
An Analysis of the Minority Representation and Acceptance in the Media

I chose to discuss minority representation in media. I wanted to write about this because I have noticed that there is a certain shortcoming of non-white actors in media. With this in mind, questions I want to address are how does it impact minorities to not see themselves in films or television? And can individuals develop a negative self-image due to lack of representation? I will confront each of these questions while focusing on how beneficial it is for people to see their race portrayed, the lack of minorities in media and why it is important to show all races in films or television. While researching this topic, I hope to further explain these issues and develop an understanding of why they are still present.

The first article I want to examine would be “Why On-Screen Representation Actually Matters” (Boboltz and Yam). In this source, it is explained that there are negative psychological impacts of people not seeing themselves in film. This article supports the idea of how critical it is for minorities to be portrayed on-screen. This quote from the source elaborates on how people who have researched minority representation have come up with terms to explain the feelings involved, ““There’s this body of research and a term known as ‘symbolic annihilation,’ which is the idea that if you don’t see people like you in the media you consume,” she explained, “you must somehow be unimportant.”” (Boboltz and Yam). I was surprised to learn the term symbolic annihilation even exists, the fact that there is even a term for this shows how much of an issue it has become. This article also mentions that minorities are often portrayed with offensive tropes that are overused and stereotypical. While it’s good that minorities are being represented it’s not achieving anything if they only act in a stereotypical manner (Boboltz and Yam). Television and movies often provide an escape from the real world, however it can put someone at a disadvantage if they translate what they see in media to reality. Watching a show with minority actors playing stereotypical roles or only white actors is not reality, it’s important to see people different than you in films or television portrayed without prejudice. From this article, I have been educated on how the inadequate portrayal of minorities can make them feel like they are not important to society.

The next article I will be discussing is “Out of 30,000 Hollywood Film Characters, Here’s how many Weren’t White” (Crigger and Santhanam). This article articulates how over the period of 10 years, the percentage of minorities in film has remained low, if we look at 2007 to 2014, the percentage of black, Hispanic, Asian, and other actors has all remained below twenty (Crigger and Santhanam). This was shocking to me because the world has changed significantly since 2007, but the percentage of minorities on-screen has remained the same. While just being

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represented on film is important, it also matters how nonwhite characters are portrayed. The stereotypes that are presented can cause the majority to have a skewed view of minorities (Crigger and Santhanam). It is strange that someone could have a view of someone just based on what they see in screen, however for some that could be all they know of that persons' race.

The following source I will analyze will be "Hollywood Stereotypes" (Mastropolo and Stossel). This article explains how the media can impact how people view minorities and also how actors do not like being cast in a role simply because of their race. Actors such as B.D. Wong, who wished he was a white actor just so he could be offered the other roles, "I wanted to be Matthew Broderick," Wong says. "If you could have given me \$150,000 and told me it was possible, I would have had that operation." (Mastropolo and Stossel). The race of an actor shouldn't exclude them from roles. Another part of the article I thought was interesting would be "The popularity of a stereotype doesn't justify it ... Cowboy and Indian movies were wildly popular for generations. But that doesn't make the stereotype right." (Mastropolo and Stossel). This extract goes along with the previous one, saying that minority actors are confined due to prejudice and although the aforementioned prejudice may be widely accepted it's still not an accurate image of minorities. Non-white actors are currently restricted to the roles available to them.

The next article "Hollywood Has A Major Diversity Problem, USC Study Finds/USC study: Minorities still underrepresented in popular films" (Keegan) delves into how the actors we see in film can extend beyond that and into our everyday life. The consecutive quote from the article touches on how the people we see in films can translate to what we find important, "Who we see in film sends a powerful message about who is important and whose stories are valuable, both to international audiences and to younger viewers in our own country.... Are films communicating to audiences that only certain stories are worth telling?" (Keegan). I thought this outtake was intriguing because it highlights how essential it is to see movies with actors of all types of race, this way we aren't saying that only a specific race, mainly Caucasian, have stories that matter. The article also examines which races are going to see movies versus which races star in the films. This outtake from the article mentions how Hispanic moviegoers are especially at a disadvantage, "Hispanics buy an estimated 26% of movie tickets, they have only 4.2% of speaking roles." (Keegan). I was surprised when I first read this because although Hispanics account for almost a third of the movie audiences, this percentage is poorly translated to the screen of the movie they are watching. What I gathered from the article is that movies do not account for minority ticket buyers, so the amount of minorities in films is insufficient.

The final source I will mention is "Why Minority Representation In Movies, Comics And TV Matters"(Tasker). This article discusses the positive effects of seeing yourself translated to screen. In the following excerpt, it is noted that we connect more with characters who are similar to us, "The more a character is like us, or is dealing with the same issues as us, the more we

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care.” (Tasker). While I found this to be interesting, it is also unfortunate that people can’t connect with characters that aren’t there. Therefore, it is amazing that we have shows/movies like Luke Cage, which stars an African American who in the show has superhuman strength, and Rogue One, which stars Diego Luna and Riz Ahmed (Tasker). Luke Cage and Rogue One both star minority actors as the leads and are headed by a huge company, Disney. To have media like this available, as it is positively showing minorities as heroes or action leads, is a massive leap. It would be amazing if shows or movies like those previously mentioned would be the standard rather than a rarity, this way minorities would get to experience seeing themselves favorably shown in media.

Now I will analyze how each source contributes to another. The sources “Why On-Screen Representation Actually Matters” (Boboltz and Yam) and “Why Minority Representation In Movies, Comics And TV Matters” (Tasker) are similar in content. Judging from the title of these articles alone, you can tell they discuss the same subject matter, why on-screen representation is important. In “Why On-Screen Representation Actually Matters”, the negative effects of not seeing yourself shown on screen are mentioned, along with how minorities are often portrayed in stereotypical roles (Boboltz and Yam). While “Why Minority Representation In Movies, Comics And TV Matters” discusses how the more we can connect with a character on a personal level, the more we want to see of that character (Tasker). Both of these articles are focusing on the same point, although the authors have different perspectives. Boboltz and Yam make it a key point to note that the lack of minorities in media, is not right, and how when minorities are represented, they often fall into a character trope. Which I would completely agree with and think they had a substantial amount of examples to support their claims. Examples such as if you were a black or Asian person seeing yourself stereotyped on screen, you might think that is all you are capable of contributing to society (Boboltz and Yam). I think Tasker would agree with Boboltz and Yam. She delves into media history, noting several shows and movies that have portrayed minorities and what their impact has had (Tasker). Boboltz and Yam discussed how minorities feel to not see themselves represented while Tasker discussed how they feel to be represented. Tasker did not present an argument, but just explained that seeing people who look like you do in media, makes life easier. Boboltz and Yam presented their argument clearly and mentioned several times throughout their article that it isn’t fair for minorities to continually be ignored by the media. They made a stronger argument because they made it a point to say that the shortage of minority roles is still an ongoing issue.

To compare another two sources, I will use “Out of 30,000 Hollywood film characters, here’s how many weren’t white”, (Crigger and Santhanam) and “Hollywood Has A Major Diversity Problem, USC Study Finds/USC study: Minorities still underrepresented in popular films” (Keegan). Again based on the names of these sources, you can tell that they discuss the same issue. Keegan mentions that nearly 80% of speaking roles in movies belonged to white actors, however only nearly 60% of moviegoers are white. And while Hispanics account for almost 30%

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of moviegoers, Hispanic actors only account for 4.2% of speaking roles in movies (Keegan). Keegan breaks down the movie audience, and from just this data you can see that there is an issue with minorities being embodied on screen. Crigger and Santhanam also show percentages, theirs has to do more with diversity in film in general, not looking specifically at speaking roles. However the percentages from both articles are roughly the same. Overall these articles both convey the same message; minorities are underrepresented in television and movies. Although I think Keegan had a more compelling article since she added more detail. She broke down who is going to see these movies, and who is making these movies and how who is making them impacts the diversity within the film (Keegan). Overall I think both of these sources contributed well to the main point of the essay, minorities are missing from media.

Throughout this essay, I have touched on three main subjects: why minority representation matters, minority portrayal in media, and the overall lack of minority appearance in general. I learned that the percentage of minority actors shown in media, especially with speaking roles, has remained the same since 2007, and these percentages do not reflect their audience. The media is not emulating reality. Minorities are often portrayed with a stereotype or bias, and I have been shown that how minorities are represented is just as valuable as the representation itself. I have also been educated on why minorities portrayal is significant. When people can connect with a character, they see themselves able to do anything that character could do. I hope to raise awareness of the concerning low the amount of minorities being shown in television or movies actually is.

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