

Taylor Gibson

Dr. Bodkin

SCOM 240/241-01

20 November 2020

Artifact Analysis Paper

### Can Riots Force Change?

Communication theories such as Whiteness theory and Standpoint theory have similar purposes. Both of these theories represent the social effects of people in our country that we see. We have seen these effects in the media and our lives. The Whiteness theory presents the social construction of race and whiteness to produce the term "white privilege" and its use in society and organizations. Standpoint theory determines a place-based upon a social location in the world. According to Julia Wood, "The social groups within which we are located powerfully shape what we experience and know as well as how we understand and communicate with ourselves, others, and the world." (Griffin, Ledbetter, Sparks, 2019, pg.396) These two theories represent the artifact from *The New York Times* podcast, "The Argument," "Can Riots Force Change?" with Frank Bruni, Ross Douthat, and Michelle Goldberg. This artifact presents these theories that play a role in our society by riots concerning police brutality and African Americans' lives in our country.

At the beginning of the podcast, "The Argument," the hosts introduce the riots happening across the country in response to police brutality by protesters. Ross Douthat presents the ways the protest can be affected by politics. Based on Douthat's research, Douthat states, "When protests were able to maintain themselves as nonviolent acts, especially when they faced police brutality in the process, that increased white support for civil rights, and the civil rights agenda,

and for the Democratic party. And when protests became violent and turned into riots, that increased support for the Republican Party, and ultimately helped elect Richard Nixon in 1968." Douthat points out that the meaning behind these riots is based on politics, shown throughout time. In the early 1950s and 1960s, African Americans and whites protested against and segregation between the two races in the country. These protests relate to the whiteness theory by producing the example of the black people's treatment by the police who were white based upon the meaning of the white privileged.

In the article, "Beyond the Knapsack: Disrupting the Production of White Racial Privilege in Organizational Practices," Patricia Park and Jennifer Mease present the details of whiteness theory and the way it reflects the artifact. The social construction of race is used in our society is based on the term racialization. Park and Mease explain, "Racialization is an ideological process that signifies the extension of a racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group." (Parker, Mease, pg. 315) Park and Mease describe race-based social construction on how racialization is used upon a group in society. "The Argument" points out the way tensions may arise between the police and the protesters. Michelle Goldberg mentions, "There's evidence that the police have taken a pretty aggressive stance towards the protesters. And then you see hints of a kind of hands-off stance towards the destruction of the city. And it's understandable, a cop not wanting to put themselves on the line for Macy's. (Goldberg, 2020) Goldberg points out that some of the protesting groups, such as the Black Lives Matter, loot and break items such as windows in public businesses and destroy their cities.

On the other hand, Frank Bruni, another host on "The Argument," mentions protests in cities across the country that have been peaceful and not violent. Bruni states, "Those of police kneeling with protesters. I think it was Louisville, where there was that amazing short video on

Twitter of a protester hugging a police officer, of the two of them falling into a hug that lasted something like 30 seconds." (Bruni, 2020) Bruni's statement relates to the peaceful protests that have been occurring between the police and the protesters to make a statement that not every cop is part of that social construction of racialization of the generalized stereotypical black person off of the streets. In response to Bruni's statement, Goldberg points out that not all the police departments have been peacefully treated these protests. Goldberg mentions, "we also have to remember that the police shot a restaurant owner named David McAtee, somebody, who used to let the police eat for eating for free." Goldberg is saying that officers are not the same person even though they might do the same job. This represents racialization from the Whiteness theory. The meaning of that racial relationship comes into different perspectives on how an officer may act towards a black person.

Based on the Standpoint theory, this artifact pays attention to how a place is made by people's social positions in this world. Sandra Harding and Julia T. Wood state, "These group memberships lead to different opportunities, working conditions, and degrees of power and influence, so they generate distinctive accounts of nature and social relationships." (Griffin, Ledbetter, Sparks, 2019, pg.396) Based upon the standpoint theories, group memberships, Michelle Goldberg points out the police being present at a protest, such as keeping babies' lives. Goldberg mentions, "If a bunch of pro-life people suddenly converged, do we think that the police would start arresting them? And I think the answer is pretty clearly no, in that they would probably be treated far more leniently than the protesters we've seen recently." (Goldberg, 2020) The way Goldberg puts this situation out there is based upon the social location that these protesters have. These protesters have nothing against the police because there is no tension

between the pro-life groups and the law like the police and the organizations like the Black Lives Matter is.

In conclusion, the Whiteness theory and Standpoint theory both represent the issue of whiteness and white privilege, along with how society has made a place for racial groups and organizations in our world. This artifact represents the audience of the protest groups and organizations such as Black Lives Matter and the Blue Lives Matter. Both of these theories show the social construction and social place is our place in the world.

Word Count: 982

## References

Griffin, E. A., Ledbetter, A., & Sparks, G. G. (2019). *A First Look at Communication Theory*.

396.

Parker, P. & Mease, J. (2009). *Beyond the Knapsack: Disrupting the Production of White Racial*

*Privilege in Organizational Practices* (12th ed.). 315.

