Chapter 14
Exploring the Complexities Associated to Victimization: Addressing Media Sensationalism and Race

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ABSTRACT

The following chapter addresses both the presence and complexities that are associated to the reports of victimization within the media in direct correlation to the element of how racial disparities sensationalize certain incidents of crime. The terminology pertaining to news coverage is also identified and described in regards to the modality of planning in the report of the news; in addition, the perspectives of racial conflict is expounded upon to include the sociological influences, ecological effects, and the criminological theories that best describe the cyclical reactions of race-related bias in the media. The discussion explores previous literature centered upon racial bias in media coverage and the areas that appear to be sensationalized more so than not. The goal of news broadcasting and narrowcasting are delineated upon as well as correlating measures associated to the perception of unequal treatment and fear of crime.

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INTRODUCTION

It is no secret or surprise that certain types of crime appear to receive more concentration within the media; furthermore, the broadcasting is typically perceived to be somewhat true as the reporting is authenticated as “news”. There are many avenues associated to media to include any of the following circuits:

- Wiki,
- Blogging,
- Google,
- Wikipedia,
- iPod,
- MySpace,
- Facebook,
- Youtube,
- Twitter, and
- Instagram (Surette, 2014).

However, for the purpose of this chapter, the discussion will center upon news coverage within the media, specifically, news coverage and victimization. What makes something sensational? Attention, popularity, and innovation. Such a phenomenon directly effects societal perceptions of victimization, narrowing the realm of what the public is aware of. Media and public reaction to high profile cases directly form stereotypes based upon the racialized assumptions of the public (Johnson, Warren, & Farrell, 2015). The intriguing aspect to consider in exploring the bias that subsists throughout media reporting is that not only does this effect the types of crime that society believes to occur, but this also effects the types of crime that victims are subjected to, as well as the types of perpetrators that typically participate in crime commission. These are three very disparate measures to consider, but they are all interrelated based upon the result of bias media reporting of victimization, based upon the singular notion of race.

For example, the majority of the world is under the impression that serial killers are predominantly White; however, Blacks now comprise one out of every two serial killers (Hickey, 2015). Subsequently, it could be stated that maybe one of the reasons that society is under the impression that Black serial killers are rare is due to the lack of media concentration and/or reporting of such incidents. In addition, Black victims of serial killers have the propensity to go unrecognized or at best receive substantially less media-related attention than White victims of serial killers (Hickey, 2015). Americans tend to sensationalize serial killers in general, due to the glorification of the heinous incidents that occur in such cases. Furthermore,
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