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# Intersectionality As A Mean For Understanding Race And Colorism

Intersectionality is a concept that is often used as a mean for understanding race and colorism we see on everyday lives and in the media in daily basics. It is a concept created to help understand the multiple identities of a person, or a group of people that leads to disadvantages and discriminations they may face in society. The idea of intersectionality was introduced to help examine how people's overlapping identities such as race, ethnicity, gender and class tend to create complex prejudices and inequalities that people may face in society. This concept focuses on understanding individuals in more than one dimension in order to be familiar with who they are as a whole and what struggles and privileges they may have in order to develop a proper method of social or political change. Moreover, the privilege one may enjoy and the discrimination that one might face are all the results of unique positions in society that are determined by these social strands.

In spite of all, intersectionality recognizes that our identities cannot be excluded from our life experience, as they do not exist independently of one another and that each contributes to the formation of the other, as a result, it often leads to many disadvantages and discriminations that people face every day. For example, as one author explains on YW Boston. "A black man and a white woman make \$0.74 and \$0.78 to a white man's dollar, respectively. Black women, faced with multiple forms of oppression, only make \$0.64" (1). This example specifically focuses on pointing out prejudices African American people face in their daily lives compared to those of the white people. As a Black person, you are always more likely to receive lower wages or be treated differently at work compared to a White person. Even if your educational background or skills are better, you are still at a disadvantage due to the color of your skin.

The concept of intersectionality became well known during the 90's when a critical legal and race scholar named Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw wrote papers regarding the inequalities African American women face daily. According to Sharon Smith, Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality came about in a paper she published called "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrines, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." In her paper, Crenshaw explained the intersection of race and gender leading to how African American men and women experience the legal system. In her study for instance, she illustrated that when cases brought by African American women are not taken seriously because they do not meet the same conditions of those brought by White women or Black men. In view of that fact, because these claims by African American women did not correspond to normative experiences of race and gender their cases were perceived as not important and irrelevant Smith explained. Consequently, Crenshaw concluded that African American women were unjustifiably dismissed due to the continuous intersecting nature of how they are viewed by others as both racial and gendered issues.

With intersectionality, we are able to understand race, and racism in the media and how some racial groups are portrayed in stereotypical ways in the media. When looking into both modern and past media, certain races and ethnic groups, such as African Americans, are in negative characterizations. Often the media extremely portrays African American as poor lower class families and dependent on welfare, as being the criminals, dysfunctional families. The media

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takes a great deal into to overhyping black fathers as absent. The media is rarely to see African Americans as lawyers, judges, or politicians. According to the Washington Post, a study conducted by the University of Illinois found that media outlets promoted racially based portrayals and fake news that pathologizes black families, while white families picture perfect with respect to poverty & crime. For example, "...black families represent 59% of the poor in the media, but make up just 27% of the poor of the general population, while White families...represent 17% of the poor in media, but make up 66% of the poor across the country," said Rodgers and Robinson. This data analysis shows that the media overwhelmingly release fake news regarding African American families in order to falsify the image they have of these families. With that being said, the media and television contribute to how we see the world, so it is important to avoid spreading fake and false information about these racial groups, as it still leads to the stereotypical images we see or go through in our daily lives.

Another intersectional group of people that are reflected through stereotypical controlled imaging in the media is the Islamic groups. The portrayals of Arabs and Muslims increase the concept known as "Islamophobia"; it advances "orientalist stereotypes" as a means to justify foreign interventions. Islamophobia as defined by Golash-Boza is "the systematic marginalization of Muslims" (p.119). In other words, Islamophobia is the fear, hatred and prejudice against Muslims or the Islamic religion in general. Whether in policies or social media, Anti-Muslim bigotry, and discrimination have become general features of American public life, and American television takes a great deal into to portraying Arabs as foreigners and even terrorists or violent individuals. It is common to see negative and stereotypical images of Muslims online, which gives us the visual presentation of where Muslims are placed in today's society. Many Muslims across the nation are currently shouldering the burden of Islamophobia, according to CAIR, research has shown that, "Muslims face bullying at twice the rate of the national average and that school administrators and teachers are under-equipped to address the challenge". Consequently, a great number of Muslim children report not feeling safe even to approach the teachers or school administrators about these issues because the media paint them and their families as dangerous people.

Intersectionality tries to correct dynamics that many of us often overlook. For example, people can't say gender alone defines people's fate in society, rather it is all her identities, race, religion, ethnicity etc. that determines that person's future. For example, "Orange is the New Black", follows different women from different racial backgrounds and classes living behind bars of an institutional racism. Institutional racism as defined by Golash-Boza is "policies, laws and institutions that reproduce racial inequalities" (102). This program shows that racial discrimination has become institutionalized in the criminal justice system. Which means that many of the written laws are discriminatory against minorities. In the shows, when comparing same crimes committed by whites and non-whites, the non-whites always end up with harsher punishments such as longer sentencing. *Orange Is the New Black* also, does a good job of outlining the police/prison guard brutalities towards non-whites. In the show, when a non-white breaks rules within the prison they are treated harshly compared to when whites do the same. All in all, when we look at the criminal justice system, it is horrifying to see how minorities are more likely to be affected negatively by this system compared to the whites. Even though the system is supposed to protect and treat everyone equally it always fails to do so.

With intersectionality, we are able to think of race and racism in terms of "systemic racism", in ways that we never thought about them before. As explained by Golash-Boza systemic racism is "patterns of unjust improvement of non-white and vested groups' interest of whites to maintain

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power.” In other words, is an oppression that is created whereby White are able to “reproduce inequalities” through the control of “politics and economy” (107). In today’s society policies, laws and institutions that reproduce racial inequalities are very common in college campuses. For instance, UW Madison created a Homecoming video with no diversity. The video goes to represent the never-ending struggles of being a minority in this country. This video is the perfect example of the relationship between UW and the minority community in Madison. The videos point out the fact that non-whites equally treated the same way as white and therefore shows that they are less important to the campus.

Colorism has existed in this world for as long as we could remember. Now a days the lighter you are the better you’ll be at a social standpoint. Colorism has become so normalized that it gives differential value to people within the same racial groups based on how light or dark your skin color is. As Golash-Boza explained, colorism is “the idea that within race, lighter is better” (159). For example, many of my friends use skin lightening lotion to lighten their skins because they because lighter skin is more attractive to others than darker skin. The values they give they give to it is related to people’s ideologies of race, gender, class as well as to colorism, which is where intersectionality comes into play, as it help us understand all these different things. Our experience of race and racism and community vary greatly by the color of our skin, just because a person is black that does mean their oppression is the same as other, many percid it to be that way. For example, if a lighter person is pulled over by the police, they are more likely to get off without any punishment compare to a darker person. And this shows the problematic relation society is facing when it comes to race and colorism. And as long as society continue to emphasize the importance of lighter skin tones, colorism will never go away.