well as the historic racialization of the social order" (p.9).

Media Influence

Crime Reporting. Crime reporting in broadcast media has been controversial since its conception due to conflicts of racial bias. Stories that are selected for reporting have been criticized for how they depict racial groups, and also for how racial groups are targeted in reporting. A study that targeted bias in television news stories, depicting violent perpetrators in Chicago noted,

> … accused Black criminals were usually illustrated by glowering mug shots 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 physical custody. (Entman, 1990, p. 337)

Though the study only observed one week's worth of local television news in a particular region of the county, broadcast media in the United States has long been held liable for racial bias in reporting. Entman's study (1990) highlights a key issue in crime reporting that still exists today, which is that news stories of crimes committed by Black citizens are more comprehensive and in-depth in visual content than stories which depict white citizens.

Entman (1990) proceeds to discuss how much story content in general is allotted to Black criminals in television news in respect to total allotted coverage. The study found that an average of forty-one percent of allotted news time that covered violent crime stories between three local Chicago news programs depicted Black criminals (Entman, 1990). Though statistics are not

given on other racial groups in this study, it is apparent that Black men are overwhelmingly

targeted in coverage of crime reporting. This issue is seriously concerning when taking into

account the general public's perceptions and stereotypes of racial groups, which are directly

influenced by the media.

Furthermore, the crime reporting that was observed in this study (Entman, 1990) was

analyzed by the author in its propensity to display white victimization. Entman (1990) claims

that this priority of crime reporting was exemplified by a news story that depicted four white

girls, on a city bus, who were assaulted by two Black girls. The story broke news with

overwhelming amounts of coverage between the three news stations that were targeted in the

study, and was exacerbated by the fact that the girls accused the bus driver of not intervening

during the incident (Entman, 1990). Entman (1990) notes that this story was comparatively non-

newsworthy when considering other violent crimes that could have been covered instead, and

that its coverage revolved around the fact that victims in the story were white, while the

perpetrators were Black.

With these considerations in mind, it is important to discuss the consequences that

present themselves as a result of biased reporting, and subsequently, biased content. Oliver's

(2003) research offers the position that "media portrayals of crime and the world's responses to

such portrayals play an important role in creating and sustaining the stereotype of Black men as

'criminal and dangerous'" (p.4). It can be said that the existence of stereotypes that target Black

men, and perhaps Black people in general, are an indirect consequence of biased reporting. This

may include more visual and informational content for Black criminals than White criminals, as

well as content that highlights white victimization.

Crime reporting is relevant when discussing social issues within the theoretical framework of racial equality because of several reasons: crime reporting is seen as a direct reflection of a community's health and functioning, which is universally relevant to any person who resides in that community; content of crime reporting has a direct influence on the audience's perception of personal identity and perception of other race members; and the influence of media habitually depicting members of a race within a given context determines how members of an audience think about that behavior itself, namely crime.

If it truly is the case that Black people are depicted the most in crime reporting over any other race, then it would follow that audience members will proceed to associate crime with Black people, and a problematic perception of that race will develop.

Ethnic Emphasis

While crime reporting is generally expected to be ethnically neutral in terms of content as a principal, there remains content in media that is salient in its addressing of racial issues, either intentionally or not, and either in an advocating or subtly pejorative manner. This phenomenon can be understood as ethnic emphasis, and it has a diffuse effect on how media influences its audiences in their perceptions of social issues. News coverage with an ethnic emphasis often occurs in topics related to social dilemmas, politics, research findings, education, and other related subjects. In order to fully grasp how media influences its audiences in their perception of race, it is imperative that the topic of ethnic emphasis be investigated.

An example of how ethnic emphasis impacts media is represented by Mcllwain (2011) who conducted a content analysis. This researcher looked at the national newspapers during the 2008 presidential primary to determine "how frequent racial references appeared in news

accounts of the presidential contest, how salient the racial content was and what factors explained racial related coverage" (p.371). Mcllwain (2011) also noted that,

> Previous research often conflates the president and repetition of racial references with salience, but little empirical testing of the relationship has been done. This leaves us to simply assume that because race is mentioned one or more times in a story, then the reader is likely to consciously or unconsciously be thinking about race". (p. 380-381)

Mcllwain's research suggested a few key findings. The first was that the representation of "one or more racial minorities increased the likelihood and present of racial references found in the story" (Mcllwain, 2011, p. 386). The researcher also discussed during the conclusion that competition between journalists may impact the motivation that they have on relying on racial references (Mcllwain, 2011).

Another research study conducted by Entman (1992) examined 180 assertions related to ethnic self-interest. Of these assertions, "Black interests were defended 115 times, white ethnic interests 43 times and other ethnic group interests 22 times" (p.356). In addition, 66 of the 115 Black assertions were in search of a response from a form of government specifically to a Black interest. "It seems likely that the exposure to such a pattern over time would feed some white resentment of Blacks' seemingly demanding stance to other groups in society" (Entman, 1992, p.356).

Entman's statement (1992) is concerning, as the intentional ethnic emphasis that is present in news stories is intended to present and advocate for racial issues in society to the general public. However, Entman's (1992) interpretation of the data regarding ethnic self-interest suggests that in this advocacy of ethnic emphasis, white audiences could still develop a negative

perception of other races after being exposed to such media content. This leads to the question of whether ethnic emphasis is even able to improve racial perceptions held by audiences, and perhaps if audiences who are racially biased are able to interpret information in a way that is prudent.

It remains to be seen if ethnic emphasis in media accomplishes what it sets out to do. Part of this reasoning is due to the fact that media content is not explained by its producers in a disseminating fashion as to how or why it is emphasizing ethnic topics, and what sort of outcome is expected. Regardless, ethnic emphasis in the media is directly related to the discussion of racial perception as informed by media, and is therefore a prelude to how media impacts racism in society.

Impacts Media has on Racism

The topic of media influencing racism in society is salient in research that targets media bias, and therefore it is prudent to explore how media contributes to racism in explicit ways. Drew (2011) discusses how media producers are positively influenced by their own perceptions of race when forming content for audiences:

> … I argue that explicit and intentional 'racial projects' can foster antiracist consciousness in their producers and promote changes in news production. These changes have the potential to interrupt – and potentially challenge – the media's function as a mechanism for maintaining the racial status quo. (p. 355)

Drew's research (2011) is focused on how news media can work to improve racial tensions in society, which is an optimistic contrast to other research which discusses the negative effects of media on public perception of race. Drew (2011) argues that there are media producers

who currently work to critique their content and their process of forming content in order to maintain a healthy bias towards racial equality rather than prejudice.

However, the majority of research that exists in this field is preoccupied with how media have failed to accomplish the goal of neutrality that Drew (2011) discusses in her research. Pan and Kosicki (1996) conducted research that explored how negative racial attitudes are directly correlated with biased media. "The news 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 to violent crime and costly social welfare systems" (p.148).

In discussing research that addresses media racial bias, it is important to include the explicit ways in which members of society express negative racial attitudes towards each other as influenced by media content. These explicit ways include micro-aggressions and stereotypes.

Micro-aggressions

It is important to elaborate on the definition of racial micro-aggressions. "Racial micro-aggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or groups" (Sue et al., p. 273). This is very necessary because "The power of racial micro-aggressions lies in their invisibility to the perpetrator and, often times, the recipient" (Sue et al., p. 275). Generally, people that have committed racial micro-aggressions are not aware of the behavior that they are exhibiting towards others from a different race.

During examinations on media stories related to whites and Blacks in politics,

Analysis revealed that Black activists often appeared pleading the interests of the Black community, While white leaders were much more frequently depicted as representing the

entire community. News about Blacks who acted politically conveyed the notion that

they spoke and behaved more than whites to advance "special interest" against public

interest. (Entman, 1992, p.355)

Racial micro-aggressions account for the many inequities that members' of racial minorities

experience in their daily experiences within a dominantly white society. Therefore, it is pertinent

to account for how these transient experiences occur and how they relate to media bias, which

arguably contributes to their occurrences in the lives of racial minority individuals.

Stereotypes

Since stereotypes involve prejudiced perceptions of others, and due to the fact that media

bias may be reasonably viewed a result of prejudice on behalf of media producers, it becomes

relevant to discuss stereotypes within this topic.

Schaffner and Gadson (2004) investigated news coverage of local politics in regards to

racial identity, with the eventual conclusion that political candidates of color were covered by

broadcast news in ways that portrayed them all to be of a similar type and personality.

Consider that both white Democrats and African-American House members have

virtually the same voting records on civil rights issues. Yet, African-American

incumbents are asked regularly to comment on civil rights, while white

Democrats are rarely asked to respond on such manners. (Schaffner & Gadson,

2004, p. 608)

These findings and conclusions by Schaffner and Gadson (2004) appear to suggest that

news media is not able to objectively cover political candidates of color in the way that white

political candidates are covered in stories, or perhaps that white political candidates are given

favor in news coverage. It would then follow that due to stereotyping that occurs within the journalistic process and content, stereotyping is then potentially reinforced within audiences.

Devine (1989) from the University of Wisconsin Madison also conducted studies to examine stereotypes. This researcher looked at the effects of automatic stereotyping as well as subjects' ability to consciously monitor a stereotype. The research incorporated both a low prejudice subject as well as high prejudice subject (Devine, 1989). Utilizing the Dissociative Model, Devine (1989) represented that

> One study suggested both high and low prejudice persons possess and have personal beliefs about the stereotyped group. A second study suggested that automatic stereotype activation is equally strong and equally inescapable for both high and low prejudice subjects (p.15).

Researchers find stereotypes integrated into perceptions in a variety of media.

 Busselle and Crandall (2002) completed a study in which the respondents were white undergraduate students. It highlighted television viewing and perceptions about race and the differences in socioeconomic success. It was found among the respondents that those who watched more television news were more likely to conclude an African American's lack of socio economic status was a result of lack of motivation and not from the lack of job opportunities.

Entman (1992) suggests that although journalists don't outwardly support modern racism, "journalistic practices yield visuals and sound bite audience stereotypes" (p.345). During a research process conducted by Entman (1992), 429 stories were analyzed that were related to crime, had a photograph or video footage and the name and race (limited to Black or white) was communicated.   Specifically, 231 (72%) were white and 90 (28%) were Black. Entman (1992)

found that in still photos of those accused of violent crimes, Blacks accounted for 49% and

whites at 65% that were named.

> When Blacks are not given a name in the picture, it suggests the visual
>
> representation can be assimilated to a larger, undifferentiated group, in this case
>
> the stereotype of a dangerous Black male. The anonymous individual portrait
>
> exemplifies the stereotype; the name is not important since the individual simply
>
> stands for a familiar category of person outside the whites' own group. (p.350)

Another study examined emotional discomfort of participants after viewing a crime story

which presented perpetrators of different skin tones. The results of the study showed that "all

participants found the perpetrator more memorable when the representation was a dark-skinned

Black male" (Dixon & Maddox, 2005, p.1555). These researchers also documented that

"multiple exposure to news programming leads to repeated cognitive activation of this aspect of

stereotype" (Dixon & Maddox, p.1566).

Research suggests that White people will engage in racial distancing by not engaging

with others. One could argue that their views are impacted by the media because that's where the

primary exposure comes from (Goff, Steele & Davies, 2008).

Parham-Payne (2014) argues that her research supports the finding that negative

stereotypes are maintained in the media and specifically towards Blacks. The stereotype

portrayal incorporates that Blacks are "innately contentious and aggressive" (p.762).

It is important to note that stereotyping occurs within each individual in a given society,

and that there is no exception with those who are involved with producing media content. Media

producers are also embedded within a society that is affected by racial tension and

misperceptions, and this reality translates into media production that may in itself reinforce stereotyping or is directly influenced by racial perceptions in a negative manner. Research conducted by Drew (2011) identifies strategies and approaches that can be used by media producers to reflect on personal bias, which may translate into more neutral media coverage of social issues.

Perception of African American Males

Particularly relevant to the topic of media bias is the notion that African-American males are frequent targets of said bias, as shown by research conducted on crime reporting. While members of the community who identify as African American are generally at risk for media bias, it is thoroughly present in research that African American males receive the bulk of negative media attention. Not only is it concerning that Black males are targets for negative coverage, but it is further concerning that all Americans are liable to be impacted in ways that affect their racial perceptions.

In Barlow (2011), Dean Larry Davis from the University of Pittsburgh was quoted stating that, "Overwhelmingly, White Americans learn about African Americans not through personal relationships, but through images shown by media. Unfortunately, Blacks too consume these same images" (paragraph 3).

University of Michigan Professor, Richard Allen, discussed findings that African Americans who were highly exposed to media, television, were more likely to report lower self-esteem (Luther et al., 2012).

There has been ample research which examines race and crime in media portrayals. "Analysis seem to suggest that genres that feature more "realistic" representations (e.g., news,

reality based police shows) are the most problematic type of programming in terms of racially biased portrayals, and particularly so in terms of bias of African-American men" (Oliver, 2003, p.5). Oliver concluded through studies that Black men were misidentified by all participants in this specific study as violent criminals (Oliver, 2003).

Grant (2012) conducted qualitative research also examining how Black males are represented in the media. The research concluded that Black men are represented by media as "the common criminal of this society" (p.161). How Black/African American men are represented in the media is essential in gaining a greater understanding of how media influences racism.

Media is biased in their representation of African Americans. Journalists and media entities choose the issues they report and the frequency. Matters media report, such as crime and violence may distress viewers (Coleman, 2002). If media chooses to represented stories involving African Americans and crimes, such as shootings at a more frequent rate than they represent Whites then the media has reinforced beliefs that Blacks are involved in shootings at a higher rate than whites. This may not necessarily be accurate.

Conclusion

In closing this review, it is important to note that bias in the media is a reflection of the indelible marks left on society from historical traumas. There remains an extensive and nuanced prelude to today's social climate which accounts for hundreds of years of political, social, cultural movements, some of which are still ongoing.

This review focused on investigating how mass media affects audience members' perception of race in their own community and on a macroscopic scale, and furthermore what

aspects of mass media account for this impact. Research reviewed in this composition generally accounts for the practices of how media production is engaged, which contribute to bias and abusive representations of African-Americans, and also accounts for how audience members are impacted by the media's influence.

Whenever research is conducted on social issues, it is important to remember that each member of a society has their own unique experiences and developmental influences which continue to affect how one perceives their own racial background as well as those of their peers. It should be noted that those who do not participate in the production of media may have also engaged in the same problematic practices as those who do, and that the media's portrayal of race is at least in part a reflection of what is already present in the milieu that is post-modern society.

Based on research, one may also conclude that media impacts in our environments by influencing our belief and value systems and how people relate to each other. What information the media presents to the public regarding a particular group of people becomes how the public learn to understand the behaviors, expectations and image of others. When people represent Black men as criminal, dangerous and aggressive, then people perceive that Black men are those things. Not just some Black men, but all Black men. This is a stereotype that the media continues to reiterate.

The media influences attitudes that people have toward African American males. It is an institution and it influences action and often does it based on someone's race.
Therefore, the media reinforces racism, not only through promoting stereotype but also by using racial micro-aggressions in selection of content and audience.

Conceptual Framework

In order to gain a greater understanding about how media may impact people's beliefs and values systems, a conceptual framework plays a significant role. People's beliefs and values systems impact behaviors whether negative or positive. Behaviors, both individually and collaboratively, contribute to the well-being of individuals and communities as a whole. Behaviors can impact relationships and communication.

Conceptual framework can help shape social work practice by providing historical and contemporary guidelines to promote best practice contexts and models. This framework also offers insight to research and how it effects human populations at micro, meso and macro levels. Theories are an important guide to social work practice. They help guide best practice as well as promote social justice.

The framework chosen for this research is Social Learning Theory. It was chosen because it supports the social work principle of "Rights and Responsibilities." This principle is one of the represented ten principles from the *Social Work for Social Justice:* Ten Principles from the collaborating schools of St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas (School of Social Work, 2006). When people understand their rights and responsibilities towards each other, it promotes justice and equality and can combat adversities such as racism and racism. Integrating how behaviors contribute to this principle supports the primary Theory of Social Learning.

People have a right and a responsibility to participate in society and to work together toward the common good. Human dignity is protected and healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Accordingly, every person has a fundamental right to things necessary for human decency.

Corresponding to these rights are responsibilities to family, community and society. Social workers, mindful of individual differences and diversity, respect and promote the right of all individuals to self-determination, personal growth and development. Social workers provide education and advocacy to protect human rights and end racism. Social workers empower individuals/groups to function as effectively as possible. (School of Social Work, 2006, Rights and Responsibilities)

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory highlights the impact of how observing others attitudes, behaviors, and emotions towards a particular subject or group molds an individual's attitude, behaviors, emotions (and in turn) responses, to their environment (Bandura, 1977).

Bandura (1977) states:

Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed. On later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action. (p. 22)

Therefore, behavior is learned as people interact within the environment.

The majority of the Unites States population is exposed to mass media. Based on Bandura's theory that behaviors are learned from observing others, one could conclude that media impacts behaviors. The specific behaviors discussed within this research models how peoples' observation of media directly correlates to their beliefs, behaviors, and emotions towards other people or populations.

Social Learning Theory has been used to gain greater understanding of aggression and criminality. Albert Bandura has completed research that discusses that one source of aggressive conduct is reinforced by the mass media. The media provides a form of symbolic modeling by showing images and providing news related to aggressive behaviors. Some aggressive behaviors could include violence such as shootings (Bandura, 1978). Often time's media depict Black males as aggressive, dangerous and criminal.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory can be used to understand how the public responds to the negative messages portrayed by media. Understanding the negative impacts of media through the framework of the Social Learning Model may reverse negative media messages, thereby rendering them a positive influence on audiences' beliefs and values. This would promote further equality and justice.

This framework will assist in gathering data from articles because it identifies environment and behaviors and key components of the model. Understanding racism and the media incorporates both concepts of environment and behavior as well. "According to Social Learning Theory, behavior is learned, at least in rough form, before it is performed (Bandura, 1971, p.8). Media is a part of our daily environments and racism can be a result of behaviors and/or reinforcement other behaviors.

The theory helped further identify themes that were retrieved from the research readings. Such themes could be behavior patterns such as responses to incidents involving African American men. Another example might be the environments where shootings occur and how the community responds. Finally, a theme may look at behaviors or actions in the environment that are exposed through media that may have racial bias.

Methodology

Textual Analysis

A Textual Analysis Method was utilized for this research. This method is generally used to address a research question by analyzing public texts such as newspaper articles, media stories, and journal articles. It can also incorporate legislative an historical records. For this research, only news articles were utilized.

The reason for using a textual analysis method was generated as a result of this researcher wanting to utilize media news articles to examine whether or not the media reinforces racism in regards to African American males. In order to start to dissect whether racism exists in the media one must have a good understanding of the definitions. For the sake of this research, racism is defined "As any attitude, action, or institutional structure which subordinates a person or group because of his or their color" (Racism in America, n.d., p.5).

Media is defined as:

> Communication channels through which news, entertainment, education, data, or promotional messages are disseminated. Media includes every broadcasting and narrowcasting medium such as newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, billboards, direct mail, telephone, fax, and internet. (Media, 2014, paragraph 1)

This research did not have to be reviewed by the Institutional Review Board of the University of St. Thomas because human subjects were not utilized as a part of this research.

An inclusion criterion was used to narrow the scope of research for relevance. It was also used to identify a specific sample population and time frame. The inclusion criterions were also used to identify what type of media was used to conduct research.
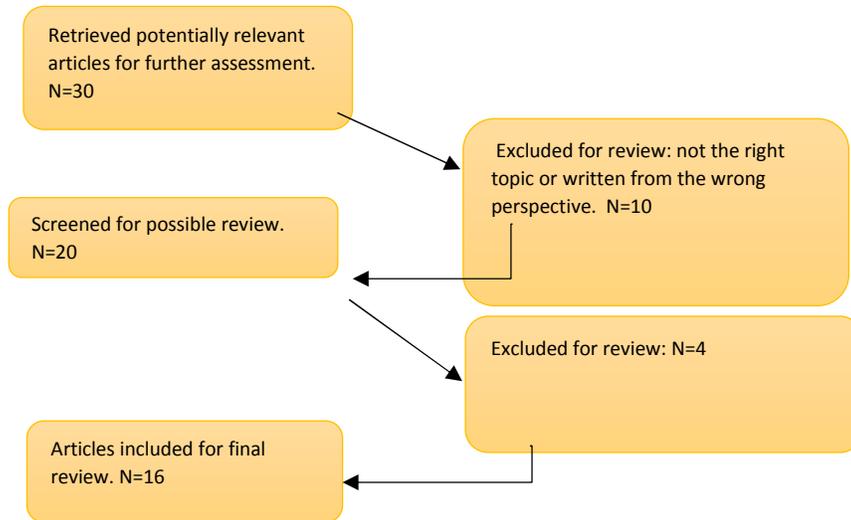
Inclusion Criteria

For the purpose of this research, the first inclusion criterion is relative to article topics. The topics included: Racism in the media, media portrayals of African American males or African American male shooting victims. The types of media sources were limited to national written news within the United States from 2012 to the present. Opinion articles also met inclusion criteria. African American males of any age were used as the sample population. The sources for the articles include USA Today, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post and Newsweek.

Search Strategy

Google was used to search for news articles. The words that were used for the original search included: police shootings, violence towards Black men, racism, black male shooting victims, and Black men killed by police officers. This researcher tracked the number of screened and reviewed articles and note how many have been rejected and how were used for this research.

Data Abstraction

Initially, the researcher keyed words into Google to search articles. The amount of articles reviewed was 30 separate stories. This researcher used inclusion criteria to determine if the article met the basic criteria. The articles were then downloaded and printed. Articles were rejected if they did not meet criteria. The researcher narrowed the search criteria according to the findings. Folders were also created when narrowing the search, to differentiate between kept (under first review) and rejected articles (first rejections) after the first visual review of the content. An example of how this researcher tracked articles is shown below. The Number of articles was noted as "N=30".

Retrieved potentially relevant articles for further assessment. N=30

Excluded for review: not the right topic or written from the wrong perspective. N=10

Screened for possible review. N=20

Excluded for review: N=4

Articles included for final review. N=16

Thematic Analysis

I conducted a thematic analysis that considered facts and themes in regards to the way a story was presented.   First, I tracked the articles that met the search criteria for the research. Then, I documented significant pieces of the relevant article. The key factors identified included basic facts such as what was the incident, how old was the victim and if a death actually occurred. Additionally, how the article identified race was incorporated. Specifically, a key piece that was included was if race identified for all the parties involved in an incident or just the victim. The articles were also checked to make sure they met the inclusion criteria stated above again.

In addition to fact finding, I also identified themes which represented the perspective and tone of the story. Possible racial micro-aggressions were also noted. I utilized highlighting as a way to identify relevant statements. When patterns and themes emerged, I made comments in

the margins and made notes to monitor identified themes for possible repetitions. I wrote down the identified themes and color coded them. I also used symbols for clear identification purposes.

After rereading the chosen articles and underlining what phrases supported my theme, I used a word document to compose the theme titles incorporated quotes to help support the findings. If the theme didn't prove to be accurate, a negative case analysis was determined. Each theme was represented, regarding its meaning, in paragraph form.

Findings

Obtained Sample

The sample for this research started with 30 articles obtained from Google search terms which included: Black males killed by police officers, police shootings, violence towards black men and racism. After reviewing the articles to determine whether they met inclusion criteria the researcher ended up with 14 articles that met the criteria for the data abstraction. Two articles were published by USA Today, four articles were published by the New York Times, three articles were published by the Wall Street Journal, four articles were published by the Washington Post and one article was published by Newsweek. Each article is recognized as national news. The articles were read several times.

Themes

There were two identified themes identified through the data abstraction in the research. While looking at these themes it is important to note that terminology was used in different ways. It should also be noted that the language used to identify certain physical characteristics was used in different terms. Black and African American as well as White and Caucasian were

all used. For the sake of this research certain identifiers were not intended to be used more than another, however in order to reflect direct quotes and research patterns, there may be unintentional terminology patterns. There is no intent to favor one wordage over another.

The first theme is racial micro-aggressions. This theme has two components. The first component is looking at the presence of racial identifiers. Using "black" and "white" as racial identifiers can contribute to a micro-aggression because it specifies individuals to a specific group. If using the specifier suggests that a particular group has, gives or receives superior or demeaning messages in contract to other group identification, it could be considered as a racial micro-aggression. In regards to the first component, the majority of identifiers were generally in reference to a person, persons, or community.

In this research, the key words used to recognize a pattern during the data abstraction were "Black", "African American" and "White". Generally the words were related to individuals or groups, however, there were also a few instances where black was used in reference to other elements which will be discussed below. The second component of racial micro-aggression is related to sentences or points made throughout the article which holds racial micro-aggressive tones. This theme was found in the presentation structure of the reviewed news articles. For example, how a specify group was generalized and presented became a pattern during the abstraction process as well. An element of micro-aggressions can also be an over representation of circumstances and/or groups. For example, "all black people…, the black community…"

The second theme evolved from how discussion of how black males and police were represented by the articles. This theme was tied to the perceptions of behavior and emotional representation of both black and white individuals. Specifically, black males were often

discussed connection with criminal acts or violence, whereas, police were often discussed language that embraced sympathy and/or justification.

Racial Micro-aggressions

Black and White identifiers. The words used to identify this pattern during the abstractions were "micro-aggression or "RMA" and "black and white". Originally, these were two separate themes, however they were combined.

The first theme is related to identifiers, in this case, race. The words included in this theme were "black and white". Throughout the news articles, identifiers of race were prevalent. In fact, the amount of times that the word of Black/African American or White was used throughout the articles collaboratively was calculated. The word black was used 196 times throughout the articles. This is 76%. In contrast the word white was used 63 times, about 24%. These numbers concluded that the word black or African-American was used 300% more white as the identifier. (See Table 1 below).

Table 1

Source	Black	White	Total	Ratios
1. WP	24 (75%)	8 (25%)	32	3:1
2. WP	1 (100%)	0 (0)	1	1:0
3. NW	20 (74%)	7 (26%)	27	3:1
4. WP	15 (62%)	9 (38%)	24	5:3
5. NYT	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	4	3:1
6. WSJ	1 (100%)	0 (0)	1	1:0
7. US	4 (57%)	3 (43%)	7	4:3
8. NYT	23 (66%)	12 (34%)	35	2:1
9. US	10 (63%)	6 (37%)	16	5:3
10. WSJ	24 (88%)	3 (12%)	27	8:1
11. WSJ	27 (69%)	12 (31%)	39	2:1
12. NYT	16 (94%)	1 (6%)	17	16:1
13. NYT	4 (100%)	0 (0)	4	4:0
14. WP	24 (96%)	1 (4%)	25	24:1
Overall Totals	196 (76%)	63 (24%)	259	3:1

*note percentages were rounded to nearest whole percent.

Key
Article numbers represented as 1., 2., 3.
WP=Washington Post, NYT=New York Times, NW=Newsweek, WSJ=Wall Street Journal,
US=USA Today

The word white was very rarely used along with the word community. One example of how white was used in reference to community was, "We are a nation of two societies, one black, one white-separated and unequal" (Fisher and Lowery, 2014, November 25, p.2). The research found that was the words "black community" was used several times. An example of how race was referenced is through an article discussing the shooting of Early Murray and Ronald Beasley.

> The Jack in the Box shooting looms large for the black community in North County, the largely black municipalities of St. Louis County that lie north of St. Louis. Black residents there feel they are routinely abused by largely white police forces. (Fisher & Loery, 2014, p. 1)

However, the word black was also used to identify different elements such as "black pathology and black crime rates" (Riley, 2014). The word black was also used in reference to violence. At times, it was used to describe a type of crime or other violent factor.

The word "black" was also linked before describing gender such as "black male". There were several incidences of this terminology as well. A pattern seems to show that attention to the word black as a descriptor is overly used.

Racial micro-aggressions in news article presentation structure. Micro-aggressions are conscious or unconscious everyday exchanges that send demeaning messages to certain people or group. In the case of racial micro-aggressions, it relates to referencing those who do not identify as white. A racial micro-aggression was able to be identified in each news article at least once.

Many of the articles referenced the shooting death of Michael Brown in Ferguson Missouri. This case is a controversial case. The Ferguson case has received national media attention. Michael Brown was an 18 year old man who has been identified as a black man. The officer who shot Mr. Brown has been identified as white. The following is represented from the article published by Marc Fisher and Wesley Lowery in the Washington Post. The reporters quoted Bob Lonsberrey,

> America does not trust black people to respond to a legal decision peacefully, and that is the result of either a horrific stereotype about black people, or horrific conduct by black people. Either way, we've got a problem. (Fisher and Lowery, 2014, p. 6)

By referencing that a group of people, in this case, black people have horrific conduct, categorized all black people instead of identifying a single person with such conduct. In addition tying "black" to the label as if it had a reason to matter. This is an example of racial micro-aggressions.

Radley Balko for the Washington Post discussed the case of the shooting a Levar Jones, a Black man, who was shot by White state trooper Sean Groubert. The article suggests that Groubert shot Jones after Jones ducked into his truck to retrieve his license. Groubert faces felony charges from incident. However, here is what the article stated,

> Does Groubert look like a cold-blooded killer? I doubt he got out of his car intending to shoot Jones. It looks more like Groubert was terrified, possibly jumped to some conclusion about Jones based on his race and appearance and reacted out of fear.
>
> (Balko, 2014, p.1)

It should also be noted that information that Jones was pulled over for a seatbelt violation was noted within the two sentences of the article. This highlighted and act of not law abiding. This overlapped in both themes. See below.

Behavior and Emotional Representation: Black individuals and community discussed with criminal or violent behaviors in contrast to Police justification and sympathy. As stated above, even the word black was used in combination of the word violence on numerous occasions throughout the review of the news articles. In reference to the Michael Brown case, which every article referenced at one time or another, there was significant discussion around the incident and the aftermath.

The Brown Case involved the shooting of an unarmed 18 year old that has been identified as black. The shooter was a police officer from the Ferguson Missouri Police department. He was identified as white. The back ground of the case has significant controversy (Apuzzo, 2015). In reference to this case, Michael Brown died. After his death the community of Fergus, which is generally noted as the "black community" in the articles, even though it has many people living in it who identify of many ethnicities, events occurred in the community as a response to the feeling that black people were being targeted by white police. An example of this is documented by the Washington Post

> August's violence in Ferguson broke the mold in three important ways-one of which is
>
> just unfolding now. These were rare suburban riots, racial violence coming to the very
>
> place where many Americans-both white and black-had fled after the urban unrest of
>
> the 1960s. These were the most significant explosions of racial frustration since the
>
> election of the nation's first black president, and so Ferguson forced the country out of the
>
> fantasy that America had entered a "post racial" era. (Fisher & Lowery, 2014, p. 2)

Darren Wilson, the officer who fired his gun, was represented by the article stating that

"Officials say Wilson kept a clean record without any disciplinary action" (Leonning, Kindy &

Achenbach, 2014, p. 3).

The prosecuting attorney in this case for the officers was noted as having "sympathies for the

cops that runs deep. His father was a policeman killed in the line of duty by a black man when

McCulloch was 12" (Levy, 2014, p.2).

In every case a shooting occurred in these articles as it relates to a black man being shot

by a white police officer, there was no discussion of the life the victim had outside of violence.

No article discussed highlights and attributes of the victim's life before discussing some form of

violence or perceived poor life choices associated to the victim, or the justification of the police

officer actions. One article discussed a victims aspiring dream to play football, which quickly

was followed by a half page article additions of perceived personal mishaps including failing

grades, a misdemeanor conviction and deficiency in child support payments (McWhirter &

Fields,2012).

No article described in depth the strengths of the victim. No article discussed

accomplishments. In another example of a media identified Black male who was discussed with

criminal or violent behaviors in contrast to Police justification and sympathy we have the

example of Earl Murray.

Earl Murray was an unarmed man shot by white officers (21 shots fired total). He was

described as a small time drug dealer. This was not what he was being stopped for. The officer's

actions were justified by grand jury as self-defense because Murray's car moved toward officers

(but did not hit). Therefore officer's actions were justified (Levy, 2014).

Another example of how black men are represented in the media can also be represented in opinion articles published by national media. Riley (2014) wrote an Opinion article for the Wall Street Journal. He wrote, "so long as young black men are responsible for an outsize portion of violent crime, they will be viewed suspiciously by law enforcement and fellow citizens of all races" (p.2).

Discussion

This study examined what information was available to readers and viewers of the news media and how that information impacts our beliefs, emotions, and behaviors towards others as it relates to racial differences. The findings brought attention to three significant findings: (1) The use of the word "black" in primary reference to racial identity is used significantly over the use of the word white in reference to racial identity; (2) In the event of an incident with a police officer, such as a shooting, Black men are often criminalized and represented as violent and in addition, in the event of a white officer as the shooter of a black man, the officer's actions are justified or supported regardless of the criminality of his or her own actions.

The over usage of the word "black" becomes a racial micro-aggression because it can condition the mind to associate the word with negative connotation. To create further understanding and meaning for this concept and analogy is offered. As already discussed the media has heavy influence on beliefs and views. Consider that the news media (both visual and written) is heavily discussing apples. The media showing pictures of red apples, several articles with written discussion of red apples, and there is media represented in political discussions of red apples. For the sake of this analogy, the coverage of red apples is daily for weeks and/or months at a time. There are instances where the media has presented other fruit and it has been discussed, however, red apples have been represented 300% more times than any other fruit. At

times red apples are shown at a 42:1 ratio, or 1600% more times. An individual is asked what the most popular kind of fruit is. It is likely that the individual will say red apples. Now taking this a step further, what if the red apples presented in the media were often bruised or rotting? What if an individual was asked what fruit spoils the quickest? It is highly likely, based on conditioning, that the answer is red apples.

If black men are portrayed as criminal and violent regularly, in both visual and written media, on several occasions daily, what happens to peoples beliefs? People start to be conditioned to think black men are violent and criminal. As discussed previously in this paper, Bandura's Social Learning Theory can be used to understand how the public responds to the negative messages portrayed by media. If black men are represented as criminal and violent on a larger scale then other individuals then people believe that black men are criminal and violent.

 The way to reduce stereo type and racial micro-aggression that influence racism is to understanding the negative impacts of media and demand that media offer many instances of positive influences and representations of all people. Equal representation of all cultures as well as reporting at proportionate rates would also promote a more accurate representation of community as a whole. This will make an impact on audiences' beliefs and values. Two offers for would be suggested to reduce the disproportionate coverage that reinforces inequalities. The first is to not use race as an identifier for a person or community. Reports should identify the individual by their name.

Secondly, if race is used as an identifier it should be used at the same rate for all. There should not be a 1600% difference between black and white media representation. Furthermore, other races should be included. Disproportionate coverage or reporting can damage people in our society by creating false belief systems and it promotes stereotype because of the significant

differences of the information provided by the media. In all the articles reviewed, the identifier

Hispanic was used one time. That was the only other racial or ethnic identifier. Some people

may argue that black needs to be an identifier to bring attention to certain topics such as racially

motivated killings. This argument might be logical if the disparity was not so tremendous. There

is no separation in equality, therefore the differences would not create controversy or be a way

for media to make money from the racially charged controversies. We are a community, all of

us, everyone. Race should not be separating factor in relation to rights, respect, safety and love.

In consideration with how race is presented in the media historically, it seems that this

research would show a correlation that racism is likely still reinforced through news media

whether conscience or not.   This is not only represented by the language and descriptors used in

news media, as seen in table one, but also by the evoking language and descriptors or violence in

relations to black men. Although the articles represented the wrong doing of certain white

people such as police offices, the officers were never described as violent or criminal, even in the

circumstances when a court found an officer guilty of misconduct of some sort. The discussion

of those who have been identified as white utilized numerous tones of justification.

With an in-depth analysis of the text from the news articles stated above the implication

of the portrayal of ordinary reporters impact on how the viewer may subconsciously or

unconsciously internalize racial prejudice and or stereotypes. These prejudices and stereotypes

reinforce racism.

As Social Learning Theory suggests, observing how others are represented in regards to

attitudes, emotions and behaviors can mold our own responses. If what people are reading

references black people or communities at a higher rate than white, the discussion related to

black may become heightened in our though process. If one adds notions of violence and crime

to the overrepresented side, in this case black, it holds truth that the attitude, behavior and emotion will be mirrored into an association of black being tied to violence and criminal activity.

In addition when the reader's associations of the same elements are reinforced by the word white being combined with support and/or justification the unconscious and conscience is reinforced that black people are criminal and violent and white people have justification for behaviors. Thus, the stereotypes are continued influencing racism and the media has made that impact by presenting us with the stimulus of the writings presented.

This research supports past research that the media does reinforce racism. As stated earlier in this paper,

> Throughout history the mass media, in various forms, have tended to support the power of the dominant group by presenting to the general public highly negative, emotion-evoking images of minority groups. (Luther, Lepre & Clark, 2012, p. 322)

Historical findings are similar to findings of current research of how media represents African Americans and more specifically black men.

It's rarely argued that racism does not exist in our society. Access to the media is prevalent and almost unavoidable. For this reason these outlets most certainly have a significant impact on people's thoughts, feelings and beliefs. The research suggests that media continues to contribute to those attributes as one considers that media influences racism.

Understanding how racism can be reinforced through media is an important contribution to may professions including social work. How media impacts our belief system, conscious and unconscious is important. Social workers need to promoting racial, cultural and ethnic awareness in practice. It is imperative that professions, such as social work understand biases,

including their own to further promote justice. Awareness is also about knowing where bias can come from as well as promoting change where change needs to happen. The media has very large institutional impacts. Promoting change and understanding of what needs to be addressed or changed on a macro level is key to fostering social change and promoting equality, a core value of social work.

"Ignorance and prejudice are the handmaidens of propaganda. Our mission, therefore, is to confront ignorance with knowledge, bigotry with tolerance, and isolation with the outstretched hand of generosity. Racism can, will, and must be defeated" (Kofi Annan).

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