

Cultural Representation of Colored People in Social Media

Yibing Jin^{1, a, †}, Jichao Liang^{2, b, †}, Shuchun Wang^{3, c, †}

¹School of European Languages and Cultures, Beijing Foreign Studies University, Beijing, China

²Foreign Studies College, Northeast University, Shenyang, China

³School of Culture and Creative Arts, University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK

^a18070083@bfsu.edu.cn, ^b20180333@stu.neu.edu.cn, ^c2535432w@student.gla.ac.uk

†These authors contributed equally.

Keywords: Colored People, Cultural Representation, Stereotype, Media

Abstract: This article examines how the transformation from traditional media to mass media affects the representation of the colored people. Specifically, the major focus is on how the functions of media - public forum and free expression give new approaches to the representation of colored people. Possible effects of the cultural hegemony in the traditional media on the stereotypes of colored people are also explored. The example of the hypocritical American Dream shows that the ideological control in the traditional media squeezes the space for the presentation of people. Results confirm that the uprising of mass media is conducive to the representation of colored people. Notably, the dissemination of the cultural representation in the mass media may help more public raise the awareness of the equality of the colored people, which offers more access to better comprehend the realist situation of the colored people and break the stereotypes. It is suggested that the impacts of the mass media shall be further enhanced to empower the rights of the representation of colored people.

1. Introduction

Traditional media is a communication medium that connects audiences via verbal or non-verbal means. It promotes mainstream ideology and favors the legitimacy of the power of social discourses, which often concern with heated social or cultural issues [1]. Gradually, media turns to be a mechanism for social control and agenda-setting, drowning out marginalized groups, regardless of original intention to contribute to social equality. As the monopoly of discourse, traditional media exerts its influence on three dimensions: the description of object, interpretation and the delivery to the audience [1]. Its preference determines what text is encouraged to create, how the information is understood, and what opinions are important.

Specifically, colored people are silent under this situation. Colored races refer to all the races except the whiteness in Europe and America, while some extreme racists also regard some white people as colored races such as Hindu. Undoubtedly, media used to censor and blot the image of colored people and often relate them to violence, disgust of sex, and represented as evil or troublesome [1]. Audiences who consistently expose to this fallacious information about colored people could suffer from hasty generalization and establish stereotypes. For example, Griffith's film, *The Birth of a Nation*, records a riot in Southern plantation during Civil War and portrays the Black as rude, brutal, uneducated while Southern Whites as victims [2]. However, the truth is not what it appears to be. More objectively speaking, that is a typical fallacious representation of colored people from the old days, and the process of dissemination through mass media has invisibly become a form of shaping collective ideas and personal identity under social control. Obviously, stereotypical representations of colored individuals are frequently exploited [3].

Limited patterns of access to the media also prevent colored people from speaking for themselves. Cultural representation refers to a collective's common representation of a culture. Such representation provides a meaningful basis for individuals to develop identification with the culture [4]. Since colored people do not occupy the people of the world as a minority community, even though they do come

close to the media, the voices of most other people still obscure them.

Besides, cultural hegemony of the traditional media squeezed the scope for the representation of colored citizens. The colored people were in the position of marginalization and succumbed to the discourse system. For instance, as a kind of political propaganda, the American Dream is more inclined to cultural hegemony in traditional media. Ideologically exploit mass media in order to hide ever-worsening social inconsistencies. Hence the communication of colored people was at a disadvantage.

Nowadays, media provides a promising avenue that empowers to defend the perceived values and norms. In a data-driven age, mass media utilize innovative communication technology and medium instruments to generate and disseminate information broadly to the general public, creating space for community engagement and diversifying cultures. The mass media facilitates the dissemination of positive representation of colored people. The mainstream values previously propagated by the mass media are no longer exclusively adopted by the people.

Media highlights the functions of the public forum and free expression. The mass media, as a platform, is strongly inclusive in a multicultural society. In 2020, George Floyd, a common black man, died because of violent enforcement [5]. A similar case commonly occurs every year in America, but the mass media reconstructs the full accounts and widely spreads the case. Common people, especially black people, once fooled by traditional media, began to express their untrust and resentment in the mass media [6]. The relatives and neighbors of Floyd also portrayed the personalities of Floyd in the mass media, which strike a chord with more people. Colored people hoped to obtain more civil rights through this case.

While more popular public raises the awareness of equity regardless of race, racial discrimination is still under-represented, and the government is still a monopoly that cannot be ignored, which hinders racial equality. Therefore, by referencing contemporary news reports and articles, this article explores how mass media facilitate the representation of colored people and how colored people represent themselves in mass media today.

The study purpose of disseminating cultural representations of colored groups in the mass media can contribute to a better comprehension of the demands of colored groups. Additionally, the mass media supports developing new forms of representations for colored people to seek an equal discourse for different ethnic communities.

2. Dominance in Traditional Media

According to Lutz, six corporations control 90 percent of the media in America in 2012 [7]. In other words, the pursue of truths is nothing but an illusion because audiences' information diets are already designed. The dominant group has privileges to valued social resources such as fortune, employment, status, and they need to consolidate their superior social class. Thus, traditional media is manipulated to create and maintain their power in the discourse, which complies with cultural hegemony, excludes heretical statements, and reaches ideological control through brainwash. Hall develops the theory of dominant-hegemonic from Gramsci, where the traditional media is the accomplice of the dominant-hegemonic discourse system in the field of culture and ideology. A classic article by Stuart Hall titled "Encoding/ Decoding" indicates that the traditional media industry, especially the TV industry, through the production of meaning, successfully colonizes the ideological and cultural field [8]. This production of meaning is carefully crafted in the stage of encoding, endowed the standpoint of the elite or ruling class in the stage of product, and ultimately interpreted by audiences in decoding.

3. Mendacious American Dream

The space for the representation of colored people was squeezed by traditional media, and the assertions of American Dream are the proper illustration of this point. American Dream refers to the value acknowledged by the majority of people in the history of America, thoroughly controlled by the ruling class and paralyzed common people. The early American Dream emphasized abstinence and social responsibility, but it was not prolonged [9]. With the gilded age (the end of the 19th century) coming, the American Dream with the core of consumerism and money worship was propagated in

the traditional media. It was not uncommon that slogans about the American Dream were widely distributed in posters, newspapers, and television programs. The ruling class preached that consumption would bring prosperity, while behind the vision of prosperity was the tremendous gap between the rich and poverty. Paul Fussell pointed in the Class that the bottom of the class who did the most work was entitled to the least rights [3]. The widespread consumerism and money worship in the traditional media triggered greed and vanity, which resulted in a high crime rate and addiction rate. The illusory vision of prosperity propagandized by the traditional media contradicted with the realistic situation of the bottom of the society, making matters worse beyond dispute. Among the bottom of the society, the colored people not only confronted issues of food and clothing, but also were burdened with discrimination. They originally did simple manual works, which were substituted by the machine with the development of technology. The tide of unemployment forced colored people to commit crimes, aggravating the discrimination. For instance, in the August of 1908, two black people were condemned to death by lynching in Springfield of Illinois. The way for the representation of colored people was limited, authors of colored people wrote novels or autobiographies to shed light on their appeals, but this way just had part influences. The traditional media repleted with the propaganda of the American Dream was another barrier for the representation of the colored people.

4. Upspring Mass Media

The massive involvement in media weakens the monopoly in the past, deconstructing the original discourse system. The mass media springs up with the flourishing of online technology. Compared with the traditional media such as newspaper or television, the mass media based on internet is more inclusive and multiply cultural. The mainstream values and cultures are not absolutely predominant, which makes it possible that different values and cultures could communicate in the platform of mass media.

In 2020, Floyd's case was similar to that in 1908 - two blacks were lynched to death, Floyd assaulted by the white policeman died of violence assaulted by a white policeman. However, the intense discussion in the mass media demonstrates that the principal part of discourse has changed from white people to the whole society. In the era of traditional media, only some white libertarians conveyed the representation of colored people. While in the platform of mass media, everyone could share his opinion about the case. The African American Monica was the founder of the organization of anti-violence in Boston. She held the activity of 8minute 46s' silence to memorize Floyd and protest against unfair treatment of the colored people, which gathered thousands of people [2]. The speediness and universality of mass media is not only conducive to the unity of colored people to represent, but also widely diffuse in the society, through which people can break the stereotypes and uncover the veil of colored people. Through the comprehensive information in the mass media, people may find it ridiculous that colored people are equal to the uncivilization group. Hence, in a nutshell, the mass media can facilitate the representation of colored people from two aspects: for one thing, the mass media allows colored people to comment on their rights in the platform; for another, the features of mass media are beneficial to the spread of the representation of colored people and arouse social concern.

5. History Factors of Racism

According to Ibram Kendi, racism is a term that originated from Gomes de Zurara, who firstly described the African as inferior and beastly in obedience to the Portuguese King [10]. From that pre-colonial time, the colored races are confronted with serious racial discrimination, most of whom are low-class physical labor especially black people. Even worse, their civil rights cannot be guaranteed, and they are depreciated by white people, who are seen as the symbol of in-civilization and crime.

6. Limited Approach of Dissemination

In the era of traditional media, literati disseminated their cultures and stated their social demands by composing fictions, of which African-American and Asian literature is the most famous. They also delivered public speeches to showcase their culture, as in Martin Luther King's I Have a Dream. Nevertheless, most traditional media are manipulated by the mainstream discourse, and the forum for colored races' cultural representations has been greatly squeezed, which is the limitation of preliminary approaches [11].

Marginal identities and the slavery history in America retain the chain of oppression on the black. Specifically, traditional mainstream media rely on their discursive power to generate a range of fake knowledge about black people, and this production can conversely strengthen the power of mainstream discourse. This knowledge and power play a crucial role in developing a mainstream image based on differences. One of the significant manifestations is that the mainstream American discourse has created various deformed, monolithic and rigid prototypical models of the black race through a series of representation systems such as literature, film and television, media and advertising. It also affects black people's self-identity, rendering them constantly alienated by the mainstream discourse, becoming target objects and incapable of conveying their true state. In this sense, the construction of representations is extremely important to black people as well as colored races.

7. Dissemination in New Media

While advances in technology, to a large extent, provides colored people with a broader speaking platform. Diversified cultures gradually emerge in the context of new media, and more people have access to the current situation and intercultural communication of colored communities through Internet. In 2020, the ordinary black man, George Floyd, died from violent police enforcement. Floyd's relatives and neighbors portrayed Floyd's personal image and propagated Floyd's positive image through new media. This representation created with Floyd resonated with a broader range of people. Colored races hoped to gain civil rights through the representation of the black race in this case. The statements of the general public, especially black people, who had been previously duped by the traditional media, were widely disseminated in the mass media and even had the power to influence official decisions.

The purpose of colored people's judgment and vocalization of prototype images through media platforms is not only to analyze whether these representations are positive, but to further understand the cultural significance of representations produced in the reproduction of knowledge and the special powers exercised by these dominant images. The various images in cultural representations are assigned a subject position and serve as cultural symbolic resources for individuals to formulate their own subjectivity, calling on individuals to acquire their identities in complicated ways [12].

Since the colored races suffer from stereotypes and racial discrimination, they should cultivate representation to break the stereotypes. Understanding the concept of representation is to shape self-identity in society to restructure the social image of colored races. The process of shaping representations is extremely important for colored races, including black people. Applying representations to the cultural sphere enables racial groups to reexamine and reposition their self-identity and reverse stereotypes to establish cultural equality with whiteness.

8. Conclusion

This article explores the current situation of representations of colored races in the backdrop of the mass media. The findings revealed that colored races nowadays have access to abundant forms of representations and avenues to disseminate representations than previously, empowering colored communities to express and spread their positive representations. Nevertheless, cultural hegemony remains an important barrier to ethnic equality and restricts the mass media audience's discourse, including colored people. As the mouthpiece of the general public rather than of other authorities such

as the government, the mass media should shoulder the responsibility of representations and promote the functions of the public forum and free expression. As a more comprehensive extension of the man, the new media environment is anticipated to provide ample scope for the expansion of discourse and disseminate representations of colored people, contributing greatly to establishing a utopia of ethnic equality.

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