Stereotyping Blackness:  
The Representation of African Americans in Contemporary U.S. Media and Its Impact on Society

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1 Introduction

Whatever we know about our society, or indeed about the world in which we live, we know through the mass media. This is true not only of our knowledge of society and history but also of our knowledge of nature. What we know about the stratosphere is the same as what Plato knows about Atlantis: we’ve heard tell of it. [...] On the other hand, we know so much about the mass media that we are not able to trust these sources. Our way of dealing with this is to suspect that there is manipulation at work, and yet no consequences of any import ensue because knowledge acquired from the mass media merges together as if of its own accord into a self-reinforcing structure. Even if all knowledge were to carry a warning that it was open to doubt, it would still have to be used as a foundation, as a starting point. (Luhmann, 2000:2)

By starting off with this quote from Luhmann’s The Reality of the Mass Media, I intend to set a critical tone for the following diploma thesis. As the title already implies, the subsequent thesis deals with the stereotyping of African Americans in contemporary U.S. mass media. Consequently, it will be argued throughout the paper that the mass media perpetuate stereotyped portrayals of African Americans that negatively affect society’s perception of the ‘inferior race’ and furthermore contribute to the preservation of the white supremacist ideology in the U.S.A. (cf. Myers, Williamson qtd. in: Rios, Zamudio, 2006:487) Accordingly, the thesis is based on the assumption that despite the fact that African Americans have made great advances throughout history in terms of racial equality, the United States are still shaped by deep-rooted racist values that constitute a bar to the already presumed “post-racist era”. (cf. Rios, Zamudio, 2006:484) I will argue that one of the main causes for the persistence of the racist ideology is the stereotyped depiction of African Americans in the mass media. In order to confirm this assumption, a critical race analysis of various contemporary materials found in the mass media will be carried out.

Moreover, I will argue in this diploma thesis that stereotyping is culturally rooted in society through language and that the stereotyping strategies evolved simultaneously with the development and expansion of the media. This means that the radio as the first mass medium to stereotype blackness used language as stereotyping aesthetics, whereas later with the invention of TV and films additional

1 “Critical Race Theory (CRT) challenges the notion of meritocracy of the United States (U.S.) using race and racism as a lens in critiquing issues.” (DeCuir, Dixson qtd. in: Agyapong, 2008:6)
strategies such as camera angles, images etc. followed and broadened the possibilities to depict stereotyped images. One of the most popular and also one of the first mass medium channels to stereotype blackness was the radio show “Amos’n’Andy” that was broadcast in the 1920s and 30s. The comedy show that was hosted by two white actors imitated the stereotyped versions of black men and enjoyed great popularity but on the other hand also caused a dispute because of its racial bias, which eventually contributed to the show’s withdrawal. However, Watkins argues that particularly this racial bias and depiction of stereotyped images in the show contributed to its success and popularity, curiously also among African Americans. Yet, when the show made its debut on TV in 1951 starring black performers it did not take long for protests to emerge which contributed to the sitcom’s demise. (cf. Watkins 1991, online) This also shows that different mass media work with different strategies and that whereas the radio show enjoyed great success and popularity, the same show caused public outrage and was unsuccessful on TV. Accordingly, this diploma thesis also analyzes various stereotyping strategies of various mass media channels and how they operate.

Firstly, in order to introduce the reader to the topic, the concepts of race, ethnicity, as well as the concept of racism will be described and exemplified. An attempt to clarify what “race” and “ethnicity” originally signified will be made. In addition, I will try to prove that race in fact can and also needs to be considered as a social construction rather than a biological fact. However, the erroneous belief that race is a biological fact gives rise to the concept of racism, which will be analyzed in detail. Hence, it will be demonstrated what forms of racism exist, how it is performed and what impact it has. Moreover, I will argue in this chapter that the white supremacist ideology already emerged in Europe before the discovery of America and examine whether racism has changed from the early years of America to today’s era in which the first African American president of the United States was elected in 2004.

The third chapter concerns itself with a particular form of racism that is central to this diploma thesis’ main argument, namely racial stereotypes and prejudices. It will be demonstrated how and why racial stereotypes are formed and that, despite the fact that stereotypes can be considered to be mere over-generalizations that are
made due to efficiency purposes, they negatively impact our perception of minority groups. Finally, the main and most frequent stereotypes about African Americans will be presented. The stereotyped images listed will then provide a basis for the subsequent racial analysis in this paper.

Moreover, the role of the mass media in perpetuating racial stereotypes will be examined. Therefore, as already implied with the introductory quotation at the very beginning, it is argued that the mass media constitutes our main source of knowledge and thus, has the power to consciously as well as unconsciously shape our attitudes, beliefs and values. To add to this, the fourth chapter exemplifies how the media influences our society and perpetuates racial discrimination in the U.S. by depicting stereotyped images of African Americans. Therefore, contemporary mass media channels are analyzed in terms of their usage, development and how they perpetuate racial stereotypes. Therefore, I will show that different mass media have different stereotyping strategies at hand. This means that whereas the print media mainly uses language and images, the broadcast media can additionally make use of camera settings for example.

Lastly, after the elaboration of the theoretical background, a critical race analysis will be carried out in order find out whether the thesis presented in the beginning is valid. Therefore, materials of various mass media channels are analyzed and it will be demonstrated that the stereotyped depiction of African Americans in contemporary mass media perpetuate racial stereotypes. The following presentation of the findings of the analysis will furthermore prove the thesis’ validity. The decision to analyze all of the major mass media channels was made in order to support the argument that racism, and in this case racial stereotypes, are persistent and pervasive. In short, this diploma thesis claims that the mass media’s depiction of stereotyped portrayals of African Americans contributes to the perpetuation of racial stereotypes and thus, constitutes a bar to a ‘racist free’ society.
2 Race and Ethnicity in a Historical Perspective

The following chapter will concern itself with two major aspects that are intertwined with each other: firstly, whether race is a biological fact or a social construct and secondly, the concept of racism. In order to start at the very basis of this topic, the beginning of this chapter will be dedicated to defining what we understand by race and ethnicity and how its perception has evolved over time, followed by an analysis of various approaches to determine whether race is biologically inherited or socially constructed. In doing so, past and more recent approaches of scientists will be taken into consideration to exemplify different perspectives, which then will contribute to the current widespread and mainly accepted opinion. Inevitably, this discussion then leads to addressing the concept of racism, its meanings, forms, effects and root causes. Consequently, the overall aim of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the main concepts that are prevalent throughout this thesis and the basis for understanding in the subsequent analytical section.

2.1 Definitions

2.1.1 Defining Race

“Race is a variable and not a constant.” (Coates, 2004:3) Using this quote as the introduction of this section already implies the significance of the fact that race indeed needs to be considered as a concept that depends on various factors and perspectives and that there is no unanimously accepted definition and/or approach among experts. Broadly speaking, according to Coates, the interpretation of race is subject to time, space and discipline. (cf. 2004) Geulen adds that “[...] die Unterscheidung von Menschenrassen [...] im Kern eine Sache der Nomenklatur und damit der menschlichen Setzung [...] ist und bleibt.” (2007:14) He points out that throughout history innumerable scientists across different fields have come up with various concepts of race that were not only arbitrary but also different in their essence. This contributed to the fact that today's concept of race is remarkably ambiguous and broad. (cf. 2007:14f) Despite this, many people still unknowingly consider race as a static categorization of racial and ethnic groups. (cf. Coates, 2004:7)
Kant, who is believed to have coined the term race, first applied it with regard to the categorization of human beings. Whereas race in its original meaning was referred to members of the nobility or dog and horse breeding, Kant passed on its original meaning to a different semantic field in order to racially categorize human beings according to their skin color. (cf. Larrimore, 2009:7-12) Later during the Reconquista in Spain race was initially used to differentiate between groups of human beings based on religious, cultural and nativity differences and only in the 18th Century did it become scientific and was linked to the belief of the existence of different human races. From that moment on and up until the middle of the 20th Century the idea that there were different races remained the common belief. (cf. Geulen, 2007:13f)

Despite the concept’s ambiguity the origin of the term and its meaning remain important for the purpose of this paper. According to the etymology of the term race it derivates from the arabic <raz>, which means head, leader, or origin and the latin word <radix>, which stands for root. Its first use is dated back to the 15th Century where it was originally used in the context of horse breeding and powerful aristocracy. Moreover, the term specifically referred to members of the nobility and horses that were particularly gallant. (cf. Geulen, 2007:13f)

Having addressed the term’s origin and its original semantic field, “The Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations” defines the then slowly altering concept of race, whose name and meaning have emerged in Western Europe, as a term that has been invented in order to help categorize and define the population according to assumed biological characteristics and differences. Thus, race served as a designator to classify certain groups and distinguish between them. In this respect, it is worth mentioning that intelligence was not considered an important distinguishing factor at that time. (cf. Cashmore, 1996:307f) Coates elaborates by stating that “race is a process of structured events which over time demonstrate a system whereby groups and individuals are racialized.” (2004:5) This racialization of groups “ha[s] been constructed first by those who wished to assign them to someone else; race has been first and foremost a way of describing ‘others’ of making clear that ‘they’ are not ‘us.’” (Cornell; Hartmann, 2007:28) This way of describing others, also referred to
as *racial designation*, entails the concept of superiority and inferiority, both physically and biologically and consequently, also implies “inferiority in moral worth” of others. (cf. Cornell; Hartmann, 2007:29)

Cornell and Hartmann continue by emphasizing that in today's society race is often times considered to be a linear and unambiguous concept, even though in fact it is the complete opposite. Biologically, race can be viewed as a system that categorizes racial and ethnic groups according to their biological differences. However, since race is assumed to be inconsistent, its biological definition turns out to be contradictory. This is chiefly due to the fact that several scientists from various fields have not been able to agree on if and what genetic predispositions are typical of what races and moreover, on how many races even exist. Consequently, classifications vary(ied) from three to 126 different categories of race. Therefore, Cornell and Hartmann legitimately question the biological justification of race, which will be exemplified in more detail later in this chapter. (cf. 2007:21f)

Additionally, it needs to be emphasized that “race has been the most powerful and persistent group boundary in American history” and that Whites, as a racial classification, have always created and enjoyed superiority over other racial categories. The latter have unsuccessfully struggled to break out of their assigned inferior roles. (cf. Ignatiev; Sacks qtd. in: Cornell; Hartmann, 2007:26)

Proceeding from the assumption that races exist, the question of what exactly is meant if someone is ‘black’ arises. David L. Brunsma and Kerry Ann Rockquemore reiterate that the concept and perception of blackness is known for its shifting nature. Whereas once anyone of black African descent was assigned to the black race, today’s scientists consider this strict ‘either-or’ categorization to be disputed. (cf. 2004:81) “The general conception of [the black] race is still one of biologically, culturally, materially, phenotypically, and ontologically rooted difference and distinction. (Brunsma; Rockquemore, 2004:87)

Ultimately however, it can be agreed on that race in any event is classifying human beings according to presumably inherent characteristics. Hence, it represents a concept that is discriminating as well as creating social hierarchies.
2.1.2 Defining Ethnicity

Similar concept, same difficulty. Similar to the idea of race and racism, as we will see later in this paper, the concept of ethnicity is unsurprisingly vague and ambiguous. Therefore, many approaches and attempts at defining ethnicity are in circulation. (cf. Cornell; Hartmann, 2007:19) Cornell and Hartmann refer to sociologist Richard A. Schermerhorn who defines ethnicity as “a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood.” (Schermerhorn qtd. in: 2007:19) Summarizing, the definition consists of three main aspects that are considered and constitute an ethnic group: lineage, shared history and shared symbolic elements, such as religion, geographical closeness and/or language etc..

However, it needs to be pointed out that these aspects do not have to rely on facts, but can be interpreted generously. This means that as Schermerhorn mentioned kinship can be either “real or putative” and thus is perceived in a much broader sense. (cf. Cornell; Hartmann, 2007:19) Another fact that constitutes ethnic groups is their self-consciousness and that they consider themselves as distinct from other ethnic groups. (cf. Schermerhorn qtd. in: Cornell; Hartmann, 2007:19) Apart from this, it is insignificant whether ethnic groups are in fact culturally distinctive or not, since there is no interdependence between ethnicity and culture, i.e. that members of an ethnic group do not necessarily practice any religion or other typical cultural practices. This is also due to the fact that first of all, “an ethnic group is a subpopulation within a larger society”, and secondly, because “cultural practices of an ethnic group may vary little from those prevalent in the society of which it is a part.” Apart from cultural practices and kinship, ethnicity is often times related to common origins. (cf. Cornell; Hartmann, 2009:19f) Broadly speaking, ethnicity can be considered as some sort of family that is connected with each other through “shared, distinctive origins.” (Horowitz qtd. in: Cornell; Hartmann, 2007:20)

Another aspect typical of an ethnic group is its self-description of members and “that it identifies itself in a particular way.” (Horowitz qtd. in: Cornell; Hartmann, 2007:20) Being a member of one ethnic group simultaneously means distancing
oneself from other groups that are put into relation. Furthermore, it is important to mention that ethnic groups are not automatically to be confused with minority groups. (cf. Cornell; Hartmann, 2007:20f) On the contrary, any group of people that shares the same values, cultural practices, kinship, language and/or history is considered an ethnic group, put aside the question of minority and majority groups.

2.1.3 Differences and Commonalities of Race and Ethnicity

After elaborating on the concepts of race and ethnicity individually, the question arises of whether races are ethnic groups, and if not, what exactly distinguishes the two concepts from each other. Once again, there is no definite answer to that. The problem resides in the fact that even though the concepts of race and ethnicity cannot be used interchangeably, they still overlap to some degree. (cf. Cornell; Hartmann, 2007:26) Therefore, the ways race and ethnicity differ from each other and what aspects they have in common will be examined in order to obtain more clarity. The following illustration serves as a visual portrayal of how the two concepts are related to each other.

![Figure 1: A Depiction of How the Concepts of Race and Ethnicity Overlap](image-url)

First of all, despite their differences, both concepts have certain aspects in common and often times overlap, as can be seen in the graph above. Both race and ethnicity are expandable notions and are “commonly held to be ‘natural’ categories, based on common descent or origin, on one hand, and on systematic physical difference, on the other.” Moreover, “[...] both depend far more on the claims people make about
one another or themselves than on any genealogical differences.” (Cornell; Hartmann, 2007:32f)

Additionally, as is known, race is a concept that classifies people according to their biological differences. Ethnic groups however, define themselves through various aspects but not through racial distinction. This means that racial categories may consist of more than one ethnic group, such as it is the case among the racial category of Latinos that includes not only Mexicans, but also Cubans and/or Colombians etc.. However, the categorization of race tends to outweigh ethnicity, meaning that the ethnicity of individuals is often ignored by society in order to refer to their racial designation. The only exception to this are Whites, where ethnic diversity finds acceptance. (cf. Cornell; Hartmann, 2007:27)

Another aspect that Cornell and Hartmann mention as a factor which differentiates the two concepts from each other is that “it has been far more reluctant to allow movement across racial boundaries than across ethnic ones.” (2007:27) This demonstrates how powerful of a concept race is and that although ethnicity is widely acknowledged, race in America has always been more prominent when defining or referring to others. Following up on this, Cornell and Hartmann support their claim by highlighting that “race typically has its origins in assignment, in the classification that a dominant group imposes upon a less powerful collection of others” and that “[...] ethnicity can have similar origins, but it frequently begins in the assertion of group members themselves.” (2007:28)

As discussed earlier, race is characterized by the fact that one racial group distinguishes itself through (mostly negative) claims about another racial group. Consequently, racial identification mainly happens through assigning distinct features to other groups. On the contrary, one of the central points of ethnicity is its tendency towards self-description. So basically, the main difference lies in the ordinary distinction between “self” and “other”. This differentiation criterion, however, may become blurry at times, since claims that are made by others might transition into a group's self-perception. In this case, ethnic groups “are engaged in a classical process of constructing ethnicity.” Conversely, “[w]hen a racial group sets out to construct its own version of its identity, it makes itself both a race and an
ethnic group at once.” Consequently, both concepts are social constructions. (cf. Cornell; Hartmann, 2007:30f,33)

In conclusion, race and ethnicity are difficult to delineate from each other which makes it challenging to consider them in isolation. However, it can be deduced that most of the time both bear negative connotations and are associated with racial discrimination and social hierarchization. Cornell and Hartmann draw attention to the fact that many people no longer believe that race and ethnicity exist due to a growing consciousness and mutual understanding and acceptance of the modern world population. However, the unexpected persistence of these concepts is proof of their power and impact. (cf. 2007:5)

2.2 Biological Fact vs. Social Construction

By means of the previous sections on the concepts of race and ethnicity, the debate on whether race is a biological fact or a social construction has already been discussed. Various scientists were and still are divided on the question of whether race is genetically inherited or a mere construction on the part of society. Particularly the passing on of antiquated concepts and the general lack of evidence in this matter contribute to today's conflicting viewpoints on race. Therefore, the following elaboration will consider how this issue has evolved throughout history, while simultaneously trying to dismiss the claim that race is a biological fact. This means that this issue will be approached from a sociological point of view, even though philosophical and anthropological perspectives will be included as counterarguments and as a way to faithfully represent the formation process of this debate.

Immanuel Kant, the man who allegedly first used the term race, in a, used the concept in order to classify the population according to their biological diversity. With his essay “Von den verschieden Rassen der Menschen”, which was published in 1775, he triggered a wide-ranging and ongoing debate among scientists. Originally related to animal breeding, Kant introduced the term race, or Menschenracen, to suggest that the heredity transmission of specific genetic traits such as it occurs with breeding, existed also among human beings. Consequently, Kant was convinced that through the reproduction of the human species some
“inevitably heritable and perdurable traits” were passed on without degeneration. As a result, his approach implied that race is indeed a biological fact and due to the passing on of some permanent traits, in his view, also genetically verifiable. Even though he was aware of the hybridization of genetic traits through reproduction, Kant considered the modification as a form of deviation and not degeneration, relying on the assumption that certain heritable traits were permanent. Additionally, perceiving the white race as the most prominent and complete one, Kant unintentionally and simultaneously also invented the concept of whiteness. (cf. Larrimore, 2009:7-12)

Clearly, Kant's philosophical approach of defining race is based on the presumption that race is a biological fact which is genetically determined. Another approach that supports Kant’s view suggests that “[...] various races [...] have emerged separately from an ape ancestry and were, in effect, different species. (Haller; Gould qtd. in: Francis and Taylor, 2015:216) Therefore, it was assumed that some races, including blacks, developed less than others and consequently, “were less advanced from the ancestral ape”, which then ultimately caused the racial divergence between blacks and whites. (Francis and Taylor, 2015:216) Also the anthropologist Franz Boas claimed, in his early writings on race, that African Americans are inherently inferior due to the proven fact that “[...] both the brain weight and cranial cavities of whites, on average, were 'larger than that of most other races, particularly larger than that of Negroses.''(Boas qtd. in: Williams, 2006:23) Boas then reached the conclusion that there has to be a “[...] direct relation between intelligence and brain weight or cranial capacity [...]” and thus, African Americans were considered to be inherently inferior. (Williams, 2006:21)

Andreasen recapitulates that from the 19th Century up until the beginning of the 20th Century it was commonly believed that race is a biological fact. Scientists that supported the claim of biological realism, as Andreasen refers to this notion, assumed that races were subcategories of the overall human species that were classified according to their genetic, phenotypical and other essential characteristic differences. He emphasizes that even though this perception of race was later on rejected because of its blurriness, it had still enjoyed ongoing acceptance. He
emphasizes that race, particularly in the United States, is still “[...] a central component of many social policies, many people’s identities, and the identification and treatment of others.” and that this is why “Constructivists want to expose these [...] conceptions as myths in the hope that our society can begin to move beyond racism.” (cf. 2000: 653,654,663) The slow rejection of erroneous approaches and perceptions of race might also have been one aspect that contributed to the fact that the debate of whether race is a social construct or biological fact is still ongoing.

Nevertheless, a shift away from biological realism was noted in the middle of the 20th Century when scientists proved “[...] that there is almost as much genetic variation within racial groups (Africans, Asians, Caucasians) as there is between them. (Lewontin, Rose, Kamin; Nei and Roychoudhury qtd. in: Andreasen, 2000: 654) Consequently, assuming that race is not based on biological realism, “[c]onstructivists argue that [it] is a social fiction; it is entirely a product of the ways that people think about human differences”. (Appiah; Goldberg qtd. in: Andreasen, 2000:655)

At the same time, Franz Boas’ perspective on race changed. Despite his rather narrow approach, and also his rash conclusions, Boas was later known as “an enlightened apostle of antiracism”, after he refuted his theory and distanced himself from his earlier claims in later publications. Reasons for this are on the one hand new insights of Boas that proved that there is no direct relation between hereditary traits and intelligence, and on the other hand, his realization that race is a dynamic concept. Moreover, he also came to the conclusion that “[...] discrimination was the salient variable in American race relations [...]” and that “[...] white prejudice, not the assumed innate racial traits, was the major obstacle to black progress [...].” (Williams, 2006:16f,30)

In summation, it was long held to be true that the concept of race is based on genetically inherited differences. Consequently, race was believed to be a biological fact. Today, in the 21st Century, opinions of experts clearly diverge on whether the distinction of human races is reasonable.
Despite its divergence among scholars however, the understanding of race as a social product can be found at all levels of the disciplinary literature, from introductory textbooks to empirical and theoretical formulations. In short, the constructivist perspective on race has become an article of 'conventional wisdom' [...]. (Stevens qtd. in: Morning, 2007:436)

Moreover, Cashmore argues that the fact that the concept of race has emerged at some point in history in Western Europe, logically implies that the term and the concept of race have been arbitrarily invented and are therefore to be considered as a social construction and not a universal or biological fact. (cf. Cashmore, 1996)

Geulen reiterates that although there is no evidence that proves the biological existence of races, scientists often times make reference to future research activities on this subject in order to uphold their conviction of biological realism. (cf. 2007:14)

However, despite the fact that scientists of different fields are divided on the question of whether race is a biological fact or a social construct, Omi and Winant argue that sociologists can generally be said to share the view that "race is not biologically real". Yet, "we have continued to use racial categorizations because of the belief that they represent a fundamental social reality." (Omi and Winant qtd. in: Brunsma and Rockquemore, 2004:85) Morning even claims that these days it is assumed that there already exists a general agreement on whether race is a biological fact or a social construct of both sociologists and natural scientists, pointing out that well-known biologists and anthropologists question and even reject the concept of biological realism (cf. 2007:436,437)

Despite the rejection of biological realism “[...] there is an enormous gap between the scientific rejection of race as a concept and the popular acceptance of it as an important organizing principle of individual identity and collective consciousness.” (Omi qtd. in: Morning, 2007:437) This means that while scientists are slowly coming to terms and mostly agree on the fact that race is a social construct, the public’s perception on this issue seems to remain rigid, accepting biological realism as fact. (cf. Rodriguez qtd. in: Morning, 2007:437)
2.3 Racism Towards African Americans in the U.S.

This section examines the concept of racism more intensively. Starting off with an attempt to define what we understand by racism, various definitions and approaches will be addressed and exemplified, followed by a classification of different forms of racism. The historical perspective is also presented as a review of when and how it has developed and may have contributed to today’s society’s white supremacist thinking. Lastly, racism then and now will be compared, trying to illustrate whether, and if, how the concept and its use have changed over time and whether the election of the first African American president of the United States, Barack Obama, in 2008 has set the scene for racial equality.

2.3.1 What is Racism?

Inevitably, the concept of race and its construction by society hint at racist actions and beliefs. According to Yang racism is a dynamic concept, just as race is, whose definition has expanded extensively from the time it was first used in the 1940s. Consequently, it has become a broad and somehow woolly phenomenon in today’s society, making it impossible to make reference to one definition only. (cf. 2000:164) Although racism is a complex and dynamic notion, this section attempts to provide a comprising and comprehensible definition.

Basically, as implied in the previous chapter on race, it can be said, that the mere fact that race has become a concept to establish a hierarchical order among different racial and ethnic groups, can already be understood as racist. Thus, race has been the prerequisite for the concept of racism to even emerge. Today’s generally known but much simplified and therefore very narrow definition can be looked up in any dictionary. So, apart from scientists, researchers and well-informed persons, it is assumed that the perception of racism for the majority of people complies with the ordinary and less complex definition that will be utilized as a starting point for further approaches. Accordingly, the English Oxford Dictionary defines the term racism as “a belief that one’s own racial or ethnic group is superior [...] [and] (also) [as] a belief that the members of different racial or ethnic groups possess specific characteristics, abilities, or qualities, which can be compared and evaluated.”
“The Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations” points once more out that the term is polysemous and that until the middle of the 20th Century it was considered to be an ideology whose aim it was to implement hierarchical structures by classifying races. Later, the meaning of racism expanded and consequently also referred to racist attitudes, beliefs and practices. (cf. Cashmore, 1996:308)

Taking up on the dictionary entry, theorist Michael Cole goes beyond scratching the surface and adds that racism is a process that structures members of society according to their biological and cultural backgrounds that are both assumed to be inherited and of “a natural unchanging origin and status” and considered to cause “negative consequences for other groups [...]”. (cf. Cole qtd. In: Garcia, 2004:37f) Garcia then continues by saying that something is racist only if it originates from a racist actions and beliefs, and not because of the output and thus, the effects that are felt. An input that is not to be meant racist, can definitely result in a racist sentiment being experienced. However, one must not confuse that “nothing is made to be racist simply by its effects.” (Garcia, 2004:46)

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that racism through racial categorization always distinguishes between the norm and otherness. Describing others in a negative way, simultaneously attributes the opposite characteristics to members of the norm. Consequently, the norm, which in this case is represented by the Whites, practices self-description through attributing negative characteristics to others. Logically, the assertion that a racial or ethnic group is uncivilized, implies that the addressor of this statement is civilized. (cf. Cornell; Hartmann, 2007:30)

In addition, Christian Geulen points out that despite the many different approaches taken in terms of defining the concept of racism, there are some aspects they all have in common. Hence, the involvement of extremism and the lack of understanding constitute the foundation of racism. Furthermore, he considers racism to be a doctrine of human races, their relations to each other, their unequal recognition and ongoing battle. Regardless of whether racism originates due to cultural, social or biological assumptions, the main issue remains the struggle of ethnic and racial groups to attain prestige and superiority over other ethnic and racial groups. In order to achieve this goal of preeminence and self-assertion, the
concept of racism uses exaggeration in form of exclusion, discrediting and representing otherness. These exaggerated and hostile images that are created and conveyed result in the emergence of hierarchies and criteria that determine membership and non-membership of individuals and groups. Hence, racism does not the world as it is supposed to be by nature, but rather the assumption of one group on how the world should look like. (cf. 2007:7,10,12) Yang even went so far as to say that racism is much more than a concept of racial injustice but rather “a social problem, a social disease, and a social waste”. (2000:53)

2.3.2 Forms of Racism

Philip Q. Yang breaks down the broad definitions, considering them to be too ambiguous. Therefore, he differentiates between four main dimensions of racism: **ideological racism**, or racist ideology, **attitudinal racism**, or racial prejudice, **behavioral racism**, or racial discrimination and **institutional racism**, or institutional discrimination. The first category, **ideological racism**, to which Yang also refers to as the narrow definition of racism, is linked to the belief of superiority of racial and ethnic groups due to biological, cultural and/or intellectual differences. **Attitudinal racism** on the other hand, as its name already implies, concerns itself with negative attitudes towards racial and ethnic groups that are primarily caused by any kind of misinformation. These negative beliefs are also referred to as **racial prejudices**.

**Institutional-** and behavioral racism both refer to discriminatory actions. While the first one defines racial discrimination by the law, institutions and organizations, the latter focuses on discrimination of racial and ethnic groups by individuals and groups. In order to fully understand the concept of racism and its impact, it is especially important to consider all of these dimensions, i.e. accepting the broad definition as being relevant, since considering only the narrow definition of racism, i.e. ideological racism, excludes any external constraints and discriminatory actions taken by society and only focuses on attitudes and believes towards racial groups. (cf. 2000:145f) However, Cole adds that there is “no correlation between cognition and action”, meaning that individuals or groups who practice ideological and/or attitudinal racism, do not necessarily carry out discriminatory actions towards people of a different racial or ethnic group. (cf. Cole qtd. in: Garcia, 2004:38)
Moreover, according to the four dimensions of racism according to Yang, racism can also be categorized into whether it is covert or overt. According to Rocha, this distinction demonstrates that racism does not necessarily have to be explicit, but that it can also be implicit and thus, “lie under the surface”. This form of racism, referred to as implicit racism, occurs when an assertion about different racial or ethnic groups implies that they are inferior, without it being openly addressed. This may happen intentionally or unintentionally. The main aspect however, remains on the fact that “[a]n implicit racist will say, do, or believe something that implies but doesn't outright express, that some racial group is inferior”, whereas “[a]n explicit racist will act on, express, or hold on to a view that one racial group is inferior in some fashion.” (cf. Rocha, 2015:54)

Approving Rocha's approach, Fredrickson adds that implicit racism is effective even if the discriminated racial group is not conscious of being discriminated. (cf. 1988:189) This can also be linked to Rocha's claim that implicit racism can be both intentional and unintentional. Contrarily this distinction is valid for the group that is being discriminated against. Hence, Fredrickson emphasizes that implicit racism is effective as soon as a racist inference regarding an assertion can be made, regardless of whether concerned group perceives it as being racist or not. Additionally, he points out that implicit and explicit racism are separate notions that are not interdependent of each other and may occur individually. (cf. 1988:189)

The distinction between implicit and explicit racism is particularly important in this paper, since the aim is to demonstrate how African Americans are portrayed in contemporary U.S. mass media, be it implicitly or explicitly, intentionally or unintentionally, or whether or not it is perceived or not perceived as being racist. This categorization is particularly important since one of these categories clearly predominates the recent discourse on racism. Therefore, it is essential to understand that racism operates on more than one level and that it does not necessarily have to be articulated explicitly.
2.3.3 How Can Racism Be Performed and What Are the Effects

As already mentioned in the previous section, racism can be performed by institutions and the law, as well as by individuals and ethnic or racial groups. These discriminatory actions can be either implicit and subtle or explicit. However, both require a medium in order to be effective and recognized as such. This means that racism can be expressed with the help of language, specific actions and gestures and/or pictures. A further and more detailed categorization of the different kinds of media will be given in chapter 4.

Logically, all the different forms and dimensions of racism inevitably lead to a certain and, for the most part, negative output. The effects that are caused by racist actions and beliefs have an impact on everyday life. As Yang mentions, the impact is particularly visible in “employment, income, education, housing, and criminal justice, as well as psychological well-being.” (2000:156) The latter, can be aligned with how “[...] race continues to affect the way individuals perceive each other and their interactions on a daily basis.” (Feagin and McKinney qtd. In: Brunsma, Rockquemore, 2004:85) This means that the effects of racial inequality are not only felt in a legal and institutional environment, but also on a more personal and psychological level. Brunsma and Rockquemore point out that in this case race becomes a social identity and “[...] it accurately describes how individuals understand themselves and how they are understood by others.” (2004:86)

Consequently, the 2014 U.S. census data show that whereas the real median household income of whites amounts to $60,256, the one of blacks totals only $35,398. In terms of the employment sector, another U.S. census data shows that out of 27.6 million businesses in the U.S. only 2.6 million were owned by black people in 2012. Logically, according to a 2015 U.S. census data, poverty rates among blacks are the highest reaching 26.2 percent, compared to only 12.7 percent among whites in 2014.

Just as Brunsma and Rockquemore, Yang points out that besides the economic and psychological effects, social effects of racism are also felt. This means that there is a social gap between blacks and whites in the U.S. that is on the one hand isolating
them from each other, and on the other hand also “[…] promotes an ignorance and disdain of other races and cultures […].” (cf. 2000:164)

2.3.2 Roots of Racism Towards African Americans and White Supremacist Thinking

In order to get to the root causes of the previously mentioned effects that are caused by racial inequality, the following sub chapter will examine at racism from a historical perspective. As Coates emphasizes, it is essential to think back on pivotal moments in history to understand what events and factors have contributed to today’s white supremacist ideology. (cf. 2004:6) Therefore, looking back in time will give an insight into what has caused today’s racial and social hierarchy in the U.S..

It is essential to remember that just because the term racism was coined in the 1940s, it does not mean that the concept of racism did not exist earlier than that. Therefore, according to Blum racism is only a term that was originally coined in reaction to the Nazi dictatorship under Hitler, in order to name any wrongdoings towards different racial or ethnic groups. However, he adds that before that “[…] people did not lack a full understanding of the moral wrongfulness of slavery as a racial institution […],” reemphasizing that the coining of the term does not correspond to the actual emergence of the concept of racism. (cf. 2004:57)

Formerly correlated to the Nazi regime, racism was only used in relation to black people in the United States in the 1960s. (cf. Blum, 2004:57) However, in order to get to the root causes of racism and white supremacy in the U.S., one needs to go back in time to Colonialism. Fredrickson points out that “pre-existing European attitudes toward blacks”, due to negative encounters of Englishmen with Africa, contributed to an ethnic bias against “people who were obviously strange and different”. Consequently, blackness had been linked to “savagery, heathenism, and general failure […] of civilization and propriety.” (cf. 1988:191) Also Brunsma and Rockquemore repeatedly emphasize that racial hierarchization and white supremacist thinking “[…] have existed as long as there has been contact between Europeans and Africans […].” (cf. 2004:80) As a result, this hostile ideology has been taken along into the 'new world' and the early America was afflicted with a certain predisposition towards racial categorization and the creation of hierarchies, which
ultimately contributed to the enslavement of Africans. (cf. Jordan qtd. in: Brunsma and Rockquemore, 2004:77) Accordingly, the racial hierarchies and thus, the perception that otherness is inferior, legitimized their enslavement. (cf. Brunsma and Rockquemore, 2004:78)

Reasons for the enslavement of Africans in the New World were the increasing demand for workers in the agricultural sector and the fact that the previously “[...] enslaved natives tended to sicken or die from disease or from overwork and cruel treatment they were subject to [...]” Consequently, the native peoples were considered unqualified workers, whereas Africans proved to be more resilient, plentiful and easier to identify due to their skin color. Accordingly, the first Africans were brought to the New World in 1619 to work as servants. Only at the end of the 17th Century did their status as servants change and the practice of slavery emerged. Since the demand for a strong workforce in the South constantly increased, slavery, which still used to be temporarily finite, then became permanent and thus, inherited slavery was introduced. Consequently, slaves were no longer freed after they had served their masters and children of slaves automatically became slaves too. “This development, along with slavery’s identification with race, forever changed the institution and shaped its unique character in the New World.” (OpenStax, 2014:27ff,78) Another aspect of slavery that should not be forgotten is that Africans worked and lived under cruel conditions, being sexually, physically and mentally abused by their masters. (OpenStax, 2014:54)

The fact that even laws had been passed to make slavery a legal institution created a feeling of togetherness and superiority among whites. This can be traced back to the fact that at this time there was a gap between rich and poor whites that socially separated them from each other. The emergence and legalization of racial slavery however, created a sense of unity among whites and thus, also attenuated class differences among them. Hence, Whites, no matter their social class, considered themselves equally superior to the African race. (cf. OpenStax, 2014:79)

When, in 1776, America gained independence from Great Britain, the Declaration of Independence, written by Thomas Jefferson, “[...] laid out the foundation of American government as a republic [...]”. (OpenStax, 2014:161) The core beliefs that
were articulated however, were the cause of many future controversies. Even though the Declaration of Independence asserted that “all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness” (1776), slavery was still flourishing at that time. Consequently, “[...] the promise of equality for all planted the seeds for future struggles waged by slaves, women, and many others to bring about its full realization.” Moreover, the Revolution and consequently, the formation of America as an independent country, even strengthened the white supremacist ideology among Americans, who “[...] viewed the nation as a white republic; blacks were slaves [...]”. (OpenStax, 2014:163,189) However, despite America being founded on deep rooted racist beliefs and slavery being a legal institution, there was a slight shift towards the abolition of slavery based on the principles of the Declaration of Independence. (OpenStax, 2014:192)

Nevertheless, it needs to be borne in mind that this subtle movement towards the abolition of slavery marked only the beginning of a long journey towards racial equality that is still ongoing. Despite laws that have been passed in favor of blacks and pivotal moments in history that promised progression such as the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement, the struggle of African Americans to achieve equality and respect has not yet ended. All this can be traced back to America’s deep rooted ideology of white supremacy. In conclusion it can be said that during colonization the European settlers perpetuated the concept of racial inferiority and hostility towards the black race. Accordingly, these values are deep-rooted and have become internalized in today’s society.

2.3.3 A Shift Towards “Liberal” Racism?

In agreeance with Coates’ approach of race and racism, Geulen emphasizes that racism is a historical phenomenon that has changed consistently over time. The fact that various forms have existed throughout history, highlights racism’s variability. However, it needs to be mentioned that despite the fact that there have been different forms of racism, it has not lost its impact and its power of persuasion. (cf. 2007:8)
Fredrickson argues that the distinction between explicit and implicit racism simultaneously stands for the distinction “between the explicit and rationalized racism that can be discerned in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century thought and ideology and the implicit or societal racism that can be inferred from actual social relationships.” (1988:189) He continues by arguing that, as already mentioned in a previous section, implicit and explicit racism are to be considered independently. He reasons that societal racism, or as he calls it, implicit racism still persists these days despite the fact that ideological or explicit racism has been largely rejected. (cf. 1988:189)

In their article, Zamudio and Rios also point out that racism indeed has become less explicit these days compared to how it used to be during the pre-Civil Rights era. Apart from that, many people still strongly believe “[...] that racism appears in only one form: explicit behavioral racist acts.” Consequently, racism is often mistakenly considered to no not exist anymore, assuming that action plans and policies after the Civil Rights Movement have led to the extinction of racism.” (cf. 2006:384ff)

Adapted from Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, the two authors refer to today's form of racism as colorblind racism or also as “'racism lite' or discrimination with a smile'”. (2006:483) Accordingly, this notion represents an attenuated version of the earlier predominant form of explicit racism. In this case the main argument that perpetuates the lite version of racism is the preservation of white privilege that is based on material rewards. In other words, a majority of whites not only tolerate but subscribe to the maintenance of racial structures and inequalities that ensure them some personal benefits(cf. Bonilla-Silva qtd. in: Rios; Zamudio, 2006:483f), while simultaneously obscuring “[...] both the prevalence of racism and the extent of white privilege.” (McIntosh qtd. in: Rios; Zamudio, 2006:484)

To make this issue more accessible Rios and Zamudia differentiate between traditional and liberal racism which are representative of explicit and implicit or colorblind racism. Whereas the former involves all the prototypical characteristics of racism, the latter is considered its less direct sequel. Hence, traditional racism concerns itself with “[...] everything from using racial epithets to refusing to rent an apartment to an African American couple to burning a cross on their lawn to killing
people because of the color of their skin.” Additionally, it is associated with slavery, racial segregation and Jim Crow racism. (cf. 2006:486) Although this form of racism already had its time of prosperity, it still “continues to be an effective means for perpetuating and reinforcing inequality [...].” (Bobo qtd. in: Rios; Zamudia, 2006:486)

Alternatively, liberal or colorblind racism represents the most prominent form of racism these days that has evolved through a break with traditional racism in the 1960s. (cf. Feafin; Omi and Winnant; Villanueva qtd. in: Rios; Zamudia, 2006:486,487) “[It] reflects the official rhetoric or formal equality and antiracism, but the deeply ingrained racism captured in private race talk reflects the racist ideology 'deeply embedded in our social structures and practices'”. (Myers; Williamson qtd. in: Rios; Zamudia, 2006:487) Moreover, due to the fact that racism has become more implicit, “political correctness and polite conversations” are used to conceal racist actions and attitudes. (cf. Bonilla-Silva qtd. in: Coates, 2004:8)

Therefore, one needs to look under the surface in order to recognize racist beliefs and attitudes.

Nevertheless, it needs to be borne in mind that the prevalence of implicit or colorblind racism these days does not automatically mean that explicit behavioral racism, as Fredricksen calls it, does not exist anymore. This tendency just indicates that implicit racist actions and beliefs are predominant in today's society. Even if overt racism is commonly expected to be disregarded and not to be performed anymore through mutual understanding and a growing awareness of the population concerning racial inequality, its use is recurrent. In conclusion, it can be said that both forms still exist in today's American society to differing extents. One thing that has changed over time however, is the fact that, despite its occurrence, traditional racism is widely disregarded and that there is a stronger tendency towards liberal racism these days.

However, the question of whether racism is decreasing or not remains. Assuming that our society has become more and more aware of racial injustice and the non-existence of biological realism, a post-racial America would be the logic conclusion. Love and Tosolt point out that particularly after Barack Obama won the presidential
election of the United States in 2008 and consequently became the first African American president, many experts expected this to be the end of racism. However, Love and Tosolt questioned this approach, arguing that the presidency of Barack Obama might have as well just changed “the public's view of racism as a changing construct.” (cf. 2010:19f) Accordingly, Obama’s victory in the presidential elections in 2008 and 2012 could be seen as a progress towards racial equality and a change in perspective, but not as the end of racism itself. (cf. Love, Tosolt, 2010:24) Teasley and Ikard add that one must not underestimate but also not overestimate Obama’s presidency. Despite the fact that his election “[…] has engendered a new and indeed intoxicating feeling of optimism among race […]”, “[…] there seems to be a disconnect between the desire and reality of a race-free society.” (2010:411f)

Based on these assumptions, the aim of this diploma thesis is to identify whether or not the United States live in a post-racial society or whether racism has simply become more subtle compared to the notion of traditional racism.

3 Racial Stereotyping of African Americans in the 21st Century

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, racism occurs in many different shapes and forms. Among these, one can also find the concept that will be discussed in the following chapter, racial stereotyping. Therefore, an attempt to answer the following question will be made: What exactly are stereotypes and what forms of stereotypes exist? How are they triggered and perpetuated in our minds? And lastly, what impact does stereotypical thinking have? At the same time, the concept of prejudices will be introduced and linked to stereotyping. Therefore, it will be analyzed in what ways the two concepts influence each other and why prejudicial thinking plays an important role when talking of stereotypes. After this theoretical and explanatory part on stereotyping and its mechanisms, a more hands-on approach follows, examining racial stereotypes about African-Americans. Therefore, commonly held beliefs, both negative and positive ones, about African-Americans in the United States will be examined.
3.1 Defining Stereotypes

The concept of stereotyping has emerged in the 1920s with the publishing of Walter Lippmann’s book *Public Opinion*. In his work, Lippmann first defined stereotypes as “pictures in our heads”. He claimed that these pictures are constructed and simplified representations of people, events and our environment, and that they are moreover “[…] not based on a direct knowledge of the ‘real’ world […].” Accordingly, Lippmann criticized the notion of stereotyping, arguing that stereotypes are an untruthful representation of reality. He also emphasized that they are influenced by cultural aspects, as well as “[…] rigid in their definition and resistant to change.” (Lippmann qtd. in: Hinton, 2000: Lippmann’s view, paragraph 1-3)

O'Sullivan, Dutton and Rayner continue by sharing a simple and quite general definition of stereotypes, arguing that the concept of stereotyping corresponds to “[a]n oversimplified representation which is used to categorise and evaluate all members of a particular social group.” (1995:356) Using this definition as a starting point, DeLamater, Myers and Collett add that during this process “[…] a fixed set of characteristics [is] attributed to all members of [that] given group.” (2015:239) These overgeneralizations thus imply that all members of a group are afflicted with the same traits, be it “[…] based on [… ] appearance, dress, speech style, or background [… ]”. (DeLamater, Myers, Collet, 2015:221,223)

Hinton, pursuing a similar approach, argues that stereotypes typically consist of a combination of three main elements: Firstly, “A group of people […] identified by a specific characteristic […]” based on either their religion, ethnicity, gender, race or other. Consequently, this identification separates this group of people from others. This means that by identifying a group of people as black, they are automatically separated from other groups that are not black. Secondly, mostly personal characteristics are then ascribed to all members of this group. One resulting example is that all blacks are considered to love hip hop music. Hinton also refers to these characteristics as *stereotypical characteristics*. Lastly, if a member of the stereotyped group is identified, it is automatically attributed the stereotypical characteristic. Accordingly, on identifying a black person, he or she is assumed to love hip hop music. (cf. 2000: What is a stereotype? Paragraph 1-5)
Moreover, Beere adds that the concept of stereotypes is not only based on overgeneralizations and assumptions, but that it also affects people's attitudes towards the targeted group. (cf. 1990:221) This means that the simplified images in our minds effect the way we think of other groups as well as how we react to them. Shaw and Wright further explain that attitudes can be defined as “a set of affective reactions toward the attitude object, derived from the concepts or beliefs that the individual has concerning the object, and predisposing the individual to behave in a certain manner toward the attitude object.” (qtd. in: Beere:1990:221)

Accordingly, one can differentiate between accurate and inaccurate stereotypes, as well as between positive and negative ones. Mostly however, stereotypes are inaccurate and bear a negative meaning and hence, are linked to the concept of prejudicial thinking, (cf. Corrigan, Watson & Ottati, Fiske, Lee, Albright&Malloy, Lee, Jussim&McCauley, Lee, McCauley& Draguns, Olson qtd. in: Slocum; Lee, 2004:62) which will be analyzed in detail later in this chapter. However, with respect to positive stereotypes, Murphy claims that “[...] well-meaning individuals sometimes attempt to combat racism and sexism by drawing attention to the so-called positive elements of cultural stereotypes.” (1998:174) However, she adds that positive stereotypes do not automatically erase negative ones. In contrast to the common belief that positive stereotypes, or also called counterstereotypes, foster a group's recognition, they “[...] may do more harm than good by making accessible (Tversky and Kahnemann 1973) and lending credence to the overall stereotype. (Murphy, 1998:174,175)

3.2 Origins of Stereotypes

3.2.1 The Formation of Stereotypes

In order to fully comprehend the concept of stereotyping, one needs to understand how and also why stereotypes originate in the first place. DeLamater, Myers and Collett take three different approaches into consideration as to how stereotypes develop. First of all, it is assumed that “[...] stereotypes arise out of direct experience with some members of the stereotyped group.” (Campbell qtd. in: DeLamater, Myers, Collet, 2015:220) This means that certain characteristics of a person of one group, that are observed at the very first encounter, are generalized
and automatically transferred to all members of the stereotyped group. This theory is supported by the concept of first impressions and the general opinion on their longlasting impact. (cf. DeLamater, Myers, Collet, 2015:220,224)

Eagley and Steffen on the other hand claim “[…]that stereotypes derive in part from a biased distribution of group members into social roles” (qtd. in: DeLamater, Myers, Collet, 2015:220), pointing out that the high density of blacks among professional football players in the 1990s contributed to the fact that outstanding athletic performance was linked to the black race. Therefore, “[r]oles have associated characteristics […] and eventually those characteristics are attached to the person occupying the roles.” (cf. DeLamater, Myers, Collet, 2015:220,221)

Lastly, according to McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears, “[s]tereotyping may also be a natural outcome of social perception.” (qtd. in: DeLamater, Myers, Collet, 2015:221) This process happens particularly when a person is confronted with an information overload and therefore unconsciously stores received information “[…] in terms of group categories rather than in terms of individuals.” (Taylor, Fiske, Etcoff, Rudermann qtd. in: DeLamater, Myers, Collet, 2015:221) Consequently, the observed characteristics of a person in a scenario like that are automatically attributed to all members of the same group. (cf. Rothbart, Fulero, Jensen, Howard, Birrell qtd in: DeLamater, Myers, Collet, 2015:221) Prince adds that stereotyping can also be seen as some kind of “shortcut”. Consequently, it is applied in order to facilitate complex situation and the organization of large amounts of information. (cf. 2006:3)

However, it must be noted that despite the different scenarios in which stereotypes emerge, the formation process stays the same. It does not matter whether we receive information about someone via reading, hearing, witnessing or through direct contact. (cf. Hassin, Trope, Zebrowitz qtd. in: DeLamater, Myers and Collet, 2015:223) Either way, the information obtained needs to be integrated and organized in our brains, in order to create a comprehensive picture of someone. This process, known as impression formation, is decisive for people’s person perception. (cf. DeLamater, Myers and Collet, 2015:223)
Moreover, there is usually more importance attached to information that is obtained at the beginning of a scenario than to information that is received during or at the end of the same scenario. Therefore, this process is referred to as the *primacy effect*. (cf. Luchins qtd. in: DeLamater, Myers and Collett, 2015:225)

Additionally, it is assumed that there are two different interpretations as to why the primacy effect takes place. Firstly, it is believed that people “[...] attend very carefully to the first bits of information [received] [...] about a person, but [...] pay less attention once [they] have enough information to make a judgment.” Consequently, information that is received later is of less relevance and therefore, not decisive for the impression formation. (Dreben, Fiske, Hastie qtd. in: DeLamater, Myers and Collett, 2015:225) The second explanation might be “[...] that after forming an initial impression of a person, we interpret subsequent information in a way that makes it consistent with our initial impression.” (DeLamater, Myers, Collett, 2015:225)

Either way, the primacy effect is assumed to be the common technique for processing information and forming impressions. However, in the event that a person’s brain attempts to consider all information as equally important, the most recent information is the most significant. Therefore, this process is referred to as *recency effect*, constituting the counterpart of the primacy effect. (cf. Crano, Jones, Goethals, Steiner, Rain qtd. in: DeLamater, Myers, Collett, 2015:225) Furthermore, it is also assumed that people in higher positions are more likely to make use of stereotypes than others, due to their more competitive environment and the fact that mistakes are more easily forgiven among people of power. (cf. Goodwin, Gubin, Fiske, Yzerbyt, qtd. in: DeLamater, Myers, Collett, 2015:221)

In short, stereotypes originate in different ways, depending on the situation at hand. One thing they all have in common is the fact that information at the beginning of an encounter or scenario is considered to be most significant and thus, influences the image we create of other individuals and groups the most. Consequently, since some of the information is ignored and considered to be of less relevance by our cognitive system, we tend to produce untruthful images in our minds that are based on overgeneralizations.
3.2.2 Why Do Stereotypes Emerge?

According to DeLamater, Myers and Collet, there are two reasons why stereotypes still emerge, despite the fact that most of them are considered inaccurate. Firstly they emerge as a result of self-enhancement purposes and secondly, because of cognitive efficiency. The first describes a process whereby stereotypes are created and expressed in order to “[…] make ourselves feel better by denigrating people from another group.” Consequently, stereotypes in this context are usually negative and also simultaneously attribute the opposite meaning to oneself. (cf. 2015:241) This means that if a white person claims blacks are less educated, it automatically implies that white people receive better education and thus, are superior to blacks.

Stereotyping because of cognitive efficiency however, can be based on either positive or negative stereotypes. In this case, stereotyping facilitates coping with unfamiliar situations, (cf. DeLamater, Myers and Collet, 2015:241) and reference of existing schemata. Accordingly, DeLamater, Myers and Collet point out that “[a]ssuming that a man is interested in sports allows us to know what to ask him when we see him.” (2015:241)

In summation, stereotypes emerge due to efficiency reasons, making it easier to handle complex situations, and because of self-enhancement purposes, creating an image of superiority over others. However, the latter reason can also be related to a very similar concept that will be addressed in the following section.

3.2.3 White Prejudice as a Side Effect of Racial Stereotyping

As already mentioned earlier in this chapter, stereotypes also affect attitudes towards specific groups. Beere argues that both attitudes and stereotypes mutually affect each other and that often times it is difficult to separate the terms. (cf. 1990:221,222) As a result, “[…] stereotypes develop from prejudicial thinking.” (Prince, 2006:1) Consequently, and despite slight differences in meaning, the concept of prejudices is tied closely to the concept of stereotyping. However, whereas stereotypes refer to a set of assumed characteristics about various groups of people and thus, are based on simplified generalizations, “[…] prejudice is […] thinking ill of others without sufficient warrant.” (Fichter qtd. in: Stangor, 2000:22)
In other words, prejudices are negative attitudes that arise without considering facts.

Stangor adds that particularly ethnic prejudices tend to be negative in their nature and that it “[...] is an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be felt or expressed. It may be directed toward a group as a whole, or toward an individual because he is a member of that group.” (2000:22,23) Based on this definition it can be deduced that the origin of negative and hostile attitudes is based on overgeneralized beliefs and thus, stereotypes. Consequently, the two concepts are interwoven and difficult to view in isolation. However, it can be agreed that while stereotypes can emerge due to self-enhancement reasons and/or cognitive efficiency, prejudice “[...] fulfills a specific irrational function for its bearer [...]” (Ackermann, Jahoda qtd. in: Stangor, 2000:24) which means “[...] that negative attitudes are not prejudices unless they serve a private, self-gratifying purpose for the person who has them.” (Stangor, 2000:24) This means that prejudices always involve negative attitudes that are based on erroneous beliefs towards individuals and groups for the purpose of downgrading them.

Furthermore, Stangor adds that this kind of devaluation and the rejection of out-groups based on prejudicial thinking can be broken down into three stages: Verbal rejection, discrimination and segregation, and finally, physical attack. (cf. 2000:39) Consequently, it can be said that stereotypes cause the emergence of prejudices, and as a result, prejudices trigger rejective and discriminatory behavior towards others. Therefore, it is important to not only consider the consequences of stereotyping alone, but also of related concepts such as it is in this case.

3.2.4 The Perpetuation of Stereotypes

In his book, *The Psychology of Stereotyping*, Schneider deals, among other issues, with the question of how stereotypes are developed and perpetuated. He mentions that despite earlier assumptions that stereotypes are taught directly, experts argue that the perpetuation of stereotypes is mostly based on various cultural agents. These agents include family and parents, peers, institutions and mass media. (cf. 2004:341,342)
Among these, family and parents represent the most significant factor. Moreover, Schneider points out that parents play a particularly important role as they have a large influence on the upbringing of their children. Consequently, parents can either foster or help reject stereotypical thinking of their children. In this regard, it needs to be emphasized that neither the perpetuation nor the elimination of stereotypes is purposeful. Quite the contrary, parents influence their offspring indirectly by reacting to their experiences. (cf. 2004:341,342) Accordingly,

[...] parental explanations for the ways their sons and daughters are treated by members of other groups occur in the context of their children’s outside experiences and may play a large role in the ways their children come to think of these other groups. (Schneider:2004:342)

Secondly, as soon as children start to attend school, they enter a new social environment. As a result, not only family but also peers become an important influencing factor in their lives. Schneider highlights that children, particularly during their teenage years, are sensitive to stereotyping and forming categories based on group differences, such as looks or interests. Thus, it is assumed that parents choose schools that pursue similar values and attitudes. Proceeding from this assumption, children develop surrounded by people that are like-minded, of similar socioeconomic status, and most of the times also of the same race. Hence, parental influences concerning stereotypical thinking are also assumed to be fostered by the children’s peers. (cf. 2004:341,343)

Another cultural agent that has been identified to contribute to the development and thus, the perpetuation of stereotypes, are institutions. Churches, schools and any other institutions either explicitly or implicitly shape values and instruct on various issues. Another institution that is believed to be the main source of “[...] spreading and perpetuating, or even creating, stereotypes of gender and race [...]”, is the mass-media. (Schneider, 2004:341,343,344) Bandura points out that all media outlets, especially television have a major impact on both adults and children. (qtd. in: Schneider, 2004:344) However, since the mass media represent one of the main channels by which stereotypes are created and perpetuated, and also constitute the
main research subject in this thesis, further and more detailed information on mass media will follow in the next chapter.

3.3 Forms of Stereotypes

It is affirmed that not only gender, racial and ethnic stereotypes exist, but also stereotypes targeting “[...] groups defined by occupation, age, political ideology, mental illness, hobbies, musical tastes, majors, school attended, and so on.” (Miller, Rahn, Rothbart, Rentfrow, Goslin qtd. in: DeLamater, Myers, Collet, 2015:220) In other words, it is obvious that the concept of stereotyping is a ubiquitous phenomenon that can be applied to any type of group. Some of the most common and frequent stereotypes however, are based on race, gender and/or sexuality.

3.3.1 Gender Stereotypes

Beere defines gender stereotypes as “[...] perceptions of persons, objects, activities, or concepts that are based on relatively rigid, oversimplified, and over-generalized beliefs or assumptions regarding the characteristics of males and females.” (qtd. in Beere, 1990:221) Hence, as the term already implies, this form of stereotyping groups people according to their sex. This means that a person is either assigned the category “female” or “male”. Ultimately, both groups are assigned a set of “typical” characteristics that contribute to the creation of the simplified images in our minds, be it that all women are weak, or all men love cars.

Golombok and Fivush add that our society has internalized this process of categorization already to such a great extent, that the distinction of gender has become an automatic and unconscious process. Moreover, they point out that as soon as this distinction can no longer be made, for example in a phone conversation, the situation becomes unpleasant. This can be explained by the fact that in such a situation, people are no longer able to retrieve their stored information about specific groups, in this case, about either female or male individuals. As a consequence, it is no longer possible to assign specific, albeit assumed, characteristics to that person. (cf. 1994:16) Accordingly, one can deduce that people rely on stereotypes all the time and that gender stereotypes in particular are continuously used without even noticing.
3.3.2 Racial Stereotypes

Racial stereotypes, as the name already implies, are stereotypes directed towards different racial groups. Gorham claims that this form of stereotyping is particularly hurtful and negatively connotated. (cf. qtd. in Prince, 2006:11) Consequently, it is claimed that racial stereotypes largely contribute to a hierarchical categorization within society, (cf. Bobo, Omi, Winant qtd. in: Nasir, McKinney de Royston, O’Connor, Wischnia, 2016:4) and thus, “[...] serve as justification for unequal access to a range of resources, including schooling, housing, income, and jobs.” (Massey qtd. in: Nasir, McKinney de Royston, O’Connor, Wischnia, 2016:4) Moreover, it is established that for the most part African Americans and Latinos are affected by negative racial stereotyping, which results in worse achievements and “[...] in anti-social behavior.” (cf. Cowan, Martinez, Mendiola; Devine, Elliott; Niemann, Jennings, Rozelle, Baxter, Sullivan qtd. in: Nasir, McKinney de Royston, O’Connor, Wischnia, 2016:5)

3.4 Common Stereotypes about African Americans

“In the instance of American racism, ‘White prejudice and discrimination keep the Negro low in standards of living, health, education, manners and morals.’ This in turn, gives support to white prejudice.” (Myrdal qtd. in: Wolfenstein, 1977:164)

As can be deduced from this quote, prejudicial thinking and thus stereotyping in a broader sense, negatively influences the real lives of African Americans in the United States, which once again confirms racial prejudices and stereotypes in the first place. Accordingly, despite the common assumption of a post-racial era, America seems to be stuck in a vicious circle of racial stereotyping and prejudicial thinking. Smith argues that the depiction of Blacks, according to stereotypes, do not mirror reality, but only the semblance of it, since individuality is openly ignored. (cf. 1977:390) She adds however, that the “stereotypic presentations of Black [individuals] pave the way for stereotypic treatment.” (1977:391) Consequently, African Americans are often considered to be “culturally deprived”, implying that they are generally disadvantaged in life. (cf. Smith, 1977:391) Therefore, the following sections will examine what the commonly held stereotypes about African Americans are and how they are perceived by others.
3.4.1 Whiteness as a Standard of Beauty

“[P]hysical appearance remains a constant basis of oppression for African Americans whether to justify a system of slavery in the nineteenth century or individual police officers’ deadly snap decisions about criminality and threat in the twenty-first century.” (Parmer et al. qtd. in: Fhagen, 2016:47) This claim confirms the importance of physical appearance as a key criterion for assigning of roles to African Americans because of their outer appearance, and in turn for stereotypical thinking. It is particularly assumed that physical characteristics of African Americans in America are downgraded due to the fact that whiteness is considered to be the standard of beauty. (cf. Hall, Martin, Neal, Wilson qtd. in: Greene, White, Whitten, 2000:166) Consequently, it can be assumed that a darker skin tone and frizzy hair automatically implies a lower level of attractiveness. Moreover, studies showed that in the middle of the twentieth-century “[…] skin tone was a predictor of socioeconomic status, employment, and mate selection among Blacks. […] Blacks who were light-skinned were favored […], because they were closer in appearance to Whites.” (Hughes, Hertel, Hill qtd. in: Belgrave, Allison, 2014:246) Belgrave and Allison argue that despite the improved circumstances, a preference of lighter-skinned people over darker-skinned ones can still be observed. (cf.2014:47) Consequently, the physical appearance of African Americans bears a negative connotation in contemporary U.S. society, which can be attributed to stereotypical thinking.

3.4.2 African Americans Are Genetically Less Intelligent

As mentioned in the previous chapter, anthropologist Franz Boas claimed in his early writings that African Americans were inherently less intelligent, due to the fact that their cranial capacity is smaller than that of other races, and particularly than that of Whites. (qtd. in: Williams, 2006:21,23) Despite the fact that this claim was refuted not much later, it seems to have stayed in people’s minds. Nasir, McKinney de Royston, O’Connor and Wischnia claim that the persistence of this stereotype might also contribute to a lower success rate of African Americans in school. (cf. 2016:2) As a result, it can be observed in middle schools that students believe that African American students are less intelligent than white ones. (cf. Rowley, Kurtz-Costes, Mistry, Feagans, qtd. in: Nasir, McKinney de Royston, O’Connor and Wischnia,
As a consequence, the perpetuation of this stereotypes might indeed negatively affect academic success and/or school achievements, (cf. Essed, Steele qtd. in: Nasir, McKinney de Royston, O’Connor and Wischnia, 2016:4) which then again gives credence to the stereotype that African Americans are less intelligent. DeBlassie and Boswell go as far as to refer to the black student as someone “[...] who has not been exposed to reading, writing, or other middle class skills.” (qtd. in: Smith, 1977:390)

Moreover, according to a 2015 U.S. Census Bureau statistic about the educational attainment by race, Blacks are ranked second to last in each category. While 36.2 per cent of non-Hispanic Whites attain a Bachelor degree or higher, only 22.5 percent of Blacks attain the same level of degree. Also, 13.5 per cent of non-hispanic Whites, compared to only 8.2 per cent of Blacks attain an advanced degree, to name but a few examples.

These statistics prove that African Americans attain a lower level of education, however, it is not proven that Whites of the same educational status than Blacks are automatically smarter, which is assumed based on existing stereotypes. This means that these facts are simplified and generalized by others and attributed to all members of a group, hence, to African Americans. As a result, African Americans are perceived to be less intelligent than white people.

**3.4.3 African Americans Representing the Impoverished Race**

Thirdly, and also as a consequence of the previous two sections on stereotypes about African Americans, Blacks are often times directly thought of in relation to poverty. The fact that their physical appearance used to be an indication for a lower socioeconomic status, as well as the fact that African Americans obtain a lower level of education, foster this stereotype. According to Census Bureau data, 26.2 per cent of Blacks were below the poverty line in 2014, taking first place, compared to only 10.1 per cent of Whites, Hispanics excluded. However, the fact that Blacks have the highest poverty rate in the U.S. does not automatically mean that all of them are below the poverty line. Still, these statistics contribute to the formation of such a
stereotype, attributing this aspect to all black individuals and thus, creating a simplified and over-generalized image.

3.4.4 „The Brute Nigger“ - All African Americans Are Violent Criminals

Other commonly held stereotypes claim that African Americans tend to be angry, violent and criminal. It is also assumed that African-Americans “[…] have a great deal of self-hatred and […] are unwilling to disclose themselves to anyone. (Vontress qtd. in: Smith, 1977:390) Murphy adds that as soon as an African American person wears baggy pants, he is automatically considered to be a gang member. (cf. 2009:74) Hawkins points out that it is always the same images representing African Americans, and particularly heterosexual men. One of these stereotypical portrayals is the menacing gang member, implying a strong tendency towards criminal activity. He furthermore claims that this perception of African Americans derives from the image of the so-called “brute nigger” that originated in Europe and represents savagery. This image moreover implies that “[…] blacks are primates or beast-like in behavior and uncivilized, thus prone to committing violent acts […]” (cf. Hawkins, 2009:39,40,42f) Consequently, the image of the uncivilized, criminal and angry black man has been passed on. As a result, any suspicious behavior of African American men might trigger the stereotype that all black men are violent, criminals and/or drug dealers.

3.4.5 „The Sambo Image“

Another stereotypical image that is symbolic of the African American man according to Hawkins is the so-called Sambo image (cf. 2009:41) that can be traced back to Colonization and times of slavery. (cf. Boskin qtd. in: Hawkins, 2009:41) “Characteristics of the Sambo image include the following: childish, contented slave, dependency, high-spirited (rhythmically speaking) but lazy, and a natural entertainer.” (Boskin, Pieterse, Elkins, Leab qtd. in: Hawkins, 2009:41) This image became particularly important, since it was considered to be a justification for slavery. (cf. Hawkins, 2009:42) Consequently, the stereotypical image of African American men as happy subordinates of their white masters has emerged. Broadly
speaking, it can be said that this stereotype evokes the image of general superiority of the White race over African Americans.

3.4.5 The Dominance of African Americans in Sports

Hawkins claims that the image of “the brute nigger” also implies physical superiority of black men and thus, the representation of African Americans as “super-athletes”. (cf. 2009:43) Consequently, another common stereotype about African Americans is their outstanding athletic performance and dominance in professional sports. Hunter points out: “Track and field, football, basketball, and boxing – sports which tend to be characterized by high-intensity anaerobic component – have a disproportionately high number of African American participants who are outstanding achievers.” (2009:85) Moreover, he argues that according to statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau, African American men outnumber players of other races in the National Football League, as well as in the National Basketball Association, accounting for 68 and 75 per cent respectively. Experts have suggested various explanations for this phenomenon, including genetic, as well as sociological and psychological theories. (cf. Hunter, 2009:85f) Whereas the biological approach claims that “The Black is a better athlete to begin with, because he’s been bred to be that way. Because of his high thighs that go up to his back. And they can jump higher and run faster because of their big thighs....” (Snyder qtd. in: Shapiro qtd. in: Hunter, 2009:86), sociologists oppose that racial stratification in America is one of the main causes. This means that “Whites, [...] because they have visible alternative role models and greater potential access to alternative high prestige positions, distribute their talents over a broader range of endeavors. Thus, the concentration of highly gifted Whites in sports is proportionally less than the number of Blacks.” (Edwards qtd. in: Hunter, 2009:86)

However, as soon as an athletically built African American passes by, it is often assumed that he is probably a professional basketball or football player, due to existing stereotypes in our minds. Zamudio and Rios also observed this during their study on private race talk at university. They pointed out that a white female person admitted that upon encounter with a tall black man on campus, she automatically wondered whether he was a basketball player. She also added that her black peers
confirmed that “[...] when people come up to them the first question they get asked is what sports do they play for the university – as if they wouldn't be here if it weren't for the athletics.” (2006:491)

Either way, the stereotype that African American men dominate in professional sports is an overgeneralized image and does not depict reality. On the contrary, it represents only a fraction of reality, omitting other crucial information. This is due to the fact that black men dominate the “the most visible sports”. (cf. Phillips qtd. in: Hunter, 2009:87). Additionally, whereas the previously examined stereotypes endorse negative beliefs and attitudes, the image of African American men as top sportsmen tend to be of a more positive nature. However, as explained earlier, positive stereotyping may also cause as much harm as negative one, as it primarily supports the concept of stereotyping itself. (cf. Murphy, 1998:174)

3.4.6 African Americans are Musical

Stereotypes that claim that all African Americans are musical represent yet another category of stereotyping to be examined. Gray, introducing the dominant images of African Americans, adds that black men, besides their stereotypical role of a gang member or top athlete, are also seen as the “indignant rapper”. (cf. qtd. in: Hawkins, 2009:39) As the adjective already implies, this image bears the connotation of violence and crime. Hence, rap music is blamed for encouraging criminal activities. (cf. Johnson, Trawalter, Dovidio qtd. in: Flowers, 2008:14) Moreover, the connotation of anger, violence and criminal activities is again attributed to all African American people. (cf. Clark, Pearson, qtd. in: Flowers, 2008:14) As a result, the vicious circle of stereotyping is completed and all black individuals, and particularly the ones that make or listen to rap music, are considered to be criminals. Another stereotypical portrayal of African Americans related to music is that all blacks in general are musical. This image can be traced back to the sambo image discussed earlier and their way to speak rhythmically (cf. Boskin, Pieterse, Elkins, Leab qtd. in: Hawkin, 2009:41) and to be “[...] musical and happy-go-lucky [...]”. (Schlenker et al. 1976:319)
3.5 Impact and Effects of Stereotypes
Logically, the application of stereotypes leads to certain effects concerning both parties, the targeted group, as well as the group establishing the stereotype. DeLamater, Myers and Collett argue that overgeneralizations and thus, the assumption “[…] that all members of a group are alike and possess certain traits […] foster[s] various errors in social perception and judgment”. (2015:221) This means that by stereotyping a specific group, one creates the impression that each and every one is alike, despite the fact that individuals are different from each other in countless ways. (cf. DeLamater, Myers, Collett, 2015:221) Consequently, stereotypes are perpetuating misperceptions about members of other groups.

Another aspect that needs to be considered is the fact that the perpetuation of stereotypes also causes negative effects for the persons concerned. This means that as soon as a stereotype is accepted by someone and considered to be a faithful representation of a certain group, “[…] information that is inconsistent with the stereotype” might be ignored. (cf. Bodenhausen, Lichtenstein qtd. in: DeLamater, Myers, Collett, 2015:221)

Moreover, the perpetuation of stereotypes and thus, the perpetuation of images of groups that are inaccurate, has a large impact on society. Since racial stereotypes foster the diffusion of negative images that affect attitudes towards minority groups, racism is spread. In other words, another consequence of stereotypical thinking is that it also affects people's attitudes and thus, their reaction towards other groups. This means that stereotyping not only perpetuates clichés, but also racial discrimination. Therefore, and in order to decrease existing racist attitudes and beliefs, one needs to distance oneself from stereotypical thinking in the first place. However, due to the fact that today's society is strongly influenced by others and particularly by mass media, rejecting stereotypes may not be as easy. Therefore, the following chapter will analyze the power of mass media, its impact and effects on society and its role in the process of perpetuating stereotypes.
4 The Impact of Contemporary Mass Media on Racial Discrimination in the U.S.

The following chapter will concern itself with the mass media in the U.S. as a social institution and its impact on society, with a particular focus on how the media shapes people’s attitudes and perceptions of race in the United States. Therefore, what exactly is understood by the term mass media in the first place will be analyzed. Next, a short overview of the historical development of (mass) media will be given, in order to understand its significance and power of social influence. Hence, the timeframes of when various types of media emerged and what purpose they originally served, and still do will be discussed. Subsequently, the current role of the media in the U.S. will be analyzed in order to find out what the most used types of media, and thus, the most influential ones, are. Finally, the main types of contemporary mass media will be discussed, followed by a more detailed analysis of the impact and effects of contemporary mass media, with a particular emphasis on common stereotyped images in the mass media and their perpetuation. Additionally, these stereotypes as well as the types of media analyzed in this chapter will then constitute the basis for the analytical part in the next chapter.

4.1 History and Development of the Mass Media in the U.S.

The following section will give an insight into what we understand by the term mass media, what types of media it includes, as well as their functions. Moreover, the origins of media and its development will be viewed in a historical perspective. The aim of this section is to familiarize the reader with the mass media as a social institution and to demonstrate the ubiquity and power of the media in today’s society.

4.1.1 Defining (Mass) Media

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term media was first coined in the 1920s, which however, does not mean that the media had not existed before. (cf. Briggs, Burke, 2005:1) Clearly, books, plays, newspapers etc. have long existed before the 20th century, without being referred to as a medium. However, in order to find out what exactly is meant by the term mass media, social theorist’s Niklas
Luhmann disambiguation will be used as a starting point.

According to Luhmann,

 [...] the term 'mass media' includes all those institutions of society which make use of copying technologies to disseminate communication. This means principally books, magazines and newspapers manufactured by the printing press, but also all kinds of photographic or electronic copying procedures, provided that they generate large quantities of products whose target groups are as yet undetermined. Also included in the term is the dissemination of communication via broadcasting, provided that it is generally accessible and does not merely serve to maintain a telephone connection between individual participants. (2000:2)

However, he points out that concerts, exhibitions and/or theater plays, for example, are excluded from this definition due to the fact that one of the key characteristics of the mass media is its renunciation of direct interaction “between sender and receivers”. Instead, technology is interposed, taking over the part of disseminating information. Yet, the distribution of the above mentioned exceptions via technology (film, CD, DVD, etc.) can indeed be considered to be part of mass media. The interruption of direct interaction “[...] ensures high levels of freedom of communication [...]”, which again ensures more possibilities for the mass media to spread individual perceptions and/or constructions of reality. (cf. Luhmann, 2000:2)

Similarly, O’Sullivan, Dutton and Rayner define the mass media or also mass communication as

organised and specialised modern media institutions such as the press, cinema and broadcasting, whose principal business involves the supply of demand for forms of information and entertainment [...]. The prefix ‘mass’ [...] carries a series of one-dimensional assumptions about the homogeneity of the audience and the direct influence of the media. (1998:351).

Moreover, O’Sullivan, Dutton and Rayner also take up the subject of interposed technology by highlighting that mass communication distinguishes itself from direct interaction such as conventional face-to-face communication or personal addressed letters, through four main characteristics. What is called the institutional gap is best described as the lack of direct interaction between sender and receivers, as Luhmann pointed out. Hence, mass media does not receive direct feedback of their audiences. O’Sullivan, Dutton and Rayner emphasize that this however does not mean that people are not reacting towards mass-mediated messages, but that their feedback is not heard by the senders. As a result, mass-media communication is considered to be “one-way”. Secondly, compared to the ephemerality of face-to-
face communication, mass communications are usually stored and/or made available in physical forms such as in books, newspapers, movies etc. and are thus retrievable and reproducible at all times. (cf. 1998:15ff)

Another distinctive aspect that is from extraordinary importance is the fact that mass-mediated messages are basically available and accessible “[...] across space, time, population and public culture” and therefore, can be distributed all over the world. This means that events of all kinds, environmental or political upheavals etc. can be watched or heard live from anywhere in the world. However, it must be noted that despite the mass media’s permanent availability, access can be restricted in terms of whether one can afford it and/or whether there are legal forms of content control. (cf. O’Sullivan, Dutton, Rayner, 1998:17) Lastly, O’Sullivan, Dutton and Rayner argue that the fourth distinctive characteristics of mass media is the fact that mass-mediated messages can be considered to be “forms of modern commodity.” This means that profitability plays a major role in the field of mass media and that “[...] we can understand modern media as specialised, industrialised agencies involved in and dependent upon the commercial supply and the cultivation of demands for diverse forms of information, communication and entertainment commodities.” (1998:17,19)

Accordingly, both the definitions of Luhmann and O’Sullivan, Dutton and Rayner emphasize the fact that on the one hand mass media is particularly characterized by their wide reach of (unknown) audiences and, on the other hand that there is no direct interaction between the sender of mass-mediated messages and the receivers due to the interposition of technology. Also, reiterating briefly the before mentioned, the ubiquity, the unrestricted availability and reproducibility are other main aspects that are particularly typical of mass-mediated messages.

4.1.2 Development of the (Mass) Media throughout History

In his book, *The Psychology of Communication*, W. Lambert Gardiner divides the history of the media, referring to Carl Sagan’s theory, into four main generations. According to his definition, a medium is “[...] any means of storing and transmitting information.” Therefore, memory and speech, being representative of storing and
transmitting information, constitute the first and then still technology-free generation of media, followed by print and film, telephone and television, and lastly, today’s generation of multimedia and the Internet. (cf. 2008:163f) Accordingly, this section will concern itself with the developments and emergences of types of media from the invention of the printing press up to more recent inventions, such as the internet.

Before the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in 1450, the dissemination of information and news happened primarily through oral tradition and the personal delivery of messages, and thus, reached only a limited audience. With the invention of printing, however, Gutenberg “[...] revolutionized the spreading of information that changed political, economic and social structures.” Consequently, reading and writing were no longer exclusive to the nobility and priests, but also became accessible to other social classes. Moreover, the printing press enabled “[...] the production of cheap literature and the reproduction of documents without error. It also enabled information to be preserved, affected social relationships, and inspired new forms of writing.” (cf. Fellow, 2013:1f) As a result, printing can be considered the first “technological” medium, serving the purpose of reproducing and disseminating information to a wider audience, as well as preserving it.

In early America, the first press was established at Harvard College in 1638, printing and disseminating religious texts that served teaching purposes, and in 1704 the Boston News Letter emerged, which is said to be the first regularly published newspaper. However, the press was not only used to distribute information and news, but also for propaganda purposes, inciting people to revolt against the oppression by the British Crown. Later, simultaneously with the ratification of the U.S. constitution, the freedom of speech and press was introduced. All these happenings also rang in a new era of the press that then represented a main determining factor of political attitudes in the American system. (cf. Fellow, 2013:13f) Briggs and Burke particularly point out that “[...] with the breakdown of censorship and the evolution of political liberty [...]”, a new era of democracy had begun. (cf. 2005:61)
In the middle of the 19th Century, the increase of America’s population simultaneously resulted in an increase of the number of newspapers, amounting to 4,051 newspapers and 387 dailies by 1860. Consequently, as a result of the industrialization and the rise of the population to approximately 30 million people, “[...] America's first press for the masses was born [...]”. Also, newspapers at that time were “[...] freed of both governmental control and political parties”. However, this did not mean that newspapers did not politicize anymore, but rather that they were owned by private and powerful business men. Hence, as Fellow points out, “[...] truth and responsibility were not always their hallmarks [...], and the competition of these strong-minded men for readers produced a constantly refined conception of news.” The fact that their newspapers reached audiences in the whole country represented a major gain of power and influence of the media. (cf. Fellow, 2013:83,85f)

Asa Briggs and Peter Burke add that whereas ‘public opinion’ still was the key concept of newspapers at the end of the 18th century, the new kind of newspaper for the masses was “[...] helping to fashion national consciousness by making people aware of their fellow readers.” (2005:1) Another important aspect of that time was the introduction of advertising in newspapers due to the process of industrialization and thus, the fact that goods became cheaper through mass production. (cf. Fellow, 2013:83)

Following the developments of the printing press and advertising in the 19th century, the first half of the twentieth-century was particularly characterized by its technological inventions “[...] including the camera, motion-picture projector, radio, and television.” (Fellow, 2013:209) After the rapid expansion of the telephone in the late 19th and early 20th century, also the radio and movies enjoyed great popularity. The radio, which was at that time the newest mass medium, became so important in disseminating information and news, that it was even used by the president in order to announce national emergency shortly before WWII. (cf. Fellow, 2013:209f) Briggs and Burke note that with the invention of electronic media, the concept of immediacy of mass communication was consequently also introduced. (2005:10) Besides the new technological inventions, Fellow points out that this generation of media was moreover characterized “[...] by mass journalism that focused on crimes
of passion, freak accidents, bizarre divorce cases, and the private lives of movie personalities.” (2013:209) Hence, the media succeeded in not only being a source of information but also in entertaining the postwar generation on issues that were of neither political, nor any religious character, but rather on issues focusing on people's everyday life.

With the increasing popularity of movies and the film industry, Fellow points out that this medium not only served the purpose of entertainment anymore, but also influenced its audience by encouraging morally reprehensible values. Accordingly, the film industry became a powerful social institution whose impact on society was this big that in 1915 it was denied the freedom of speech and press by a U.S. Supreme Court decision. The main reasons for this were, amongst others, immoral and obscene content or the glorification of criminals, sex and seduction as well as the disadvantaged depiction of people of a different social class, race or religion. (cf. 2013:223f) Fellow emphasizes that

> [a]s Hollywood came to rule the film industry, Americans slowly realized the power of motion pictures could have on the nation's social and political fabric. They were, after all, the first major mass media forms to attain the status of a ‘massive’ socializing national force [...] [having] the capacity to arouse passionate feelings and instill ideas in audiences. (2013:223)

With the invention of the television in the 1950s, another medium of information and entertainment was introduced influencing the social and political lives of people even more than any other medium before. Walter Cronkite even claimed that “[n]ever in the history of mankind has there been a medium with the impact of television.” However, Americans had split feelings about the new medium. On the one hand, television enabled people to watch the first landing of a man on the moon and presidential debates, on the other hand, horrifying pictures of crimes and race riots were broadcasted. Either way, television was easily accessible from home and served the purpose of informing, entertaining, as well as advertising. By 1960, 90 per cent of all households in the United States already owned a television. Consequently, the concept of television advertising expanded and became more and more important. Advertised products however, not only included goods and services, but also presidents. In other words, advertising, regardless of the medium,
became an important tool for politicians. (cf. Fellow, 2013:311ff) The second half of the 20th century, however, was marked by technological innovations that changed society and the conception of mass media enormously. Of course, the main reason for this upheaval was the invention the computer and consequently, of the Internet and all its services and functionalities. Originally, the Internet was introduced as a military project under the name “ARPANET” in 1968 and later also enabled sharing information for research and academic purposes. Only in the course of time the phenomenon that was then called Internet extended its functions and uses. (cf. Briggs, Burke, 2009:264f) As a result, the Internet, as it is known today, basically serves any number of purposes. Whether for communication, entertainment, consumption, education and/or business purposes etc., the Internet has revolutionized today’s media generation drastically. Moreover, it has made information accessible for everyone at all times from anywhere in the world, giving new meaning to the term mass media.

4.1.3 Functions of Mass Media

As O’Sullivan, Dutton and Rayner already addressed in their definition on mass media that the media’s main functions are informing and entertaining. (cf.1988:351) However, as already discussed in the previous section, informing and entertaining are just a few, as well as very general functions the media fulfills. Consequently, all the purposes mentioned earlier will be summarized here, to provide a clear overview.

Firstly, spreading as well as preserving information and news. Whether through television, the radio, newspapers and/or the Internet, the media provides people with information on general world knowledge, happenings and events, both past and present. Thus, the media not only informs in a narrow sense, but also educates. Information on politics, religion, history and the whole universe etc. can be retrieved from multiple media channels. Moreover, the media may also inform people about the weather forecast, sports results, wars going on, crimes, elections and many more.

Another main purpose of the media is entertainment. Watching a film, reading
gossip in a magazine and/or surfing on the Internet are only a few examples that serve entertainment purposes. Logically, entertainment does not automatically rule out the purpose of informing. Thus, a movie or a documentary for example can be both instructive and entertaining. This principle of course is also valid for any of the other functions of the media. Hence, the media can serve more than one purpose at the same time. The mass media also serves to facilitate communication. Whereas most of the mass media channels, such as TV or the radio, are based on one-way communication, the Internet allows people to also react to blog posts by commenting and or liking/disliking posts.

In addition, advertising represents a further purpose of the media and can, as already mentioned, be used in various fields. From advertising products, to lifestyles and services, and even politicians, each mass medium can serve this purpose. Lastly, mass media is also used for propaganda purposes by influencing and inciting the population against movements, political parties etc. In short, the mass media informs, entertains, advertises, educates, enables communication and incites. Either way, there is no doubt that the mass media both consciously and unconsciously influences people’s everyday life.

4.1.4 The Mass Media’s Construction of Reality

The fact that the direct contact between senders and receivers of mass-mediated messages is interrupted clearly results in the fact that misrepresented contents cannot be avenged as easily as it is the case in direct communication. This means that senders of messages are usually anonymous and cannot be judged immediately and/or directly in most cases. Luhmann emphasizes that mass media institutions rely on acceptability of the audience in terms of what they communicate. Consequently, this assumption “[…] leads not only to the standardization but also to the differentiation of their programmes, or at any rate to a standardization not tailored to individuals.” He argues that through this process individuals get to embrace a “personalized” program that is designed to be appealing to specific groups of people, such as teachers, or politicians. Therefore, Luhmann explains that the mass media in this matter is dependent on external conditions, namely what
exactly wants to be seen/heard or read by various audiences. (2000:3)

Accordingly, it can be argued that different programs convey different values and beliefs depending on the target audience. **Luhmann points out that**

[t]he reality of the mass media, their real reality, as we might say, consists in their own operations [...] [and that] all statements, including these, are the statements of an observer and to this extent have their own reality in the operations of the observer. (2000:3)

Therefore, Luhmann points out that the reality of the mass media can be considered to be “[...] what appears to them, or through them to others, to be reality.” In other words, what is communicated by the mass media can be treated as “[...] a sequence of observations or, to be more precise, of observing operations.” (Luhmann, 2000:4) This means that even though the media constitutes our main source of information, only a construction of reality is presented to the audience, since the media only presents what they are observing in the real world, which again is subjective. The case of the media’s subjectivity and construction of reality can particularly be seen these days under the presidency of Donald Trump as he recently accused The New York Times, CNN and other major media institutions of the U.S. to report ‘fake news’. However, these institutions only presented what they were observing, which obviously was different from what President Trump observed. This demonstrates that no matter if legitimately accused or not in this case, the media is capable of constructing its own reality.

### 4.2 Mass Media Today

Since the main goal of this thesis is to find out to what extent racism and particularly black stereotyping is present in contemporary mass media in the U.S., it is important to understand what role mass media plays in today’s society. O’Sullivan, Dutton and Rayner point out that at the present time the “[...] mass media, from newspapers to film to radio and TV, have become accepted as everyday ‘facts of life’ [...]” (1998:19), hinting at their extraordinary significance to today’s society. Also, one needs to be aware that, as O’Sullivan, Dutton and Rayner argue, “[w]e are living in a period which has frequently been characterized as a ‘communications revolution’, a cycle of profound and accelerating social and cultural change often attributed to the impact
of new media technologies.” (1998:270) For exactly this reason, households and private spaces have become more and more technologically equipped, leading to today’s ‘connected’, ‘multiscreen’ and media-saturated society. (cf. O’Sullivan, Dutton, Rayner, 1998:270) Therefore, this chapter will focus on the different types of media primarily used these days, as well as to what extent and by whom they are used in the U.S.. The main focus, however, will be on those types that are considered to be most influential. Accordingly, not all types of media will be given the same attention and an emphasis will be put on the ones that are most relevant for the subsequent analysis in the next chapter. Therefore, a detailed analysis of media channels that are not featured in the analytical part, such as brochures, books and/or the radio, will be omitted. However, it will be attempted to at least list every medium in order to have a better overview of the various categories.

4.2.1 Print Media as a Stereotyping Strategy

The print media segment includes besides books, also magazines, newspapers, posters and brochures etc., which, as its name already implies, appear in printed versions. Kipphan points out that “[i]t is true that the age of electronic media has started; however printed information is and remains omnipresent.” (2001:4) Hence, the print media represents a medium that has not lost its value over the years and is still regularly used by the majority of people. Basically, the print media can be divided into two categories: commercial printing and periodicals. These two subcategories differ from each other by their frequency of publication. This means that while commercial printings, such as brochures, posters or catalogues only appear occasionally and when needed, periodicals, including newspapers, magazines and journals, are produced periodically. Hence, periodicals may appear daily, weekly, monthly etc.. In general, many different types of magazines exist, such as business magazines, illustrated magazines, trade magazines or journals, just to name a few. All of them however tend to appear periodically and are partly financed by advertising. Compared to books, magazines have a flexible cover, are multicolored and have a limited lifespan, which is mainly due to their differences in content. (cf. Kipphan, 2001:4f)
Newspapers, as one of the most important contemporary forms of mass media, have a particularly high circulation. Whereas most of them appear weekly or daily, some even appear multiple times a day in order to ensure actuality. As is the case with magazines, newspapers are mainly financed by advertising. Accordingly, newspapers, originally appearing in black and white, have adapted to today’s expectations of advertising customers and the readers and also feature colored photographs and ads. However, due to their high circulation, they consist of loose sheets, in order to print economically and keep the consumer price at low cost. (cf. Kipphahn, 2001:6) However, both newspapers and magazines try to stand out from the rest and thus, try to seize the reader’s attention by presenting special front pages, catchy titles, new designs etc. (cf. O’Sullivan, Dutton, Rayner, 1998:135) Moreover, stereotyping in the print media can be considered to be more liberal, as their content is controlled by editors before publishing. This means that due to the media’s principle of objectivity, editors are subject to report in the most neutral way possible. Clearly, and as will be later detailed in the analytical section, this is not always the case. However, broadly speaking it can be said that stereotyping in the print, as well as in the broadcast media tends to be more neutral than on networking platforms, due to external restrictions.

4.2.2 Broadcast Media as a Stereotyping Strategy

The broadcast media basically includes radio and television. Both media “[…] are required by law to be politically impartial.” Consequently, surveys showed that television is considered to be the most trustworthy medium by the majority of people. (cf. O’Sullivan, Dutton, Rayner, 1998:81) Moreover, the broadcast media, compared to the print media, are also accessible to illiterate people considering the fact that information only needs to be seen and heard rather than read. Moreover, the radio, representing the first broadcast mass medium, is particularly characterized by its cheap acquisition costs. Consequently, it represents the only, or one of the few, sources of information for the poor. Either way, broadcasting in general, including television, “[…] retains a central role in social, cultural, and political life […]”. (cf. Buckley et al., 2008:33f)
Along with broadcasting news, talk-shows etc., also fictional genres such as films and shows are broadcasted via television that predominantly serve entertainment purposes. In 1915 the first movie *The Birth of a Nation* was broadcasted and already made clear that this medium not only entertains, but also shapes and changes social and political perceptions. (cf. Fellow, 2013:211) As will be seen later, television has neither lost power nor influence down to the present day. Moreover, as already mentioned in the section of the print media, the broadcast media is also subject to objectivity. Consequently, also this type of media tends to portray stereotypes in a more neutral way than the social media do. However, compared to the print media, the broadcast media is characterized by its visual aspect, which adds another aspect to the strategies of stereotyping. Fujioka adds that particularly television can be held responsible for the perpetuation of stereotypes, “[s]ince television conveys ‘simulations of everyday situations’ and since it shares similar characteristics of real life events [...]”. (1999:52) He points out that the imitation of reality might become the basis for racial judgments (cf. 1999:52) and thus the misrepresented imitation can be considered to be the strategy of perpetuating stereotypes.

### 4.2.3 Internet and Social Media as Stereotyping Strategies

Since the Internet has become a concept of immense dimensions, it is difficult to define the term to its full extent. However, James Watson and Ann Hill have epitomized the main aspects by saying that the Internet is a [worldwide network of interlinked computer systems providing the swift exchange of digital information – texts, sounds, pictures, or video. [...] The information available on the Internet and its associated systems such as WWB, the World Wide Web, is immense. It includes digests of American White House briefings, university library catalogues, reproductions from the worlds museums [...] as well as [...] offering subscribers a service of communicative exchange [...]. (1997:114)]

O’Sullivan, Dutton and Rayner add that this worldwide network moreover serves the purpose of “[...] diverse forms of interactivity and data interchange.” (1998:350) Beginning in the 1990s traditional mass media channels, such as the radio, television, and/or newspapers recognized the potential of the Internet and set up their websites. Consequently, their media content was accessible both offline and
online. Moreover, due to the rising numbers of smartphones and tabloids around 2010, all these “web-based” services became accessible from anywhere in the world as long as a network connection can be established. (cf. Schmidt, 2013:9f)

Another recent phenomenon, which resulted from the invention of the Internet, is the emergence of social media. Schmidt describes this type of media as web-based platforms, or also called ‘online communities’ or “web 2.0” such as Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia, YouTube etc. that improve the possibility of sharing and editing information and also enable quicker and easier interpersonal communication. The latter aspect in particular interferes with the original definition of mass media, since mass communication generally rules out direct and interpersonal communication, as already mentioned. However, online communities have changed the field of mass communication by allowing direct feedback to mass-mediated messages. In short, the social media facilitate the dissemination and editing of information on the Internet, allow the user to easily publish and share information that is accessible to mass-audiences and enable interpersonal communication among users. (cf. 2013:8-11,15)

As of today, Facebook is considered to be the most used and most known networking platform, reporting more than one billion users in 2012. Among the multimedia platforms, YouTube is clearly the most popular one, providing the user with video clips such as music videos, advertising spots, tutorials etc.. Moreover, blogs or microblogs also belong to the category of social media. These blogs resemble online diaries that are unrestricted in terms of content and enable the users to comment on and contribute to these entries. The most popular microblog is Twitter, restricting the user to not use more than 140 characters. However, the messages can relate to any topic. Moreover, newspapers and the broadcasting media not only have set up their own websites on the internet, but have also successfully integrated themselves on social media platforms. As a result, the mass media channels are widely represented on Facebook or Twitter for example. However, Schmidt claims that journalistic themes are also spread by non-journalistic user profiles. Hence, the sharing and forwarding of information of private users might involve personal attitudes, such as approval, rejection or criticism towards various issues. (cf. Schmidt, 2013:12f, 52f)
Accordingly, since there is definitely less censorship on the Internet and social media platforms than in the broadcast or print media, which are subject to objectivity, stereotyping on the Internet can be considered to be less neutral and thus, more offensive and explicit at times. This can also be explained by the fact that people can hide behind user names and might feel more anonymous. However, censorship in a broad sense also exists on the Internet and networking platforms, as posts that are pornographic and/or politically incorrect can be reported by other users and will be deleted by the networking platform if proofed to be inappropriate.

4.2.4 Advertising as a Stereotyping Strategy

According to Dibb et al. “[a]dvertising is a paid form of non-personal communication about an organization and its products that is transmitted to a target audience through a mass medium such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines, direct mail, public transport, outdoor displays, or catalogues.” Dyer on the other hand offers a much more simplified definition by saying that advertising is basically nothing more than “to inform a large number of people about something.” (Dibb et al., Dyer qtd. in: Janoschka, 2004:15f)

Janoschka adds that in addition to the mass medium channels mentioned by Dibb et al., online advertising needs to be included as well. Moreover, she points out that in order to inform the audience and convey a message, advertising instruments are necessary. These instruments can be print ads, commercials on television or also web ads. However, advertising not only serves the purpose of informing people about something, but also and more importantly of persuading them. Therefore, the “[...] advertising messages try to influence or change the audience’s attitudes.” (cf. 2004:16ff) Hence, one decisive aspect is to attract the masses’ attention with a strong slogan that will be hard to forget. Fellow adds that the aim of advertising is to convince customers to buy a product at low cost. Additionally, as already mentioned, not only products, but also services and presidential candidates etc. can be advertised. (cf. 2013:313) Depending on the advertising instrument, advertisements can include sounds, animations, written language, graphics, pictures, symbols etc.. (cf. Janoschka, 2004:22) Regarding stereotyping strategies in
advertising, one can argue that due to the diverse range of advertisements in the various media channels, ads are characterized by their variety of strategies they use and combine. Since this medium particularly wants to sell, embellishments and memorizing features are used that appeal to the audience. Therefore, the perpetuation of racial stereotypes in ads can be conveyed via language, sound, pictures, symbols etc., as mentioned earlier.

4.2.5 Media Use in the United States in Numbers

The following section will focus particularly on contemporary media use in the United States, in order to identify what medium is used the most by what audiences. These numbers are of great importance and relevance in this thesis, since the most used media channels also tend to be the most influential ones. Therefore, statistics and data relating to media use in the contemporary U.S. will be analyzed in order to find out what media channels are most frequently used and thus, are most influential. The extent to which people in the U.S. are exposed and/or expose themselves to the media will also be examined in order to evaluate what impact the media has in general.

![Figure 2: Growth of average time spent with major media per day in the United States from 2011 to 2017](image-url)
This chart from statista.com shows the growth of average time spent with major media per day in the United States from 2011 to 2017. The types of media analyzed are subdivided into mobile, desktop/laptop, other connected devices, radio, TV, magazines, newspapers and other. Clearly, the more modern devices, i.e., mobile- and other connected devices take the lead, whereas the rather “old fashioned” non-electronic and offline media types such as magazines and newspapers report a continuous decline over the past 7 years.

As can be seen, clear leader of all types of media is the mobile phone, voice calls excluded, listing numbers that peaked in 2011 and 2012 with a 96.8% and a 90.9% increase, respectively. Even though the numbers from 2013 to 2017 have steadily declined, the growth of time spent with mobile phones still lists a 5.2% increase in 2017. Similarly, also any other connected devices, such as tabloids, show a fair increase of the average time spent per day, reporting the highest percentage of growth over the last 3 years with 21.2%, 13.6% and 8.4% in 2017. Consequently, almost all other types of media report a continuous decrease. Whereas radio and TV list a slight but consistent fall ranging from -1.9% to -4.1% with few exceptions, magazines, newspapers and other report a much higher decline of average time spent per day, not showing a plus in growth over the past 7 years at all. Logically, the conclusion can be drawn that the rather recent emergence of online media use is catching up with offline media. However, as we will see in the next chart, it has not quite yet substituted it. In short, people in the United States are developing a higher affinity to retrieving information via their phones, tabloids and/or their computer.

Whereas the first chart represented the growth of average time spent with major media per day and therefore focused on the development of various types of media in the U.S., the following chart refers to the actual average time spent with major media per day (in minutes) in the United States as of April 2016. Consequently, it shows what medium most heavily used by the U.S. population.
The bar chart above shows that the average American person spends a total of 725 minutes per day using any kind of medium for various purposes. Out of these 725 minutes, more than one third, namely 245 minutes, are spent by watching TV, followed by using their mobile phones with a total of 186 minutes per day, again voice calls excluded. Other online media channels are ranked third with a consumption of 131 minutes per day per person. Other connected devices, newspapers and magazines are positioned at the end of the chart amounting to 26, 16 and 12 minutes per day, respectively. Consequently, on the basis of these statistics, it can be deduced that whereas mobile and online media have gained considerable market growth over the last 7 years, television is still the most used and thus, the most popular medium in the United States as of April 2016.

4.3 The Impact of Mass Media

As already mentioned in the introduction, Luhmann emphasized that all of our knowledge is based on information that comes from the mass media. (cf. 2002:2) Consequently, the impact mass media has on our society obviously is enormous. Kulaszevicz adds that “[w]ith the advancement of technology, the impacts of mass
media are profound. [...] Media impacts our beliefs, assumptions, public ideology, [...] our experiences [and] educates people, with and without credible knowledge.” (2015:4) O’Sullivan, Dutton and Rayner moreover continue by saying that newspapers, the broadcasting media and other mass media channels have become such pervasive phenomena that they are indeed considered to be “everyday ‘facts of life’”. Moreover, they point out that our society instinctively relies on the information presented by the media. (cf. 1998:19) Kulaszevicz emphasizes that “[i]n those cases in which audiences do not possess direct knowledge or experience of what is happening, they become particularly reliant upon the media to inform them.” (2015:5) Fellow shares this opinion and adds that the uneducated, children, as well as immature and unsophisticated people are easy prey for the mass media and their influencing power. Another important aspect is the fact that these people, who constitute the majority of the population, are furthermore “[...] incapable of distinguishing between fantasy and reality.” (cf. 2013:225) Consequently, the majority of people believes what they see, hear or read in mass media sources, regardless of whether it is based on real facts or mere imaginations.

According to Fourie, the effects of the mass media can be categorized into long-term- and short-term effects. One of the most frequent short-term effects for example can be observed in advertising. In this case the media advertises a product, with the intention of making it desirable for the audience. Therefore, the desired short-term effect of the media, or more precisely, of advertising, is the purchase of the advertised product. Other short-term effects can be observed under severe conditions, such as during times of war and/or social upheavals. (cf. 2007:232)

Regarding long-term effects, Fourie claims that „[t]he underlying assumption [...] is that the media does not have an immediate impact on behaviour and people's way of thinking, but can affect behaviour over a longer period of exposure to media content. (2007:237) This means that in addition to short-term effects such as consumption, the media also shapes our perceptions and our behavior. Effects that can be either long- or short-termed are, amongst others, institutional change, media violence and/or collective reaction. Moreover, Fourie points out that the media is also reality defining, which basically refers to “[...] the media's interpretations of realities with which we are confronted daily and how we should understand them”.

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One of these reality defining aspects of the mass media concerns the representation of individuals and groups, and thus, stereotyping. (cf. Fourie, 2007:248)

Stereotypical thinking often becomes an “[…] unquestioned part of [people’s] way of thinking about groups and individuals”. According to Fourie, two different explanations for this issue exist: Similar to the approaches demonstrated in the previous chapter, he argues that stereotypes can either emerge based on myths or binary oppositions, or due to the fact that “[…]stereotypical thinking [is] institutionalized in media content”. (2007:248f,251) However, this paper is of the assumption that the latter explanation contributes to shaping realities and perceptions for the most part.

4.3.1 The Perpetuation of Racial Stereotypes in the Mass Media

Since the mass media is considered to have a major political and social impact on society, Prince points out that according to the Kerner Commission, the media is considered to be an institution that is thus also held responsible for establishing “a social division between Caucasians and African Americans.” This social division is created through the stereotypical representation of African Americans in the media that has a lasting and negative impact on race relations. (cf. Kerner Commission qtd. in: Prince, 2006:11) Kulaszevicz moreover claims that the (mis-)representation of people in the media is responsible for the perpetuation of racism. “Throughout history the mass media, in various forms, have tended to support the power of the dominant group by presenting to the general public highly negative, emotion-evoking images of minority groups.” (Luther qtd. in: Kulaszevicz, 2015:7f)

Additionally, Blacks were not only misrepresented by the media, but also “[…] struggled to represent their own stories, beliefs, opinions and identities because whites controlled the entertainment industry and chose what images of Blacks to portray.” (Kulaszevicz, 2015:8) Only in the 70s African Americans introduced the so-called “Blaxploitation” films starring African Americans as the main protagonists in order to overcome racism. However, these films were neither successful, nor

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2 theories according to Claude Lévi-Strauss
watched by white audiences. As a result, they were no longer produced, since the majority of the audience of mass media channels were and still are Whites. (cf. Bausch, Luther, Wilson, Gutierrez, Chao qtd. In: Kulaszevicz, 2015:8f)

Moreover, Kulaszevicz points out that besides the fact that Blacks were underrepresented in the media, they are also greatly misrepresented in crime reporting in the broadcast media. (cf. 2015:10) Whereas Whites tend to be presented as the victims, there is a significant overrepresentation of African Americans as perpetrators. (cf. Dixon and Linz qtd. in: Prince, 2006:12) This racial bias can also be embraced in the case of O.J. Simpson in 1994 when the TIME Magazine edited Simpson’s mug shot in order to make it look more violent and merciless and put it on their magazine cover. The following comparison of the two magazine covers shows that the Time cover artificially blackened O.J. Simpson’s skin tone, as dark skin is automatically linked to characteristics such as violent, criminal, aggressive, merciless and angry, to only name a few. Clearly, the left magazine cover that is not edited does not evoke the same feelings.

Figure 4: Artificial blackening of O.J. Simpson in the Time Magazine compared to the original mug shot on the left side in the Newsweek

Moreover, racial minorities are often presented as criminals, drug dealers, abusers, and as being animal-like. Consequently, Blacks are assigned the role of a criminal, whereas Whites are represented as victims in the mass media. Another
discriminating fact of Blacks in crime reporting is that black suspects, unlike Whites, are often times not given a name along with their mug shots. This implies that Blacks are not considered to be valued as individuals. (cf. Sewell, Smith-Shomade, Oliver, West, Lundmann, Weiss and Chermak, Entman, Oliver qtd. in: Parham-Payne, 2014:756) This phenomenon can be embraced in both magazines, the Time and Newsweek. Both display a number next to the mug shot and the catchy title, implying that the case of O.J. Simpson is just another case among many others. However, Blacks are not only under- and misrepresented in news- and crime reporting, but also in movies, TV shows, advertisements etc.. One thing that all of these genres have in common, compared to news reporting, is the existence of a fictional character. However, it is argued that the majority of the population lacks the ability to distinguish whether stereotypical images conveyed by the media are fictional or real. Thus, they process any kind of information as to be real in the first place. In her article *The Impact of Factual Versus Fictional Media Portrayals on Cultural Stereotypes*, Murphy argues that it is commonly assumed “[…] that individuals are quite capable of distinguishing reality from fantasy, or fact from fiction [and that] our ability to discriminate between the two immunizes us from any potential effects of fiction.” (1998:170) However, she adds that studies on this subject rejected this assumption, arguing that according to Gilbert, individuals “[…] tend to first give credence to anything they comprehend and only later evaluate and reject information they believe to be false.” (1998:170) Moreover, Prentice, Gerrig, and Bailis also point out that individuals automatically hold fictional assertions to be true. They emphasize that it wants a “willing construction of disbelief” to reject fictional portrayals and thus, stereotypes. Only if an individual is motivated and consciously willing to reject fictional portrayals of others, will he be able to “evaluate their veracity”. (cf. qtd. in: Murphy, 1998:170) However, “[t]he extent of the influence [of media images] may be a function both of individuals’ preexisting cognitive schemata and their motivation to maintain a particular worldview.” Despite this assumption, Murphy adds that the perception of others however also depends on group membership. (cf. 1998:173) Basically however, as Hanson and Hanson rightfully note, “[t]he impact of mass media fantasy depictions of sex role stereotypic persons and behaviors […] can
be extended to the domain of the real by their capacity to prime biased appraisals of subsequently encountered real persons and behaviors.” (qtd. in: Murphy, 1998:175f)

Consequently, the perpetuation of racial stereotypes in the mass media, no matter if real or fictional, most likely contribute to the fact that individuals consider them to be a part of reality. Accordingly, the media fosters racial stereotypical thinking and broadly speaking, also racial discrimination. Therefore, it can be assumed that whenever African Americans are depicted as drug dealers or violent and aggressive criminals, these stereotypes are believed to be true. As a result, the majority of the population will assume that Blacks are generally criminals and drug dealers, except they consciously reject the stereotypical image. This is particularly true for people who normally do not come into contact with the stereotyped group, and African Americans in this case.

As also mentioned in the previous chapter, Schneider considers the media to be one of the main agents, among family and peers, that perpetuate and promote stereotyping and prejudicial thinking. He points out that particularly television is held responsible for “[…] spreading and perpetrating, or even creating, stereotypes of […] race.” (cf. 2004:343f) In short,

the media are simply a tool that facilitates the perception of racial and ethnic minorities as criminal, immoral, untrustworthy, uneducated, and/or civically irresponsible in order to sustain or reinforce the infrastructure of the socially constructed hierarchy. […] The use of visual symbols and subtle verbal cues signals to the watching or listening audience a message intended to frame how individuals perceive various issues and phenomena. (Hughey; Abraham and Appiah; Bonilla-Silva qtd. in: Parham-Payne, 2014:759)

Clearly, the theory says that the media is responsible for the perpetuation of racial stereotypes of African Americans in the United States. Moreover, it is argued that regardless of whether the genre is fictional or not, the majority of people believes whatever they see, hear or read to be based on true facts. The subsequent analysis however, will investigate whether the assumed thesis of the pervasiveness of racial stereotyping in contemporary U.S. mass media is true or if the perception and the portrayal of Africans Americans has become more liberal and less stereotypical.
5 A Critical Race Analysis of Stereotyped Portrayals of African Americans in Contemporary Mass Media in the U.S.

Methodology

As already mentioned, the following analytical chapter will examine whether racial stereotypes and prejudices are still pervasive in contemporary U.S. mass media. To reiterate, the common belief is that racism has become more implicit these days and that explicit or overt racial discrimination is commonly rejected and thus, less frequent. Consequently, the following critical race analysis will analyze how African Americans are represented in contemporary mass media. Therefore, an analysis of whether blackness is still stereotyped in the media and if, what types of media are particularly portraying racial stereotypes will be carried out. Furthermore, the question of whether detected stereotypical representations of African Americans convey an explicit or implicit racist message will be examined. The question of whether the analyzed materials are racist and/or offending in an obvious manner or whether the racist message conveyed is more subtle and not always identifiable at first sight will be answered.

The materials used will include magazines, online as well as offline newspaper articles, a movie, as well as social media posts and advertisements. Hence, the major contemporary mass media outlets will be presented. The materials used were arbitrarily chosen and can therefore, not be considered to be representative for all U.S. mass media channels. However, the main goal of this analysis will be to demonstrate to what extent stereotypes occur in the U.S. mass media in general. It will be argued that racial stereotypes are still pervasive in the media today and that these contribute to the perpetuation of racial attitudes and beliefs. Consequently, this is the reason why there is no particular focus on only one type of mass media channel, as is often the case. In this case, analyzing only the print- or broadcast media and excluding others, would not support the thesis of this paper. Also, only certain and pivotal passages of the movie *The Blind Side* will be chosen for analysis under the category ‘broadcast media’, as otherwise it would exceed the capacity of this analysis.

Also, because all major mass media will be analyzed and in order to focus on the general pervasiveness of stereotypical portrayals, both fictional and non-fictional
genres will be examined. However, it is again argued that the majority of people do not
distinguish between fiction and reality and thus, also accept fictional
misrepresentations of African Americans as to be true representations of reality.
Therefore, the genre blending in the following analysis will not result in a distortion of
the findings. This is also due to the fact that to some extent newspaper articles, which
are believed to be based on facts, might also be considered to be fictional due to
subjective reporting. Hence, it can be argued that the boundaries between fiction and
non-fiction are often blurred anyway.

The analyzed material will be categorized into four main sections, namely the major
types of mass media that served as a theoretical background in the last chapter: Print
media, broadcast media, Internet and social media, and advertisements. All these
media outlets were examined and combed through in order to find prejudicial
assertions or images as well as any kinds of stereotypical portrayals of African
Americans. Accordingly, the findings will be analyzed and then assigned to the
respective media categories. A variety of stereotypes will be found for each category to
once again support the main argument of ‘pervasiveness’. However, as addressed in the
previous chapter, not every mass medium has the same prerequisites and strategies for
the perpetuation of stereotypes, which needs to be taken into consideration as well.
Consequently, one type of stereotype might be more prominent on TV, while others
occur predominantly on the Internet for example.

The analyzed aspects will include texts and/or language in general as well as visual
portrayals. Lastly, the findings will be presented and a discussion of whether one can
claim that racial stereotypes about African Americans are still currently pervasive in
contemporary U.S. mass media will be conducted. Moreover, an attempt will be made
to identify whether the examined stereotypical portrayals were explicitly and thus,
stated on purpose, or, whether the assumption that there has been a shift towards
implicit / liberal racism has taken place is true. Either way, the aim is to demonstrate
that it is mythical thinking to assume that we live in a post-racial era.

5.1 Black Stereotyping in the Print Media
This section will analyze racist material found in magazines and newspaper articles,
including both offline and online versions since this distinction does not alter the
content and characteristics of the medium, but only differs in access mode, reach and audience. Therefore, also social media accounts of newspaper publishers are considered to belong to the category “print media” in a broad sense. Villenas and Angeles point out that the print media “[...] produce[], and reproduce[], constitute[], and re-inscribe[] ideas about how the world is racially organized, and about how race and racism are to be understood and acted upon [...]”. (2013:510) They shape society's perceptions “[...] through choice of words, pictures, topics, placement of articles, and framing of storylines”. (Richardson qtd. in: Villenas, Angeles, 2013:510)

5.1.1 Lebron James as King Kong on the Vogue cover

The April 2008 issue of the well-known magazine Vogue featured NBA star Lebron James and model Gisele Bündchen in a similar pose to that of King Kong. Despite the progressive fact that an African American man was portrayed on a magazine cover, the racist and stereotypical representation of African Americans cannot be denied. The main focus of the analysis is put on the visual object of the cover, disregarding the accompanied text. As can be seen in the left illustration, Lebron James appears to be aggressive and wild, and even animal-like. His belligerent pose, his all-black clothing and the fact that his mouth is open as if he is screaming contribute to his frightening and beast like portrayal. The cover picture was obviously imitating the picture on the
right: The movie poster of Stephen King’s movie King Kong, starring a monster-like gorilla. Moreover, Gisele Bündchen, who is portrayed as a beautiful fair-skinned woman, seems to be held captive by Lebron who is holding her in one arm and dribbling a basketball with the other.

This portrayal of star athlete Lebron James can obviously be related to several racial stereotypes about African Americans. First of all, the picture implies that African American men are uncivilized and untamed and are thus animal-like and bare a resemblance to apes. This association of African Americans as apes can also be linked to the common former belief that African Americans are less developed than the white race. Either way, the picture implies that white is beautiful and black stands for aggressiveness, violence and beast-like looks. Consequently, the picture of the ‘brute nigger’ is conveyed. Moreover, the fact that Lebron is depicted while dribbling a basketball also reduces African Americans to the classic cliché of their physical superiority and outstanding athletic performance. It implies that the only reason why he is on a magazine cover is because of his athletic success and that otherwise he would have never made it onto the cover. In short, the depiction of Lebron James as a representation of King Kong is a stereotypical and downgrading representation of African Americans in many ways.

However, even if the stereotypical presentation can be considered to be obvious and immediately recognizable, the portrayal of Lebron on the magazine cover is implicitly and not explicitly stereotyping African Americans. This results from the fact that the sender of this message is not explicitly saying that the top athlete resembles a frightening, wild and beast-like gorilla but one needs to make an inference about the racist nature of this picture. However, clearly, this depiction of an African American man on the US Vogue front cover reaches masses and therefore automatically impacts society and perpetuates racial stereotyping.
5.1.2 Simone Manuel neglected in headline about her and Michael Phelps' Olympic gold medal win

This racist faux pas of Mercury News happened during the 2016 Olympics in Rio. Both swimmers Michael Phelps and Simone Manuel won an Olympic swimming gold medal and while other media channels celebrated and acknowledged the success of both athletes, Mercury News seemed to disregard Simone Manuel's performance by publishing the following headline on their Twitter account: “Olympics: Michael Phelps shares historic night with African American”.

In this case the analyzing object is the headline of this article and thus, the underlying racist attitude that is conveyed by the newspaper's choice of words. Clearly, this headline hints at a white supremacist attitude. Whereas Michael Phelps' gold medal win is acknowledged by calling out his name, Simone Manuel, who delivered the exact same performance, was only referred to as “African American”. This implies that, as already addressed earlier in this thesis, Simone is due to her skin color not considered to be a valued individual, but rather seen as one among many other African Americans. Consequently, white supremacist thinking assumes that all African Americans are the same and thus, being identified as African American instead of mentioning her name is sufficient. In other words, the stereotypical portrayal of African Americans in this case can be linked to the assumed sameness of one race and thus, the insignificance of
African Americans in a white supremacist society.

The racist attitude underlying this headline is conveyed implicitly as it is not explicitly stated that Simone Manuel is less important than Michael Phelps due to her skin color and African American descent. However, the fact that Michael Phelps' name is stated and Simone Manuel's is not, implies that his success is more acknowledged and valued than hers. Logically, this inference has also been made by the public who immediately reacted to the discriminating post and finally contributed to the fact that the newspaper publisher publicly apologized and updated the original headline to the following: “Olympics: Stanford’s Simone Manuel and Michael Phelps make history”. (Almond 2016, online) Hence, the editing of the headline simultaneously confirmed the racial and stereotypical bias behind it.

5.1.3 African American director being referred to as 'slave' in the Daily Breeze

In 2014, the African American director Steve McQueen became the first black director in history to win Best picture for his film “12 Years A Slave”. However, this progressive and gratifying step representative for many African Americans was overshadowed by insensitive and racist headlines, among which the Daily Breeze's front page headline came definitely second to none, titling their story: “‘Slave' becomes master”. (cf. Sanders)
Again, the use of language and/or the wording convey a racist and stereotyped representation of African Americans. Certainly, the movie is called “12 Years A Slave”, however this is no justification for claiming that before winning an award McQueen could have been considered to be a slave, which is the obvious inference of this headline. Moreover, it implies that only by winning a prize for his movie is he now considered to be a “master” and thus, to be seen equal to the superior white race to some extent. This is also due to the white supremacist view that normally only Whites are successful and achieve major success. The headline furthermore implies that if he had not won the award, he probably would have still been regarded as inferior and subordinate to his white colleagues. Evidently, the cliché of white supremacy is present in this discourse, downgrading African Americans to their roots as slaves in the past of American history. As mentioned in an earlier chapter this can be explained due to the deep rootedness of the association of African Americans with slavery in society. Besides the white supremacist discourse, one could also argue that to some extent the “sambo image” is also portrayed considering the whole front page and its interplay of text and visuals. The picture portrays part of the cast that starred in the film and McQueen himself proudly smilingly and holding the award trophy. As analyzed, the “sambo image” represents a contented slave who is considered to be a dependent but happy entertainer. Hence, the link between the headline and the picture might evoke the exact feelings of the reader about the African American director.

Concerning the explicitness of the stereotypical portrayal of African Americans in this case, it is arguable whether the front page of the Daily Breeze is implicitly or explicitly stereotyping and discriminating blackness. Obviously, the words “slave” and “master” are explicitly used in the headline making the statement very clear to the reader. However, the publishers played with stylistic features in order to distance themselves from the statement and make it appear less offensive and also less explicit. This means that the word “slave” here is cited in quotation marks which automatically creates a distance between the statement and its meaning. However, this wordplay is nonetheless racist and stereotyping African Americans, intending to remind them and everyone else of their history as slaves.
5.2 Black Stereotyping in the Broadcast Media

The following section will concern itself with the analysis of stereotyped portrayals of African Americans in the broadcast media, taking into particular regard movies on TV. The fictional genre for this category has been selected due to the fact that, as addressed earlier, “[t]elevision [...] plays a role in constructing viewers' 'social reality' [...] since [it] conveys 'simulations of everyday situations' [...]”. (Fujioka, 1999:52) Richardson adds that Hollywood TV and films are particularly known for typecasting specific groups of society. Among these groups, African Americans are, amongst others such as Christians and families, affected the most. She points out that “[...] for blacks, the typecasting is especially deplorable. In fact, because the stereotyping for black has gone unchecked for so many years, many people mistakenly believe these images represent reality.” Moreover, according to her, the roles of African Americans on TV are limited to either comedies or tragedies. Basically, the depiction of blacks “[...] lead[ing] ordinary lives, is nearly nonexistent in Hollywood productions.” (1995:1f)

For this analysis the movie The Blind Side has been chosen since it offers a variety of stereotyped portrayals of African Americans. Out of many, three main misrepresentations that are perpetuated in the movie will be analyzed subsequently in more detail. First of all however, a short summary of the movie will be given in order to provide an overview of the overall content and message. The 2009 film directed by Gil Netter is set in Memphis, Tennessee and tells the story of the African American teenager Michael Oher. Michael grows up in various foster homes due to his mother's drug addiction and performs poorly in school. At one point, he has no place to stay and secretly spends his nights in the school’s gym. Thanks to a coincidence he runs into Leigh Anne Tuohy and her family, who offer Michael to stay over at their home for a while. Eventually, the white upper class family and ‘Big Mike’, as he is called due to his physical appearance, begin to develop a close relationship and Leigh Anne and her husband decide to become his legal guardians. From that moment on, Michael's educational achievement improves and he becomes the star of the school's football team which enables him to go to college.
5.2.1 The Depiction of African Americans as Criminals in *The Blind Side*

When Leigh Anne and her family drive home after a school performance of their son SJ, Leigh Anne notices Michael walking towards the gym in the rain, wearing only a short-sleeved shirt and shorts. They stop and Leigh Anne gets out of the car asking Big Mike where he is headed. After she finds out that he has no place to stay she decides to let him stay over at their place. After she has set up the living room sofa for him she becomes slightly nervous about her decision to let a stranger stay at their home. The following conversation takes place between Leigh Anne and her husband Sean before they go to sleep:

Leigh Anne: “Was this a bad idea? [...] How well do you know Big Mike? [...] You don’t think he’ll steal anything, do you?”

Sean: “I guess we’ll know in the morning.”

The next morning the scene continues in the bathroom before Leigh Anne is getting ready and about to go downstairs. She says to her husband: “Well, if you hear a scream, call the insurance adjuster.” (The Blind Side, 2009: 23:50 – 24:50)

This scene in the movie depicts the misrepresentation of African Americans as criminals. The fact that Big Mike, an unusually tall and big African American teenager, sleeps in Leigh Anne’s home concerns her. Even though she decided to give Michael shelter in the first place, Leigh Anne later worries about the potential of Michael being a criminal. She fears he might steal something, which also can be seen in the bathroom scene the next morning before she walks downstairs to check whether something in her house is missing. In this scene she tells her husband to call the insurance adjuster in case he hears her screaming. Her statements imply that she does not feel completely safe in her own house due to the fact that Big Mike was staying over. Moreover, she explicitly expressed that she feared he might steal something. Consequently, the scene implies that African Americans tend to be criminals. Additionally, Leigh Anne not only asks her husband if he thinks Michael will steal something, but even expects Michael to be a thief the moment she is telling Sean to be prepared to call the insurance company. In short, a tall dark-skinned young man is automatically considered a criminal. This is the exact image that is explicitly perpetuated by the movie.
5.2.2 Poverty and Low Standards of Living Among African Americans in *The Blind Side*

Poverty and the affiliation of African Americans with the social underclass are two more stereotyped portrayals of African Americans that are fostered in the movie. As already described in the section above, the Tuohy family drives past Michael after the SJ's school performance. It is raining and Michael is only wearing a short-sleeved shirt and shorts and is holding a small plastic bag in his hands, whose content, as we only learn later in the movie, represent all of his belongings. In this scene, the contrast between Big Mike and the Tuohy family becomes particularly apparent, as the camera first displays Big Mike standing in the rain having no place to stay and a plastic bag that contains everything he owns, and then goes back to the Tuohy family's car, a BMW, probably worth more than $50,000. Seconds later, they turn into their driveway and their house, which is more like a castle, comes into view. Consequently, two comparisons are made within one scene. Firstly, it is conveyed that even the Touhy family's car is worth far more than Michael has ever owned in his whole life. Secondly, the drastic contrast of Michael's homelessness and the Touhy's vast mansion also demonstrate the enormous social and economic gap between their and Big Mike's lives. Thus, poverty and low living standards or even homelessness are aspects that are related to Michael and thus, might lead to overgeneralizations and stereotyping. As a result, these characteristics might be attributed not only to Michael, but to African Americans in general. This perception is particularly reinforced by the opposite portrayal of white families, who, are assumed to own luxury cars and big houses. In this case, the movie is implicitly stereotyping African Americans with the help of camera settings and the arrangement of images within a scene. There is no dialogue necessary in order to make the according inference of the different lifestyles and social statuses of a white upper class family and an African American homeless teenager. Consequently, this contrast automatically emphasizes the African American inferiority stereotype.

5.2.3 Overall White Supremacist Message in *The Blind Side*

As already mentioned, the movie offers a variety of scenes that support a white supremacist view, as for example depicted in the scene above. Basically, a black teenager is attributed features such as homelessness, poverty, bad living conditions and
low educational attainment. However, not only individual scenes, but also the movie’s overall core message conveys white superiority. In other words, the fact that only after Leigh Anne Tuohy and her family gave Michael a place to stay and eventually adopted him does his life began to change and move in a positive direction.

Prior to moving in with the Tuohy family, Michael’s life is disastrous. He is homeless, his mother is a drug addict, his father is unknown to him, his school achievements are below average, his physical appearance is extraordinarily big and intimidating and there is no stability in his life. Hence, Michael Oher represents the perfect stereotyped lead role of an African American in a Hollywood drama. He is basically attributed nearly all racial stereotypes of African Americans existing and thus, generally represents inferiority. However, as soon as he moves in with the Touhy family his life begins to change to the better. He owns a bed for the first time in his life, he is considered to be a member of an intact family, his grades become better, he gets his own car, successfully plays sports and is eventually offered a scholarship for the college he applied to. This unexpected plot twist begins the moment he is considered to be part of a white family. Thus, it is implied that Michael, is also entitled to enjoy the privileges of Whites starting from the moment he moves in with the family. Consequently, the implied key message of the movie is that without the help of a white privileged family Michael would not have had all these opportunities. It implies that Michael was dependent on a white woman in order to get out of his unpromising situation. If Leigh Anne had not been there to help him, Michael would most likely still be homeless. Additionally, the image is conveyed that being part of a white family automatically means that one leads a better life and enjoys privileges. In short, it can be said that the movie conveys the message that it needs a white person to get a black person out of an unpromising and desperate situation. Additionally, the fact that the Tuohy family helped an African American stranger depicts the white family as being excessively noble, selfless and exemplary which again supports the white supremacist attitude of the movie.

In this case, the key message of white superiority is conveyed implicitly through various scenes, portrayals and through the plot itself. It is not explicitly expressed that Michael would not have made it this far in life without the Tuohy family but it can be inferred quite easily.
5.3 Black Stereotyping on the Internet and Social Media Platforms

The following category concerns itself with the stereotypical portrayals of African Americans on the Internet and in particular on social media platforms such as Facebook and/or Twitter. All of the analyzed posts which follow have been removed from the networking platforms after they caused public outrage. Consequently, the original sources are no longer available on the respective platforms and the subsequent illustrations were taken over from websites and online newspaper articles that reported the incidents. Either way, compared to the other three categories, this one particularly distinguishes itself from print- and/or broadcast media, as well as advertising because individuals not the media institution as a whole is responsible for the content of a message, but individual platform users. This means, as addressed beforehand, that there is no obligation to being objective and that there is no direct censorship. Consequently, anyone having a valid account on one of the social media platforms can express their subjective attitudes, opinions and feelings.

5.3.1 West Virginia Official Calls Michelle Obama “a Ape in heels”

Figure 8: Pamela Ramsey Taylor offending Michelle Obama on Facebook by calling her “a Ape in heels”

Pamela Ramsey Taylor, the author of the above shown post and former official in West Virginia, posted the following statement after Donald Trump won the presidential election in November 2016: “It will be so refreshing to have a classy, beautiful, dignified First Lady back in the White House. I’m tired of seeing a Ape in heels.” The obviously racist post triggered public outrage which finally contributed to Taylor deleting the
Moreover, her employers brought about consequences which ended up with her being fired. (cf. Quinn 2015, online)

Taylor's racist post on Facebook conveyed two racist stereotyped portrayals at once: whiteness as a standard of beauty and the general belief of white superiority. Referring to Michelle Obama as an ape bears the same meaning as Lebron's portrayal as King Kong. It erroneously implies that African Americans are physically less developed than the white race and thus, seem to be ape-like. Moreover, the comparison to the new First Lady, Melania Trump, who is described by Taylor as “classy” “beautiful” and “dignified”, can be considered as a general ascription to Whites. Thus, Taylor is claiming that whiteness is the equivalent of beauty, class and dignity. Simultaneously, the ascription of these features to the white race implies the opposite features to Blacks. In short, Pamela Ramsey Taylor discriminates African Americans by claiming that they are ape-like, inelegant and dishonorable at the same time.

Moreover, Taylor openly criticizes Michelle Obama and does not hesitate to purposefully discredit her. Hence, Taylor is explicitly discriminating the former First Lady and openly addressed the stereotype of whiteness as a standard of beauty and white superiority.

### 5.3.2 Selfie With African American Boy Caused Racist Remarks in Comments

![Figure 9a and 9b: Gerod Roth’s selfie with an African American child on Facebook and the according racist comments of Roth’s friends on the right side](image-url)
The screenshot above shows a selfie posted on Facebook of Gerod Roth alias Geris Hilton and his African American co-worker's son at his work place in Atlanta, Georgia. Sydney Shelton, the mother of the 3 year old boy reportedly brought her son to work after school in September 2015. Gerod Ross, her work colleague, took the chance and posted a selfie of him and the toddler on Facebook. What followed were racially discriminating and degrading comments of his Facebook friends which caused public attention and public outcry. As a result, Roth deleted the Facebook post and was fired from his work place. (cf. Schnurr 2015, online)

The picture itself demonstrates Roth supposedly sitting at his desk looking in the camera. His lips are pressed together and his eyebrows are slightly raised as if he was thinking “look at this!” or “not too bad”. Cayden is standing in the back of the picture looking in the camera as well. However, his facial expression is more apathetic than enthusiastic. Roth posted the picture without a caption, which obviously was used as an opportunity by his Facebook friends to comment racist remarks under the picture. As can be seen in the second illustration the comments ranged from “help feed this poor child today” to “but Massuh, I dindu nuffin’” to “I didn't know you were a slave owner”. According to Schnurr, Roth later replied to the comments by writing “He was feral.”.

Consequently, not the picture itself but the racist comments and remarks it triggered perpetuate negative racial stereotypes.

The user's comments imply that one of the first things that came to their minds when seeing an African American toddler is slavery, a poor and hungry child and black slave children in an inferior position apologizing to their master in ‘black’ English. The comments imply that for a large part of our society it is still unusual to see Whites and African Americans together without thinking of white superiority, slavery and other racist clichés. The words “slave owner” and “massuh” for “master” explicitly refer to their assumption that Roth represents the boy's master and that he is owning him. Had the boy in the picture been white, surely these comments would not have made. However, the fact that Cayden is African American and dark-skinned contributed to the fact that people explicitly and unscrupulously called him a slave. Moreover, Roth’s comment saying that the boy was “feral” additionally implies that African Americans are uncivilized and wild which can be referred to the “brute nigger” image.
Additionally, the fact that one user imitated ‘black’ English implies that African Americans have a lower level of education and thus, speak in a vernacular. Hence, these comments are explicitly as well as implicitly stereotyping and discriminating Cayden and African Americans in general. Whereas the other users’ overtly discriminate African Americans, Roth’s comment can be considered to be more implicit. The stereotypes portrayed range from white superiority, to the ‘brute nigger’ image, to the assumption that African Americans achieve lower educational attainment.

5.3.3 Young Woman on Twitter Claiming Only White People Belong in the White House

Mallory C., a white girl probably in her twenties, which can be assumed based on her profile picture, tweeted the above statement on her Twitter account. It says that “Obama needs to get out of the White House [because] it's called the WHITE House for a reason. Controversially, the girl however explicitly claims not be racist even if the post might make her look like one.

In her post Mallory discriminates Barack Obama because of his skin color and thus, because of his African American ancestry. She demands he move out of the White House because he is black. In her opinion, as the name already implies only white people belong there. This statement, which contrary to her own belief, is indeed racist evokes the inference that the office of President is or better should solely be accessible for white people. Therefore, Mallory supports white supremacist thinking with her post. She not only discriminates Barack Obama because he is dark-skinned, but also generalizes her statement by basically saying that no-one except white people are supposed to be head of the United States. The fact that she capitalized the word
“white” even reinforces the tweet's key message, namely that the white race is superior, better and the only race capable of ‘ruling’ a state, according to M. C.. Consequently, the tweet is stereotyping blackness in terms of their inferior position to Whites.

Again, this social media post explicitly stereotypes African Americans, as the author of this tweet did not hide her racial bias towards African Americans. Consequently, her post not only addresses Barack Obama, but all African Americans. Also, Mallory C. did not mantle her disdain of Barack Obama’s presidency, but explicitly write about it. As a result, no inference needs to be made in order to understand what she was trying to say. In short, this post on the social media platform Twitter explicitly discriminates African Americans because of their skin color and is representative of white supremacist thinking.

5.4 Black Stereotyping in Advertising
5.4.1 Dove's Body Wash Turning Dark Skinned Women Beautiful

The above shown advertisement of Dove’s body wash was released in 2011 under the slogan “Visibly more beautiful skin from the most unexpected of places – your shower.”. As typical for advertisements, Dove made use of a combination of language
and visuals. Hence, a picture is shown accompanied by a catchy text, in order to make the product desirable to consumers. However, the ad was accused of unmistakable racial bias due to implying that black skin is ‘dirty’ and not beautiful.

As can be seen, the picture shows three women of different sizes, shapes and skin colors wrapped in a towel. The dark-skinned woman is situated on the left, the woman who seems to be of Hispanic descent stands in the middle, and the white woman is positioned on the right side in the picture. Below, the advertising slogan is positioned and in the right bottom corner a depiction of the product, Dove's body wash, can be seen. In the back of the women the words “before” and “after” are placed on the upper left and upper right corner, respectively. The African American woman is curvy and has curly black hair, as typical of African Americans. The Hispanic Woman also has black hair but it is straight and has a bronze skin tint. She and the white woman are visibly skinnier than the African American woman on the left side. The white woman on the right side moreover has fair skin and straight blonde hair.

However, Dove's message to show diversity among women clearly went wrong by placing the word “before” behind the African American woman and the word “after” behind the white-skinned and blonde-haired one. Logically, the product’s slogan in combination with the positioning of the two words and the order of the women placed in front of it imply that the African American woman on the left side is neither beautiful nor clean. It implies that white skin is beautiful as it is the outcome when using the body wash which is promising “visibly more beautiful skin”. Moreover, the dark-skinned woman has kinky hair and is curvier compared to the two other women featured in the ad. Therefore, the dark-skinned woman represents the classic stereotyped African American woman. It implies that African American women are generally heavier. However, this is only an assumed stereotype and cannot automatically be transferred to any woman of African American descent. Thus, whiteness as a standard of beauty is addressed in this ad, whether consciously or unconsciously. The ad portrays fair-skinned, skinny and blonde women as beautiful and desirable, whereas the curvy dark-skinned woman represents the “before” and thus, the opposite. The message is conveyed implicitly, as it is not explicitly claimed that the African American woman is dirty and not beautiful. However, the positioning and combination of the text and the image strongly convey a racist core message. Therefore, assuming the design and
organization was purposefully assigned this way, it can also be argued that this ad is overtly discriminating and stereotyping African American women.

5.4.2 Intel Promoting Their New Processor While Simultaneously Approving of Slavery

![Intel Advertisement](image)

Figure 12: Intel advertisement showing a white employer and his subordinate black employees kneeling at his feet

This Intel Advertisement that promotes their Intel Core 2 Duo Processor was released in 2007 under the slogan “Multiply Computing Performance and Maximize The Power Of Your Employees”. While the slogan alone leaves no space for ambiguity and clearly refers to the hardware product Intel is advertising, its combination with the accompanied image of the ad evokes different and particularly racist thoughts.

The ad is set in an office portraying a white man representing the boss and six African American men that represent his workforce. They are positioned between desks, kneeling down in the position typical of sprinters. The African American men all wear running gear and keep their faces down towards the floor, whereas the white man stands in an upright position in the middle of them wearing a suite. The interplay of this picture and the product's slogan that comes with it address negative stereotypes about African American as well as white supremacist thinking.

First of all, the most obvious connection that can be drawn when seeing this ad is slavery. The picture clearly portrays the white man as the boss and thus, like a
slaveholder. The African American men, on the contrary, are referred to as the workforce and kneel at their boss's feet. The men's arms are muscular and their submissive position signifies that they are inferior to the white man. Hence, the image portrays white superiority and can be compared to a white slave owner and his subordinate laborers or also, slaves. Moreover, the stereotype of outstanding athletic performance of African Americans is addressed in this ad. The African American men are wearing running gear and seem to be very muscular and athletic. Thus, Intel conveys that this is a feature typical of the black race, which is, as already mentioned, a mere overgeneralization. However, in combination with the ad’s accompanied text that says “40% more performance for business” it is obvious that this is related to the African American workforce in the picture, who supposedly, according to the common stereotype, are not only physically superior but also more resilient due to their past as slaves. This means that Intel compares their new high performance processor with black workforce. In short, Intel stereotypes African Americans in terms of their inferior roles to Whites and their slave history, as well as their supposed athletic advantages in a very obvious and offending fashion. The white man, on the other hand, seems to not work physically but only watches his employees from above. He seems to make sure that his workers work fast and efficient in order to maximize profits. Because of this and the fact that racism in this ad is this apparent and undeniable, it can be argued that Intel is overtly stereotyping blackness with this advertisement.

5.4.3 Nivea Ad Implying African Americans Are Uncivilized

Figure 13: Nivea ad representing black man as uncivilized and unkempt
The shown 2011 advertisement of Nivea promotes cosmetic products for men under the motto “look like you give a damn” - “re-civilize yourself”. The ad, consisting of two parts, depicts a young African American man on the left along with the slogan of the advertisement and three different men’s body products along with a description to them on the right of the ad.

The analyzing object is the left part of the advertisement depicting the young dark-skinned man. The man has a well-groomed appearance, wearing jeans, a white shirt and a gray sweater. Moreover, his hair is very short and his posture is reminiscent of of the posture apes have: His arms hang loose in front of his body, his upper body is bent forward and one of his knees is bent as if he was moving forward. In his right hand, he is holding a black man’s mask by its unkempt hair. The mask depicts a neglected African American man with kinky hair and an unshaved beard. The slogan “re-civilize yourself” is in bold, held in a bright white color, and placed right in front of the African American's body. The other slogan “look like you give a damn” is placed in the upper right corner.

The interplay of the depiction of the African American man and the motto under which Nivea promoted their cosmetic line conspicuously implies that the African American, prior to using the brand's products, used to be dirty, uncivilized and not care about his looks. This inference can also be made due to the fact that the mask he is holding portraying an unshaved African American which probably stands for his former appearance. In summation, Nivea promotes the stereotype that African Americans are wild and uncivilized and inferior to the white race. Moreover, the statement “look like you give a damn” furthermore implies that African Americans do not “give a damn” about their physical appearance and generally look unkempt.

Whether this advertisement is implicitly or explicitly stereotyping African Americans again can be considered a matter of opinion. Clearly, not many people will miss the racist message behind this ad, however, it can be argued that there is a difference of explicitness between advertisements and racist social media posts. In this case, I would argue that this ad indeed lacks subtlety but definitely is less explicit and also less direct than the analyzed networking platform posts mentioned earlier. Therefore, this ad is
considered to implicitly perpetuate racial stereotypes.

5.5 Findings

According to the conducted analysis, it can be argued that the assumption of a post-racist era in the U.S. clearly is a misconception. As demonstrated with a variety of material in various mass media, stereotyped portrayals of African Americans are ubiquitous and exist in abundance in contemporary U.S. mass media, which contributes to the overall perpetuation of racial stereotypes in society. However, despite the fact that every mass medium misrepresents and stereotypes “blackness”, there are slight differences in terms of how and what different mass media channels stereotype, which will be demonstrated subsequently.

As mentioned earlier, the print media’s stereotyping aesthetics constitute of the use of language, images, as well as the framing of a storyline etc.. However, the print media, and in particular news reporting, are obliged to remain neutral and objective. This accounts for the fact the analyzed newspaper articles tend to depict more subtle stereotypical portrayals of African Americans, as can be seen in the case of Mercury News headline about Michael Phelps’ and Simone Manuel’s Olympic gold medal win. However, as can be seen in the other two examples that were analyzed, subtleness is not always the key. Consequently, the Vogue’s and The Daily Breeze’s portrayal of African Americans is considered to be less implicit and more offensive than the one of Mercury News. Moreover, two out of the three examples analyzed, used language as the stereotyping strategy, whereas Vogue renounced of textual aesthetics and conveyed a white supremacist message with only an image.

The analyzed scenes of The Blind Side demonstrate that the broadcast media, and particularly fiction, offers a wide variety of stereotyping strategies. Analyzed objects were images and camera perspectives, as well as language. Again, explicit as well as implicit stereotyped portrayals of African Americans could be identified. Moreover, it can be argued that the fictional character of movies allows for a wider scope in stereotyping blackness, as it is only considered to be a simulation of reality and thus, does not have to be truthful in every aspect. Therefore, various explicitly expressed misrepresentation of African Americans can be found, in addition to others that are portrayed in a subtler fashion. Whereas the assumption that Michael might be a
criminal was expressed explicitly through the use of words, the depiction of African Americans as the poor and overall inferior race is conveyed through both language and images.

Clearly, the analysis of networking platforms showed that stereotypes on social media is more explicit and offensive than in any other mass medium. Three out of three analyzed posts, and thus, 100 per cent, explicitly expressed negative feelings towards African Americans and conveyed a stereotyped depiction of blacks. This is also due to the fact that individual users of networking platforms may express their subjective feelings and opinions and do not adhere to restrictions of neutrality and objectivity as is the case in news reporting. Moreover, all three posts used language as the strategy to discriminate and stereotype blackness.

Lastly, all three ads analyzed stereotyped blackness through a combination of text and images. As it is the aim of advertising to arouse the consumers’ interest and to persuade, embellishment and catchy slogans are key. Accordingly, images and slogans also tend to be exaggerated in any way in order to stay in people’s heads. Consequently, also the ads analyzed demonstrate an exaggerated, or in this case stereotyped, depiction of African Americans. It is obvious that the ads convey a stereotyped portrayal of African Americans that discriminates the black race. Still, as mentioned earlier, it cannot be claimed that due to the easily-made racist inference, the ads are stereotyping explicitly.

However, despite differences and similarities of stereotyped depictions of Africans Americans in various media channels, it is obvious racial stereotypes are indeed perpetuated by the media. The fact that various stereotypes could be easily identified in each medium is evidence for their pervasiveness in contemporary U.S. mass media.

6 Conclusion

To conclude, according to the analysis’ findings, I have shown that the thesis presented in this diploma thesis can be confirmed. Simultaneously, the general assumption of a post-racist era in the United States and thus, an era in which racial discrimination does not exist anymore, can definitely be rejected. Basically, the analysis has demonstrated that a wide range of the stereotyped portrayals exemplified in this paper in could be
identified without difficulty in various mass media. Additionally, the fact that each mass medium depicted several stereotypes about African Americans, with the help of various strategies, again supports the claim of the pervasiveness of racial stereotyping in the mass media.

Moreover, referring back to Rios’ and Zamudio’s claim that liberal racism, or also a more subtle form of racism has substituted traditional racism such as Jim Crow and racial segregation (cf. 2006:486f), the findings showed that particularly on social media platforms explicit and overt racism and thus, traditional racism can be found. Consequently, the assumption that traditional racism has completely disappeared can be rejected as well. However, it needs to be taken into consideration that despite the fact that traditional racism still exists in today’s society, it is commonly not accepted by the majority of people. This can be deduced due to the fact that every post, headline and/or other analyzed material that explicitly stereotyped African Americans caused public outrage as well as further consequences, such as dismissals, public apologies etc. Either way, I am arguing that explicit stereotyping as a form of traditional racism still persists but is commonly considered to be unacceptable.

Moreover, the analysis undoubtedly showed that both positive and negative stereotypes about African Americans are frequently portrayed in ads, news reports, movies etc. As addressed in the theoretical section of this paper, the fact that positive stereotypes are depicted as well does not mitigate the power of negative stereotypes, but in fact supports the overall concept of stereotyping and reinforces the belief that they are based on true facts. Secondly, various racial stereotypes could be identified in both fictional and non-fictional media genres. The human brain does not automatically make a distinction between fiction and fact and thus, also holds imagined portrayals of African Americans, as for example in movies, to be true. Additionally, it can be argued that particularly fictional genres enjoy more freedom of portraying stereotyped images of African Americans without being accused of depicting racism. Therefore, fiction can be considered to be particularly problematic and involved in the perpetuation of racial stereotypes which contributes to racist and hostile attitudes towards African Americans.

In other words, all stereotyped depictions of African Americans that were an analyzed in this diploma thesis, as can be seen in the movie *The Blind Side* and its depiction of
poverty among African Americans, contribute to the perpetuation and persistence of racial stereotypes in society. The depiction of racial stereotypes and their perpetuation can occur, as demonstrated in the analysis, through language and wording, images, as well as the combination of text and images. Either way, implicit and explicit, positive and negative, as well as fictional and ‘truthful’ stereotyped portrayals of African Americans could be identified. Despite their differences in characteristics, aesthetics and/or their explicitness, all of these stereotyped portrayals are over-generalized mass-mediated messages that are presented, as the name implies, to mass audiences. Thus, the erroneous depiction that according to Murphy is believed to be true by the majority of people (cf. 1998) reaches, as typical for mass-mediated messages, an enormous amount of people. Consequently, these racial stereotypes consciously and unconsciously influence the people’s perceptions of race, their attitudes and values. In other words, the pervasiveness and perpetuation of racial stereotypes about African Americans in contemporary U.S. mass media negatively affect people’s feelings about African Americans. Then again these negative and intrinsic racist and stereotyped assumptions that are fostered by the mass media contribute to the fact that these exact attitudes are either explicitly mirrored by the mass media as in racist hate speeches on social networking platforms or implicitly as for example in ads. Therefore, I am arguing that the stereotyped images perpetuated by the media create a vicious circle of racial stereotyping and impede a progress towards a post-racist era in the United States.
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