

Select and critically discuss, three images which can be seen to perpetuate stereotypical attitudes for a group of your choosing.

Introduction

'If you're not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed and loving the people who are doing the oppressing.' Malcolm X

Images have long been used to sell narratives, spread propaganda, and re-enforce stereotypes for the political or social benefit of others. Berger. (2021) We live in an age of social media where everyone takes pictures and posts images that tell a story. Kelly. (2014) Sometimes, these images can re-enforce negative stereotypes and, like Malcolm X claimed, can be persuasive in normalising the oppression of vulnerable or minority groups.

When writing the article on criminal stereotypes, Avery et al.(2021) cite the case of *McQuirter V State*, 1953, where a black man innocently walking down the street in a white neighbourhood loitered for a while, in the area of a white woman, Mrs Ted Allen, who became afraid, was convicted of attempted rape. H20, (2014). In assessing the criminal intent of *McQuirter*, the court accepted that his race could be considered negatively when determining intent, stating:

'In determining the question of intention, the jury may consider social conditions and customs founded upon racial differences, such as that the prosecutrix was a white woman and defendant was a Negro man.' *McQuirter V State* (1953)

We are noticeably some ways away from this particular injustice; however, the stereotype that associates black men with criminality still exists today. McGee (2007).

Dorling (2010) points out that it was commonplace in the 1970s in the UK for the police to beat up young black men. He suggests it has taken a generation to acknowledge how objectionable that was. However, the overt racism Dorling refers to has been replaced with the more challenging to address 'covert racism', Holdaway & O'Neill (2007). In his report into the treatment of and outcomes for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the criminal justice system. David Lammy MP concluded that there was a reduction in overt racial prejudice, but that covert or unconscious bias was becoming more prevalent. Lammy (2017)

Between April 2020 and March 2021, the statistics show that there were 7.5 stop and searches for every 1,000-white people, compared with 52.6 for every 1,000 black people. Gov.UK (2022). This disparity in the number of stops and searches conducted on black

people feeds the negative stereotype that black people are more involved in criminality than whites. If the public sees black people being stopped and searched seven times more than white people, it can start to re-enforce any unconscious bias they may have, including those working within the police force. Equality and Human Rights Commission (2016)

The Images



Source: Knoote/Getty. (1958). *London police search a young man in Talbot Road, Notting Hill, in 1958*



Gideon Mendel/Corbis. (2015). *Police stop and search black youths at the entrance to the Notting Hill Carnival.* [Photograph]. London: The Guardian.



Jared Brewington & Rashford West. (2020). George Floyd arrest. [Photograph]. Palm springs: NBC.

The three images selected show different interactions with police. In the first two images, we can see that the police have stopped black men and are in the process of searching them. In the final picture, we see a black man, George Floyd, handcuffed and being led to a police car.



The first image taken in 1958 was ten years after the first arrival of the Windrush ship and ten years after 11 Labour MPs called for the cessation of the 'influx of coloured people'. When writing to the then Prime minister, Clement Attlee, they argued that:

'An influx of coloured people domiciled here is likely to impair the harmony, strength and cohesion of our public and social life and to cause discord and unhappiness among all concerned.'

Windrush Foundation (2020).

It is impossible to prove that this sentiment from MPs led to a more confrontational approach by law enforcement. However, it is fair to suggest that it engendered a stereotype that black people would somehow cause conflict within communities. This narrative was reinforced by the infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech by Enoch Powell in April 1968. When describing the experience of one of his white constituents, living in an area that had seen this 'influx' of

immigrants, he says: With growing fear, she saw one house after another taken over. The quiet street became a place of noise and confusion. Regretfully, her white tenants moved out.

"The day after the last one left, she was awakened at 7 am by two Negroes who wanted to use her 'phone to contact their employer. When she refused, as she would have refused any stranger at such an hour, she was abused and feared she would have been attacked but for the chain on her door.'" Enoch Powell (1968)

Her fear is possibly the same unfathomable fear that Mrs Ted Allen had in the McQuirter case, based on the colour of someone's skin.

The stereotype of blackness and immorality is surreptitiously included in the speech when Powell states.

'So insane are we that we actually permit unmarried persons to immigrate for the purpose of founding a family with spouses and fiancés whom they have never seen'.
Enoch Powell (1968)

This immorality of black men is further propagated by the police reports to the Home Office between 1953 and 1957 that suggested 'a fondness to white prostitutes' by black men and their lack of 'social responsibility'. Whitfield (2006)

So the picture is an illustration of how in the UK, black men, in particular, were seen at that time and for many years later. Out at night terrorising innocent white women 'demanding to use their phones' and abusing them. It might seem fair then for law enforcement officers to stop and search these black immigrants!

Avery (2021) suggests that stereotypically crimes associated with black people are seen as more immoral than those by white people. Alter et al. (2016) argues that the association of black or darkness is 'ingrained in human psychology'.

It is undeniable that the word 'black' is seen in a negative context and often negative language associated with the word 'black', such as blackmail, blacklist, the black sheep of the family, The Black Death, black magic, and the black market, the list goes on and re-enforces the negative stereotype of blackness.

Although this stereotype of criminality is prevalent when primarily referring to black men, it is not exclusive to men, with the case in 2020, where a black female barrister, Ms Wilson, was mistaken for a defendant three times in one day. BBC (2020)

The second Photograph is of a group of youths at the entrance to the Notting Hill Carnival, possibly second or third generation Windrush UK black citizens. Gilroy (2008) states that the smiling ‘piccaninnies’ portrayed by Powell in his speech have now grown up, and a new image of young black criminals has replaced the image Powell described, but the stereotypical element of criminality remains.



The image of black men being stopped by the police and searched and arrested feeds a stereotype that associates black men as perpetrators, involved in theft, carrying offensive weapons or drugs or committing other crimes. In researching the ‘stereotypical associations on visual processing,’ Eberhardt et al. (2004) found that in their study of the stereotyping of black Americans, police officers were shown photographs of black and white faces and told that some of the photographs might be of criminals and asked the officers to identify the faces they thought were of criminals. The research showed that the participants were likelier to identify black faces as criminals. As highlighted by Andrews (2015), the history of stereotyping and associating black people with criminality has directly led to the ‘over-policing of black communities. This over-policing continues the cycle of bias, with the belief that this group ‘must be up to something’ as they are constantly being stopped and searched.

The over-policing of black communities in the eighties primarily led to the race riots in Bristol, London, specifically Brixton and spreading to Birmingham. Pierre. (2022). In his report on the riots in April 1981, Lord Scarman stated,

“The riots were essentially an outburst of anger and resentment by young black people against the police.” Scarman (1981)

He concluded that Institutional racism did not exist, which was in contrast to the later report by Macpherson that found it did exist in the police force and defined institutional racism as

“the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin”. Booth, The Guardian (2019).

The Sewell report (2021) on race and ethnic disparities detailed the statistics of the number of 10 -17-year-olds first entrance into the criminal justice system, comparing the 0.25% of the ethnic minority population with the 0.16 % of those from the white population. However, the commission did not attribute this to stereotyping and suggested that the focus on disparities should be instead on the differences in crime and violent crime. The report suggests that the cause of BAME overrepresentation lies with other social factors such as poverty, lone-parent upbringing, and the high number of school exclusions. Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (2021). Rather than addressing the stereotypes that black youths face within the criminal justice system, the report in this area appears to re-enforce a stereotype of black fathers abandoning their children.

The third image is that of the murdered George Floyd, moments before the deadly actions



carried out by Dereck Chauvin and his fellow police officers NBC News (2022)

This image has been highlighted here instead of the more well-known image of George Floyd under the knee of Dereck Chauvin to

underscore how the image of a black

man being arrested is baked into some of our unconscious minds. We do not think anything is out of the ordinary; the stereotype of black men being in trouble with the police is prevalent in society. It is only when we realise that this photograph is from the moments before the murder of George Floyd that the stereotype begins to unravel. We know now that this black man was deprived of his civil rights, was not given medical aid and was murdered by Dereck Chauvin. NBC News (2022).

However, even as the facts of this case were being revealed and the outrage and protest began to rise, some in the news and press media and social media platforms began to publish negative stories about George Floyd, feeding into the stereotype of black criminality. In his broadcast opinion, right-wing media news anchor Tucker Carlson stated. *'George Floyd was emotionally out of control'*.

Carlson details the criminal past of George Floyd and his interactions with the police. Listing his criminal record from 1997 to 2007. In trying to justify his negative stereotype of George Floyd and the assertion that perhaps George Floyd was somehow partly responsible for his own death, Carlson ends with:

'The percentage of people who think George Floyd was murdered has now dropped to 36%. In other words, the question of whether George Floyd was murdered is, in fact, "disputed" by a majority of Americans. The bad news is you're still not allowed to say that out loud.' Fox News (2021)

The irony should not be lost in that Carlson said it out loud! Dixon and Dundes (p.14. 2020) argue that the stereotype of black males being involved with criminality precipitates the view that it is more important to maintain stability and 'the status quo' than to invest in measures that promote equality, particularly in policing. In the research on the impact of teaching Critical Race Theory to police officers where the understanding of racism as a social construct is examined, Bornstein et al. (p.201.2012) found that there was both a need and benefit for police officers, mainly white police officers, to study CRT pedagogy.

Whilst this discussion has predominantly focused on the images which can be seen to perpetuate stereotypical attitudes toward black men, there is another stereotype that the images selected can perpetuate, particularly if viewing these images from the perspective of the black community. As Trinkner et al. (2019) discussed, 'racist police officer' is a long-standing stereotype in the United States. In 'The Stephen Lawrence inquiry' (1999), McPherson quoted a number of senior officers and organisations within the Metropolitan police who suggested there were unquestionably racists within the police force.

'6.27 The MPS Black Police Association's spokesmen, in their written submission to the Inquiry, para 3.2, said this: - "... institutional racism permeates the Metropolitan Police Service. This issue, above all others, is central to the attitudes, values and beliefs, which lead officers to act, albeit unconsciously and for the most part unintentionally, and treat others differently solely because of their ethnicity or culture.' (The Stephen Lawrence inquiry' p.46,1999)

These statements and McPherson's conclusion that the Police force in London was institutional racist is something that the black man in 1958 and the black youths pictured at Notting Hill Carnival were probably already well aware of from their experiences. The fact that a prominent former high court judge stated it, assisted in bringing it to others outside of the black community. It's also interesting to note that the prominent black Labour MP for Tottenham and one of the three first black MPs in Parliament, Bernie Grant, had been arguing for some time that the institution was racist and had been accused of being anti-police and was branded 'Barmy Bernie' by the Sun Newspaper. BBC (2000). Thompson (2003) argues that:

'Institutional racism is closely linked to the S level, the structural level of macro and political factors. Racism is therefore, part of the way society is organised and reflects Britain's history of imperialism.'

The link between imperialism and the negative stereotype of black men is important, as stereotypes about the 'savagery' of those black inhabitants being invaded by white European colonists were established well before the Windrush generation. Brantlinger. (2018)

More recently, Neil Basu, assistant commissioner of the Metropolitan police, argued that the British police remained institutionally racist. Basu (2022). He endorsed the opinion that the black African-Caribbean man, in particular, had been 'over-policed' and unshielded since the Windrush era. He states in his article:

'Sir Michael Barber, in his Strategic Review of Policing, says it will be 20 years before policing is representative of gender in England and Wales, and 58 years until it is representative of race.'

Fifty-Eight years until the force is representative of the communities it represents, seems an unrealistic timescale if the issues of racism in the force are to be eradicated. The recent story of the brutal beating of Tyre Nichols, ABC News (2023), could also suggest that having more

representation might not necessarily overcome the bias and stereotyping within the police force.

Conclusion

These images are a tiny ‘snapshot’ of the millions of images stretching back centuries that negatively stereotype black men as somehow less than, as immoral, and uneducated. Green (2022). The continuation of these stereotypes and images, in conjunction with the current divisions and animosity on the subject of race, equity and inclusion that even go as far as Governors in the United States banning Critical Race Theory from being taught in schools and proposing to ban diversity and inclusion initiatives in universities, Contorno. (2022) does not encourage hope for change. Police officers and society must have the opportunity to learn, explore, and discard the negative stereotypes these images propagate.

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