

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria  
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research  
University of Amar Thelidji - Laghouat  
Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages  
Department of English Language



# An Investigation into the Roots of Violence by African-Americans during Late-Twentieth Century America

*A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for Master Degree in Literature and Civilization*

*Option: American Civilization*

**Submitted by:**

AKAKA Siham

**Supervised by:**

Mr.MIHOUBI Ahmed

**Board of Examiners:**

Mrs. GUELIL Assia	President	(University of Laghouat)
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**Academic Year: 2017/2018**

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# Dedication

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*This dissertation is dedicated to my patient parents, my dear sister and my brother, who experienced with me all the ups and downs of my research.*

# Acknowledgements

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*This piece of academic research would have never been achieved without the help and support of certain individuals, who deserve all my gratitude, appreciation and respect.*

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# Abstract

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In the last decades of the Twentieth Century, American society witnessed an increase in the rate of violence by Africans Americans, which is reflected in the higher rate of crime. Many researchers explained that the increase in violence is related primarily to culture and character of black Americans. Therefore, this dissertation's main aim is to reveal that the problem of violent crimes committed by African Americans is not a matter of culture as many white Americans believed. In order to achieve this aim, violence was discussed in its historical background as well as a wide range of primary and secondary sources was consulted, especially those sources related to the influence of media on the perception of individuals to real world. In addition, this dissertation discussed different theories, which explain an existing relationship between being subjected to racial discrimination leads African Americans to engage in a world of violent crimes. The analysed data and study findings suggest that roots of violence stem from the distorted image of African Americans portrayed in different American media programs as well as the racially biased educational policies in U.S public schools.

**Key Words:** Violence; Crime; African Americans; United States; Late Twentieth Century; Education; Racial Discrimination; Dropping Out; Stereotypes; Media.

شهد المجتمع الأمريكي في أواخر القرن العشرين ارتفاعا في نسبة العنف و الذي انعكس بدوره على ارتفاع في معدل الجريمة. حيث فسر العديد من الباحثين أن أسباب ذلك العنف تعود بالدرجة الأولى إلى ثقافة و شخصية الأمريكيان السود. لذلك تهدف هذه الدراسة لإثبات جرائم العنف التي يرتكبها الأمريكيون من أصل أفريقي ليست مسألة ثقافة كما اعتقد العديد من الأمريكيين البيض. من أجل تحقيق هذه الهدف تتطرق هذه الدراسة إلى الخلفية التاريخية لتطور ظاهرة العنف حيث تم الاطلاع على مجموعة واسعة من المصادر الأولية والثانوية المتعلقة بتأثير وسائل الإعلام على مدى تصور الأفراد للعالم الخارجي والتطرق إلى مختلف النظريات التي تؤكد أن التعرض للتمييز العنصري يحرض على الانخراط في عالم الجريمة. تشير البيانات التي تم تحليلها و نتائج هذه الدراسة إلى أن الأسباب الكامنة وراء جرائم العنف ينبع من الأثر الذي يخلفه تشويه صورة الأمريكيين الأفارقة في مختلف البرامج التي تعرضها وسائل الإعلام الأمريكي بالإضافة إلى السياسات التعليمية التي تتميز بكونها متحيزة عرقيا و المطبقة في المدارس العامة بالولايات المتحدة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العنف ، الجريمة ، الأمريكيون الأفارقة، الولايات المتحدة، أواخر القرن العشرين ، التعليم، التمييز العنصري ، ترك الدراسة ، القوالب النمطية، الإعلام .

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# General Introduction

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Twentieth century was a time of massive changes to Americans in general and to African Americans in particular. Despite long years of chattel slavery, cruelty of Jim Crow laws and continuous discrimination and marginalization against people of color, most African Americans contributed in shaping the American character and culture. They founded their own schools, churches, colleges and other institutions in order to become “A Nation within a Nation”<sup>1</sup>. However, there is always a darker side for the African American experience in the United States. Like many other societies that experience clashes and wars social phenomena, the United States was no exception but to associate an entire culture with violence was unacceptable. In the last years of the twentieth century, the American society witnessed an unprecedented wave of violence and crime especially amongst black communities. Association between blackness and crime was imposed.

African Americans make 13% of the United States’ population; however, they commit 52% of the country’s homicides (Bandler). For an ordinary reader, such statistical information perfectly condemns African-Americans with violence and criminality. However, there exists another issue in need for further discussion and research, paving the road to an endless list of interpretations: the roots of such violent and criminal behaviors among African-Americans. White researchers, sociologists, as well as psychologists compete among each other in order to prove the legitimacy of their claim, which incriminates the African American culture and accuses the blacks’ presence of being the source of all evil in the country without giving no clues to the reasons behind these violent crimes. Whereas other experts have dedicated their

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<sup>1</sup>In June 1935, W.E.B Du Bois wrote “A Negro Nation Within the Nation,” where he describes the African American experience and struggle in the United States. In addition, how they were self-reliant and formed their own culture and community. He called for the separation of races and building a pride of the African American heritage and culture. In other sources, the expression of “Nation within a Nation” was first used by Martin Danley, in 1852, when he said, “We are a nation within a nation”. (qtd in. Hine et al 559)

time and effort in order to prove the opposite. This paper categorizes the literature produced into three main types the nature of violence as a behavior, black violence and the issue of African American culture.

Previous studies were conducted as far as the issue of African Americans' violence and crime is concerned. *The Color of Crime: Race, Crime and Justice in America* is a report based on statistical data. This study shows crime rates in the United States categorized according to three different races: Whites, Hispanics and Blacks. Jared Taylor, the author of the report, in accordance with other intellectuals who share a similar racist ideology, refused to be labeled as white supremacist because, for him, the higher rates of crime and violent behavior in the country are due to the existence of black race. Jared Taylor has, also, defended the police forces and the criminal justice system. Furthermore, he attacked the way in which blacks justify their violent actions, that is to say, in the name of racism and discrimination. This report received a massive support from the American people as well as criticism. Some questioned the accuracy of the data found, arguing that the report does not include other crimes, which white American people commit such as driving under the influence [drunk driving], tax fraud and embezzlement. Instead, it focuses only on murder, rape, robbery and car theft in which blacks mark higher rates.

On the other hand, there exists another interpretation of the same phenomenon. Khalil Gibran Muhammad argues, in his book entitled *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America*, for the innocence of the black culture from being the reason of such urban epidemic. In a sort of a biography, the book discusses how the black culture is incriminated in the United States. It also emphasizes the reality of using the high rates of violence within black communities, by white Americans, as a tool to justify the act of discrimination against the black race whereas crimes were and still invisible.

This book traces the evolution of violence and recalls the contributions of different sociologists and criminologists into the field of criminology.

Within the context of defending the black culture, Katheryn K. Russell explains in her book *The Color of Crime: Racial Hoaxes, White Fear, Black Protectionism, Police Harassment and other Macroaggressions*, how Americans associate between race and criminality. It also highlights the effects of exploiting the black stereotype for serving personal purposes especially when blacks and whites are suspected of committing the same crime. The judge is likely to convict a black rather than a white suspect. Moreover, she stresses the bias in the American Criminal Justice System giving it the name Racial Hoax, which is based on racism while alluding to real life examples from the American court cases. At the end of her book, the author suggests six principles for the Criminal Justice System to follow in order to achieve, according to her, fairness to all races. The book received huge criticism because the author was accused of being subjective due to her racial belonging.

Barry Latzer's book *The Rise and Fall of Violent Crime in America* is another important document containing historical events related to the study of violent crimes in the United States, mainly by ethnic groups. Despite the fact that violent crimes in America witnessed a huge increase during the second half of the Twentieth Century, but the author believes that the best method to understand the origin of violence is to trace back the development of crime throughout the nation's history. "The Rise and Fall of Violent Crime in America is a synthesis of history and criminology" (Latzer xiii), it holds within its chapters a detailed explanation of violent crime as defined by criminologists. The book also lists four different types of offences: criminal homicides, robbery, rape, and assault; however, it excludes kidnapping, arson, and burglary since these are considered property crimes. Furthermore, the author draws a distinction between organized, or mob crimes as it is referred to in the book and ordinary (or street) crime and explains the amount of fear caused by street

crime than organized crimes. The author also stresses the idea of rape and how it is not given much attention. Latzer concludes his book by referring to the highly sophisticated techniques used nowadays in the study of violent crimes in the United States including multiple regression analysis compared to researches of quantitative nature, which proved to be unable to explain the origins of violent crimes due to their broader scopes and absence of any theoretical background.

*Race, Ethnicity, Crime and Criminal Justice in the Americas* is an important source to the study of violent crimes in the United States. The book's editor, Anita Kalunta Crumpton, provides a detailed analysis of crime when it intersects with race and ethnicity in North and South America as well as the Caribbean. At the very beginning, Crumpton creates a line that separates race and ethnicity and lists the reasons, which make this book more valuable as far as the study of crime and violent behavior is concerned. *Race, Ethnicity, Crime and Criminal Justice in the Americas* "documents the unfortunate shared experience of Diaspora Africans in the western hemisphere, and to a lesser extent, other non-whites, especially "Original People"/aboriginal people/native people, as disproportionate victims of crime and delinquency as well as disproportionate" (Crumpton xvi). Crumpton believes that both race and ethnicity when accompanied with low socioeconomic status is the probable cause for violent and criminal behaviour not only in black communities, but also in societies where aboriginal people live [Canada] referring to the idea of economic systems such as Socialism in Cuba and Capitalism in the United States. Finally, Anita Kalunta Crumpton concludes her book with a comparative assessment to race, ethnicity and crime in the Americas. In general, the significance of this book lies in the fact that it contributes to a great extent in enriching the academic body of knowledge concerned with race, ethnicity and crime; however, it puts a huge emphasis on socio-economic well being at the expense of other factors, which may deprive violence and criminality from having a multi-dimensional analysis.

The issue of violence by African Americans, as many in the United States label it, creates a sense of confusion and ambiguity in ones' mind. The fact that two opposing seemed to be characterized by personal leaning and different racial belongings challenges the researcher to contribute in the enriching this area of research, to reveal the real roots of violence. This dissertation will not look for more reasons to violence and crime; instead, it will evaluate the nature of such reasons and to look beyond the scope of culture, which has been a dominant interpretation for the issue of African-American violence in the United States for years. The general aim of this dissertation is to investigate the roots of violence by African Americans in late twentieth century. Furthermore, there exist a set of other objectives. This study seeks to understand the concept of violence and to examine the impact of discriminatory institutional practises, which the blacks encounter daily on their behaviour. This dissertation also aims at stressing the role of media in provoking violent reaction of Blacks.

This dissertation addresses one particular question in addition to several sub-questions. The main question is: What were the real roots of the high rates of violence by African Americans? The following sub-questions are:

-Did high rates of violent crimes by African Americans necessarily mean that their culture itself encourages violence?

-To what extent did other factors outside the controll of African American contribute to violence?

-To what extent was the African American culture responsible for the acts of violence during Late Twentieth Century?

Thus, for the sake of finding the appropriate answer to previous questions the present research is conducted according to qualitative method. The researcher uses this method, because it best suits historical research and matches the aims of the study. Since the

dissertation is discussing a social phenomenon in the United States, data about violence by African Americans were collected after consulting a wide range of primary and secondary sources. To better understand the real reasons that provoke violent responses of African Americans, the research establish two main linkages. The first analyzes the impact of Media, especially negative stereotypes and distorted images, on the behaviour of African Americans. The second inter linkage combines between the discriminatory practises at the level of public educational institutions and violence. Moreover, this dissertation proves the validity of the idea suggesting that violence is not an African American cultural trait, through basing this study on various theories about the impact of Media and racially biased educational system to violent crimes.

The present dissertation is divided into three chapters. For a clear assessment to the issue of violence by African Americans, the first chapter offers a brief historical overview about the development of violent acts omitted by Blacks throughout the American history. In addition, the first chapter offers a definition of violence to a better understanding of the term. The second chapter is devoted to discuss the role of distorted image of African Americans in Media and their influence on African Americans' behaviour and their perception in the American society. Finally yet importantly, the third chapter is dedicated to the analysis of discriminatory practises in U.S. public school and their direct relation to African Americans' violence.

# **Chapter I A Historical Context for the Development of Violence by African Americans from the Colonial Period until Late Twentieth Century**

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## **Introduction**

Violence is a wide and multi-dimensional concept. It covers all sorts of crimes including robbery, theft, crack use, drug deal, murder and other forms of physical abuse. Many consider violence as a solution to problems, especially when people are politically or economically oppressed. Instead, others see violence as a problem in itself and as a violation of law. Therefore, the definition of violence is presented in this chapter in order to limit this study to specific types of violence. Moreover, this chapter serves as a theoretical framework to study for it traces the historical development for phenomenon of violence by Black Americans throughout the Twentieth Century.

### **1-1 Definition of Violence**

Like many other terms, violence is very difficult to define, for it may be used in many different disciplines including psychology, sociology, history in addition to health issues. Violence is a critical term since its definition changes according to various situations in order to express different actions and behaviours. Generally, definers of violence fall into two main categories: those who measure violence in terms of force or physical harm and others who see it as a violation of an individual right. Generally, the majority of people tend to associate violence with force and aggressive body harm. However, in some other situations, this association fails. Hannah Arendt points out that “*Force*, which we often use in speech as a synonym for violence, especially if violence serves as a means of coercion, should be

reserved, in terminological language, for the ‘forces of nature’ or the ‘force of circumstances’ (*la force des choses*), that is, to indicate the energy released by physical or social movements”(qtd in. Bufacchi21).

Similarly, the terms ‘violence’ and ‘force’ appeared to be used interchangeably by The World Health Organization. The latter clearly declares violence as “The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation“(4). This definition explains how the scope of violence expands to include not only physical harm but also verbal threats and suicide attempts. It also shows the negative effects of violence both on individuals and on communities.

The World Health Organization presents also a typology of violence, (see figure 1) that distinguishes three categories of violent behaviour; self-directed violence, interpersonal violence, and collective violence. “This initial categorization differentiates between violence a person inflicts upon himself or herself, violence inflicted by another individual or by a small group of individuals, and violence inflicted by larger groups such as states, organized political groups, militia groups and terrorist organizations” (4).

The previous three categories are further divided into more subcategories. Self-directed violence, for example, includes suicidal behaviour from thinking about the idea of suicide until finally committing it. In addition to suicidal behaviour, self-directed includes violence includes self-abuse that is generally perceived as the outcome of certain psychological problems. Whereas interpersonal violence, as the name suggests, takes place in familial context, such as child abuse or between intimate partners such as a partner abuse. The latter is sometimes referred to as domestic violence. Furthermore, interpersonal violence happens between members of one community or society, who may or may not know one

another. This type of violence is called community violence. Finally, collective violence appears when two, or more, groups whose members belong to different historical and social backgrounds or share a set of economic or political beliefs that oppose each other. This type of violence is divided into social, economic and political violence and it can take the form of wars, terrorist attacks, organized crimes, colonialism and genocide (World Health Organization 4).

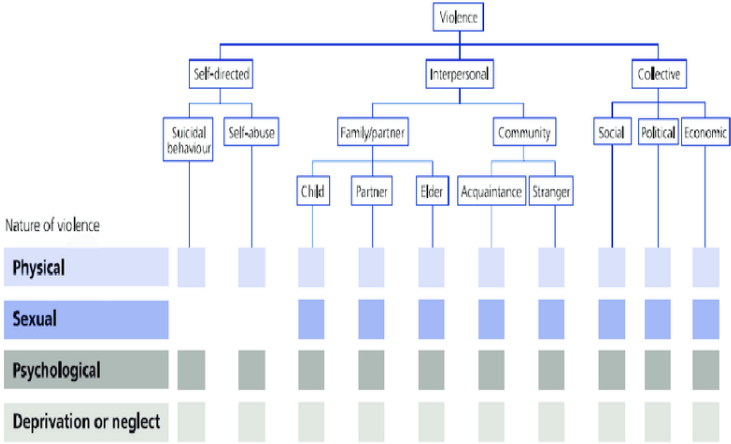


Fig.1. A Typology of Violence from: “World Health Report: Summary”, (Geneva; 2002; 5)

Within the context of associating violence with force, the Cornell University of Law School sees violence as an offence that involves causing or even attempting to cause any physical harm to individuals or properties and declares that violence is:

- (a) an offense that has as an element the use, attempted use, or threatened use of physical force against the person or property of another, or
- (b) any other offense that is a felony and that, by its nature, involves a substantial risk that physical force against the person or property of another may be used in the course of committing the offense. (“Violence and Crime Defined”)

On the other hand, exists another school of thought which attempts to explain violence from a different perspective. Newton Garver is one of many believers in the idea that violence is nothing but a violation of rights. Garver published his essay entitled ‘What Violence Is’ for the first time in the *Nation* in 1968, where he asks:

What is violence? That is a typical philosophical question. The psychiatrists and the sociologists are interested in the questions: why is there violence? What causes violence? That’s not my concern — at least not my professional concern nor my concern here. What I’m interested in is the old-fashioned philosophical question: What is the nature or essence of violence? (qtd in. Jacquette318)

Garver distinguishes himself from sociologists and psychiatrists who seek to understand what caused such violence, arguing that violence should be analysed from a philosophical perspective; in other words, he emphasized the idea that being knowledgeable of the real nature of violence would facilitate and fasten the mission of discovering other possible ways to cure or prevent its occurrence in society. Hence, Garver explains how he sees violence from the perspective of violating an individual’s rights as follow:

. . . If it makes sense to talk about violating a person, that just is because a person has certain rights which are undeniably, indissolubly, connected with his being a person. The very idea of natural rights is controversial since it is redolent of Scholasticism<sup>2</sup>, but I find myself forced to accept natural rights in order to understand the moral dimension of violence. (qtd in. Bufacchi133)

Garver’s definition seems to hold vagueness within its lines, because he actually did not highlight what type of rights he is referring to. Furthermore, Garver declares that violence is categorized into four types, “. . . the violation of a person can be classified into four different

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<sup>2</sup>The term Scholasticism refers to “The system of theological and philosophical teaching predominant in the Middle Ages, based chiefly upon the authority of the church fathers and of Aristotle and his commentators”. Available <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/scholasticism>

kinds based on two criteria, whether the violence is personal or institutional, overt or covert (quiet)” (qtd in. Bufacchi133). As the name suggests, personal violence is understood as a physical harm, which caused by one person to another person, whereas institutional violence, for instance, appears where there are larger groups of individuals. Overt violence is related to physical harm and covert, or quiet, is of a psychological nature. Garver explains why he refuses to associate violence with force as follows:

One of the very first things to understand about violence in human affairs is that it is not the same thing as force. It is clear that force is often used on another person’s body and there is no violence done. For example, if a man is drowning — thrashing around and apparently unable to save himself — and you use the standard Red Cross life-saving techniques, you will use force against his body although certainly you won’t be doing any violence to him...To think so rigidly of force and violence being identical with one another that you call this sort of life-saving an act of violence is to have lost sight entirely of the significance of the concept. Similarly, surgeons and dentists use force on our bodies without doing violence to us. (qtd in. Jacquette319)

According to him, the use of physical force is not considered as violence, simply because the force used can be seen as an attempt to rescue a person dying as he explains in the given example or offering a sort of relief to that person from. In this vein, Vittorio Bufacchi cites Robert Audi’s definition of violence:

Violence is the physical attack upon, or the vigorous physical abuse of, or vigorous physical struggle against, a person or animal; or the highly vigorous psychological abuse of, or the sharp, caustic psychological attack upon, a person or animal; or the highly vigorous, or incendiary, or malicious and

vigorous, destruction or damaging of property or potential property. (qtd in. Bufacchi24)

Bufacchi sees that the importance of Audi's definition lies in the fact that violence is not merely a physical attack that results in aggressive body harm, but it rather expands to include the psychological or mental side. In his definition, Audi describes the way in which violence can take both forms physical as well as psychological, against humans, animals and even properties.

## **1-2 Violence by African Americans from The Colonial Period to Late Twentieth**

### **Century America**

#### **1-2-1The Colonial Period**

During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, English colonists established their thirteen colonies in the New World. In 1619, the first group of twenty African indentured servants arrives in the English settlement of Jamestown, in Virginia to set the beginning of a historical journey full of suffrage, misery and bloodshed shared between white and black Americans. Thus, in order to achieve a successful institution of slavery, white colonists were forced to maintain discipline, obedience and order amongst black African labours. However, in the case of Native Americans white people were in good terms, simply because they were in an urgent need for support in order to survive in a very different land from their own. In general, American history witnessed conflicts between the three races, white, black and Native Americans, across time because "they [whites] considered both [Africans and native Americans] racially, religiously, and culturally inferior, yet blacks, viewed as individuals, needed subjugation while Indians, seen as nations, required removal" (Rucker and Upton xx). Since this dissertation is concerned only with African American, in particular, then Native Americans, obviously, will not be the focus.

The Colonial Period witnessed seven major slave rebellions. However, attempts that followed those revolts were unsuccessful. Usually, slave uprisings or rebellions shared similar events including burning plantations and destroying buildings. In an attempt to escape, Black Americans killed white people in a form of self-defence or revenge. Time, place, and people who take place in the rebellions vary but they all face one destiny: death, either by the hands of white militiamen or by committing suicide. Nevertheless, certain slaves were lucky enough to flee death for another colony.

### **1-2-1-1 Two New York City Affairs in 1712 and 1741**

The first rebellion in New York happened on the six of April 1712, when a group of twenty armed slaves decided that it was high time to put an end to their suffrage and misery. The slaves set fire on buildings, resulting in the death of nine white people, in addition to injuring others. The British militia forces, explains Maxwell, played a crucial role in rescuing people from being burned. The destiny of the conspirators and revolters had been already decided. A number of slaves were sentenced to death; they were either hanged or burnt, while others preferred to put an end to their lives by suicide. Years later, New York City witnessed another chaotic slave revolt in 1741. Similar events took place, when a group of slaves burnt and destroyed buildings. This incident created a sense of anxiety and confusion among white people, which resulted in the passing of certain laws that restricted the behavior of slaves and their lifestyle. Historians believe that the second slave revolt was encouraged by white Catholics (Eudell 278).

### **1-2-1-2 The Stono Rebellion**

Due to rising economy of plantations, Southern Colonies had great numbers of slaves, which participated to a great extent in creating a chance for new slave rebellions to take place. The story began when luck seemed to work for African slaves, in other words armed slaved

were determined to reach Florida, because there and only there slaves would guarantee their freedom “The outbreak came on the Stono River in St. Paul's Parish about 20 miles from Charleston on the morning of Sunday, September 9, 1739” (Brown 191). On their way, they burnt stores buildings and plantations, in addition to killing white people. Unfortunately, the slave’s dream was never been realized, because forces held these freedom seekers. The rebellion resulted in major losses to the city of South Carolina, similar to many other slave rebellions, it finished within two days(Brown 191).

### **1-2-1-3 Gabriel Prosser Plot for a Slave Rebellion in Virginia**

According to historical sources, Gabriel was born on July 1776; he planned with his wife, Nanny in addition to his two brothers, Solomon and Martin; and Jack Bowler an armed rebellion in order to overtake the city of Richmond (Eudell279). Unlike previous slave rebels, Gabriel and his followers belong to the black elite in their community. They had been greatly influenced by the principles of the American Revolution and the right of individuals to gain their freedom. The revolt was planned to be on august 30, 1800, in an attempt to capture Richmond city and negotiate for their freedom. Unfortunately, white leaders gained knowledge of the rebellion, thanks to some black slave informers, which led to capturing Gabriel along with his fellow rebels who were trialed and sentenced to death immediately (Eudell 279).

### **1-2-1-4 The Louisiana Slave Uprising**

There is a limited amount of information is provided, by the *Encyclopedia of African American History*, concerning this slave uprising. simply in a one-sentence-long paragraph, which states that, “In January 1811, Deslondes, a slave driver originally from St. Domingue, led a march of more than several hundred slaves toward New Orleans, in which plantations in St. Charles and St. John the Baptist parishes were burned and at least two whites were killed

before federal marshals suppressed the insurrection” (Eudell 279). Because it took place between two major slave revolts, the Stono and Gabriel Prosser rebellions, the Louisiana uprising lacks a satisfactory and adequate explanation. Whether planned or not, hundreds of slaves started to burn plantations and to kill white people. Eventually, the rebels were captured by militia forces and sentenced to death, similar to former rebellious slave (Eudell 279).

### **1-2-1-5 Denmark Vesey Rebellion in South Carolina**

A planned slave rebellion was about to take place in Charleston area, South Carolina on July 1822. Denmark Vesey, “who had purchased his freedom with lottery winnings in 1799, after having been brought to South Carolina (via St. Thomas and St. Domingue)” (Eudell280), spent forty years as an inhabitant of Charleston. Vesey was motivated by the desire to free both his wife and children from being slaves to a cruel white master. Vesey along with other slaves belonged to a higher rank in their black community and the main purpose behind their rebellion was to “. . . gain freedom by commandeering shipping for transportation to the black republic of Haiti that had been created by the victorious St. Domingo slave insurgents” (Brown195). However, ‘loyalty’ of certain slaves to their white masters prevented Vesey and his followers from realizing their hopes in a victorious slave revolt. The outcome of the rebellion was not different from the previous ones, Vesey was found guilty and sentenced to death along with his supporters (Brown195).

### **1-2-1-6 Nat Turner's Rebellion in Virginia**

A small city called Southampton in Virginia, where there existed a little number of slaves, was about to witness one of the major slave revolts in the colonial period. Nat Turner was a black inhabitant of the country and a religious man. Like the former rebellion leaders turner was literate, intelligent and a man of strong religion. Turner had a belief in retrieving the freedom of slaves through an act of violence, the reason why he planned for a revolt on

August of 1831. Since the rebellion was religiously motivated, the rebels intended to capture a place, which they referred to as 'Jerusalem', but in a less-than-two-days period, white militia forces captured the rebellious leader of the attack, Turner, and consequently the rebellion was put to an end (Hine et al 155-6).

### **1-2-2 Violence by African Americans in Pre-Civil War and Post-Reconstruction Era**

During the period between the 1820s and the 1830s, black Americans started to form their own communities known as 'Ghettos' that were located mainly in Philadelphia, Boston, Cincinnati, and New York. Slavery was coming to an end, and African Americans had hopes in a better future for their own children in the land of opportunities; America. In an attempt to assimilate to the American culture, black Americans founded all-black schools as well as colleges, shops and other businesses. In 1823, Alexander Twilight was the first African American student to graduate at Middlebury College in Vermont. Five years later, John B. Russwurm and Rev Samuel E Cornish published the first African American journal in New York City entitled the Freedom Journal ("African American History Sparkcharts" 1). Moreover, they decided to enter the political field, when Alexander Twilight became the first African American to hold a public office, after being elected and winning a seat on the Vermont legislature in 1836 ("African American History Sparkcharts" 2). While three years later, abolitionists led by John G Birney organized The Liberty Party that was considered to be the first antislavery political party in the United States ("African American History Sparkcharts" 2). At the end of the decade, the African American population reached 2,873,648 in 1940 ("African American History Sparkcharts" 3), a trouble that threatened the white existence. After the end of slavery, white supremacists wanted an alternative solution in order to impose their own control and power over the black Americans, Brown emphasizes:

. . . White perception of black aggressiveness, not merely the act of black aggressiveness, triggered violent white reprisal. With the decline and, finally, end of slavery and its associated legal system of authoritarian control of blacks, whites came to feel the need for an informal, extralegal system of violent suppression to replace legal slavery in keeping blacks at the bottom of American society. (Brown 206)

Thus, the period witnessed some conflicts between blacks and whites but the real causes of these riots were fabricated by white racists in order to hide as well as justify the growing anger, jealousy, and fear from the advancement made by African Americans during the Reconstruction era. Hence, there were at least fourteen riots: four of which were major-initiated by white Americans- in addition to others that were minor. Philadelphia had been witnessing a rising number of racial violence and race riots between 1835 and 1837. However, the major event happened in the 17<sup>th</sup> continuing until 18<sup>th</sup> of May in 1838, when a new place, Pennsylvania hall, was dedicated to abolitionist's gatherings. Certain white citizens were still holding the belief of the impossibility to be socially equal with blacks. Years later, more precisely in the southern city of Wilmington a riot broke out on November 10, 1898, as result of whites' anger. By the year 1898, African Americans' communities reached an unprecedented flourish in their business. Moreover, blacks also enjoyed the right to holding public posts in Wilmington "... a thriving black community (comprising more than one-half of Wilmington's population) that had its own impressive cadre of enterprising businessmen and professionals notable, especially, for its able and aggressive lawyers, doctors, and editors" (Brown 209).

Dissatisfied with that situation, whites led an attack in which a group of thirty black people were murdered but in reality, the true number of victims remained a mystery to the present day. In Atlanta, white racists developed a new and different excuse, from that of

Philadelphians, to justify their terrible rebellion against African Americans in 1906. the riot this time was motivated by the belief, whether real or imagined, that black were becoming a threat to the southern white women because of “the ‘New Negro Crime,’ rape, which blacks had adopted, so it was felt, in frustration over their failure to gain the social equality that had emerged as a goal during Reconstruction” (Brown210). The riot of September that lasted for four days, particularly between 22<sup>nd</sup> until 26<sup>th</sup>, in Atlanta ended. Whites were supported by police forces against Black Americans, who suffered from major losses due to being either murdered or injured.

The last riot was the most terrifying one. Chicago, the city where there was an increasing number of African American communities, was about to witness one the major riots on the American history. as result of this growing black population, a competition between white and their black counterparts was fuelled by the eagerness of African Americans to expand and develop their ghettos that was confronted by the intolerable whites, who fought strongly just because they wanted to distance themselves from the blacks. Referred to as the Red Summer of 1919<sup>3</sup>, when riots spread in other cities, including Chicago, more precisely from 24<sup>th</sup> July until August 2<sup>nd</sup>. The riot resulted in losses to both races. After a period of two and one-half decades, another major race riot took place in Detroit, Michigan in 1943. Causes behind the riot were shared among all riots in that period in other words, a growing tension between blacks and whites of Detroit. In the summer of 1943, at the Belle Isle Amusement Park<sup>4</sup>, where there was a social contact between both races, a riot between blacks and whites broke out. Two days later, Detroit riot ended with higher casualties among Blacks <sup>5</sup>(Brown 212-214).

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<sup>3</sup> The Red Summer Riots of 1919 happened in six major cities throughout the United States:

<sup>4</sup> Riots in that period took place where blacks and whites were more likely to encounter each other, places such as Belle Isle Amusement Park.

<sup>5</sup> In the period between the First World War and after, riots took different pattern. Before, riots were initiated by whites who outnumbered blacks; however, communal riots had equal members of one community, either black or white, attacked the other community.

### **1-2-3Violence by African Americans between the 1920s until the 1940s**

The early years of the twentieth century was a period of a landslide change in the lifestyle of Americans. Before, people inhabited small villages and towns, where murders were less likely to happen. Rural people used to know each other well. However, the urbanization of America and the great economic development resulted in an expansion to the cities in order to cope with the new economic situation. Consequently, violence was used to solve daily problems. Great migration, also, took place during the period. When African Americans started to escape the rigid south, seeking better opportunities and higher wages jobs in the industrial north, mainly between 1910 and 1930. Furthermore, The African American young males participated in the First World War as American soldiers and after returning to their homelands. However, the sense of fighting in the battled and holding a weapon to kill was still engraved in their minds and hearts. Encouraged by the rise of organized crime which popular during the twentieth, violence by African Americans changed into lethal one from 1920 until 1925. Since, victims were blacks, the justice system never cared, considering this type of violence as internal black issue and did not need any interference “Southern district attorneys, for example, routinely eliminated cases involving black-on-black violence. ‘So long as they [African American assailants] do not kill white men,’ a Louisiana African American newspaper editor explained, ‘everything is all right. But it is ‘just another nigger gone’ when a colored man is killed” (Adler 38). However, the shift happened between 1925 to the last years of the 1940s when the United States witnessed a remarkable decline in the crime rates regardless to race:

During the mid-1920s the crime wave abruptly crested in most cities, and rates of violence plummeted for the next fifteen year.... From 1925 to 1929 rates of lethal violence tumbled by 20 percent in Boston, 28 percent in New Orleans, 31 percent in New York City, 32 percent in Chicago, and 37 percent in St.

Louis. The decrease continued through the 1930s, even as poverty mushroomed. Between 1925 and 1940, homicide rates plunged by three-fourths in Detroit, by nearly two-thirds in New Orleans, Chicago, Buffalo, and Pittsburgh, and by more than 50 percent in Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Memphis.... (Adler 38)

The Great Depression had a negative impact on African Americans in the southern states. By definition, the great depression was a rapid decline in economy, which took place in America as well as in other parts of the world during the 1930s. On a larger scale, the great depression affected citizens and made African Americans fear for their lives in other words, that current economic situation forced white southerners to be economically equal to their black counterparts. Therefore, state government enacted Jim Crow Laws that encouraged racial segregation and preserved the low economic status for African Americans. Another major cause in strengthening the black fear was the fact that white citizens did not wait for the government in order to react; instead, they committed terrible acts of violence and murder against black Americans, mainly the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>6</sup>

## **1-2-4 Violence by African during the Second Half of the Twentieth Century**

### **1-2-4-1 The Civil Rights Movement**

To African Americans, The Civil Rights Movement was the first step towards success in the political sphere. According to Jack Bloom's *Class, Race, and the Civil Rights Movement* (1987), "the term Second Reconstruction [as] applied to the civil rights movement is apt: the first Reconstruction attempted but failed to do away with the power of the Southern landed elite. The Second Reconstruction succeeded where the first failed; it accomplished this change by carrying out what was, in effect, a social revolution" (qtd in. Rucker583). The first

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<sup>6</sup> Ku Klux Klan was a white terrorist group, active during the twenties and targeted persons who belonged to different races. Members of the group believed that America is the land of the pure white race. Based on their discriminatory ideology, they committed terrible massacres against African American at that time.

event that signaled the beginning of the Civil Right Movement was Board v. Brown of Education court decision in 1954. When Linda Brown wanted to attend an all-white school, which was better funded, closer to her house with teachers that were more qualified. However, due to the Jim Crow laws doctrine, the children were forced to attend all-black school. The court overruled the Plessey vs. Ferguson decision.<sup>7</sup>

Another event that followed Brown v. Board of Education was Emmitt Till murder in Mississippi in 1955. The 14-years old Emmitt Till was from Chicago, in family visit to the Mississippi the boy whistled at a white women which was seen as a cultural violation. Later the woman and her husband chased the boy who was kidnapped, tortured and then killed by those racist couple. In the court, the couple was innocent due to double Jeopardy<sup>8</sup> (Hine et al 459-460). Months later, Rosa Parks, an activist, was arrested because she refused to give up her seat for a white man. Martin Luther king Jr., at the time, proved to be a leader after organizing the Montgomery bus boycott that lasted approximately for a year, in which black passengers refused to use the buses. As a result, the bus companies lost 65% of their income, leading to integration in the buses (Hine et al 461). Three years later, blacks were able to attend schools close to their homes; however, this was not the case in Arkansas. Little Rock High School was at the doors of a new school year, when nine black students attempted at entering the school, but national guardsmen prevented them following the orders of Arkansas state governor. On September 23, the same group of black student returned to their high school, however; town's people prevented them from entering the school. Finally, President Eisenhower supported the nine students by allowing them to attend high school with white students (Hine et al 461).

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<sup>7</sup>Plessey vs. Ferguson is a court case in which “separate but equal” doctrine was constitutionally recognized. More details about this case are found in Chapter III pages 74-75.

<sup>8</sup>According to the Fifth Amendment in the Bill of Rights of the American Constitution, a person is never accused or tried of committing the same guilt or crime twice. This is known as Double Jeopardy.

In 1960, a group of four black students from Greensboro, in North Carolina was refused to be served at a lunch counter. Therefore, they decided to return to the lunch counter every day until been served. That was known as sit-in campaigns, which gain attention across the nation impinging other students to organize similar protest. A year later, a group of black as well white students decided to travel on buses, across the southern states, where passengers choose to sit in the places they pleased, in an attempt to end bus segregation. Freedom riders received violent attacks during their journey, but they refused to surrender (Hine et al 465-466).

Birmingham, in Alabama was considered as one of the most segregated and racist city in the United State during the period of 1960s. A protest led by young men, women children and in the form of a peaceful march. Unfortunately, the protestors were surprised by being attacked by police officers, who used fire hoses and police dogs under the orders by city commissioner Eugene bull Connor. Those demonstrations were part of martin Luther Birmingham campaign. The event helped the Civil Rights Movement to gain attention and sympathy, after having been reported in television news. Similarly, Washington D.C witnessed the largest march (ever happened) on august 28<sup>th</sup> 1963, where around 200,000 peaceful demonstrators. Martin Luther king delivered his famous speech 'I Have a Dream' at the Lincoln Memorial. Martin Luther King emerged as the leader of the Civil Rights Movements with his non-violent ideology:

We must blot out the hate and injustice of the old age with the love and justice of the new. This is why I believe so firmly in non-violence. Violence never solves problems. It only creates new and more complicated ones. If we succumb to the temptations of using violence in our struggle of justice, unborn generations will be the recipient of a long and desolate night of bitterness, and

our chief legacy to the future will be an endless reign of meaningless chaos.  
(qtd in. Russell P. Et al 458)

After been assassinated in Texas, John F Kennedy was succeeded by his Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson, who participated in passing laws through congress, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlaw discrimination-based on race, color, sex or national origin- and segregation in public places, schools and employment. Nevertheless, in 1965, Southern Christian Leadership Conference organized a march in Selma to call for the voting rights legislation, which took place in Edmund Pettus Bridge, between Montgomery and Selma. Unfortunately, voters were stopped violently and March 7 was referred to as the Bloody Sunday. Later, President Johnson passed a federal voting rights law that outlawed literacy tests and enabled hundreds of thousands of African Americans to vote. That year witnessed also large race riots, resulting from clashes between African Americans and whites including Watts Riots in Los Angeles (August 1965), Newark in New Jersey (July 1967) and Detroit, Michigan (July 1967).

### **1-2-4-2 Malcolm X**

Malcolm X<sup>9</sup> was born on May 19, 1925 in Omaha, Nebraska to his father Reverend Earl Little and his mother Louise. At the age of six, Malcolm lost his father in a street car accident. Despite his mother's attempts to keep the members of the family together, Malcolm was put in the host of a white family in orders of the welfare authorities. In 1941, Malcolm travelled to Boston in order to live with his half-sister Ella Collins. The city life had a negative influence on Malcolm's behaviour, engaging in criminal activities all including drugs. Therefore, at the age of 20 years old, Malcolm was sentenced to 8 years imprisonment.

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<sup>9</sup>Malcolm X was born as Malcolm Little. Later, he replaced his family name, Little, by X after joining to The Nation of Islam, to become el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz after returning from Mecca, which he visited for pilgrimage.

During his time in prison, Malcolm had the chance to be introduced to teachings of Islam until his released in. Malcolm moved to Detroit to join his family members who took an active role in the nation of Islam an organization whose leader was Elijah Muhammad. Similar to other members, Malcolm changed his last name to X, believing that “The Muslim’s ‘X’ symbolized the true African family name that he never could know. For me, my ‘X’ replaced the white slavemaster name of ‘Little’ which some blue-eyed devil named Little had imposed upon my paternal forebears. . . . Mr. Muhammad taught that we would keep this ‘X’ until God Himself returned and gave us a Holy Name from His own mouth” (Lee 1116).<sup>10</sup> Malcolm X participated in the progress of the nation of Islam, attracted new members and became the head of temple No.7 in Harlem, New York, in 1954. Four years later, Malcolm x married Betty x and had six children. It was believed that Malcolm did not succeed in achieving the goal of being the father for his children due to his constant travels within the activities of his work. By 1959, Malcolm x gained a nationwide recognition after the broadcast of his documentary where he declared the white race as evil and whites were devils. In Message to the Grass Roots speech, taking place in Detroit, Malcolm X states:

We all agree tonight, all of the speakers have agreed, that America has a very serious problem. Not only does America have a very serious problem, but our people have a very serious problem. America's problem is us. We're her problem. The only reason she has a problem is she doesn't want us here. And every time you look at yourself, be you black, brown, red or yellow, a so-called Negro, you represent a person who poses such a serious problem for America because you're not wanted. Once you face this as a fact, then you can start plotting a course that will make you appear intelligent, instead of unintelligent.

(qtd in. Breitman4)

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<sup>10</sup>For more details about the life of Malcolm X, seeX, Malcolm with the assistance of Alex Haley. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1965.

He continues:

So we're all black people, so-called Negroes, second-class' citizens, ex-slaves. You don't like to be told that. But what else are you? You are ex-slaves. You didn't come here on the "Mayflower." You came here on a slave ship. In chains, like a horse, or a cow, or a chicken. And you were brought here by the people who came here on the "Mayflower," you were brought here by the so-called Pilgrims, or Founding Fathers . . . . We have a common enemy. We have this in common: We have a common oppressor, a common exploiter, and a common discriminator. But once we all realize that we have a common enemy, then we unite- on the basis of what we have in common. And what we have foremost in common is that enemy-the white man. He's an enemy to all of us. (qtd in. Breitman5)

Malcolm shared a different ideology from that of Martin Luther King Jr. during the civil rights movement. Furthermore, disagreement grew between Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm x due their contradicted ideologies over certain issues.<sup>11</sup> Media played a crucial role in the rising tension between the two highlighting the idea that Malcolm x was better to be a leader for the Nation of Islam instead of Elijah Muhammad. Tensions developed to reach its peak after the assassination of President John Kennedy in 1963. Malcolm x refused to follow the orders of Elijah who banned all the ministers of the nation from making comments concerning the assassination, leading to his suspension from delivering any public statement for 90 days. On March 8, 1964, Malcolm announced his break with the nation of Islam to form the Muslim mosque Inc. in Harlem, and later the Organization of Afro-American Unity to oppose the Nation of Islam and its supporters. During his pilgrimage to Mecca, Malcolm

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<sup>11</sup>In 1959, Malcolm appeared in television documentary show, "The Hate That Hate Produced." Where he expressed explicitly the feeling of hatred to the whites race and considered whites to be devils. His beliefs were against the teachings of the Nation of Islam and of Elijah Muhammad (Lee 1116).

changed his name to el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz; in addition, he discovered the idea of racial brotherhood that is found in the teachings of Islam. Consequently, Malcolm decided to change his violent ideology to parallel that of Luther king. However, Malcolm did not live to realize his dreams. On 21<sup>st</sup> February 1965, and while delivering a speech to a large number of audience, he was assassinated by three members of the nation of Islam (Lee 1118). In a short period of political struggle within the area of African American civil rights, Malcolm X succeeded in influencing many other black movements and organizations such as the Black Power and the Black Panther Party, which saw in the ideas of Malcolm X an inspiration to continue the struggle for political empowerment not through peaceful strategies, but rather through the use of force.

### **1-2-4-3 The Black Power Movement**

Historians agree that the Black Power Movement is merely a continuation to the previous one that is to say the Civil Rights Movement. According to Rucker, the Black Power is "a phase or extension of the Civil Rights movement beginning in the period after 1966 when individual activists and organizations began to articulate the need for black political empowerment and self-defence as a means of achieving a variety of goals" (662). Particularly, the shooting of James Meredith in Jackson, Mississippi<sup>12</sup>, brought blacks attention to their dangerous situation at that time. Pushed by the need to control their own affairs, two members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Stockely Carmichael and Willie Ricks used "the slogan [Black Power] as an alternative to we shall overcome, which had been an unofficial anthem of the Civil Rights Movement" (Rucker 663). The term Black Power seemed ambiguous and raised many questions in the minds of individuals on the reality of its nature. When Kwame Ture with Charles V. Hamilton

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<sup>12</sup>In 1962: The U.S. Supreme Court rules that the University of Mississippi must admit its first African American student, James Meredith. In June 1966, during one of the voting riots, James was severely wounded (Wallenfeldt 38).

published *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*, in 1967, where they attempted to define Black Power as follows:

. . . mobilizing African Americans to use their newfound political voice—as a result of the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act—to create semiautonomous communities in which black police officers patrolled black people, black businesses provided jobs, black elected officials and black-controlled political parties articulated the aspirations of African Americans, and African Americans used armed self-defence to protect their lives. (Rucker 663)

Ture wanted African Americans to take an active stance in the journey of calling for their political rights, and to enjoy the total freedom in deciding about their own internal issues as well. The Black Power Movement appeared to have a major influence in the emerging of other organization such as “... the Black Panthers Party, for self-defence, SNCC, CORE<sup>13</sup>. The Republic of New Afrika, The Congress of African Peoples, The Deacons and Justice, and Us” (Rucker 664). Unlike Martin Luther King Jr, Activists in the Black Power Movement abandoned the philosophy of non - violence due to its irrelevance to the African American struggle in the United States.

#### **1-2-4-4 The Black Panther Party**

The Black Panther Party was an organization established by African Americans, which took place in the United States between the 1960s and the 1970s. The Black Panther Party changed the way in which African Americans perceived the struggle for their rights and contributed largely to the American culture of present times. In the fall of 1966, both Henry P. Newton and Bobby Seale founded the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California “to patrol

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<sup>13</sup> CORE refers to the Congress of Racial Equality. It challenged White supremacy over Blacks and public segregation.

black ghettos to protect resident from acts of police brutality” (Wallendfeldt43). Both leaders, Newton and Seale, were members in an association that inspired equality and freedom for African Americans. However, they soon became frustrated and disappointed by what they believe to be the inability of that association to provide solutions for the issues of blacks rather than merely discussing them. As a result, the Black Panther Party was born with the intention of taking a more active role in the struggle for racial equality in the United States. On May 2, 1967, with only few members, the black panthers carried out their first protest in the state of California. The reason behind their protest was the selective ban of weapons imposed by the state of California. The protest ended when police forces arrested all the thirty members of the Black Panther Party who took place in the march. This event participated in creating a sense of awareness amongst black communities to the necessity of a resistance movement to gain political empowerment for the black Americans (Wilson 659).

The Black Panthers created their own newspaper in 1967 having the title *Black Panther*, in addition to the introducing of what they called a ten-point programme: a plan that addressed black community needs including land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. Within the same year, the party’s revolutionary leader; Huey Newton was arrested and trialled for the assassination of, Patrolman John Freyan, an Oakland police officer. The shooting had a major influence in paving the way to the free Huey campaign and in reorienting the attention of the party members towards the idea of police brutality and oppression against African Americans. By year 1968, the Black Panther Party had expanded into many cities throughout the American soil such as Chicago, Los Angeles, San Diego, New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington and Baltimore. “By the end of the decade, the BPP had grown to be a national organization with 40 chapters, more than 5,000 members, and tens of thousands of supporters. By 1969, the Black Panther Party comprised individual chapters unified under one central committee” (Wilson660). Despite its nationwide recognition and

major impact on the American society at that time, the Black Panther Party was quick to decline during the 1970s. Reasons differ from one historical source to another, but they all agreed upon the following certain points. A huge part of the organization focused on the issue of winning a place in the local government, in addition to offering great social services to black Americans; on the other hand, there was another part, which involved in a constant struggle and conflict with the police officers. Therefore, a disagreement took place among the party's leaders, on how to face these challenges, leading to a significant split in the party and to its ultimate dissolution. In The encyclopaedia of African American History includes an explanation to the role played by the FBI forces in erasing the party and performing the amount of effort needed:

Throughout the country, FBI operatives convinced grocery stores and supermarkets to stop supporting the Panther's breakfast program, informing managers and owners that the party used the program to disseminate antipolice propaganda to children. Also, parents were told that the party's breakfast food was contaminated and infected with diseases. Further, to create dissension among the chapters, the FBI office in Philadelphia sent a letter to Huey Newton, allegedly from the Philadelphia BPP chapter, questioning his leadership ability. (Wilson 661)

Finally, the Black Panthers presented themselves in a manner that recalled a violent view in the minds of very individuals. Furthermore, the party received huge criticism in spite of the fact that the Black Panthers were politically ambitious and attempted at reforming the black communities, they were seen as threat to the lives of Americans. "In September 1969, J. Edgar Hoover, the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), declared that the BPP was a major threat to the domestic security of the United States" (Wilson 661). The Black Panther Party eventually disappeared from the political struggle in 1982.

In the early years of the civil rights era, that is to say the decade between 1950 and 1960, crime committed by African Americans witnessed a huge decline in its rate. Statistics showed that “throughout the 1950s and into early 1960s, African American homicides rates declined or held steadily. This was true even for the segment most at risk, males between the ages of 25 and 34. From 1950 to 1960, homicide rates fell to 18, 8 percent” (Latzer93). Obvious reasons, continues Latzer, behind that decline were unable to provide adequate explanation for the decreasing number of homicides. Socioeconomic status \_or poverty \_ that seemed for many experts the perfect justification for the rising level of black violence and criminality was irrelevant. “The postwar period was a time of enormous gains for blacks. However, these gains continued to the late 1960s and beyond, a period of major increases in black violent crime” (Latzer95). That is why socioeconomic progress as a cause started to lose its credibility as far as the African American violence is concerned. While other alternative explanations emerged to the surface, including the low consumption of alcohol by African Americans and a decline in the young black male population. Generally, the period was characterized by calm atmosphere at all the levels that is why, it was difficult to decide about appropriate justifications or reasons however, the shift in events took place in the post 1960s, when a wave of crimes and violence occurred across the United States.

Between 1960 and 1970, rates of violent crime (essentially, murder, rape, robbery, and serious assaults) in the United States more than doubled, from 161 per 100,000 to 364. Murder rates rose 55 percent, while robbery rates climbed over 91 percent. The bulk of the increase occurred in the second half of the decade, during the time of the riots and Vietnam War protests. Whereas, between 1960 and 1964, violent crime rates averaged 168 per 100,000, never exceeding 200, between 1965 and 1969, rates never fell *below* 200, and the mean was 260. Bad as it was in the late 1960s, things grew worse with each

succeeding decade. In the 1970s, the average violent crime rate rose to a shocking 452 per 100,000, only to soar still further in the 1980s, climbing another 31 percent to 594. And even that wasn't the peak; the average for the first half of the 1990s was a staggering 741 per 100,000. From 1960 to 1990, violent crime in the United States increased 353 percent. (Lutzer110)

In the last decades of the twentieth century, the United States witnessed a rise in the crime rate and more specifically violent crimes committed by the African American people. Moreover, violent crime rates vary throughout the United States that is to say, certain cities mark high crime rates whereas others not, including rape, assault, robbery, and murder. This had participated in a negative influence on the perception of crime and violence by the public opinion in other words, violent behaviour was associated then with black Americans who were seen as a threat and danger to the lives of white people in particular. The Bureau of Justice Statistics, in the *Report on Homicide Trends in the United States-2008*, states the following:

-In 2008, the homicide victimization rate for blacks (19.6 homicides per 100,000) was 6 times higher than the rate for whites (3.3 homicides per 100,000).

-The victimization rate for blacks peaked in the early 1990s, reaching a high of 39.4 homicides per 100,000 in 1991.

-After 1991, the victimization rate for blacks fell until 1999, when it stabilized near 20 homicides per 100,000. -

In 2008, the offending rate for blacks (24.7 offenders per 100,000) was 7 times higher than the rate for whites (3.4 offenders per 100,000). -

The offending rate for blacks showed a similar pattern to the victimization rate, peaking in the early 1990s at a high of 51.1 offenders per 100,000 in 1991.

-After 1991, the offending rate for blacks declined until it reached 24 per 100,000 in 2004. The rate has since fluctuated, increasing to 28.4 offenders per 100,000 in 2006 before falling again to 24.7 offenders per 100,000 in 2008.

(11)

As it is mentioned above, by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, violent crimes reached higher rates during the 1990s and it was until the last years of the twentieth century that crime started to decline. Black Americans tend to mark higher rates in certain types of crimes, suggests the Bureau of Justice Statistics:

-Black victims were over-represented in homicides involving drugs, with 62.1% of all drug-related homicides involving black victims. By comparison, 36.9% of drug-related homicide victims were white and 1% were victims of other races.

-Compared with the overall percentage of murder victims who were black (47.4%), blacks were less likely to be victims of sex-related homicides (30.4%), workplace killings (12.5%), or homicides of elders age 65 or older (28.6%).

-While two-thirds of drug-related homicides were committed by black offenders (65.6%), black offenders were less likely to be involved in sex-related killings (43.4%), workplace homicides, (25.8%) or homicides of elders age 65 or older (41.9%) compared to their overall involvement as homicide offenders (52.5%). (12)

Therefore, African Americans committed crimes that involved drugs, because during that period blacks had easy access to all sorts of drug. However, when sex-related crimes as well as workplace homicides are concerned with blacks, they were less likely to be involved

mainly because usually there were higher rates of unemployment among blacks so public office holders were of a white color. Moreover, African Americans committed more interracial crimes, “84% of white victims were killed by whites and 93% of black victims were killed by blacks” (Bureau of Justice Statistics 13). Hence, they were more threatening not to the white people but rather to each other.

### **1-2-4-5 War on Drugs**

America of the 1970s witnessed another obstacle that prevented its citizens from enjoying a secured life. Drug or Crack, as criminologists refer to it, was a double-edged sword. In other words, drug is considered both a crime and a reason to commit other crimes.

Crack is made by cooking cocaine, baking soda, water, and other commonly available substances, such as benzocaine, to produce a rocklike material that emits vapors when heated. The name comes from the crackling noise made during the cooking process. When inhaled, crack vapors generate an instantaneous euphoria that wears off in less than ten minutes, leaving an intense craving for another “hit.” Crack pellets, marketed in small glass vials, could be bought cheaply, anywhere from \$2 to \$20, making them popular in poor neighborhoods. (Latzer 175-6)

Addiction to drugs is simply a matter of habit formation that is why drug addicts show their willingness to commit more serious crimes in order to feed that habit. In parallel with drug use, a rising number of other crimes such as robbery, prostitution (exchanging sex for drugs) and murder (homicides) would consequently take a place. As a result, the United States government launched a campaign in order to stop drug use.

The phrase “War on Drugs” is used when referring to a government-sponsored campaign against the illegal use of drugs<sup>14</sup>, which took place in the United States during 1970s. The public opinion responded differently to the campaign, some people supported the idea; however, others believed that it was initiated in order to serve racist purposes. The war on drugs started with President Nixon, particularly in June 1971, when he considered drugs as an enemy to the young American population. In an attempt to stop drug use, President Nixon founded the Drug Enforcement Administration in 1973 with a huge budget and a great number of agents. In the period between the mid-1970s and the end of the decade, many states began to decriminalize Marijuana use and possession. The fight against drug use continued in the times of President Reagan, whose emphasis on the issue contributed in the increase of in the number of prisoners involved in drug use crimes. In 1986, the American Congress passed the Drug Abuse Act, which was characterized by the use of “mandatory sentences for drug offenses”, in addition to dedicating a large budget for “state law enforcement” along with “drug testing of prisoners and jail inmates” (Latzer 181). The act was heavily criticized, because the period of prison sentences in crimes involving drug use were longer in the case of African Americans compared to white Americans. Therefore, the rate of Blacks, as well as Hispanics, who were sentenced to prison had remarkably increased

*Harper* magazine published an interview, conducted by journalist Dan Baum, where President Nixon’s domestic policy chief, John Ehrlichman said, “We knew we couldn’t make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities”. Ehrlichman justified his point of view by saying, “We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course, we did” (“War on

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<sup>14</sup>In the United States, drugs including cocaine, morphine and opium were and still used for medical purposes since 1890.

Drugs”). Thus, the only solution that was left in order to convict African Americans according to Ehrlichman was to associate blacks with heroin, even if it was a mere suspect.

Determined by an urgent need to discover the causes behind African American violence and criminality, experts divided themselves into two different schools of thought. The first one attempted to associate poverty or socioeconomic development with the study of crime, supported by the fact that African Americans who committed violent crimes usually, if not always, belonged to neighbourhoods where there was a lack of public services, high rates of unemployment and easy access to drugs and guns. However, there existed other white neighbourhoods where levels of poverty seemed to parallel the black neighbourhoods, clearly this fact weakened the first claim, which leads to the second claim. The other group favoured to believe in the violent strain of African Americans, rather than poverty; in other words, blacks have certain cultural characteristics that make them behave in a violent and aggressive manner. “In the late 1960s, criminologist Marvin Wolfgang and psychologist Franco Ferracuti presented a new theory of crime—the subculture of violence theory . . . . According to this theory, in any society there may be groups with exceptionally high rates of homicide; such groups are likely to share values that support violence” (Latzer165). It seemed to Latzer that white thinkers invented the subculture theory without providing concrete evidences to prove the credibility of their claim besides “this theory came under heavy fire, partly because of its circular reasoning: violent behavior alone cannot prove the existence of a subculture of violence” (Latzer166). Therefore, a culture cannot be blamed for the behaviour of certain individuals.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, African American violence started as uprisings and rebellions during the Colonial Era to develop into riots generally initiated by white racists. However, the first decades of the twentieth century mark a growing number of violent crimes due to the rise of the organized crime that was popular at those times. From the mid twenties until the last years of the 1940s, violence witnessed a remarkable decline due to the Great Depression. This decline continued throughout the civil rights era to change in the late 1960s. In last decades of the twentieth century, a wave of violence and terrible crimes started and continued for decades to end, more precisely from the late 1960s to reach the 1990s, with the beginning of the Twenty First Century.

## **Chapter II The Impact of Negative Media Portrayal on African Americans' Reality**

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### **Introduction**

After learning about the development of black violence throughout the American history, the second chapter of the present dissertation offers an analysis to the misrepresentation of African Americans in Media and its impact on the behaviour of Black Americans. This chapter also highlights the main stereotypes associated with both male and female African Americans, including the Mammy, the Jezebel, the Tragic Mulatto, the Sambo and its variations in addition to others. Furthermore, this chapter focuses on the role of television, and not another media outlet, because during the second half of the twentieth century, American population had heavily relied on television, making it a cultural force. Many experts proved its ability to shape people's beliefs and opinions. Based on George Gerbner's Cultivation Theory that discusses the long-term effects of media on the real world of viewers, this chapter aims at explaining the relationship between heavy exposure to television by Americans and resulted violence.

### **2-1 Definition of Stereotypes**

Prejudice and discrimination appear to govern social relations of American people. Prejudice is generally understood as "a preconceived and irrational attitude toward people based on their group membership. Just as the term suggests, this is a pre-judgment. It is inflexible and not based on direct evidence or contact" (Stolley141). These prejudices can take both forms positive as well as negative, however; in general, the term prejudice is often used to mean negative attitudes towards a particular group of people. According to Stolley, prejudices take place in the society in the form of all the "isms" in other words prejudice is an

umbrella that holds racism<sup>15</sup>, sexism<sup>16</sup>, ageism<sup>17</sup>, ableism<sup>18</sup>, heterosexism<sup>19</sup> and the most destructive form of prejudice is the stereotype (Stolley 141). A stereotype is a standardized and fixed idea about a particular group or type:

Stereotypes are beliefs that generalize certain exaggerated traits to an entire category of people. These common images can assign either positive or negative traits to various groups. They may arise out of observations of behaviors or traits that the observer applied to all people in the actor's category (sex, ethnicity, club membership, hair color, etc.). Like the "isms," stereotypical beliefs are used to justify unequal treatment of groups. (Stolley142)

Definers of the term stereotype agreed that the word stands for a fixed and standardized idea whereas the stereotypes accuracy is still a debatable issue. When few people refuse to believe in stereotypes and argued that stereotypes were simply assumptions and generalizations about a group and they do not define the whole culture or the intended group. On the other hand, there exist larger portions of society that seemed to believe in their accuracy.

Stereotypes fall under four main categories. Racial stereotypes are the most common amongst the other categories. By definition, racial stereotypes are fixed assumptions or prejudgements about a particular racial or ethnic group such as Asians, Latinos, Native Americans, African Americans, Italians or British. Examples of those stereotypes suggest for instance that African Americans are unintelligent, inherently violent and poor. While gender stereotypes, as the name suggests, refer to the inferior treatment and perception of women

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<sup>15</sup> Racism is the belief that one racial or ethnic group is inherently inferior and the unequal treatment of people based on their racial or ethnic belongings.

<sup>16</sup> Sexism is the belief that one sex is inferior or superior.

<sup>17</sup> Ageism is the unequal treatment of the elderly people.

<sup>18</sup> Ableism is the prejudice against disabled people.

<sup>19</sup> Heterosexism is the unequal treatment of people who have different sexual orientations, that is to say homosexual people.

compared to their male counterparts. Despite the great achievements and huge success of women in the all aspects of daily life, they are still marginalized by the society as well as men. Culture stereotypes suggest that persons who belong to one specific culture share certain traits. For example, all Arabs or Muslims are terrorists whereas all blacks are poor and engage in criminal activities. Sexual stereotypes occur when someone holds negative views and ideas about people of different sexual orientations such as gays, lesbians and transgender individuals. Stereotypes are deeply rooted in the American society due to heavy exposure to media outlets more precisely television.

## **2-2 Media**

Media in the United States is a cultural force. It is a source of information and entertainment. Americans rely heavily on media. According to the statistics, the period before the end of the Second World War saw a slow increase in the number of U.S. homes with television sets. Whereas in the late 1990s, almost every home in the United States had at least one television set. Media including different television news, entertainment programs, films and advertisements played a crucial role in the shaping and reshaping of the audience's beliefs, opinions, and experiences:

. . . [We] found a relationship between the prior exposure to information, often related to strength of attitude, on the subject and the degree to which the information impacted on beliefs and opinions. Those who had been least exposed to either subject were most open to adjusting their views and conversely those who arrived at the groups with most exposure were least likely to have their opinions changed by the new information. This was the case even if the information they had been exposed to was polarized, or inaccurate. (qtd in.Kulaszewicz4)

### **2-2-1 Television**

In earlier years, that is to say before the end of the Second World War, methods used in television industry were primitive and traditional. A camera was used in order to capture actions and events. Later, the recorded videos were broadcasted to other stations. Because cameras at that time suffered from problems with colours especially the color white, therefore actors were obliged to work under extremely hot lights, “wearing black lipstick and green makeup”. The Second World War has terribly weakened the progress of television industry, because companies were busy, dedicating all their money and efforts for the sake of supporting military production. Radio continued to be the only source of information and entertainment until the second half of the twentieth century. Many critics considered the period as the Golden Age of television. The political event that reoriented the Americans’ attention towards television was the broadcasted debate between Kennedy, the Democratic candidate for president, and Vice-President Richard M. Nixon, the Republican's nominee during the presidential elections of 1960. Those who listened to the debate between the two candidates assumed that Nixon would win the elections, whereas the ones who watched television held different views especially after noticing the poor posture of Nixon in contrast to the confident young Kennedy (“History of Television”).

By 1964, color broadcasting began on prime-time television. Americans became fascinated by the new invention, therefore; they watched all the different programs broadcasted on the three major networks ABC [American Broadcasting Company], CBS [Columbia Broadcasting System] and NBC [National Broadcasting Company] that dominated broadcasting in the United States. American people held the belief that everything portrayed or reported on television was the truth and depicted reality especially after the events of the Vietnam War, which gave the journalists a sacred position in the society and in the hearts of the Americans. According to the statistics, around the year 1948, there was only one percent

of the American population with a television set. In few years later, more precisely on 1953, the number of households that contained television reached 50 percent. However, it was until the early 1960s that the 90 percent of Americans actually had a television set in their homes (Johnson V.169). Thus, Americans watched television extensively.

The press, pulpit, and radio have long been noted as the three great molders of public opinion . . . Now comes another addition to this potent trinity of news dissemination—television—probably destined to become the most powerful of them all. Television now both tells and illustrates it—just as it happens and without being ‘doctored’ or ‘slanted’ . As a result, television . . . can easily become America’ s greatest foe to bigotry, malice and racial or religious hatred. (qtd in. Johnson. V 167)

The advancement occurred in the television industry and the development of media programming strengthened the existence of stereotypes in the American society.

### **2-3 African American Stereotypes**

African American stereotypes were created by white Americans in order to justify their racist and discriminatory policies towards the blacks. Moreover, through the eyes of white Americans, these stereotypes helped in preserving their superior position in the American society. Exposure to such negative stereotypes began early in American society during the days of slavery.

Media stereotypes have also affected the self-definition of African Americans. These “internalized media stereotypes” cause African American audiences to alter their self-image. Young black males may behave in a more aggressive fashion because of how their lives are depicted in videos. Assumptions about

relationships are based on televised depictions of black marriages and romances. Traditionally black neighborhoods are considered undesirable based solely on how a television show (especially news coverage) frames them. Media stereotypes have been so pervasive that many other countries have seemingly come to “understand” African Americans through what they have seen in American media. (Newton 890)

Angela M. Nelson describes six African American stereotypes<sup>20</sup> that were used in order to represent blacks in films and other forms of popular culture. These stereotypes consisted of the Sambo and its other variations including Jim Crow, Zip Coon, Uncle Remus, and Uncle Tom, Nat, Mammy, Jezebel, Tragic Mulatto and Pickaninny. The *Blackface Minstrelsy* or the *Minstrel Show* was the reason behind the rising popularity of other African American stereotypes (187). The *Minstrel Shows* date back to the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, expanding to reach the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in American popular culture. Performers of those *Minstrel Shows* were all of a white skin, who attempted at imitating blacks’ manner of speech and appearances, by painting their faces with the color black, and applying white makeup around their eyes and mouth in order to be similar to African Americans. During that time, Blacks were forbidden from taking parts in white productions. *Minstrelsy Shows* portrayed blacks as lazy, extremely unintelligent, childish and submissive and the main aim of those shows was to mock at African Americans. The minstrel shows were a mixture of dance, songs and theatrical performances derived from the blacks’ cultural heritage the aim behind the minstrel shows was to make the public believe that African Americans were happy under slavery and preferred to maintain loyal to their white masters (Nelson 187).

The Sambo was one of the earliest racial stereotypes. To discover the original meaning of the word, “Boskin traces the etymology of the name Sambo either to the West African

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<sup>20</sup> These stereotypes are often referred to in some books as African American archetypes.

Mende and Vai languages, where the word means “shameful” or “disgraced,” or to Hispanic and Portuguese sources, where zambo means “bow-legged” or “knock-kneed” and denotes a person who resembles a monkey” (qtd in. Nuriddin252).The Sambo stereotype created its place within the mainstream American culture after the publication of Helen Bannerman children’s book, *The Story of Little Black Sambo* in 1898.The first variation of the Sambo stereotype was the Jim Crow, which represented personality of an ignorant and unsophisticated African American. Usually the Jim Crow is depicted in rural settings “an ignorant, fun-loving buffoon. Jim Crow represented the slow-thinking, slow-moving country and plantation darky. Wearing rags and a battered hat, Jim Crow spent his time sleeping, fishing, and hunting opossums” (Nelson 187). Another Sambo-like stereotype was Zip Coon. To a certain extent, the Coon was the darker side of the Sambo;he wears mismatched clothes in order to signify the irrelevance or the inability of blacks to cope with the white Americans’ society. Uncle Tom stereotype appeared to the American popular culture after the publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel in 1852 entitles *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. The story’s main character was an old African American man, with a simple mindset. Uncle Tom, religious man, was also a passive, loyal and devoted to his white master (Nelson 187).

Nat Turner<sup>21</sup>, that rebellious free slave, inspired filmmakers to create a stereotype. It had similar traits to the rebellious Nat Turner. This stereotype is sometimes referred to as angry Black man, who burned houses and plantations, killed white people. Nat Turner represented a blood thirsty and a runaway slave during the old days of slavery. This stereotype created fear within white families who were often rescued by militiamen (Nelson 188).

The Mammy is a female racial stereotype, which was popular during the 1950s and 1960s. This female stereotype was seen as Uncle Tom’s female counterpart. The Mammy was

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<sup>21</sup>More details about Nat Turner are found in Chapter I page 15

often a sexually unattractive large woman, with a very dark skin. She was good at cooking, cleaning and taking care of her white master's children, she was also "The faithful, obedient domestic servant who was treated more as a family member than a slave, Mammy was well loved and yielded some authority in her white household. Often portrayed as overweight, dark, and with characteristically African features, Mammy knew her place as an obedient servant and accepted her subordination" (Nelson 188). Like in the times of slavery, Black women especially the elderly, used to be devoted to the service of their white masters and looked after white children and households at the expense of their own.

Jezebel stereotype is an entirely different female stereotype from that of the Mammy. Jezebel stereotype appeared during the time of slavery, it depicts the African American as being materialistic, governed by her sexual desires, seductive and hypersexual. This stereotype was used in order to justify and explain the accusations of rape made by black women against their white masters:

Thomas Jefferson, in his book *Notes on the State of Virginia*, argued that black men were "more ardent after their female," implying that black women liked this. However, Jefferson also asserted "loves seems with them to be more an eager desire, than a tender delicate mixture of sentiment and sensation. Their griefs are transient." In other words, the general opinion was that blacks were more sexual than whites, and their marriages were not founded on love or mutual affection, but on sexual attraction. (qtd in. Nelson189)

From Jefferson's point of view, it was unlikely to accuse or incriminate white men of sexually assaulting Black women during the years of slavery, simply, because those Black African American women were naturally willing to sexually satisfy their white masters. This claim

resulted in many divorces within the black community and many Black men abandoned their families (Nelson189).

The term Mulatto was originated during the times of slavery, when miscegenation occurred between white and black races. David L. Brunnsma explains that the word Mulatto was often believed to be derived from the Spanish mulato or “little mule” (231). This stereotype was highly associated with females rather than males. Tragic Mulatto was a beautiful woman, who received a great amount of Western knowledge and was raised like a typical white girl. The Mulatto enjoyed such privileged status, because she was the offspring of a white slave holder and a black female slave, or freed black female. The reason behind the tragedy of the Mulatta was her belonging to two different and opposite cultures (Brunnsma 231). The Tragic Mulatto would be ignored by her father’s and mother’s race, when the secret of having a black blood circling in her veins was discovered, Tragic Mulattos often committed suicide: because they were unable to retrieve the higher status that was guaranteed by the white blood. Whereas the Pickaninny often used in plural pickaninnies, depicted African American child as a source of entertainment and amusement to white people. Pickaninnies were harmless, non-threatening and simple-minded children. Their prime goal was to satisfy whites “Pickaninnies were usually depicted as happy, playful, submissive, and animal-like . . . . Pickaninnies appeared in the background of plantation scenes, frolicking and running and jumping about much as domesticated animals” (Nelson 190).

Another negative stereotype associated with African Americans was that of the Savage. As the name suggests, the Savage was depicted as an animal-like and cannibalistic creature. Usually lived in the jungles and forests and covered himself with leaves of trees. The Savage followed an undeveloped lifestyle. This stereotype, which is also referred to as the brute, appeared mainly in mainstream press as a hideous, ugly and unattractive figure just in order to remind white people of the danger that they might encounter when freed slaves were

given more rights than they deserved. The latter resulted in a rising sense of fear and horror in the hearts of the white population (Newton 889). While Bogle decided to go further with the brute stereotype by distinguishing two categories of the Savage; the Black Brute and the Black Bucks. “The black brute was a barbaric black out to raise havoc...his physical violence served as an outlet for a man who was sexually repressed...Bucks are always big, baadddd [sic] niggers, oversexed and savage, violent and frenzied as they lust for white flesh” (qtd in Johnson. T 26). The Black Bucks were the male counterparts of Jezebel stereotype. Since the African American women were lacking the characteristic of the white European women, black men became obsessed with the white women innocence and beauty.

Unlike the normal families, where the father or simply the man is the source of power, African American families depend on the women to govern and control the family’s business. That woman was known as the Matriarch. Again, the Matriarch was also referred to by many as Angry Black Woman or Sapphire. This female stereotype, which emerged during the mid-1950s more precisely within the period of the Civil Rights Movements, when poverty seemed to strike black communities. She is characterized by masculine traits, unlike the European female characters that enjoy feminine features. The Matriarch likes to control her male counterpart. She was usually a single black mother or a widow who acted in a rude, malicious and loud manner. Usually, the Matriarch emasculates black males using verbal assaults.

When a reader or an observer first encounter the Black Athlete stereotype, he/she might think of it as a positive characteristic of African Americans; since, it portrays the African American as a famous athlete. However, in reality such stereotype stresses the idea that black African Americans have nothing to do with intelligence and mental processes. Instead of that, they fit only for the practical side of learning, which requires the person to enjoy certain physical traits, unlike whites, who are logical thinkers. Even when sports were concerned, white Americans were associated with certain sports that require critical thinking.

Blacks are unintelligent argued Lewis M. Terman, in his study on the *Measurement of Intelligence*; he declared, “as far as intelligence is concerned, the tests have told the truth. These boys are uneducable beyond the merest rudiments of training. No amount of school instruction will ever make them intelligent voters or capable citizens in the true sense of the word. Judged psychologically they cannot be considered normal” (52). Based on his analysis, the unintelligence of these ethnic and racial groups was inherent and related to their origins:

Their [Indians, Mexicans, and Negroes] dullness seems to be racial, or at least inherent in the family stocks from which they come. The fact that one meets this type with such extraordinary frequency among Indians, Mexicans, and negroes suggests quite forcibly that the whole question of racial differences in mental traits will have to be taken up anew and by experimental methods. The writer predicts that when this is done there will be discovered enormously significant racial differences in general intelligence, differences which cannot be wiped out by any scheme of mental culture. (Terman 52)

Terman suggested certain steps and procedures to be followed by the government and educational institution including middle and high schools:

Children of this group should be segregated in special classes and be given instruction which is concrete and practical. They cannot master abstractions, but they can often be made efficient workers, able to look out for themselves. There is no possibility at present of convincing society that they should not be allowed to reproduce, although from a eugenic point of view they constitute a grave problem because of their unusually prolific breeding. (Terman 52)

Drug victim or drug dealer stereotype, when compared to previous stereotypes, is considered more modern. In the period between 1980s and late 1990s, the portrayal of African

Americans in news and other television programs were directed to a different stereotype: Black as a drug dealer, drug victim, criminal or a member in a gang.

Magic Negro or Magical Negro; a term that was first coined by the African American director Spike Lee in 2001, when delivering a speech at Washington State University. This stereotype suggests the existence of an African American person who enjoys supernatural powers or characteristics, in American modern films, which enables him from rescuing and saving the lives of the white people. Again, Magical Negro is a black stock character who offered his wisdom, insight or magical powers to the troubled white main character or protagonist.

#### **2-4 Portrayal of African Americans in Television Programs**

D. W. Griffith released his anti-African American and racist film *The Birth of a Nation* in 1915. The film was an adaptation to the famous novel *The Clansman* by Thomas Dixon Jr.<sup>22</sup> The three-hour epic movie, set in Post-Civil War America i.e. during The Reconstruction Era, *The Birth of a Nation* narrated the story behind the formation of the Ku Klux Klan by its supremacist members, who were portrayed as America's heroes and saviours from the dangerous freed slaves in the American South. The central theme of the film focused on the strong feeling of redemption that hunted white Americans after granting freedom to African Americans and how was the idea of reconstruction considered as the most terrible decision of the government, to elevate a naturally inferior race to be treated equally with the superior whites (Stephen P. 1050).

The story follows Ben Cameron as he moved from South Carolina to Pennsylvania to participate in the war. After been severely wounded, he was nursed by Elsie Stoneman, the daughter of the great Congressman Austin Stoneman. The two fell for each other and decided

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<sup>22</sup>Dixon, Thomas Jr. *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1970.

to move back to South Carolina in order to be married. The other side of the story began during the Reconstruction, where a conflict between white northerners represented by Austin Stoneman, who was attempting at destroying whites southerners through the African American enfranchisement. The latter gave a right to vote for unqualified people in order to be responsible and to become rulers in the South. “Griffith portrays a Reconstruction government made up almost entirely of African Americans, who eat chicken, drink whiskey, and take their shoes off while the state Congress is in session, and pass a series of bills designed to ensure black dominance over Southern whites” (Stephen P.1050). The chaotic situation, caused by the newly freed slaves, disturbed Ben Cameron, who decided to found a group he named the Ku Klux Klan for the sake of re-establishing and retrieving white’s dominance and control over their country. the final scene of the movie summarized it all, a war between the two opposing forces the Ku Klux Klan members who won against the evil and savage African Americans, followed by the happy ending in which a double wedding between Ben Cameron and Elsie Stoneman along with their younger siblings Margaret and Phil was celebrated. The scene represented the union between south and North America (Stephen Prince Jr).

*The Birth of a Nation* seemed to portray all possible stereotypes of African Americans, “. . . the film’s black characters (all of whom are played by white actors in black face) are portrayed either as hopelessly childlike and na.ve, or as violent, criminal, lustful brutes with uncontrollable passions and unspeakable desires. Griffith’s racism had a political and historical purpose, however. African Americans are not portrayed as innately depraved” (Stephen Prince Jr.1051). The racist scene in the film was set in the forest, where Flora a younger confederate sister to Ben Cameron was been chased by Gus an African American man. Gus was depicted as a brute buck attempting to rape the white innocent and beautiful woman. Flora decided to jump off a cliff, putting an end to her life, rather than been capture

or raped by a black man. *The Birth of a Nation* glorified the efforts made by the members of the Ku Klux Klan who stood in the face of violent blacks in order to save American southerners. Griffith's film established an ideology for the upcoming years, and directed the attention of whites to a future wave of violence and criminality that would sweep in the American society if those freed African Americans were not eradicated.

The Mammy stereotype was one of the recurring figures in films. In *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), for instance, white men or women always played the role of the Mammy. However, the period between the 1930s and the 1940s witnessed a change in filmmaking industry. *The Imitation of Life* (1934) was a film about two widowed mothers struggling to raise their own daughters during the hard times of the Great Depression. Louise Beavers, an African American woman, played the role of Aunt Delilah, who has the secret recipe for making delicious cakes meets Miss Bea, a white widowed mother and decided to establish a business together. Miss Bea offers Aunt Delilah a shelter in exchange for her services: cooking, cleaning and taking care for her little girl. However when the business grew and flourished, Miss Bea decided to release Aunt Delilah by offering her a percentage of the company. Surprised, Delilah responded by saying “How I gonna take care of you and Miss Jessie if I ain't here? I's your cook. And I want to stay your cook” (qtd in Banks 69). Her devotion and fidelity to the White employer resembled that of the old days of slavery. Usually the Mammy stereotype appeared in films that discussed the history of the American southerners. *Gone with the Wind* (1939) was set in the South during the Civil War and the Reconstruction. Hattie McDaniel played the role of the Mammy, which was a character closely related to the blackface minstrelsy tradition (Banks 69).

Another black female stereotype, which appeared in Hollywood films, was the Jezebel. *Hallelujah* (1929) a film to its director King Vidor presented the African American woman as sexually attractive, exotic and seductive to men. Chick, a dancer, was the story's

female antagonist who represented a source of destruction to the spiritual man named Zeke. At the end of the film, Zeke killed Chick in order to restore his normal and spiritual life as it used to be. *Hallelujah* emphasized the idea that black females were considered as a threat to both black and white males. Thus, the film was trying to convey a message for men to control, enslave, and marginalize black women. If not those women would emasculate them or form a threat to the white men. Other films presented African American women as Jezebel were *Pinky*(1949) and *Carmen Jones*(1954)(Banks 71).

The most famous films that portrayed the black woman as the Matriarch were *A Raisin in the Sun* 1961 and *The Sounder*1972. The first film was an adaptation to the works of African American playwright Lorraine Hansberry under the same title. *A Raisin in the Sun* recounted the journey of the widowed mother, Lena Younger, who became responsible for her two children a daughter named Beneatha, and a son known as Walter. With the money of the insurance policy, Mrs. Younger decided to move to a more comfortable and safer neighbourhood. However, her daughter wanted the money in order to continue her studies, and the son as well longed for pursuing his dreams in establishing his own business and becoming the family's responsible. Mrs Younger emasculates her son and deprives him from being the head of the family, since this was the natural place for him (Banks 76). Similar events took place in *The Sounder*. Set in Louisiana during the Great Depression era, which took place in 1930s, Cicely Tyson dreamed to establish a family after been married to her husband Nathan. However, after a certain period of time, her dreams faded, when she was forced to replace her husband as the head of the family, because her husband, Nathan, was accused of stealing meat in order to feed his family (Banks 77). Both female characters were presented as male-like women who lacked feminine traits and emasculated the men of the family.

The period between 1970s and late 1990s witnessed the return of the blackface minstrelsy with a modern flavour. For white Americans, the black face became associated with comedy and entertainment. Comedies often presented African American characters as unintelligent, lazy, and reacting in a clownish and buffoonish manner. Stereotypes like the Sambo and the Coon were highly popular in order to offer a comic relief for white viewers. Other comedies featured the stereotype of the Sapphire *The Cosby Show (1969-1971)* during that period racism became the new comedy.

*Law and Order (1990)* was first aired on television on 13<sup>th</sup> of September 1990, and it lasted for about twenty years. The series belonged to the drama crime genre. When Shannon I. Isaacs conducted research on *Portrayal of African Americans in the Media: an Examination of Law and Order*, he examined 345 characters in the series categorized according to the race; as whites, African Americans and other races. Whereas the variables measured were race, role, appearance, behaviour, language/ speech, physical aggression, crime committed, domestic crime, indicator of guilt, verdict, repeat character and role importance. A comparison between the first and last seasons revealed that African Americans' representation was characterized by stereotyping especially in the earlier seasons (Shannon 173). Based on the fact that drama crime series are a representation of reality, the researcher analyzed the data that suggests the following:

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, African Americans made up 12.1% of the population and Whites made up 80.3% in the 1990 data report. . . . In 1995, the Uniform Crime Reports revealed that African Americans represented 30.9% of arrests for crime and Whites represented 66.8% of the arrests. For violent crime, which is noted in the (UCR) as offenses of murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault, 43.7% of those arrested were African American and 54.3% of those arrested were White. For property crime, which

is noted in the (UCR) as crimes of burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson 32.6% of those arrested were African Americans and 64.7% of those arrested were Whites. (qtd in. Shannon 173)

After comparing the statistical data with the representation of African Americans in the series, the researcher discovered a clear contradiction between the figures provided in the statistics and the portrayal of African Americans in *Law and Order*. The research's findings proved that "the media does highly exaggerate whether for good or bad purposes; however, television shows such as law and order and other crime dramas should not be used as an example or be viewed to measure real life" (Shannon 173).

Late-Twentieth-Century films and television shows were still negatively portraying African Americans using old stereotype but in modern disguises. *The Green Mile (1999)* was the perfect example that proves the persistence of black African American stereotypes. The film was first premiered on screens in 1999. It narrated the story of an African American man named John Coffey, as he was accused and convicted of raping as well as murdering two white girls at the age of nine years old. *The Green Mile* proved to be a reminder for the white audience that blacks were still the same brutes and monsters who lust for their pure and innocent white women like in the old days of Civil War and the Reconstruction, increasing the amount of fear and horror associated with the blackface. Furthermore, during his time in prison, John discovered that he has magical or supernatural powers that could heal white people, embracing another stereotype the Magical Negro (Sung 262). Until nowadays, African American actors and actresses suffer from the limitations of roles. In that period, popular arts also portrayed African Americans as main characters in either comedy shows or crime dramas. Another season of *The Cosby Show (1984-1992)* was broadcasted on NBC. It was believed to be one of the famous comedies in that period.

Animated cartoons also had a role in the negative portrayal of African Americans, since they addressed children. The most common stereotype in the animated cartoons were the Mammy, the *Coon* and the Sambo. Animated cartoons including *Little Black Sambo*(1935)*Jungle Jitters*(1938)and *Tintin Adventures in the Congo* represented the whites as imperialist and extremely racist who were trying to civilize those animal-like creatures in the African lands. These racist animated cartoons was popular during the 1930s and 40s continuing until the late 1960s. Later, they were heavily criticized and banned.

News had a similar effect on white Americans' perception of black African Americans as films. Clearly, news should present and portray reality as it is; however, American journalists seemed to be governed by their white prejudices, which explains the reason why news reporting and coverage presented a distorted and negative image of racial and ethnic groups in the United States particularly African Americans. Since news reports were creating wrong ideas and beliefs about blacks and other minorities, they participated to a great extent in destroying the image of such groups in the minds of Americans. Schaffer and Godson conducted a study in which they examined news coverage of political events and candidates according to their racial and ethnic belongings:

Consider that both white Democrats and African-American House members have virtually the same voting records on civil rights issues. Yet, African-American incumbents are asked regularly to comment on civil rights, while white Democrats are rarely asked to respond on such matters.... In fact, in one study, only 17 percent of African-American House members thought the media treated them fairly, compared to 85 percent of the liberal control group (608)

Schaffer and Godson arrived at the conclusion that news reports and coverage of such political events focused in the first place not on the achievements of the black political

candidates like in the case of whites; instead, they decided to emphasise their racial and ethnic belongings giving a subjective representation of the political candidates.

Similarly, Entman, in a study conducted on the stories portrayed in media, analyzed a total number of 429 stories related to the breaking of law providing the race of the accused persons either through the use of photograph or motion video footage. According to Entman 72 percent were white while 28 percent were blacks:

At a symbolic level, the absence of naming could be significant . . . . When blacks are not given a name in a picture, it suggests the visual representation can be assimilated to a larger, undifferentiated group, in this case the stereotype of a dangerous black male. The anonymous individual portrait exemplifies the stereotype; the name is not important since the individual simply stands for a familiar category of persons outside the whites' own group. (350)

Entman suggest that news was trying to categories African Americans as one group or the same person. Giving a name to black person was not important since he belonged to one particular racial group. This revealed the attempt of news at presenting blacks in a stereotypical image.

According to Lawrence Grossman former president of CBS news and PBS admitted that TV newscasts “disproportionately show African-Americans under arrest, living in slums, on welfare and in need of help from the community.” It is no longer news that the criminal black man is an ethnic stereotype in the US. The implication is that black American men are expected to be criminal and dangerous and this image is aptly depicted in the media. Hence the figure of black man as criminal do [does] not only appear frequently

in the media, it has been used in racial profiling by law enforcement agencies in the US. (qtd in.Sani 296)

## **2-5 Cultivation Theory**

Media shapes the perception of reality in the minds of humans. Based on this idea, George Gerbner, who was professor at the Annenberg School of Communication in Philadelphia, conducted a research in order to discover the impact of violence and aggression broadcasted in television programmes on the individuals' perception of the real world. Gerbner was first to conceptualize what is known as the cultivation theory. "The theory proposes that the danger of television lies in its ability to shape not a particular view point about one specific issue but in its ability to shape people's moral values and general beliefs about the world" (Mosharafa23). Historically, the cultivation theory started as social indicators programme during the mid-1960s. It examines the long-term effects of media on the perception of the real world. It suggests that heavy viewers of television are more likely to develop a fear from the outside world, which is also called Mean World Syndrome. Television plays a crucial role in the process of cultivation. It is both visual and auditory. Thus, it does not require viewers to be literate. Consequently, all portions of society could understand what is portrayed on television. The authors Shanahan and Morgan highlight, in their book *Television and Its Viewers*, the role of television in the context of the cultivation theory. Both authors believe that the theory is not concerned with changing an already existed point of view or belief but it rather reinforces it. Moreover, they highlight the issues that cultivation theory addresses as follows:

Would watching a film of adults batting around clown dolls cause children to imitate that behavior? This is not a question for cultivation analysis, but cultivation could say something about how exposure to many thousands of

violent images over time might have something to do with our perception of the likelihood of encountering violence in the world. . . . Would seeing Jodie Foster gang-raped on a pool table in the film *The Accused* cause some viewers to imitate that crime? Again, cultivation couldn't answer that question, but it could say something about broader patterns of association between television demography, favoring male power and female victimization, and the chances for women to succeed in society. (6)

Gerbner considers television as a basic element for the process of cultivation because it provides people with information about the world. Nevertheless, television exports not a "presentation" but a "representation" of the outside world. This speculative and distorted image of reality is used in order to serve the purposes and intentions of "those controlling the media". Another important issue related to television is the nature of the programmes portrayed on the screens. According to the cultivation theory, it is not necessarily that the content of television shows or programmes should be cultural all kinds of programmes including news, films, advertisements and even those dedicated to women and children participate in the cultural formation of individuals (Mosharafa23).

The Cultivation Theory consists of three active variables; real life experiences, television exposure and perceived utility. The idea behind real life experiences is the existence of a strong relationship between personal experiences of the viewers and the perception of the portrayal of a particular group of people. In other words, it highlights the extent to which an individual is related or close to, a particular programme or character (Mosharafa28). Whereas television exposure distinguishes two different categories of television viewers; those who watch television excessively are called heavy viewers and another type is known as light viewers. At finally yet importantly, perceived utility sometimes it is referred to as instructional motives, seeks to identify the levels of exposure to television

in order to gain knowledge and information. Usually, Instructional motives are associated with heavy viewers because they believe in the events portrayed on television and its significance in order to construct a social knowledge of the surroundings.

The Cultivation Theory is based upon two major processes. Mainstreaming is a process by which cultural, political and social differences are neglected. Instead, Media offers a stabilized and homogenous perspective to events and experiences. In other words, television attempts at creating a fixed social pattern and limiting the resistance for change through minimizing social differences or even eliminating them. Resonance, however, is the ability of television to influence a particular group in a given society and not another. Usually, people who are strongly influenced by television have experienced similar events or simply have an interest in them (Mosharafa<sup>32</sup>).

Finally, Gerbner lists four major steps, for a researcher, in order to achieve a correct cultivation analysis. Message system analysis is a process during which the researcher identifies the television content and the type of programmes. Then, he/she assesses the time of television exposure in order to separate between light and heavy viewers. In the third step, the researcher is required to ask participants certain questions to investigate people's views about the world. Finally, the researcher tries to establish relationships between the television viewing and the conception of social reality through detecting the differences in the answers of the heavy viewers (Mosharafa 26).

## **2-6 Impact of Media portrayal on African Americans' Behaviour**

Stereotypes limited the life and experiences of African Americans in the United States. A researcher in the reality of blacks would discover deeper stories than the ones portrayed on television. Negative pictures of African Americans influence others' opinions and beliefs about the reality of race and ethnicity in America. Through media, representations become the

norm and would be accepted by the common and ordinary viewer, which leads to the formation of prejudgments and misunderstandings of races. These negative, biased and distorted images of blacks were and are used in order to explain as well as justify racial and ethnic inequalities that are manifested in higher rates of poverty, unemployment and involvement of blacks in criminal activities.

### **2-6-1 Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence or intimate partner violence occurs within the borders of the family or intimate relationship. It is a very common phenomenon especially among African American and black communities in general. In a research conducted on *Exploring the Link between Stereotypic Images and Intimate Partner Violence in the African American Community*, Tameka L. Gillum aimed at investigating and exploring the extent to which African American men embrace the stereotypes, which depict African American women in negative images. The sample under study was a group of 221 African American men. The findings of the research showed that 70 percent of the sample believed that the reason behind the endorsement of women stereotypes was the negative portrayal and the misrepresentation of black females in literature as well as other popular media. Gillum created a clear linkage between the distorted image of black women in television shows, focusing the Matriarch and Jezebel stereotype because these two stereotypes were the most negative of the others, and the violent behaviour of African American males.

If African American men perceive African American women to be matriarchs and/or jezebels, if they believe “their women” are attempting to emasculate them or are sexually promiscuous, they may feel as though they are powerless and that the only way to regain that power is to be physically abusive. In the case of the matriarch, they may feel as though they do not have control over the

women's aggressiveness, words, or attitude. In the case of the jezebel, they may feel as though they do not have sexual control over their partners. Therefore, the perceptions of African American women that these stereotypes may have fostered, along with feelings of powerlessness, may lead some African American men to respond with violence against their partners. (Gillum67)

The study revealed that a large number of African American men hold strong beliefs in the stereotypes about their black women. Moreover, those black men assumed that the Matriarch and Jezebel stereotype contributed largely in the occurrence of domestic violence in African American families and communities. These men also justify the use of physical force and aggressiveness through the stereotype.

### **2-6-2 Overcriminalization of African Americans**

Blacks throughout the American history and culture suffered the issue of police brutality and bias in the Criminal Justice System. Black African Americans died at the hands of police officers under the name of justice, not because they committed serious crimes nor engaged in any sort of violence, but simply due to their skin color. For white Americans blackness in itself was a crime. The Criminal Justice System reacted as it used to be during the times when African Americans were under the rule of Jim Crow laws. The latter forced blacks to be punished simply for reacting as parts of the American society, punished for walking in the streets or even talking to a friend and more than that speaking to someone white seemed a suicidal action (qtd in. Barak et al xxi).

White Americans were obsessed with the idea of making crime reports, in which high crime rates were always preserved for African Americans but the question is why these rates were higher. Blacks appeared as criminals and as a threatening race but in reality, the police

officers held a fixed and standardized assumptions in their minds about the blacks, “The chief executive officer of Koch Industries says that the past four-decade’s rise in incarcerations has been extremely costly for African-American families and communities, state budgets and society. Koch also believes that large number of the African American population had been in prison at least one in a lifetime, “there’s a 70 percent chance for an African-American man without a high school diploma to be imprisoned by his mid-thirties” continues Koch, “Overcriminalization leads to mass incarceration, undermines race relations and ultimately keeps more people in poverty” (qtd in. Reed). In the United States and during 1970s, the American government financed the campaign against drug use. However, many believed that the war on drugs created an opportunity for police officers in order to practice their perception of African Africans in real life, and to incarcerate more blacks using longer sentences for lesser offences.

The Reagan administration hired staff to publicize the emergence of crack cocaine in 1985 as part of a strategic effort to build public and legislative support for the war. The media campaign was a extraordinary success. Almost overnight, the media was saturated with images of black “crack whores,” “crack dealers,” and “crack babies”— images that seemed to confirm the worst negative racial stereotypes about impoverished inner-city residents. The media bonanza surrounding the “new demon drug” helped to catapult the War on Drugs from an ambitious federal policy to an actual war. (Alexander 5)

Stereotype change the perception of African Americans including the police officers. They perceived an African American man as a troublemaker, a criminal and always been targeted by police who checked and arrested him for sometimes doing nothing. But, since African Americans were portrayed as criminals or violent rapists in the television increased the likelihood to be arrested than people of other races are. As Gerbner suggests in his

Cultivation Theory, Media resulted in a growing sense of fear from the outside world. A fear from the other, would force police officers as well as even eyewitnesses to describe their offenders according to the characteristics of African Americans, even if they did not see them properly, because media has rooted the stereotypes of Africans in the society and engraved them in the conscious of white Americans. Especially during the period of the 1970s, in particular, blacks were often associated with drugs and crime.

Michelle Alexander explains in her book, *The New Jim Crow*, on Mass Incarceration of African Americans in the United States that the American Criminal Justice System was not simply a racially biased institution but rather “a different beast”, and the process of mass incarceration to African Americans functions similarly to Jim Crow (4). In the United States, whiteness was a privilege and “To be a black man is to be thought of as a criminal, and to be a black criminal is to be despicable—a social pariah. To be a white criminal is not easy, by any means, but as a white criminal you are not a *racial* outcast, though you may face many forms of social and economic exclusion. Whiteness mitigates crime, whereas blackness defines the criminal” (Alexander193). Alexander suggests that the association between African Americans and criminality was not a mere coincidence but it was instead the outcome of media negative representation of African Americans, “the conflation of blackness with crime did not happen organically; rather, it was constructed by political and media elites as part of the broad project known as the War on Drugs” (Alexander 193).

According to Khalil Gibran Muhammad, who argued that the problem with African Americans’ crime data was caused mainly by the testimony of “judges and other authorities”. He also argued that police officers were more likely to “arrest Negroes more freely than whites, to book them on more serious charges, to convict them more readily, and to give them longer sentences” (240). He supported his claim but citing one municipal court judge who declared that “certain . . . police [who] were going into Negro clubs and arresting Negroes

they found there, bringing them into court without a bit of evidence of any offense” (qtd in. Muhammad240).

### **2-6-3 Self-Fulfilling Prophecy or Stereotype Threat**

Another issue related to the misrepresentation of African Americans in media is the self-fulfilling prophecy. Many sociologists, through the perspective of a Labelling Theory, attempted at explaining the Stereotype Threat. By definition, the theory’s focus is not the behaviour but rather “The response of others than defines (labels) the behavior as deviant and impacts further deviance” (Becker and Cavender qtd in. Stolley118). In other words, labelling is not based on the behaviour in itself; it is instead the outcome of people’s reaction to the occurrence of such unprecedented behaviour, which decides about the nature of that behaviour whether normal or deviant. At a certain level, the labelled person arrives at a stage where he sees himself from the perspective of the label, this is called by sociologists a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy, that is to say “a self-concept based on the label and acts based upon that self-concept” (Stolley 118). Labels could be used in order to refer to both negative and positive features, but generally, labels are associated with negativity. Moreover, a negative label may develop to become a stigma, which is “a powerful negative label that changes a person’s social identity and how they see themselves” (Stolley 119). Usually, people perceive the stigmatized and labelled persons only through the limits of the label and he valued according to the label even if they enjoy other good feature (see figure 2).

William Chambliss conducted a research study in 1973 on two groups of teenage boys. Delinquency among these boys was to be measured. The first group were called saints and the second were known as roughnecks the names resembled the perspectives through which community has viewed the boys and it was totally far from the amount of delinquent actions committed by the boys. Through the period of two years, those two groups of boys engaged, similarly, in different kinds of behaviours including drinking alcohol, speeding and robbery.

However, they share one different trait. Saints came from upper or middle class families while the roughnecks belonged to lower or working class families. Throughout the period of study, Chambliss declared that the saints were never been arrested whereas the roughnecks were arrested more than once (Stolley 119). As a conclusion, Chambliss proved that labels made by community for the boys had a long lasting impact on their adulthood.

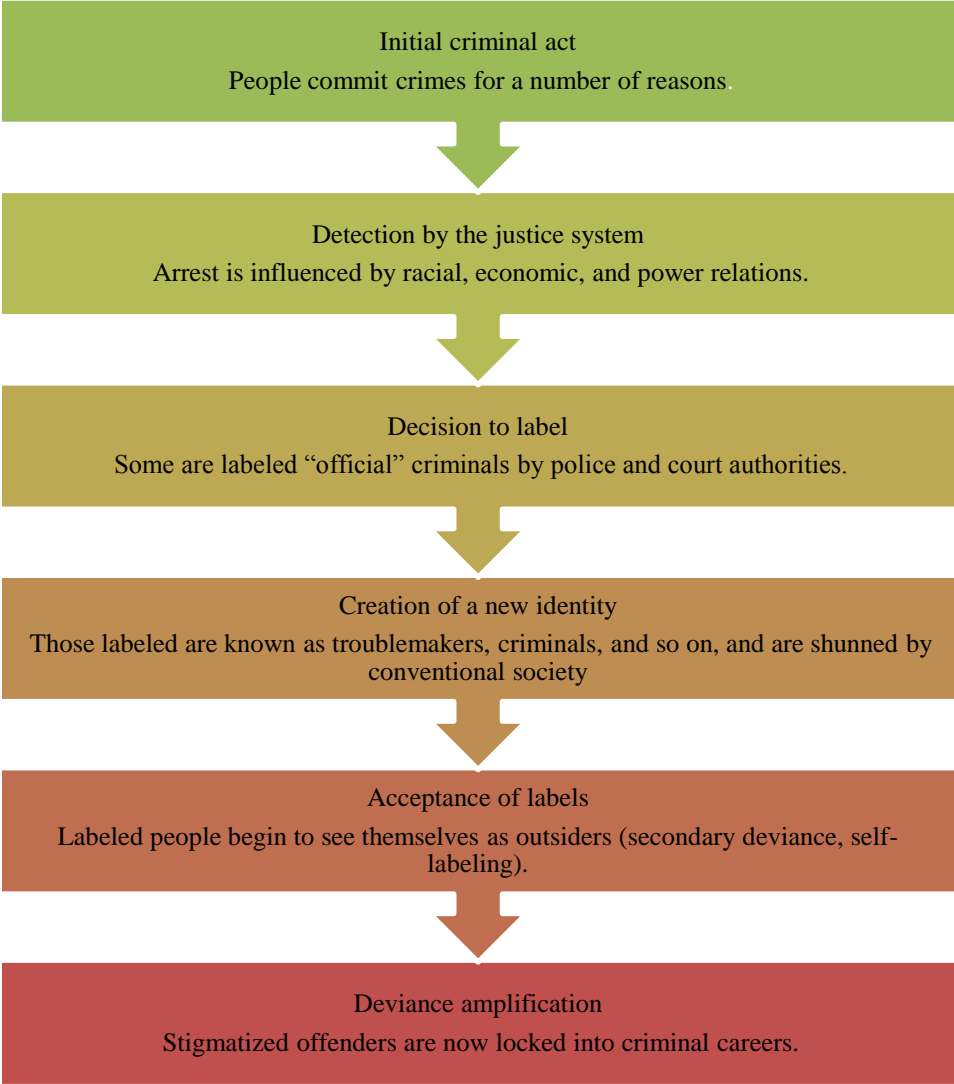


Fig.2.The Labeling Process from: Larry J Siegel, *Criminology: Theories, Patterns and*

*Typologies* (Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2010, *BO-K*; Web. 29 April 2018; 231)

Self-fulfilling prophecy is also referred to as stereotype threat in other different sources. A stereotype threat occurs “when a member of a group that suffers from stereotyping comes into a situation where that stereotype is highly relevant, they experience a number of effects that reduce performance. Increased anxiety, self-consciousness about performance, and efforts to suppress negative thoughts and emotions all use up mental resources needed to perform well on cognitive and social tasks” (Schmader et al. qtd in. “Social Science Literature Review” 28). African Americans, for instance, were totally aware of the stereotype that portrays them as criminals, violent and unintelligent through media, as a result when blacks face similar situations where the stereotype is more likely to occur.

When juxtaposing the experiment of William Chambliss and the case of African Americans' violent behaviour and criminality, it becomes clear that the whole story began with a negative stereotype presented by media. Diuguid and Rivers suggest, “The media have not been kind to African American males. Throughout America's history, black men, teenagers, and boys too often have been depicted as buffoons, criminals, or oversexed animal-like creatures who lust after white women. That followed a design in this country to maintain an inferior, second-class status for black people, dating from slavery on through the twentieth century (qtd in. “Social Science Literature Review” 33). Stereotyping causes mental problems to the stereotyped persons, in this case African Americans, leading them after a certain period of exposure to such a stereotype to embrace and accept what was presented. The reason behind blacks' violent behaviour never had been their culture. African Americans have been labeled and stereotyped throughout the American culture and history. A consumer of the American media would certainly think of African Americans as being a source of problem to the society.

## Conclusion

The second chapter first aimed at highlighting and explaining the role of distorted and negative portrayal of African Americans in media on their behaviour. This chapter discussed also the most common African American stereotypes throughout history and their portrayal in films including *The Birth of a Nation*, *Hallelujah*, *The Imitation Of Life*, and other media programmes such as news reports, animated cartoons and drama series. Furthermore, this chapter shed light on the effect of television in reshaping the viewers' perception of the real world, creating what is known as The Mean World Syndrome. The latter obliged people to believe that the world is more dangerous and full of violence. Especially in the case of Americans who were heavy viewers. According to the cultivation theory, overreliance on television as a source of information control the way Americans perceive their reality more precisely the way they perceive blacks. This association resulted in the occurrence of bias in the criminal justice system and mass incarceration, in addition to other forms of violence including domestic violence that affects the treatment of black women by their male spouses. at the level of African Americans mentality, the negative representation in the media leads also to a self fulfilling prophecy or stereotype threat.

# **Chapter III Discrimination in U.S. Education and its Relation to Violence by African Americans**

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## **Introduction**

James Baldwin once said, “The purpose of education, finally, is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for himself, to make his own decisions, to say to himself this is black or this is white, to decide for himself whether there is a God in heaven or not” (qtd in. Ferguson 227). However, for black Americans in the United States, education has been always linked to hardships. Therefore, it invites the reader to learn the major events associated with African American education. It assesses the impact of discrimination in educational system on the future of African Americans offering another interpretation for the issue of African American violence and criminal behaviour. It includes the main theories in the study of criminology that prove a relationship between dropping and engaging in criminal behaviour.

## **3-1 A Historical Background to Education of African Americans from slavery until late 1960s**

The agreed upon form of education is the one providing knowledge, skill and understanding through attending school, university or college. Education as a process paves the way for a desirable career and prosperous life. This concept is spread throughout the world and common to all cultures. Again, education orients individuals to right behaviours and good manners it enriches the society by producing a generation of well-educated citizens who would participate in the flourishing of their country. African Americans were no exception. They considered education as a life saviour, a means through which they could

obtain their lost freedom, moreover; in order to escape and at the same time avoid whites' discrimination and racism.

In the period before the American Civil War, African Americans were deprived from the right to slave education. American states passed various laws that restricted slaves' literacy, and it was considered a crime to sell writing materials to slaves or teach them (qtd in.Span and Anderson 296). Many states passed laws and punishments for those whites who would think of teaching their slave how to read and write, simply because a growing sense of fear seemed to haunt white Americans, a fear that well-educated slaves would call for their freedom. Whereas in other states, including Kentucky, Arkansas and Tennessee, public opinion played the role of government; in other words, there were no actual laws prohibiting a white American to teach enslaved Africans Americans; however, people simply preferred not to teach them.

It is perfectly well understood at the south, that to educate a slave is to make him discontented with slavery, and to invest him with a power which shall open to him the treasures of freedom; and since the object of the slaveholder is to maintain complete authority over his slave, his constant vigilance is exercised to prevent everything which militates against, or endangers, the stability of his authority. Education being among the menacing influences, and, perhaps, the most dangerous, is, therefore, the most cautiously guarded against. (Span and Anderson 296).

Span and Anderson argue that local sentiment<sup>23</sup> had a great impact on the remaining situation of African American slaves. Those sentiments encouraged states to pass laws in order to strict the learning process of slaves and to prevent them from enjoying their civil and

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<sup>23</sup> Views that believe African Americans were inferior race and incapable of learning. These views were also found in the work of the socialist Herbert Spencer and Graham Sumner who adopted Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution to study humans in modern society and saw life of the modern era identical to the life of animals.

political rights like many other citizens throughout the United States. Education meant freedom and empowerment, a reality in which white supremacists strongly believed. Thus, they decided to associate education with horror rather than empowerment and the result was severe punishments and physical abuse to enslaved blacks. The story of William Heard reflects the cruelty of white Americans against slaves. Heard, who was a child during the years of slavery, narrated a scene he has witnessed where a slave was discovered learning. Results were terrible. The slave's hand fingers were cut in order to assure that he would never write again and to show for other slaves the destiny waiting them if they thought of education (297).

After the end of the American Civil War in 1865, the number of free African American slaves increased especially in the Deep South<sup>24</sup>. African Americans expressed their desire to acquire knowledge and to learn how to read and write. The period witnessed an increasing number of schools dedicated to black children and adults. "By 1863 there were 1700 students and 45 teachers at 30 schools in South Carolina low country (Hine et al 233). In the South, quality of education and teachers was not identical to those in the North. Former slaves who had received an adequate level of education took responsibility of teaching newly freed African Americans. Hine et al explained that northern white teachers who were sent to teach in the south showed no interest in teaching or discussing blacks' related topics, which clearly highlights the views and opinions of reverend Richard H.Cain, who believed that the mission of African Americans' education should be the responsibility of black teachers instead of whites. Reverend declared, "We must take into our own hands the education of our race. . . .Honest, dignified whites may teach ever so well, but it has not the effect to exalt the black man's opinion of his own race, because they have always been in the habit of seeing white men in honoured positions, and respected" (qtd in. Hine et al 233).

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<sup>24</sup>According to the statistics made before the Civil War, slaves consisted 22 percent of the Upper South population and 45 percent of the Deep South population (Hine et al 123).

Therefore, white southerners were discontent with efforts made for the sake of educating black people. Usually, whites were strong believers in the inferiority of the black race and the absurdity of African Americans' education. While in reality, they were completely aware of blacks' ability to learn, an idea that threatened the position of whites in the United States. In the eyes of whites, the type of education suitable for blacks was the one providing industrial training, resulting in productive members of to the American community. Whites wanted Africans to believe that it was better for them to be employed in jobs involving physical hardship rather than theoretical education and critical thinking. One of the best practises of such ideology was the Hampton model. In 1868, Samuel Chapman Armstrong founded Hampton Normal and Agriculture Institute in Virginia, which focused on teaching basic skills for African Americans and other minorities. "Armstrong stressed learning trades, such as shoemaking, carpentry, tailoring, and sewing. Hampton placed little emphasis on critical or independent thinking. Students were taught to conform to middle-class values" (Hine et al 299).

The first student to graduate from the Hampton's Institute was Booker Washington in 1872. Washington was strongly influenced by the teachings and ideologies of Armstrong for that he spent two years as a teacher in the institution to be called later in 1881 in order to establish a black college in Alabama known as the Tuskegee institute. The latter was identical in curriculum to his former institution. Until his death, Washington attempted at convincing his people as well as white officials that the most appropriate and suitable learning process for blacks is the one providing practical knowledge. Many blacks went to the Tuskegee institute, which reflected the success of white Americans in making blacks believe in the idea of being brought to America in order to serve white masters and if they received education, it would be learning how to serve.

One of the earliest states to start tax- supported public education was Massachusetts in 1827. Public schools spread to reach northeast and northwest states few years later. At first, schools were racially integrated. However, when the number of African Americans exceeds the norm whites decided to exclude and separate their children from the black ones, in order not to influence the education of their children. According to Whites, African Americans' children and adults were unable to cope with higher mental abilities of the white children, which may lead to poor academic achievements of whites' children.

Northern states refused to finance and fund public schools for African American children that led to the exclusion of blacks from educational facilities across the North in addition; whites were reluctant to support previous schools, which were constructed by African Americans leaders and abolitionists<sup>25</sup>. When such schools became a part of the American states' educational system, they began to lose financial support. Consequently, attendance declined (Hine et al). Inadequate public schools' funding for African Americans resulted in massive problems. Black children received poor education, because white teachers who took the responsibility of delivering knowledge were poorly payed. Unlike those who worked in white public schools. Therefore, hopes of black and white abolitionists to see a generation of well-educated black children faded (Hine et al 136). Nevertheless, other abolitionists, including Frederick Douglass, believed that African American children deserved better education opportunities. Many white abolitionists and black leaders, between 1840s and 1860s, adopted his policy and struggled to integrate public schools in the northern states (Hine et al). After years of struggle, abolitionists achieved a landslide victory especially in the case of Massachusetts where in 1860; all public schools even smaller school districts were racially integrated.

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<sup>25</sup> African Americans' free schools began in New York City in 1798, and in 1812, an African American school, established by Price Hall 1787, became a part of the educational system in Boston.

In the upper south, the dream of offering education to African Americans seemed unlikely to be realized in the real world. This pushed white as well as black churches to provide black children with basic knowledge, which was restricted to religious teachings. “The schools met-often sporadically- in rooms furnished by churches or in private homes and generally lacked books, chalkboards, and student desks” (Hine et al 139). The journey of African Americans struggle to gain their right to proper education continued in the Deep South. Free and wealthy black families sent their children to receive education in the North, which explains the higher rates of literacy in New Orleans and Charleston. However, that was not the case in all southern states, where education for African Americans meant the loss of a great labour force. White southerners rejected African Americans’ schooling because they feared education might increase a desire for freedom in the hearts of blacks. Thus, southern economy that was based on Africans Americans would collapse.

During the Reconstruction era, black leaders attempted at increasing the rate of literacy among African American communities. A system of public education spread across the southern states. Despite great efforts and huge costs in order to build schools, employ teachers and provide learning materials, success was limited. None of the intended tasks was appropriately achieved. “In some communities and in many rural areas, schools were not built. In other places, teachers were not paid. Some people -Black and White- opposed compulsory education laws, preferring to let parents determine whether their children should attend schools or work to help the family (Hine et al 255). The idea of school integration was the nightmare that haunted white parents. The period before and after the American reconstruction, public schools were segregated not under a state law but rather due to highly prejudiced white parents who refused entirely the idea to put their children in such situation. African Americans were obliged to accept the fact of sending their children to segregated

schools, because they realized eventually that choice was between separate schools or none at all.

The growing refusal of white Americans to the idea of seeing their children sharing the same schools with children of their former slaves paved the road for the most tragic period in the history of America, the era of Jim Crow laws and segregation.

### **3-1-1 Segregation**

One of the earliest forms of racial discrimination in the United States of America was the period Jim Crow laws or segregation laws. “For Colored People Only” is a phrase that characterized the period from 1880s until 1960s<sup>26</sup>. By definition, segregation refers to the separation between people based on racial qualities or traits (Lang 268). Segregation and discrimination seem to be parallel. However, there might be discrimination without segregation and vice versa. Lang explains that if blacks and whites lived in different neighbourhoods, because each preferred a different setting. Here segregation is not discriminatory. Nevertheless, if blacks were forced to live in neighbourhoods that were inherently worse than those of whites were. Then segregation becomes purely discriminatory. In the case of African Americans, segregation and discrimination are two concepts that can be used interchangeably.

Jim Crow laws were a form of social segregation in the south, where slaves existed in great numbers. White southerners became dissatisfied with that painful reality: their former slaves were free and equal to them in terms of political and civil rights. Therefore, white supremacists created a set of laws in order to maintain the low and poor status of African Americans as in previous years during the era of slavery. Many believe that Jim Crow referred only to a set of laws that segregated blacks and whites in the United States.

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<sup>26</sup> In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law, which outlawed racial segregation and gender discrimination in public schools, public places, employment and housing.

Historians use various interpretations in order to explain the story behind associating the phrase Jim Crow and those laws. Pryor writes that, as early as 1830, Thomas Dartmouth Rice, who was a white actor and performer at minstrelsy shows, composed a song and while he was performing, he wore blackface<sup>27</sup>, old clothes and imitated the manners of an old African American man for the sake of entertainment. The song which says “weel about and turn about and do jis so, Eb’ry time I weel about and jump Jim Crow” gained a huge popularity especially among northern politicians and officials (828).

These laws profoundly changed the face of “Jim Crow” in the United States, but many argue that the process of racial equality and integration is not yet complete. “Jim Crow” may no longer be an explicitly legal practice of racial exclusion, but socioeconomic factors that relegate African Americans and other Americans of color to poorer neighborhoods with less well-equipped schools and less chance for economic opportunity have fostered a reincarnation of “Jim Crow” into the 21st century. (829)

Jim Crow laws were pervasive. They dominated all aspects of the African American society and lifestyle especially in the Deep South. Some of those forced African Americans to act in according racial etiquette, suggests Hine. Blacks were forbid to shake hands with whites because the process implied social equality between both races. African Americans also used courtesy titles, including miss missus mister, when addressing whites. Black boys were not allowed to look at white women. White customers in stores were to be served first, even if an African American arrived before.

Many African Americans resisted Jim Crow laws. Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537 (1896) is a court case decision, which legitimized Jim Crow laws. The case stemmed from an incident in 1892. Homer Adolph Plessy, who was an African American, brought a first-class train

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<sup>27</sup> A blackface refers to a white man who put black make up in order to look like a black person

ticket. Plessy refused to sit in places designated to blacks in the train, breaking the Louisiana law, was arrested for violating the law. Years later, lawyers attempted at proving the idea that segregation deprived their client from the rights guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment<sup>28</sup>, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that separate entities for blacks were legal as long as they were equal. Under the separate but equal doctrine, blacks were forced to eat in separate restaurants, to use separate bathrooms and drinking fountains. White as well as black children could not attend the same schools and compared to white schools, black schools were less funded and teachers were poorly and unequally payed (see table 1).

### **3-2 Racial Discrimination in Education**

#### **3-2-1 Definition of Discrimination**

Discrimination as a term is often misunderstood to be synonymous to prejudice and stereotype<sup>29</sup>. This led Lang to define discrimination by drawing a clear distinction between discrimination and prejudice. Therefore, discrimination becomes an observable behaviour and a more developed stage of prejudice, in which a person treats others inferiorly based on certain traits including race, gender, age, religion, physical appearance or sexual orientation. Discrimination is also the unequal treatment of people based on their group membership (Stolley 142). For a better understanding of the terms discrimination and prejudice, Lang suggests the following example:

Consider the case of a taxi driver who is driving down a one-way street late at night in a dangerous part of town and is hailed simultaneously by people on

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<sup>28</sup> According to fourteen Amendment section one people who born or live in the United States are citizens of the United States. Consequently, no state is able to deprive any person despite his racial belongings of life, liberty, or property.

<sup>29</sup> A stereotype is a pattern associated with a particular group of people. The problem with stereotype is when a pattern becomes an expected behaviour for example an African American is either a basketball player or a criminal. Prejudice on the other hand is related to the negative beliefs held by a particular group of people against another.

each side of the street. It is equally easy for her to pick up either customer. On the left side of the street is a little old lady. On the right side is a tall African American teenage boy wearing a hood. The taxi driver unhesitatingly chooses the little old lady over the teenager. Did she discriminate? (266)

**Table 1**

**South Carolina's Black and White Public Schools, 1908-1909**

<b>Black Schools</b>		<b>White Schools</b>
2,354	Public Schools	2,712
894	Men Teachers	933
1,802	Women Teachers	3,247
181,095	Total Pupils	153,807
123,481	Average Attendance	107,368
77	Pupils Per School	55
63	Pupils Per Teacher	35
14,7	Average Number Of Weeks Of School	25,2
\$118.17	Average Yearly Salary For Men Teachers	\$479.79
\$ 91.45	Average Yearly Salary For Women Teachers	\$249.13
\$308,153.16	Total Expenditures	\$1, 590,732.51
<p>Schools for most southern black students and teachers was a part time activity. Because of the demands of agriculture, few rural students, black or white, attended school more than six months a year. Very few teachers were graduates of four year college programs. The situation was better in urban communities and upper south schools, where the school year lasted longer and education was better financed. But all public schools were segregated in the south.</p>		

Source: African Americans Hine, Darliene Clark, William C. Hine, and Stanely Harold, *African Americans: A Concise History Combined Volume*. 2<sup>nd</sup>ed (New Jersey: Pearson education, Inc., 2006; print; 233).

Lang describes how using such kinds of questions put his students in uncomfortable situation. Confused and hesitated, students always seek justifications for the taxi driver even if the students belonged to a racial minority such as African Americans. Whereas in reality the taxi driver did discriminate. Because, according to Lang, she had no prior knowledge or previous information about both the old woman and the African American teenager. Nevertheless, she chose the old woman instead of the teenager. In short, discrimination is the impact of the prejudiced ideas on the individual's behaviour, and when "Equals are not being treated equally. Instead they are being treated unequally on the basis of group membership" (Lang 267). Similar to individuals, institutions practise discrimination as well. According to the U.S. law, institutional discrimination is inherently illegal, but in reality, it is still practised in many public sectors, especially in employment and education.

### **3-2-2 Discrimination in Education from 1960s until Late-Twentieth Century**

The story of African Americans' struggle to gain equal opportunities in education continued even after the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. Blacks studied in segregated schools until the late 1960s. African Americans entered a new phase of the epic battle to have an equal education opportunity like their white counterparts. Integrated schools were perceived by many African Americans as a heaven-like place, a solution to their education problems. They would receive the high quality of learning similar to that of white students and overcome the separate but equal doctrine that characterized the previous decades in their lives. Surprisingly, integrated schools were a devastated experience to young African Americans. In this vein, Meier Stewart and England (1989) explained that the struggle of African Americans, to gain equal access to resources in education, focused mainly on fighting policies regarding segregated schools and strongly believing that gaining access to all white schools would put an end to the black education problem. Because throughout the American history of policy-making equal educational opportunities were defined as a synonym to

desegregated schools, ignoring the fact that whites' resistance to desegregated schools would lead to inventing and creating new yet severe methods of limiting access to equal educational opportunities (Meier, Stewart and England 6). Discrimination replaced segregation during that period.

Fryer and Torelli conducted a study, in which they proved that when African American students were put in an educational environment where the majority of students and the working staff are of a similar race, grades were higher than in schools where there is a white majority. "Fryer and Torelli interpret this as evidence that there is a penalty for "acting white" in environments in which there is a lot of interracial contact. When group solidarity is not threatened by the presence of a white majority, success is as valued among black students as it is among white students" (qtd in. Lang 324).

Pupils or students in schools often misbehave or react inappropriately. Thus, a teacher is required to punish his/ her students in order to maintain good behavior in classroom and order in school. Disruptive behaviours that need punishment vary according to gender whereas punishments vary according to race. For a girl, being disruptive means laughing, talking to others in loud voice or attracting attention. In the case of boys, to misbehave means joking, shouting out, being uncooperative during the school activities (Ferguson175). Ferguson<sup>30</sup> dedicated a section entitled jailhouse where she discussed suspension. Punishment room or jailhouse is a place where most black students especially males spend their time. In the United States, there are three types of exclusion from classes and schools. Detention is an in-school punishment in which a student is asked to remain at school usually in a detention room for a specific period of time during the school day. Suspension is another type of school

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<sup>30</sup> Ann Arnett Ferguson was hired at Rosa Parks Elementary School in 1989, as a member in an evaluation team investigating schools' conditions, in order to decide about schools that need intervention. Her book offers an overview to the subject of racial discrimination, which African Americans encounter during their journey to acquire knowledge in U.S. schools from different perspectives the author interviewed children principles and member of the school staff. Ferguson's book gained huge positive critical views when first released in 2001.

disciplines that includes a temporal exclusion to students as a form of punishment. Consequently, student or pupils are deprived from attending to lessons. Expulsion where teachers and school principles decide to put an end to the student's education usually it involves offences. During an interview with Mr. Sobers, the responsible at the detention room was a former African American basketball player showed a feeling of discontent with the situation of people of color in American public schools. Ferguson wanted to understand the reason why most students sent to detention were African Americans. in a desperate tone, Mr. Sobers declared, "I have no power in this school at all. I just do what I'm told. Talk to Mr. Russell [the vice principal]. Talk to Joyce [the principal]. Talk to the teachers. Ask them why 99 percent of the kids that they send to me are black. Talk to the men who went to school with me who live around here who don't have any jobs. You could learn something from them. Not from me" (Ferguson 36).

Effective teachers held strong beliefs and higher expectations for all students regardless to their race, sex, religion or economic status. Furthermore, a teacher is required to participate in the development and progress of his/her students however; in the case of African Americans, teachers have lower expectations for blacks' academic success. Researches were conducted proving that holding lower expectations results in low academic achievements as well. Ferguson cites the story of an African American pupil with discrimination and bias, which was experience by students of color in Rosa Parks School where teacher student relationship is characterized by racial discrimination:

My teacher this year . . . she be racist. When she tells us to put something away—mostly all the black kids—she says I'm taking it. When it's like the white kid—she say, one more time play with that and I'm taking it away. And then she gives them another chance. Everybody, everybody knows that it's so! My friend, Lucas, he's white and he says it's not fair. It's definitely not fair. But

he's not racism [*sic*] at all. He's okay. He's nice. He's funny. He plays around in class sometimes. (220)

The story reflects the way teachers treat black and white students in public schools. Race appeared to govern the teacher-student relationships and decided about the academic future of black American children in the United States.

Ruddis was another researcher who invested time and efforts to study racial disproportionality in school discipline. Rudd argues that implicit bias or prejudice played an important role in the experience of African American education in the United States. According to Rudd, implicit bias is a mental process that happens unconsciously over the course of the human life. It has a great yet negative effect on the perception of African Americans by their teachers, which determine the teacher student relationship throughout the academic year. The research proved that when teachers held implicit, sometimes-explicit, bias to African American as well Hispanic students leads low expectations of blacks' academic success (3). Such ideas include irresponsible poor violent aggressive have no intention to learn and need to be separately taught and offered a special education. Consequently, teachers with low expectations in classroom treat students of color differently, that is to say unequally.

These students felt that teachers were "prejudiced" against them. "You know they [white teachers] don't like black people." They didn't help us learn, and I hated school." Others indicated the "schoolwork was "too hard to understand and that teachers "rushed" through the work. " They [teachers] didn't really teach us." "Some didn't give a damn." We were on our little own." (Bell 11)

Disciplinary practises including detention, suspension and expulsion were and are still used nearly in every school district throughout the United States. The main purpose of such practises is to maintain order and good behaviour within the school system. Researchers discovered that punishments were more severe in the case of African Americans and other

minorities including Hispanics and Native Americans compared to white students, provided that both white and black perform similar delinquent behaviour but receive different punishments. Meier, Stewart and England examined the impact of second-generation educational discrimination<sup>31</sup> on black students in the United States. Researchers argued that public schools are where educational opportunities are not equally distributed. Sorting or grouping process categorizes students according to their academic level. The process of grouping student leads to low self-esteem and frustration especially at younger age. Consequently, students who are placed in a low academic achievement group are more likely to experience many psychological problems, including stress, frustration and low expectation in addition; those students are at higher risk of dropping out of school. In order for an African American or other minority student “to benefit from.

Meier, Stewart and England conducted an in depth analysis to the effect of second generation discrimination and concluded that sorting practises were racially disproportionate, that is to say, public schools in the united states place students of color in low academic groups. Black students are three time more likely to be sorted in a class for the educable mentally retarded than their white counterparts. In addition, a black student is 30 percent more likely to attend classes designated to a trainable mentally retarded than a white student. On the other hand, white students are 3.2 more likely to be placed in a gifted class than black students are (5). In addition to academic grouping, schools frequently subjected black students to disciplinary practises. Being an African American or Hispanic is an enough reason for suspension

Thus, students who are subjected to low academic grouping and/or discriminatory educational practises are more likely to follow three different paths. First, students can easily decide to put an end to his education journey and drop out, especially if those students

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<sup>31</sup> Second Generation Educational Discrimination refers to certain practises and actions that schools in the United States followed in order to maintain the blacks’ low academic achievements.

experienced excessive and daily punishments. Second, other students who chose to continue their studies they would after all lose interest and not graduate. Finally, another type of students, who are able to overcome the effects of lower academic grouping and harsher disciplinary practises, will eventually graduate from high school. However, they will not enjoy the same quality of education as white students (Meier, Stewart and England 29). Since African American students receive unequal treatment in schools, they are more likely to follow one the previous courses of actions this is African Americans have high dropout rates and low graduation rates. The research reveals a positive and strong relationship between suspension and dropping out of high schools.

Rudd shares similar views to Meier, Stewart and England. Rudd believes that teachers schools administrators in the united states give more severe punishments to students of color than white students for performing similar disruptive behaviours

Although discriminant analysis suggests that disproportionate rates of office referral and suspension for boys are due to increased rates of misbehavior, no support was found for the hypothesis that African American students act out more than other students. Rather, African American students appear to be referred to the office for less serious and more subjective reasons. Coupled with extensive and highly consistent prior data, these results argue that disproportionate representation of African Americans in office referrals, suspension and expulsion is evidence of a pervasive and systematic bias that may well be inherent in the use of exclusionary discipline. (Skibaqtd in. Rudd 2)

In order for a student to acquire knowledge, he needs a comfortable and well equipped classroom environment including books chairs desks tables and effective teachers. In the United States, public schools where the majority of students were blacks or belonged to

another minority suffered from serious defects. Kozol (1991)'s book *Savage Inequalities* offers clear insights about the bitter reality of public education in the United States between the period from 1964 until 1991. Kozol describes his surprise and shock after visiting schools throughout the American soil including Illinois, Washington D.C., New York and many other states. Kozol believes in the superficiality and insignificance of the Civil Rights Act because it provided no progress in the case of African American education and declares:

The Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* 37 years ago, in which the court had found that segregated education was unconstitutional because it was "inherently unequal," did not seem to have changed very much for children in the schools I saw, not, at least, outside of the Deep South. Most of the urban schools I visited were 95 to 99 percent nonwhite. In no school that I saw anywhere in the United States were nonwhite children in large numbers truly intermingled with white children. (3)

Throughout his journey, Kozol interviewed teachers, school's principals and student. many teachers, whether white or black, in schools of African Americans were unequally payed. Disparities in wages push teachers to prefer working in schools where white make the majority and there are better facilities and to abandon schools where blacks make the majority. Often students at black schools remained without teachers for months. When the issue of salaries was brought to discussion, officials believe that increasing teacher's salaries would never make black students better. Kozol interviews a principal in the school at Camden New Jersey about the shortage in teachers and she explains:

"My first priority, if we had equal funding," says the principal when I return to see her at the end of school "would be the salaries of teachers. People ask me, 'Can you make a mediocre teacher better with more money?' I am speaking of the money to attract the teachers. In some areas where I run into shortages of

staff — math and science, in particular — I get provisional teachers who are not yet certified but sometimes highly talented, exciting people. As soon as he or she becomes proficient — squat! — where is she? Out to the suburbs to earn \$7,000 more. (90)

If teachers were not equally paid; schools as well were not equally funded. All school districts visited by Kozol suffer from shortage in teachers and equipments. In some schools, half of the students have no books or books out of the school curriculum, in an interview of a pupil in Cherry Hill School named Jezebel while comparing her school to her friend's school. She mentioned that at her friend's school there were new books, clean rooms with carpets and air conditioners (Kozol 195). Another striking difference explained Jezebel was in textbooks. Jezebel was an eleventh grade like her friend but the textbooks in Cherry Hill school were for eighth grade students. Classrooms with leaking roofs and no walls painted. Within the same school, science classes had no ceiling tiles and other laboratory equipments were missing, due to a shortage in equal financial sources (Kozol 95).

### **3-3 Dropping out of School to Dropping in the World of Violent Crime**

#### **3-3-1 Definition of Dropping Out**

Dropping out is a common phenomenon in U.S. schools, especially among African Americans and minority students in general. There are many reasons that lead a student to drop out of high school, but in the case of minority students, including African Americans, the most probable reason to abandon education was discrimination and racially biased practices within the American educational system. It seemed to many that dropout rates among racial groups and minorities would decline especially during the second half of the twentieth century, whereas statistics proved the opposite. Moreover, disparities between white and black student in dropout rates proves that despite all efforts in order to narrow the gap

between white and black American students at schools, it became wider than ever. Success of African Americans has been always a challenge to the American government (see table 2). In the United States, a dropout<sup>32</sup> future is determined, because he will be deprived from several privileges suggest startling and hope, “dropping out of high school is a clear path to an indigent quality of life that usually culminates in poverty, poor health, dependency on welfare and other governmental programs, criminal activities and even incarceration” (43).

**Table 2**

**Event Dropout Rates of 15- through 24- year-olds who Dropped out of Grades 10-12, by Sex and Race/  
Ethnicity: October 1972 through October 2009<sup>a</sup>**

Year	Total (percent)	Sex (percent)		Race / Ethnicity (percent) <sup>1</sup>		
		Male	Female	White, non- Hispanic	Black, non- Hispanic	Hispanic
1972	6,1	5,9	5,3	5,3	9,5	11,2
1973	6,3	6,8	5,7	5,5	9,9	10,0
1974	6,7	7,4	6,0	5,8	11,6	9,9
1975	5,8	5,4	6,1	5,0	8,7	10,9
1976	5,9	6,6	5,2	5,6	7,4	7,3
1977	6,5	6,9	6,1	6,1	8,6	7,8
1978	6,7	7,5	5,9	5,8	10,2	12,3
1979	6,7	6,8	6,7	6,0	9,9	9,8

<sup>32</sup>In the United States, a dropout is a student who decided to leave school before gaining a high school diploma

1980	6,1	6,7	5,5	5,2	8,2	11,7
1981	5,9	6,0	5,8	4,8	9,7	10,7
1982	5,5	5,8	5,1	4,7	7,8	9,2
1983	5,2	5,8	4,7	4,4	7,0	10,1
1984	5,1	5,4	4,8	4,4	5,7	11,1
1985	5,2	5,4	5,0	4,3	7,8	9,8
1986	4,7	4,7	4,7	3,7	5,4	11,9
1987	4,1	4,3	3,8	3,5	6,4	5,4
1988	4,8	5,1	4,4	4,2	5,9	10,4
1989	4,5	4,5	4,5	3,5	7,8	7,8
1990	4,0	4,0	3,9	3,3	5,0	7,9
1991	4,0	3,8	4,2	3,2	6,0	7,3
1992	4,4	3,9	4,9	3,7	5,0	8,2
1993	4,5	4,6	4,3	3,9	5,8	6,7
1994	5,3	5,2	5,4	4,2	6,6	10,0
1995	5,7	6,2	5,3	4,5	6,4	12,4
1996	5,0	5,0	5,1	4,1	6,7	9,0
1997	4,6	5,0	4,1	3,6	5,0	9,5
1998	4,8	4,6	4,9	3,9	5,2	9,4
1999	5,0	4,6	5,4	4,0	6,5	7,3
2000	4,8	5,5	4,1	4,1	6,1	7,4
2001	5,0	5,6	4,3	4,1	6,3	8,8
2002	3,6	3,7	3,4	2,6	4,9	5,8
2003	4,0	4,2	3,8	3,2	4,8	7,1
2004	4,7	5,1	4,3	3,4	5,7	8,9
2005	3,8	4,2	3,4	2,8	7,3	5,0
2006	3,8	4,1	3,4	2,9	3,8	7,0

2007	3,5	3,7	3,3	2,2	4,5	6,0
2008	3,5	3,1	4,0	2,3	6,4	5,3
2009	3,4	3,5	3,4	2,4	4,8	5,8

<sup>a</sup>Event dropouts refer to students who left school without obtaining a school diploma

C. Chapman, J. Laird, N. Ifill, and Ramani A. Kewal, “Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972–2009”, U.S. Department of Education Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics  
<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>.

**3-3-2 Theories of Dropping out and Violence**

**3-3-2-1 Labeling Theory**

Several theories<sup>33</sup> proved the existence of a positive relationship between dropping out and the possibility of engaging in a world of crime and violence. After years of study at the Rosa parks school realized that, a prison cell is waiting the perfect time to appear in the future of black students. Ferguson also believes that schools in the United States seem “ to feed into the prison system “ through a clear association that links punishment rooms or jailhouses, as she referred to them, and the cells of local, state and federal prisons. To Ferguson, both follow a similar ideological system and she declares:

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<sup>33</sup>Rational choice is “The view that crime is a function of a decision-making process in which the potential offender weighs the potential costs and benefits of an illegal act” (Siegel 508). Routine activities theory refers to “The view that the volume and distribution of predatory crime are closely related to the interaction of suitable targets, motivated offenders, and capable guardians”(Siegel 509). Social learning theory is based on “The view that human behavior is modeled through observation of human social interactions, either directly from observing those who are close and from intimate contact, or indirectly through the media. Interactions that are rewarded are copied, while those that are punished are avoided” (Siegel 510).

There is a direct relationship between dropping out of school and doing time in jail: the majority of black inmates in local, state, and federal penal systems are high school dropouts. Therefore, if we want to begin to break the ties between school and jail, we must first create educational systems that foster kids' identification with school and encourage them not to abandon it. (230)

On the other hand, schools follow an identical procedure. The image of black as a criminal and violent, according to Ferguson, controls the decisions made at the level of the criminal justice system as it does at schools, where preconceived ideas about black children are used in order to justify harsh as well racially biased punishments and cruel disciplinary practised including suspension and expulsions. African American children unlike their white counterparts were severely punished for committing similar disruptive acts in classroom or school. Being labeled<sup>34</sup> as troublemaker as a child increases the likelihood of going to jail as an adult, argues Ferguson. Black students who are labeled troublemakers experience isolation, marginalization and deprivation from equal access to educational resources in schools. Time for troublemakers is spent in suspension in schools or at homes; as a result African American students would be unable to cope with their classmates leading to “a gap in skills” between black and white students (230)

School and jail reinforce similar practises and systems of other institution in the society, especially when racial bias is concerned. Like the criminal justice system, schools practise also racial discrimination. Ferguson cites findings of a study conducted by Huizinga and Elliot in 1986<sup>35</sup>, who explained that the existing disparity in incarceration statistics is clearly an outcome of different institutional responses to youths who belonged to racial and

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<sup>34</sup> Labeling Theory is detailed in the Chapter II pages 63-65.

<sup>35</sup> David Huizinga and Delbert Elliot conducted a research entitle "Juvenile Offenders: Prevalence, Offender Incidence, and Arrest Rates by Race," the paper was presented at *Race and the Incarceration of Juveniles*, Racine, Wisconsin, December 1986.

ethnic groups; instead, verdicts were not based on the actual behaviour of suspects. According to testimonies of black as well as white youths between the age of 11 and 17 years old, researchers compared delinquent behaviours committed and actual police reports of delinquency and concluded that there were no differences in the kind or number of delinquent behaviours perpetrated by the two racial groups. However, the difference lies in that minority teenagers were more likely to be charged and convicted by police officers than white teenagers who were reported committing similar offences (Ferguson 232). Thus, Ferguson arrived at the conclusion that clearly emphasizes a similarity between both settings. Bias in the criminal justice system mirrors that of the educational system. In other words, schools systems in the United States are indirectly preparing African Americans students to serve time in jail.

### **3-3-2-2 Social Control Theory**

Social control theory is generally based on the relationship between individuals and the society to which they belong. Social control theorists believe that behaviours are controlled by internal and external forces, which make individuals develop a commitment to conformity. In other words, properly socialized people are incapable of hurting others especially the closest ones including parents, friends neighbours family members or colleagues and violating social norms because their commitment and attachment to certain institutions, persons or processes. Whereas those who lack the ability to form attachment and commitment are easily prone to crime, and feel an absolute freedom in violating laws simply because they have little to lose (Siegel 226).

Many sociologists attempted at explaining the connection between self-concept and crime<sup>36</sup>. However, in 1969, Travis Hirschi's new perspective to social control became the most dominant version of the theory. Hirschi (1969) argues that all individuals regardless to their ethnic, racial, religious or social belonging are law violators. Yet, the fear that illegitimate or illegal behaviours will destroy their relationships with for example a parent, friend, a teacher or an employer, prevent them from engaging in any sort of crime these relationships are referred to by Hirschi as social bonds or ties. The latter are divided into four main elements including attachment, commitment, involvement and belief (Siegel 227). Furthermore, to engage in a criminal activity means losing the opportunity of enjoying a prosperous life, including a proper education and a perfect job, this may strengthen the fear inside the individual.

In order to test the validity of the previous hypothesis, Hirschi (1969) conducted a self-report survey that consisted of more than 4000 high school students of different contra Costa's high schools in the state of California. Study findings strongly supported Hirschi's claims. Attachment involves a feeling of interest and sensitivity towards a particular person, process or thing. A sense of attachment includes the formation of strong bonds with different social persons and more importantly social institutions such as schools. Hirschi arrived at the conclusion that people, particularly youths, who are attached to society would be less likely to commit crimes as he predicted. Similarly, Hirschi's survey stresses the high significance of attachment to schools in particular and education in general. The study reveals that youths who experience a detachment from schools are at a great risk of engaging in criminal

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<sup>36</sup>"As early as 1951, sociologist Albert Reiss described how delinquents had weak egos. Scott Briar and Irving Piliavin noted that youths who believe criminal activity will damage their self-image and their relationships with others will be most likely to conform to social rules; they have a commitment to conformity. In contrast, those less concerned about their social standing are free to violate the law. In his **containment theory**, pioneering control theorist Walter Reckless argued that a strong self-image insulates a youth from the pressures and pulls of criminogenic influences in the environment. In a series of studies conducted within the school setting, Reckless and his colleagues found that nondelinquent youths are able to maintain a positive self-image in the face of environmental pressures toward delinquency" (Siegel 226).

activities, while those who are committed to their educational process are less likely to commit crime and violence (Siegel 228). Commitment on the other hand refers to the amount of time and efforts, which take a form of actions including education, saving money for plans or looking for job. Young people who establish a commitment to a parent, a teacher or an employer face a difficulty in committing crimes or violating a law to avoid being deprived from various privileges offered by society for instance money or higher grades. Often, the association between social bonds and crime is reciprocal. In other words, youths who use drugs for example, are more likely to drop out of school; youths who drop out of school are at higher risk of becoming a drug addict as an adult( see figure 3).

A social control theory perspective to the phenomenon of African American violence emphasizes the idea that violence results from the absence of a social bond between African American youth and schools as social institutions. African Americans suffer from high dropout rates compared to their white counterparts due to the racial discrimination in terms of policies governing the educational system in the United States. Dropping out of school, as a result, weakened the ties between those teenagers and education. Social control theorists suggest that many students, despite their racial belonging, when they leave school the risk of engaging in criminal activities increases. Dropouts of school will easily form new bonds stronger than the previous ones. Thus, the relationship between dropping out of school and delinquent behaviour is based upon the type of the newly formed social bonds after becoming a dropout. African Americans during the late twentieth century inhabited neighbourhood where there was poverty, high rates of unemployment, drugs and easy gun access and gangs. Certainly, dropping out an African American student is directly followed by the formation of new social bonds leading to adopting strong yet negative identities to cope with the society.

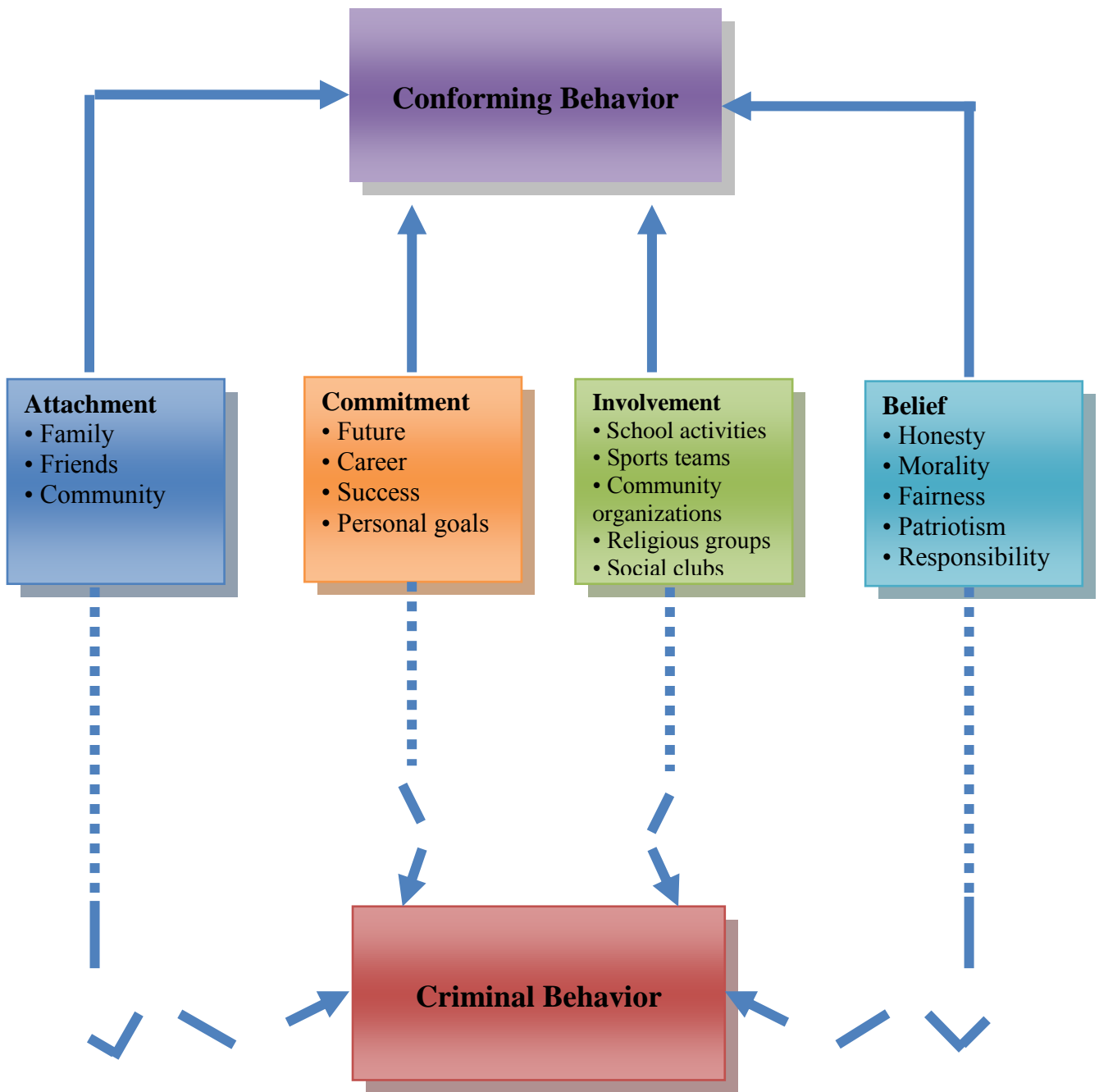


Fig.3. Elements of the Social Bond from: Larry J Siegel, *Criminology: Theories, Patterns and Typologies* (Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2010, *BO-K*; Web. 29 April 2018; 227)

Social control theory received huge criticism. However, no empirical studies were presented in order to support the weaknesses of the theory. Until the very moment, criminologists believe that social control theory is one of the most important theories to the study of crime and delinquent behaviour by youth.

### **3-3-2-3 Strain Theory**

Strain Theory<sup>37</sup> is one of the most difficult and complicated theories in the study of crimes and delinquent behaviours, which makes the field of criminology more challenging to researchers. Yet early developments of the theory were much easier. Robert k Merton (1938) was the first to introduce strain theory to the field of criminology. The theory suggests people in the United States, when suffering from a contrast between the goals to be achieved and the legitimate means to achieve them; people are forced to use illegal channels in order to gain prosperity. People who belong to lower classes and especially minorities and racial groups are deprived from equal access for proper schooling and education compared to whites in order to cope with the shortage of sources individuals commit crimes including theft drug use/deal and prostitution (see figure 4).

One of Merton's students has broadened the strain theory. Cohen (1955) attempted to explain the origins of youth male gangs using strain theory. Cohen argued in his study that individuals especially adolescents who come from lower classes of the society are subjected to humiliation, marginalization by their teachers and middle class students on larger scale. Middle class status provides money and respect needed thus it is a desired goal to lower class individuals. However, middle class status is not an easy goal to be achieved neither through legitimate nor illegitimate means. Therefore, lower class individuals establish a system to fit their status. "The middle class values private property and polite behaviour, for example,

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<sup>37</sup> Strain is the internal emotional conflict caused when people believe they cannot achieve their desired goals through legitimate and illegal means.

while these lower-class juveniles' value theft and aggression. This alternative status system takes the form of juvenile gangs, with the gangs rejecting the cultural goal of middleclass status and substituting new, criminally oriented goals in its place" ( Jang and Agnew 495).

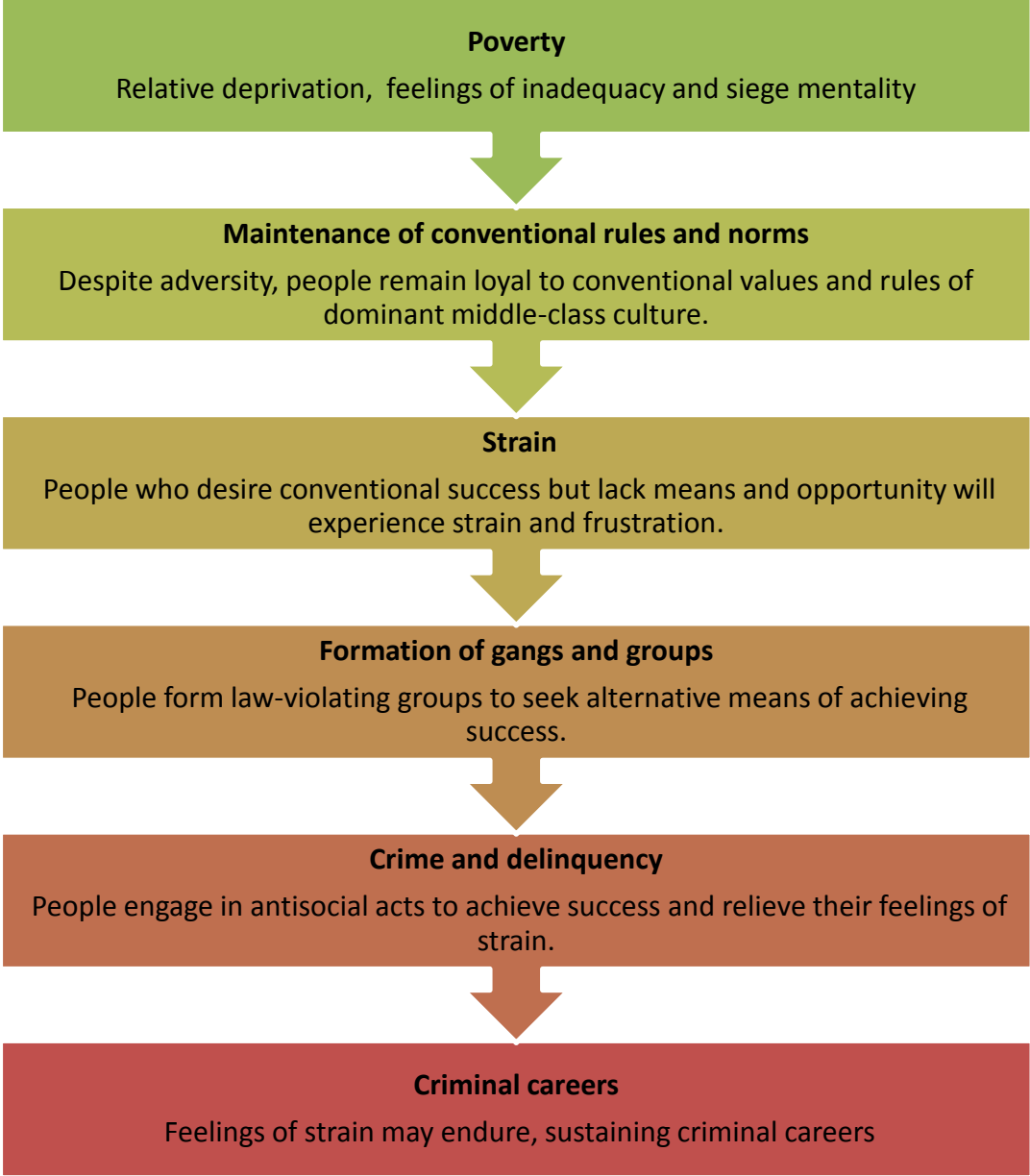


Fig.4. Basic Components of Strain Theory from: Larry J Siegel, *Criminology: Theories, Patterns and Typologies* (Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2010, BO-K; Web. 29 April 2018; 191)

Similarly, Cloward and Ohlin (1960) explained the relationship between the inability to achieve goals and the formation of gangs. However, the idea that distinguishes this theory from the earlier study focuses more on illegitimate opportunities. In other words, it seeks to understand and to answer certain questions related to the main responsible for facilitating the process of engaging in criminal activities.

Robert Agnew (1995) based his new version of the strain theory on reviewing previous studies in the field. Unlike traditional strain theories that focused only on the inability to achieve goals through legitimate means of success, Agnew's General Strain Theory combines between strain theory and the field of social psychology. ". . . Agnew has attempted to build into GST the ability to examine a wider range of strains, such as when an individual is treated poorly by others (e.g., physically or sexually abused, ridiculed by peers) or when individuals lose that is valuable to them (e.g., loss of property, loss of a relative, loss of a romantic partner)" (De Angelis 296). Agnew criticized classical strain theories because they focused mainly on class and social status. Strains or stressors as referred to them by Agnew create and generate negative emotions, such as anger and frustration, which lead individuals to engage in criminal activities. In his General strain theory, Agnew put a huge emphasis on the crucial role played by stressors which he defined as ". . . events or conditions that are disliked by individual" (De Angelis 296), in order to widen range of suggestions and possibilities to explain criminal coping.

Strain theories offer clear insights to the problem of African Americans' higher rates of violent acts and crimes. Above all, most of African Americans as well as other minorities hold lower classes in the American social hierarchy. In communities where African Americans consist a majority, there is always a lack in resources especially educational opportunities. Education in the United States, like many other countries, is the means through which a citizen can achieve economic and social prosperity, which is a desired goal. However,

African Americans experience strains or stressors at earlier ages in their schools. In some cases, black students drop out of school at very younger age, around 11 and 12 years old, as a result to the excessive subjection to various stressors, including prejudiced teachers, racial discriminatory punishments, humiliation and bully by their white counterparts. Especially that in the period late twentieth century schools were integrated and because African Americans were to a certain extent safer during segregation when surrounded by people of similar racial origins. Consequently, dropping occurs in order to avoid such pressure:

Suspensions, often the first stop along the pipeline, play a crucial role in pushing students from the school system and into the criminal justice system. Research shows a clear correlation between suspensions and both low achievement and dropping out of school altogether. Such research also demonstrates a link between dropping out of school and incarceration later in life. Specifically, students who have been suspended are three times more likely to Students who enter the juvenile justice system through the school-to-prison pipeline often find it difficult to return to school drop out by the 10th grade than students who have never been suspended. Dropping out in turn triples the likelihood that a person will be incarcerated later in life. In 1997, 68 percent of state prison inmates were school dropouts. (New York Civil Liberties Union. (qtd in. Rudd 4-5)

There are other reasons to dropping out, but compared to discrimination they seem trivial. According to Strain Theories, a disjuncture between goals and means takes place at that moment, African Americans are obliged to look for other means in order to survive and achieve wealth. Employment is no longer a solution, because most of African Americans have left schools without gaining a diploma. Thus, illegitimate channels became the alternative solution including formation of gangs, drug dealing, crack consumption, which consequently

leads to theft/robbery and sometimes even to murder. Eventually, an African American young man, who was in the very beginning an innocent child with a soul full of hopes, longs for a better future in the land of promising opportunities became a convict and consequently a prisoner.

### **Conclusion**

Many believe that the second half of the twentieth century brought the winds of change and success to African Americans, especially when the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed to remove all the obstacles that faced African Americans that prevented them from enjoying their civil and political rights. However, higher expectations of blacks met harsh reality of white institutions in the United States. The problem of African Americans' violence and high rates of crime stems from discrimination in public schools, where people of color were exposed to various forms of racial bias, more precisely, through of low academic grouping, cruel disciplinary practises and prejudiced teachers. The effects of such practises on the behaviour of African Americans were disastrous. They create a source of strain and stress accompanied by frustration, hatred and anger and other psychological problems. Usually African Americans tend to avoid such source of stress by dropping out of school. After dropping out a world of crime and drugs attracts those schools dropouts. The relationship that links between dropping out and crime involvement is clearly proven using social control theory and strain theories.

# General Conclusion

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This study aimed to investigate the underlying reasons to violence by African Americans through assessing the extent to which stereotypes of African Americans portrayed in media influence the perception of African Americans by the American society. This study aimed also at revealing the discriminatory practises practised by teachers and public schools against African Americans.

Research findings show that the impact of negative stereotypes and distorted images of African Americans portrayed in media, particularly television, provides a support to the main objective of this dissertation. The problem of higher rate of violence by African Americans is not a matter of cultural background, as many researchers have suggested. Instead, there was a continuous line of events, which forced African Americans to engage in violence. African Americans tended to assimilate to the American culture and to embrace the new cultural norms of white Americans including religion, language, customs and traditions. However, for white Americans, black culture remained different and African Americans remained the “other” to whites. Moreover, white Americans believed from the early days of colonialism and slavery that Africa, the Dark Continent, was the place where savage people, brutes and animal-like individuals existed. These ideas made them associate violence directly with African American culture.

Research findings also indicate that the issue of race plays a key role in the educational process of African American students, who often felt insecure when surrounded by white teachers. Thus, there was in an urgent need for black teachers expressed to be taught by someone who looked like them especially in terms of physical appearances with a similar

cultural perspective and background. Academic achievement and success are related to African Americans males' personality. Therefore, prejudiced teachers who hold negative and racially biased ideas about African Americans including incompetence, laziness, aggressiveness, being in a prison or members in gang affected African Americans' academic performance and success. Those ideas formed a threat to African Americans, because they provoke low self-esteem and doubt in them. Findings of this research suggest that teachers with implicit or explicit bias make African Americans believe in impossibility of success in academic spheres; instead success was to be found out of school.

High level of poverty as a separate reason for violence failed to explain the behaviour of African Americans during the second half of the twentieth century. In other words, this research explained that during the 1950s, African Americans were suffering from higher rates of poverty, but they were less violent. Instead, violent crimes increased when blacks witnessed improvement in economic status. However, poverty, as a condition, needs to be combined with one of the reasons discussed in this dissertation, such as media or discrimination in public institutions.

Clearly, the United States' attitudes and policies during the second half of the twentieth century did not in any way stem from sympathy for African Americans. During the 1970s, the "War on Drugs", for instance, appeared to many as a successful governmental project to help the United States get rid of the drug epidemic that threatened American youths. However, according to this research's finding, the campaign was hugely broadcasted in media where black faces were linked to drug use in order to confirm the prejudiced ideas in the minds of Americans and to justify mass incarceration of blacks. African Americans themselves embraced their stereotypes as a form of resistance to their poor situation, to cope with lack of political power and lack of resources in order to survive. African Americans felt that they had to actually shape their own lives and experiences. In other words, they received motivation

from media stereotypes, as the research suggests, through different television programs especially news which confirmed the hyper-sexuality and masculinity of African Americans. Since Americans were considering media sacred, stereotypes were effectively misleading.

The U.S. public institutions are still inherently biased Institutional discrimination is still practised especially at the level of public schools, employment and criminal justice system. Obviously, the Civil Rights Act did not put an end to the sufferance of African Americans. Its success was limited to the period of the 1960s. This shows a clear contradiction between the laws found in the US Constitution and the realization of such laws in the real world of African Americans and people of color in the United States, especially Indian Americans and Hispanics. Thus, future United States is developing a tendency toward resegregation.

In the field of academic research, the end of a given dissertation about a particular subject does not necessarily mean end of research. Instead, dissertations offer a wide range of options to future researchers and open a gate to further researches to be conducted in various subjects. Therefore, as far as the topic of violence and crime by African Americans is concerned, the researcher suggests a set of new ideas or perspectives to approach this topic. Further research may, for example, examine and compare between the violent response of African American males to negative stereotypes in media and discrimination in public education with black females' response. The idea behind this study is to determine whether the phenomenon of violence is specific only to black males or it transcends sex limits to reach African American females. One of the issues discussed in this dissertation are the problem of dropping out in United States, especially among minority and racial groups. Therefore, the researcher recommends a further research to be conducted for the sake of suggesting solutions to the problem of dropping out of school either at the level of policy-making or at schools and students' families. There is also a growing body of research about the role of family structure

in developing and shaping an individual's character and future, where psychology and history as disciplines are blended. A typical modern African American family, usually, consists of a single mother, where an absence of the father means absence of control in the family. Future research may study the impact of family structure on behaviour of black youths especially in recent years.

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## ملخص

شهد المجتمع الأمريكي في أواخر القرن العشرين ارتفاعا في نسبة العنف و الذي انعكس بدوره على ارتفاع في معدل الجريمة. حيث فسر العديد من الباحثين أن أسباب ذلك العنف تعود بالدرجة الأولى إلى ثقافة و شخصية الأمريكيان السود . لذلك تهدف هذه الدراسة لإثبات جرائم العنف التي يرتكبها الأمريكيون من أصل أفريقي ليست مسألة ثقافة كما اعتقد العديد من الأمريكيين البيض. من أجل تحقيق هذه الهدف تتطرق هذه الدراسة إلى الخلفية التاريخية لتطور ظاهرة العنف حيث تم الاطلاع على مجموعة واسعة من المصادر الأولية والثانوية المتعلقة بتأثير وسائل الإعلام على مدى تصور الأفراد للعالم الخارجي والتطرق إلى مختلف النظريات التي تؤكد أن التعرض للتمييز العنصري يحرض على الانخراط في عالم الجريمة. تشير البيانات التي تم تحليلها و نتائج هذه الدراسة إلى أن الأسباب الكامنة وراء جرائم العنف ينبع من الأثر الذي يخلفه تشويه صورة الأميركيين الأفارقة في مختلف البرامج التي تعرضها وسائل الإعلام الأمريكي بالإضافة إلى السياسات التعليمية التي تتميز بكونها متحيزة عرقيا و المطبقة في المدارس العامة بالولايات المتحدة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العنف ، الجريمة ، الأمريكيون الأفارقة، الولايات المتحدة، أواخر القرن العشرين، التعليم، التمييز العنصري ، ترك الدراسة ، القوالب النمطية، الإعلام .