# SOME ASPECTS OF MEDIA REPORTING ON A MARGINALIZED GROUP

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Abstract: There are numerous definitions of marginalization, discrimination, and similar phenomena, which essentially indicate the process (s) of exclusion of certain persons, even groups, addressed by the definitions. What all of them have in common is that their marginalized position is caused by various factors that they have no or very little influence on. At the same time, there are numerous examples and evidence of the very strong role of all forms of media reporting, which can affect the form and intensity of demarginalization. The aim of this paper is to indicate both processes: creating a negative but also a positive reaction of "media consumers" towards people in focus. The way we describe a person, group, phenomenon, indicates the relationship to that person, a group, or phenomenon, and therefore is a strong determinant of the attitude towards it.

Key words: attitudes, marginalization, media

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#### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

# Marginalization

Why does the different position of individuals in society, its belonging to certain levels, groups and subgroups "produce" marginalization?

We direct our view of the answers to the beginning of action, related to the person "who is marked by unwavering prejudices, preconceptions that structure his horizon of understanding." <sup>5</sup>

The importance of pre-opinion is at least equal to the importance of tradition, because these prejudices, pre-opinions, are a conditio sine qua non of dialogue with tradition, but therefore "understanding" reaches its true possibility only when the pre-opinions with which it begins are not arbitrary. (Majić, 2008: 758).

Basically, we are talking about attitudes, as presentations of behavior, which are discussed in various sciences, primarily in social psychology. logic, sociology, anthropology, defectology, as well as other social sciences.

One of the reasons for such a multiple use of the term is its complexity, because this term can point out different aspects of human behavior in the social environment (Krneta, 1998, according to: Vukajlović, 2003: 13).

They are organized around a central concept, which makes up the value system of that individual, making the authority's organization of attitudes.

There are different aspects of this widely used term, but the differences are still evident. Despite the obvious differences, most authors most often agree:

- The attitude is acquired, ie. it was formed in social interaction;
- It has a dispositional character, ie. represents the readiness to react in a certain way in a social situation;

<sup>5</sup> The space of Gadamer's thinking, and thus of her hermeneutics, raises the question "how is understanding possible?" Majić, I. (2008). Gadamer's hermeneutics - from the "philosophy of listening" to literary-theoretical practice. Philosophical research III year 28 (3), 749–760.

- It has a valuable dimension, ie. reflects the affective relationship between the individual and the phenomenon, which can be expressed in constant acceptance and non-acceptance.
- It is related to behavior, ie. directly or indirectly affects the actions of an individual, directed towards the phenomenon (Krneta, 1998, according to: Vukajlović, 2004: 15).

The nature and extent of the relationship between attitudes and value systems have important implications, not only on the amount of pressure that needs to be mobilized to change them, but also for the type of force that will produce change "(Katz and Stotland, 1959, according to: Vukajlović, B., 2004: 15)<sup>6</sup>. In the beginning, the affective (emotional) component of the attitude is reinforced, especially if it is connected to the value system, which precedes to behavior.

Although the picture of poverty has changed over time, and it is almost as old as humanity, it is possible to observe several evolutions in the perception of the poor and attitudes towards them.

There is agreement that unemployment and low levels of education are the main causes of poverty. Therefore, as being employed today is not security against existential difficulties, poverty can also affect employees, but who have low wages<sup>7</sup>.

The group helps the person who belongs to it to determine their attitudes . As the goup is changed, so do attitudes.

b. Situational change

Attitudes are often changed due to a change in the situation of a person.

c. Imposed changes in behavior

Under certain conditions, a person changes his negative attitude to an object.

d. Contact with the object

The attitude towards people is more favorable if there is more information and contact. A person with prejudices perceives the subject of his prejudices in a new and different way and then it is open to change in attitudes.

e. Changes in the object

The object itself can be changed through the imposed changes in behavior. If the bearer of the attitude notices this, changes in his attitude are caused.

f. The role of information

An important source of changing attitudes is also information about the phenomena which has a certain attitude (Krech & Cruchfild, 1976, cited according to: Vukajlović, 2004: 17).

7 Mostly in the World Bank's analyzes, about 18% of the poor in BiH are mentioned, with the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Krech and Cruchfild cite a number of factors that cause attitudes to be shaped:

a. Changes in membership of the group

The attitude of the society towards poverty throughout history differs, but at the same time their negative attitude can be noticed.

It was considered that certain social groups (eg the disabled) are not to blame for their difficult situation, while on the other hand, the so-called the willfully poor, who chose poverty as their way of life. We are talking about the homeless, alcoholics and the like, although such claims should be taken with great reserve (previously determine the reasons for such a situation).

The basic division is into the so-called absolute and relative poverty<sup>8</sup>. What they have in common, however, is that both are marginalized on the margins of society.

At the global level, we are talking about marginalized societies, some communities may be marginalized from the dominant social order, ethnic groups in certain social processes, while families or individuals may be marginalized in the narrower space, locality.

There are examples that the "status" of marginalization is variable to some extent. Thus e.g. individuals or groups may at one point enjoy high social status, but as changes in society occur, they lose their status and become marginalized (Kagan, C. et al., 2002: 3).

It can be said, however, that most sociologists and economists do not equate poverty and exclusion, but define poverty as one of the forms of social exclusion<sup>9</sup>.

The agreement is, however, that marginalized people have relatively little control over their lives and the resources available to them.

We traditionally talk about the marginalization of the so-called minority groups<sup>10</sup>, which essentially indicates an *act /acting*, exclusion, "putting aside", insufficient or inadequate acceptance, rejection, separation of a part from the whole.

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possibility of an increase and 20% due to the loss of income of many households due to the COVID pandemic 19.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Indicators of absolute poverty are the economic situation, a certain level of (un) earned income, housing conditions, etc., while relative poverty means ensuring an acceptable standard in relation to time and space ("famous" consumer basket).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> The comprehensiveness of the concept of exclusion is related to the problems of its definition. For now, we cannot talk about an agreed definition of social exclusion.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> The name "minority group" is often used, which calls into question whether the rich are marginalized in a poor society?!

Etymologically, an *act /acting* means an action, action and behavior in which at least two actors participate, the one who commits the *act/acting* and the one towards whom the *act / acting* is directed. They do not have significance role for themselves, unless they enter into some form of communication, which (theoretically) they can equally direct and manage. In practice, however, this is not the case.

Being marginalized in itself indicates the impossibility or difficulty of accessing a mechanism to reduce or eliminate ("do") marginalization.

Thus, the "path" to de / marginalization can be viewed in the following lines: attitudes  $\leftrightarrow$  prejudices  $\leftrightarrow$  stereotypes  $\leftrightarrow$  discrimination and / or segregation  $\leftrightarrow$  marginalization.

# MEDIA REPORTING AND MEDIA COMMUNICATION

It is immanent to human nature and has been present since the beginning of life<sup>11</sup>, communication develops, adapts and changes in accordance with biopsychosocial influences.

In our case, we view communication as a process that marks social events, which makes it one of the basic prerequisites for action in society.

It is similarly marked by Tubbs, who indicates joint action, ie co-action, which implies dialogue (Tubbs, 2012).

In some societies, mass communication is perceived as a kind of social subsystem, which unites all those who participate in mass communication (Kagan, et al. 2002: 36).

Different media (all of them written, physical, electronic, mechanical, etc.) are a means of communication, they are intermediaries between the holders of power and citizens. Their basic role is to inform the public about current and important topics for that society, in order to form public opinion of citizens (it is possible, unfortunately, to talk about the increasing manipulation of citizens).

The newborn prefers to listen to speech rather than other sounds, and prefers to observe the face in relation to other visual stimuli. Children are especially focused on other people from birth, they enjoy interacting with them, their touch, smell, face and voice. Neurobiological orientation to the social world is the foundation and basis of the development of communication and social learning. See more in: Ljubešić, M., Cepanec, M. (2012). Early communication: what is the secret ?, Speech Therapy, 3 (1), 35-45.

The function of the media depends on the social or political system in which they operate. This has been confirmed since the so-called "Authoritarian theories of the press", derived from the state philosophy of absolutism, where "truth" is allowed only to "sages", who also have leading functions in society.

Theories emerge and develop normative notions of how the mass media function in different societies (Frederick et al., 2006: 38). McQuail complements these theses with two theories based on the current social order and the development of new media (McQuail, 1983). We are interested in the issue of media approach to ethics, ie the approach of media owners to ethical standards and their respect and application in the media.

Some research shows that the concept of responsibility in journalism in BiH is mainly interpreted in the context of the relationship between media owners and elites, and that the ultimate goal / outcome of media owners is profit, which is realized in the form of financial gain and / or (political and social ) power and influence (Turčilo and Buljubašić, 2020: 33).

"A 2011 survey found that most media owners neglect social role and responsibility by prioritizing profits. In the relentless struggle to attract and retain the attention of the public and the interests of advertisers, ethical standards suffer first, and the social role of the media is placed in a subordinate position in relation to their business role "(Turčilo and Vukojević, cited in: Turčilo and Buljubašić, 2020: 33).

The media can encourage and influence certain behavior, contribute to the development of society as a whole, encourage tolerance, reduce differences between social strata, stimulate imagination and creativity, but can equally strongly influence the development of negative behaviors (especially children), such as excessive consumerism, obsession with entertainment, language skills, pornography, gender discrimination (but other grounds, such as attitudes towards migrants)<sup>12</sup>, passivation, violence, but both behaves depending on their role in society, or the goals of the current government.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Some media outlets have repeatedly humiliated people who try to build a happier life by constantly repeating the word migrant, which is mostly mentioned in a very negative or victimization context, because they do not have even the basic things for living.

However, the most important positive aspects of the media are information, education and entertainment.

Speaking about the influence of the media, Tanta points out manipulation as a method of controlling behavior, due to the following facts:

- a) Manipulation is a "painless persuasion" that neither individuals nor the general public are aware of because they do not feel coercion.
- b) Manipulation is based on scientific knowledge of man (psychology, psychiatry, sociology, neurology, neurolinguistics, semantics, sociolinguistics, etc.).
- c) The dimensions of power have been expanded (mass media newspapers, television, radio, internet), modern communication technologies (mobile phones, internet and intranet)
- d) Dependence of individuals indirectly or a group, or the public as a whole directly on powerful organizations and institutions that have a monopoly on information globally or locally.
- e) Division of labor and specialization of functions prevent individuals from gaining a complete picture of what is happening in society, so they are forced to take information from those who offer it.
- f) Manipulation is not an institutionalized form of power and therefore the one who has that power does not have to explain when, how, why and for what purpose he will use it, so the public remains deprived of the real intention that remains secret "(Tanta, 2007: 21).

"Manipulation, therefore, can be explained as a deliberate, systematic and controlled procedure or set of procedures by which the manipulator, using symbolic means, in suitable psychosocial conditions, sends to the public (mass) through the media (mass communication channels) certain messages with the intention of influencing people's beliefs, attitudes and behavior "(Tanta, 2007: 22).

The term "public opinion" was vividly defined by journalist and columnist Joseph Kraft, who said: "Public opinion is an unknown God to whom modern people burn incense" (Kraft, cited in: Tanta, 2007: 15).

The fact that emotions strongly influence our attitude towards the "object", "is the double-edged sword of communication" (Tanta, 2007: 15)<sup>13</sup>, which the media uses very successfully. The possibility of real public

<sup>13</sup> Emotions are a constructive and powerful force of persuasion, creating relationships when

communication in creating public opinion within media systems based on mass communication is difficult to establish.

Being inclined to the masess, we reject self-responsibility to the masses and surrender to it with a sense of relief and no need to judge for ourselves, because the feeling of freedom also brings the possibility of risk associated with their own decisions, requires taking a stand and opposing various claims. We surrender to ready-made opinions, because they are easier to adopt and because we feel comfortable (Gavranović, 2009: 133).

A study of the media effects of the German Research Association (DFG, 1986: 1) states that we still know too little about the relationship between mass communications and society, and about the laws of media performance (Kunszik & Zipfel, 2006: 34).

## ON RESEARCH WITH DISCUSSION

The growing prevalence of social media in everyday life is noticeable, which, in addition to the possibility of choosing and the way of presenting content, also gives the possibility of influencing the creation of the so-called public opinion, is the subject of our interest. Precisely on the notion of opinion, the notion of public opinion creates stereotypes on the basis of which a large part of our lives is determined. It is possible to draw the conclusion that it is not the opinion that guides and determines us, but it is the stereotype that emerges from the opinion.

We will look at the role of the media in relation to de / marginalization from the aspect of the media's interest in our target group (the poor) and the way they report on them.

In relation to the first aspect, the indicators are the representation in the media space, and for the second aspect we offer indicators on the manner of reporting, the use of adequate terms, the selectivity of information.

We set a general hypothesis and open a discussion, focusing on numerous examples and evidence of the very strong role of all forms of media

they are sincere and positive, but they cause suspicion when they are negative and insincere. Good communication with the public begins with good conversation, a skill that involves listening, reacting, being interested, and understanding each other's thoughts; however, this is not always the case. See: (Tanta, 2007: 15).

reporting, which can affect the form and intensity of attitudes about individuals, members of groups covered by marginalized (economic poverty).

Guided by data from the analysis of media content in the last year<sup>14</sup>, and for the purposes of this paper, we give only some examples, which, in our opinion, are representatives of the hypothesis. Preliminary data show that the largest number of media reports (newspaper articles and TV shows) are aimed at representing families in which poverty is noticeable due to lack of material resources<sup>15</sup>.

We present the first example:

<u>National Award for Decent Reporting on Poverty and Social</u> Exclusion<sup>16</sup>

Girl Kristina (surname omitted, although published on the official website), spent all nine years of her life on half-ruined farms, without electricity and water, without bathroom, TV, computer and games and all that makes a beautiful childhood.

.....

"My mother told me that I need to learn well to become someone, so I took it seriously from the beginning. I study by candlelight, which has a strange smell when it goes out. The teacher says" just keep it up, "you'll be a wolf.

.....

Vuka is grateful for the gift and hopes that there are still good people who will help with tidying up the apartment. Kristina can't wait to move to a new apartment, although the children who used to humiliate her are now friendly towards her.

<sup>14</sup> In the next period, it is planned to publish the results of the mentioned research, the authors.

<sup>15</sup> Only the most watched: TVBN, The Hand of Salvation; TV HAJAT, Give me your hand; TV PINK, Roof of Love; RTV (took over other TVs) With Tamar in action;

<sup>16</sup> May 21, 2021.13.08 | Source: RTV (Nevena Vrtulek), http://www.rtv.rs/sr\_lat/vojvodina/nagradjena-emisija-o-siromastvu-kristinina-nova-kuca-(audio)\_1241015.html, visited, 21.5.2021.

Another story:17

A family with seven children, aged 16 to a small baby in her arms. They live in a small dilapidated house, which is threatened with the roof collapsing from the first snow cover. "They are happy" because "children are wealth". The "hand of salvation" brings more or less well-known media personalities, who "always respond" to such actions. A 12-year-old boy turns his back, DOESN'T WANT to be photographed, but his shoulders can be seen shaking because of crying.

In all examples (most often on TV, but also in other media), the focus is on families with minor children, and often some of them are children with disabilities. There is a "pattern": dilapidated house or tenancy status, mostly the father works "for a wage", the family is mostly large, "children are the greatest wealth", in turn the children say their wishes that do not differ from show to show.

A roof that doesn't leak, a room with a light bulb instead of a candle, a fridge that is not empty, a bathroom with hot water, are the wishes of 21st century children in a country on its way to the "European Union" (mostly younger children).

Praises go to those who gave, donated, bought, every opportunity is used "not to forget" that they helped. <u>Praise</u> for such individuals (there are also those who do not even want to hear the story, where human values are measured by the size of the warehouse, the BMW model in front of the house, etc. - example from the action House of Love, TV PINK, 6.8.2021.).

How have "MI" (media and "media consumers") contributed to reducing marginalization?

Where are Kristina and her seven other brothers and sisters, mother Vuka?

Where is Kristina, the girl who got the house, her room, who now has other toys besides "little blue teddy bear?"

Kristina's little girl, who was told by her teacher that she believed

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> It is interesting to note that in the last few years, the focus has been on poor families, with more members of the family household, where poverty is the main cause of social exclusion. Other needs are not discussed. Only shows in regular terms are listed, although in daily, especially informative shows, this topic is the most common (in relation to other marginalized groups and individuals).

in her that she would be the best in school, finally got friends from school and her surroundings with a humanitarian action?

The boy "who is shrugging his shoulders because of crying" got his room with a light bulb, instead of a dimmed candle, but we don't know if he got "friends".

To report in this way, again in practice marginalization and social exclusion are equated with (material) poverty.

Of course, such depictions can have positive consequences, but such depictions are usually accompanied by feelings of pity.

We are sure that there is an agreement that none of us wants to be in a situation of pity. Psychologists count the emotion of pity as unpleasant emotion, which contains the awareness that the pity being is in a miserable and hopeless situation, in a situation which he is unable to cope with. We (who are sorry) are in a far better position, which may make us a little uncomfortable, and maybe our conscience "bites us".

Compassion deprives dignity of a human, and it adds energy to suffering. Compassion is actually running away from real contact, because you put yourself in a position to be worth more and you don't give that person the opportunity to make real contact with them. This contact is made on the basis of social, class divisions, which have nothing to do with the real situation within ourselves.

A very important component in reporting on "our group" is the obligation of journalists to show and portray children and minors with extreme caution, and to comply with the best interests of the child in accordance with the Press Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

"When we talk about the direct participation of underage persons in audiovisual media services, it should always be such as not to cause distress or fear, or impair their physical, mental and emotional development and dignity, whether the person is alone or his parent or the guardian or other legally responsible person has given consent. According to their age, naivety and susceptibility to influence, the underage should never be questioned about private family matters or topics that may be beyond their comprehension "(Council of Europe, 2019: 23).

The development of perceptions of the social environment has been the subject of numerous studies (including Mullen, Brown, Smith, 1992), which show that "social categorization" occurs between the ages of three and four.

The need to belong to a peer group and relationships with peers are a very important factor in a child's development and form an important developmental context within which children acquire a large number of behaviors, skills, attitudes and experiences.

Rejection by peers is a very difficult and frustrating social outcome for a child, and therefore the reactions of the rejected (marginalized) child and adolescent on a very wide continuum, from apathy to aggression, are possible.

# CONCLUSIONS AND SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

Why the "invisibility" of the position of marginalized groups? The main causes can be divided into 5 groups:

- 1. "Traditional, patriarchal consciousness of the population who (poverty, supplement to the author of the text) does not want to" see "disability, up to" hiding "for example, children with special needs in family settings, subconsciously considering it as "shame". Part of that is the apathy of the public to all the problems in BiH society.
- 2. Media scenes are dictated by political parties, government policies at all levels. The focus of these policies is neither the general social problem, nor the position and problems of marginalized groups. In the news programs of the media, which logically follow public policies, this leaves no room for real social problems, except when they are "incidental" in nature, such as strikes, roadblocks or occasional protests by the veteran population. However, this is also related to public policies, ie. their weaknesses.
- 3. In this context, a special problem for the media is the extensive coverage of nationally colored political conflicts that dominate the political scene and that never touch the social situation, and not even the position of marginalized groups.
- 4. Political pressures and influence on the media have been intensified in the last year, imposing topics of interest to political parties and

strengthening their positions. This additionally hinders not only the freedom of the media, but also the possibility of media coverage of social problems and the problems of marginalized groups. Part of that problem is financial pressures and the destabilization of the financing of public TV and radio services.

5. The Reform Agenda, in the set of necessary reforms to complete the transition process in BiH, does not pay attention to reforms in the social sector, nor policies to reduce poverty and improve the position of marginalized groups "(Coalition of Marginalized Groups, 2018).

By actively involving and reporting on the problems of various types of marginalization,

the recommendations are especially relevant to public service broadcasters, where the media should make the public aware of the importance of non-institutional support services for all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, not just marginalized groups.

We start from the assumption that there is an understanding of the development of social relations, that there is an agreement on the basic characteristics (indicators) that indicate differences between social groups, that there are justified reasons for different attitudes and even different value systems.

What is the information (indicators) that the media can offer "us", how will humanitarian actions not get "friends"?

It is recommended to discuss the reasons that bring a family into poverty, to discuss support systems, "strategies" for poverty reduction, which are still a "dead letter on paper".

The way we describe a person, group, phenomenon, indicates the relationship to that person, group or phenomenon, and thus is a strong determinant of attitude towards it.

No matter how much we try, even in this text, to talk about poverty outside the narrative context in which, using adjectives and phrases "poor", "hungry", "homeless", "often dirty", etc., we use more affirmative statements, like those "diligent", "making an effort", "optimistic", "looking for the best opportunities...", we will do almost nothing to eliminate or at least reduce the feeling of marginalization.

Being marginalized is a feeling that an individual (but also a group) suffers because of stereotypes based on some external, visible, perceptual indicators, which are most often visible evidence of inadequate functioning of the system.

There is a fine line between compassion, and empathy. Therefore, the media face a great challenge and skill so as not to come from a situation of desire for support to move into a process that will further strengthen the feeling of marginalization, but also not start the process of changing negative attitudes towards such a defined target group.

Reporting on families (and especially every member of that family) is a "slippery" path to marginalization, because from the point of view of social sensitivity and solidarity towards marginalized groups, this stereotypical and sensationalist portrayal portrays them as poor, losers, irrelevant characters, excluded from society, closed in predefined roles.

"So the poor, the disabled or the elderly are portrayed as poor people who need to shed a tear and not ask themselves: - why are there so many poor people in this society or - who is responsible for leaving the old and sick to themselves or (exclusively) their own families or - why people with disabilities are not provided with adequate jobs, access to public facilities, adequate education, etc." (Dardić and Milojević, 2010: 21).

In reporting on marginalized groups, the ultimate goal should be, if you are socially responsible, to influence institutions to improve public policies and practices towards marginalized groups in every society.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> The most populous country in the world, China, has reduced poverty, in 1981 the extreme poverty rate was 88%, in 2015 0.7%, introducing basic measures: strengthening the economy / industry, preserving the environment and investing in education, source: https://balkans.aljazeera.net/program/al-jazeera-svijet/2020/12/27/al-jazeera-svijet-kina-pobijedila-siromastvo

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