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## Representation Of Stereotypes In The Media

Inbred into the society, stereotypes are inaccurate images and clichés about certain groups of people being passed on from one generation to another. These are presumptions that are based only on existing information that a certain individual holds about a certain group. People rely on stereotypes to justify certain prejudices which they already have. Indeed, it is detrimental in nature because it degrades others onto a level that is usually inferior. If only someone could police these stereotypes! When our judgment is clouded by stereotypes, our ability to think critically is compromised. Concurrently, we are making a disservice to people around us by honoring false information about others, usually women and minorities. These stereotypes become our representing reality and we start to believe that these are based on actual data when all there is to it are hasty generalizations. In consequence, it masks the diversity and uniqueness of every individual.

There are different kinds of stereotypes: negative, positive and neutral but most of what resonates in society are negative stereotypes like being underprivileged, lazy and unlawful or criminal. No matter what their type is, all of them are harmful. Stereotypes strongly reflect the unequal relations of different classes so one manifestation is when it comes to people of color, according to a study by Dr. Monnica Williams, stereotypes contribute to keeping people of color in a disadvantaged status.

We might acknowledge that stereotypes are harmful but fail to gauge just how serious its effect can be especially in the justification of withholding of privileges in education, employment, housing and other opportunities. With the same study by Dr. Williams, it is shared that African American youth are pushed to pursue careers in sports, entertainment and other professions that are not as stable in the long run because of the stereotypes imposed to them about their athletic skill and musical abilities. There is also the stereotype, especially in the workplace, that “people of color are lazy”. If remain unchallenged, it can lead to difficulties for the people of color to get jobs because employers may easily infer that this is true and even generalize all people of color as lazy despite never working with one ever.

Representation in the media plays a huge role in either worsening or battling out stereotypes. For the longest time, the work of people of color in the media has always been overlooked, even in award shows like the Oscars and Grammys. That is why when Black Panther was released, it was such a breakthrough to have a cast with majority of it being black people. Many other films and TV shows have already taken notice of the current state of representation for the minorities but not all attempts are successful.

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If stereotypes are to be uprooted, true representation in the media will be the pivotal factor that will force people to confront the harsh reality that prejudice is threatening the lives of different classes among them. Once we see changes in the different media that we are exposed to and the different contents we consume, we will continuously think about it until we want to write about it to reverse the existing condition where all we study are stereotypes and all we see are stereotypes so all we create are stereotypes.

Representation in the media means offering a different set of lens for people to see themselves as the multicultural, multiracial, beautiful people they are. Representation can make disadvantaged groups become real people. In the essays by Julie D. O'Reilly titled *The Wonder Woman Precedent: Female (Super)Heroism on Trial and Seeing and Making Culture: Representing the Poor* by Gloria Watkins better known as Bell Hooks, we find that stereotypes are well, alive and thriving in pop culture. On the first essay, O'Reilly discusses how even superheroes or supernatural beings, if female, are subjected to a different treatment compared to male superheroes because not all representations of superheroes promote the same equal-opportunity perspective on heroism. Female superheroes had to repeatedly "earn" the title of being a superhero and prove their worthiness unlike their male counterparts.

It further discusses how unfair the depiction of women superheroes in comics, TV shows and other forms of media are because it merely becomes a commodity for men's sexual domination fantasies and the male gaze. Besides from this, female superheroes also had the constant challenge of being subjected to authority, with the law being imposed upon them because of the actions they have committed. Meanwhile, male superheroes do not undergo the same obstacle, instead are even tolerated, celebrated and/or are praised after committing the same actions. Until the use of this narrative technique to limit women's roles as fully recognized subjects — as heroines in their own right — is discontinued, the stereotype of a woman being "less" than a man will continue to flourish.

Moreover, on the second essay, Hooks challenges the stereotype against the poor and how they are depicted in media to have no integrity or dignity and are very desperate for material gain. She recalls how different it was back when she was young, wherein being poor was not equivalent to being valueless. Now, there is a stereotype that when they are lazy and dishonest, they are consumed with longing to be rich, a longing so intense that it renders them dysfunctional. Willing to commit all manner of dehumanizing and brutal acts in the name of material gain, the poor are portrayed as seeing themselves as always and only worthless and that they can never truly feel good while being poor.

In these essays, we see the current situation of stereotypes proliferate in pop culture, and the detrimental effect of it to not only those who are stereotyped but everyone, with how we critically think, how we move around others and how we value certain principles and beliefs. There are

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conscious efforts today to challenge these stereotypes but there are still fields in media or face-to-face that has little to no progress at all when it comes to challenging these prejudices. Comedy has been around ever since our Roman ancestors decided to entertain themselves through performance and dramatization. Up to this day, comedy is a genre that is enjoyed by all, no matter the age, race, gender, etc.

Comedy is not restricted to a certain audience which makes it more ironic how comedy uses certain stereotypes in the name of making people laugh. It is time for us to admit that comedy has been and still is a problem. It has always used the job of making people laugh as an excuse to make light of serious social issues and it is widespread in the internet which is now filled with unregulated and dangerous comedy, among other things.

Some, like Tony Fox, Comedy Central's Vice President, argue that using stereotyping in comedy is actually helpful in introducing the injustices that is carried with these stereotypes because people are smart enough to know it is exaggerated and satirical so it should only be taken as a joke. Despite Fox's proposition being ideal, there is no certainty to it. Not everyone will understand that it is all for comedy and think that stereotypes are forms of exploitation of different ethnic and sexual groups just to get a laugh. It gives an illusion that you are learning about a certain group but in reality, it gives you a distorted image. Comedy may try to portray these groups but at the end of the day, these groups are portrayed in only one way - inferiorly.

One thing that is very irksome when it comes to comedy is how problematic the characters can get to pave the way for comedy. No one knew it was possible for comedy to be progressive - but it is possible, and this is exactly what Brooklyn Nine-Nine (B99) entails. The series is about a team of detectives working for the 99th precinct of the New York Police Department. One of the best ensembles of TV includes Jake Peralta (Andy Samberg), the lead character of the show who is immature yet surprisingly one of the most brilliant detectives. Amy Santiago (Melissa Fumero), another detective who is a smart, organized (sometimes overly) and brilliant is Jake's main competition. Charles Boyle (Joe Lo Truglio), Jake's bestfriend, who is very unique when it comes to his interest and is eccentric in nature becomes completely infatuated with Rosa Diaz (Stephanie Beatriz), a badass detective who is feared by majority of the 99th precinct. Their fellow detectives are Hitchcock (Dirk Blocker) and Scully (Joel McKinnon Miller,) who are the oldest detectives that they seat in their chairs all day and do most of the paperwork. The sergeant of the team is Terry Jeffords (Terry Crews) who is both an incredible leader and father to his kids and finally, there is Ray Holt, the traditional and expressionless new captain. Gina Linetti, is also one to mention because of her amazing administration work as Captain Holt's secretary who usually is sarcastic. There are plenty of reasons why B99 is one of the best comedy shows of today, but what is worth focusing on is why and how they are the stereotype police.

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Representation is best when it is positive representation and that is exactly what B99 does for a community that in many ways is still underrepresented and sometimes, misrepresented. First off, it has not one but two black men in high ranking positions and simultaneously is conforming to zero stereotypes in the form of Captain Holt and Sergeant Terry Jeffords. Captain Holt, is an openly gay black man married to white man but he is not portrayed as flamboyant the way most homosexual characters are stereotyped in media. He provides incredibly important and positive representation for the LGBTQ+ community which could be praised endlessly. His sexuality is not made the punch line of any harmful jokes and his personality of being very serious and expressionless rather than his sexuality is put to the forefront. Meanwhile, Terry is tall and muscular and it would have been easy to label him as a “traditionally masculine” character, but he instead goes against any preconceptions you could stereotypically come up with from the little things like loving yogurt so much to the big things like being a loving and emotional family man which does not “strip his masculinity away”. The image of the “angry black man” is also out of the picture because Terry is one the nicest and purest souls of the show despite his towering, imposing figure.

To top that, there are also three women working together but they are never pit against together for work, or worse, over a man. Among these three women are two women of color, Rosa and Amy. In most screen time of Latinas, they are consistently stereotyped and sexualized, but neither Rosa nor Amy suffers from that because it is their hardwork and wit that are given attention to as lead detectives. To add to that, Amy Santiago is part of the show’s leading relationship, but she is never once reduced to “the love interest” that has the sole purpose of being there for the lead to be romantically linked to. She is equal to Jake and sometimes, even better as she is now a rank higher and Jake it totally accepting of that, with no trace of toxic and fragile masculinity at all.

Lastly, we have the two best friends Jake Peralta and Charles Boyle. Despite Jake being the lead male, the show does not box the story on only him. Each character has his/her fair amount of the story with some character development on the side. It is also worth noting that even though he is known for his childlike way, he never once makes damaging comments towards anyone. There is even one episode where he fights against such comments when he punched a well-known author he idolized when he was younger because of the author’s homophobic remark towards Captain Holt - and that really is another level of how the sitcom shows how fighting against homophobia should look like. Also, one example of Jake’s lines from the show is “I can’t make a woman’s choice for her.” There are a lot more moments in some episodes that can prove how Jake is a feminist male cop, and feminist, male and, cop are words you never really thought could go together and describe a lead character in a comedy show.

It is also remarkable how two of the relationships in the show aren interracial which is still something that is not properly represented in the media therefore is still controversial yet B99

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does not make a big deal out of it and leaves race as a factor if relationship problems arise. Brooklyn Nine-Nine touches on a lot of social issues like racism, homophobia, sexism, masculinity, police brutality which is a new high for a comedy show. At the same time, it is not too idealistic as a show, in some latter part of the show, Rosa came out of the closet and proclaimed herself as bisexual. Not one detective overly reacts to this, it was simply taken notice. But to keep things real, still Rosa did experience some judgement which is the struggle of most people who come out of the closet — her parents were not too happy and accepting but that only makes the show more realistic with the ending not always being perfect.

The television landscape is broadening its horizons at a maddeningly slow pace because despite how progressive today's media consumers are, if problematic practices are still imposed on them, we will always be steps further from reaching our goal and therefore is never really moving forward. It is sad that there is so much lacking in representation that shows who get it right gets so much praise and celebration for something so minimal compared to what else is needed to be achieved, but until these shows change how they are naturally exclusive, B99 will be our sole stereotype police. In fairness to Brooklyn Nine-Nine, it has never been self-congratulatory about their diversity and hopefully, that is because they know it is nothing to celebrate doing, it is simply something that should be done more.

Before we can successfully address the problem of stereotyping, there is a need to recognize the role we play in it as individuals, personally. We may not find out immediately because of the fear of confirming that we do harbor and promote stereotypes but soon, we will gather the courage to police even ourselves. Until then, let's watch and support shows like Brooklyn Nine-Nine featuring our very own stereotype police.

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