

Exploring Racial Interpellation through Political Satire

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ABSTRACT

In North America, race and racialization can be seen as products of domination that are (re)produced and perpetuated through the mechanisms of racial interpellation. This concept refers to the fact that identity and subjectivity are imposed on racialized subjects through institutions and practices such as racial profiling. In this sense, literature on race, racialization, and resistance in North America reveals that racial profiling is a key issue in the region even if a façade of post-racialism trumps the existence of ongoing injustices, inequalities, and limitations of freedom faced by racialized minorities. In this respect, this research emphasizes that language, representations and practices are at the core of this issue as components of dynamics of racial interpellation. This research also acknowledges the existence of endless struggles for respect among racialized minorities, specifically Arabs and Muslims in North America. These struggles seek to allow racialized subjects to be seen as members of a society in which race and differences are not the underlying concern. Since humour (satire) has historically been recognized as a tool of disruption of dominant discourses, in this research we ask: how do comedians issued from racialized minorities face these struggles? With ongoing atrocities faced by racialized minorities, in this paper, I seek to reflect on how the intersection of race and comedy can be used to negotiate (accept, tolerate, and resist) the reproduction of racialized subjects. I focus on the way political satire faces Althusserian ideological interpellation (later translated to racial interpellation by Frantz Fanon). Can the latter be resisted or challenged through humour? This thesis argues that when race and comedy intersect it allows comedians to voice challenges often faced by racialized communities in order to resist an existing reality and create new meanings. As Frantz Fanon once mentioned: “Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill it, or betray it”. Is the

fight against racialization part of the mission that popular comedians of minority communities have given to themselves?

Introduction & Overview

Frantz Fanon once mentioned that “it is clear that what divides this world is first and foremost what species, what race one belongs to” (Fanon, 1952, p. 5). Although claims of neutrality and colourblindness trump the existence of racism in North America, race continues to pervade discourses, representations and practices present in society and adopted by the state (Saha, 2013). The Canadian province of Ontario is no exception in this sense. For instance, as we will see in this research, The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has documented experiences about racialization and racism in the province. According to their report *Under Suspicion*, racial profiling “is an insidious and damaging type of racial discrimination “that concerns dignity, safety, and security (OHRC, 2017, p. 3). As a matter of fact, following 9/11, Ontarian institutions of safety and security deployed discriminatory practices against people “of colour”, particularly those who appeared Arab or Muslim. Although values such as equality are constantly invoked by the government, the OHRC’s work points to the fact that racism exists in our society. Similarly, the World Economic Forum recently highlighted that systemic racism persists within our societies (Yitamben, 2020).

Race can be seen as emerging when individuals face societal values and practices leaning politically, socially and culturally on phenotypical differences. Thus, individuals become racialized subjects that engage and interact with ideology through common-sense rhetoric, representations, and discourses. In fact, race is a condition and a barrier that has profound effects (DiAngelo, 2011). These profound effects take shape in every aspect of life; essentially, reducing people “of colour” to an identity that distinguishes between good people “of colour” and bad people “of colour”. Although individuals may become aware of the identity or label imposed on them, they may not be able to negotiate this due to barriers that will be presented throughout this

research. This question can be explored through the theoretical concepts of ideological interpellation and racial interpellation. Indeed, with the inclusion of Fanonian thinking on race within the framework of Althusserian interpellation, the concept of racial interpellation emerges as a powerful tool to understand the societal processes that provide identities, positions, and choices to people “of colour”.

In North America, the problem of racial profiling and racism manifests in visible and invisible ways often placing a burden on people “of colour”. In this study, I focus on racial profiling as an example through which we are able to recognize the interpellation of racialized folks. Although it is statistically significant, Domise (2019) reveals that racial profiling is often seen as an accident or as something done in a discreet way or as a problem occurring only through subtle forms of racism such as insults and dynamics of (mis)recognition. However, racism is indeed present in our society. Although minorities may not be aware of the fact that they are being profiled, their racialization still hinders their ability to belong and participate in Western society. In this context, racialized comedians present an interesting position as they speak about experiences of race, racism, and racialization, yet do so in a strategic manner. They may also represent illusion and hope and recognition in spite of the pre-conceived notions and common-sense rhetoric imposed on them. Interestingly, they embody a struggle and a journey which is under-studied in academia. In this research, this journey will be explored through the analysis of stand-up comedy of six comedians of different racialized backgrounds who are often (mis)recognized as Arabs and Muslims.

Although this thesis is not about immigration, but about racism, a short comment on immigration from countries of the Global South to Canada is pertinent here. As we all know, Canada is usually seen as an accepting and safe country for immigrants and racialized folks.

However, this idea dismisses a history of discriminatory practices. Historically, Canada considered ‘whiteness’ as a precondition for citizenship. This meant denying racialized folks’ entry to the West. In fact, immigration was previously about securing the white majority and later occurred through new waves (Thobani, 2007). Immigration from the Global South, particularly from Arab and Muslim countries to Canada dates back to only 50 years, when Canadian immigration policies changed because of humanitarian and economic reasons (Wingfield, 2006). After 9/11, immigration from the Global South to Canada was seen through sociolegal constructs, political inventions, and distinctions related to the idea of national security. In this respect, public safety concerns increased and visualized immigrants as individuals who could be ungovernable, unknowable, and unpredictable (Pratt, 2005). The Anti-Terrorist Act and Bill C-36 gave new meaning to immigrants and refugees who were now seen as deserving or undeserving of life in the country. In this context, immigration and citizenship policies gave birth to tropes that linked individuals to experiences of discrimination and disrespect justified by notions such as security and threat.

Certainly, using the theoretical framework of interpellation to understand this kind of problems is not a novelty. In fact, many studies have demonstrated the role of interpellation as a process in which subjects are constituted in relation to powerful structures and ideology (Youmans, 2017) and as a process that ensures individuals are named, categorized and integrated in society in accordance with state expectations (Azeez & Barrera, 2017). Whether the individual is aware of his or her subjectivity, the underlying idea of interpellation is that subjectivity is imposed on the person (Snyman, 2008). This theoretical framework provides a lens for the experiences of minorities pertaining to race, racialization, and racism in North America. In fact, people “of colour” are assigned a racial identity through situations of racism that involves a violent dynamic

of interpellation. As we will see throughout this research, interpellation supposes the existence of an endless cycle in which racialized folks are constantly brought back to a social position in which a particular subjectivity and identity are given to them by the state, its institutions, and people. In this sense, performances by stand-up comedians allow us to look at this endless cycle through a discourse that is shared in a creative and informing manner. However, it is important to keep in mind that performances by comedians of colour may (re)produce the same relations and conditions they seek to denounce. It is also important to note that these performances are interpreted in relation to the theory of interpellation and can be exaggerated. This research will explore this phenomenon in an effort to contribute to the literature on race, interpellation and comedy. This thesis argues that the intersection of race and comedy is particularly important when we explore subjects such as racial interpellation. It allows us to navigate and understand both stereotypical narratives and representations and the reactions of minorities. However, at the risk of (re)producing the same relations it seeks to challenge.

The first chapter of this thesis contains the theoretical framework which not only guides this research, but is also used to analyze comedic productions in North America. I opted for this unusual structure because by starting with the theoretical framework we gain a better understanding of the subjects identified in the literature review of this research. The chapter begins with Louis Althusser's discussion of interpellation as a starting point to understand the way in which individuals become subjects through ideology (narratives). I also explore Judith Butler's understanding of the role of the subject in the process of interpellation. More specifically, I discuss her ideas on why and how a subject is constituted and how this subject may or may not be aware of their social position. Lastly, Frantz Fanon is crucial to this study and to interpellation since he allows us to understand the process of racialization in terms of racial interpellation. His

incorporation of race in interpellation is useful to reflect the ongoing violence faced by minorities. Although these theorists present the main elements of the theoretical framework, James Martel's ideas on misinterpellation are also included in the chapter. As we will see, each author offers insight into the process of interpellation.

In Chapter 2, academic documents pertaining to race, racialization, and racism in North America are discussed as part of the literature review. This includes discussions concerning the conceptualization, function, and treatment of race in the West's Academia (Canada and The United States). Academics emphasize how social constructions of race often translate into negative treatment, atrocities, and forms of oppression faced by minorities. A particular concern is that individuals who appear Arab or Muslim are often "interpellated" as specific types of racialized subjects in North America. As we will see throughout this study, they are referred to through the divisions of good and bad subjects who are expected to mirror state ideologies (Volpp, 2002). When they contradict these ideologies, they are seen as threatening to the political and social stability of the state, its institutions and practices. Political satire intervenes this aspect as it seems to allow individuals to push boundaries and challenge experiences that are not typically brought forward.

Chapter 3 provides an explanation of how I link theory and methods, particularly for the purpose of this study. I present the methodology of the research. In particular, I justify the use of thematic analysis and identify the racialized comedians I study. Their positions in North America as self-identified performers, comedians, and artists "of colour" are also described. I present the concept of transmedia as a useful methodological tool to explore the critical process of interpellation in our digital era.

Chapter 4 contains an analysis and discussion of ideological interpellation and racial interpellation through political satire. Comedic performances reveal individual experiences of race that may be shared with a variety of people. These performances present themselves as a type of subject that not only has the potential to reveal, but also challenge existing forms of racial oppression. This is explored and discussed through three prominent subjects which are: tropes and experiences of racialized minorities, challenges related to racialization, and negotiation of interpellation. As we will see, the intersection of race and comedy opens a possibility for resistance and presents itself as a promising field of study (Bilici, 2012).

Lastly, Chapter 5 concludes this study by reiterating the importance of both the choices and identities imposed and the role of the racialized person in the process of interpellation. Given the fact that many ordinary individuals do not have a platform to reveal their experiences of race, racialized comedians present a possibility for common experiences to be heard. By revealing their experience, they sometimes question narratives and practices that would not typically be challenged in mainstream platforms and news media. As a result, they present a possibility, a potential for racialized minorities to be understood, acknowledged, and accepted for who they are and the experiences they have encountered.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

To present how race and racialization operate in North America and how racialized minorities react to instances of racism, it is pertinent to first discuss the theoretical framework that allows for an understanding of the conditions and relations of racialized minorities. It is purposeful to present the theoretical framework first because this chapter allows for a better understanding of the subjects identified as part of the literature review presented in chapter two. This chapter presents the theoretical framework of this research. I will discuss the works of Louis Althusser, Judith Butler, Frantz Fanon, and James Martel. As it is well known, Althusser's theory provides a base for understanding the notion of interpellation as well as the way other scholars have used his theory and gone beyond. In this sense, while Althusser presents interpellation as the creation of subjects through ideology, he dismisses the role of resistance. For this reason, I include Judith Butler's ideas about the active role of subjects and resistance. However, since her perspective lacks the inclusion of race, I refer to Fanon's perspective which includes race and resistance. On the other hand, James Martel discusses interpellation from a perspective that acknowledges its flaws. All four perspectives remain pertinent to this research because they provide concepts pertinent to interpellation such as subjectivity, identity, (mis)recognition, and race. To understand ideological interpellation, racial interpellation, and misinterpellation, I will present their theories separately in the following sections.

1.1 - Louis Althusser: ideological interpellation

Louis Althusser conceptualized interpellation as the phenomenon in which norms are internalized and become a part of the individual; hence, creating a subject (Chong, 2008). As a structural Marxist, Althusser first introduced the notion of ideological interpellation in *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus* in which he used ideology and the state to discuss how subjects are

constituted in the political and social realm. Althusser's writing and theoretical work were directed towards political aspects to use the past as a way to encounter situations in the present (Diefenbach, 2013). More specifically, as a way to use Marxist philosophy to enable knowledge production and the renewal of philosophy. Althusser extended Marxist notions of historical materialism by referring to the mode of production as made possible by ideological class struggles. (Althusser, 1971). What is important to consider from this analysis is that Althusser believes that power is everywhere in society. In other words, power concerns people who are part of authority as well as people who are subjected to it time and time again. In this sense, the mode of production involves systemic operations (relations of production between the productive forces), practices, and values that remain consistent. Althusser indicates that every social formation depends on the reproduction of economic and social conditions of the mode of production (e.g. class struggle, social divisions, social positions, and capitalism). Moreover, he signifies that the creation of subjects, social classes, and practices is only possible through the ideological production of the material conditions (Althusser, 1971). In this sense, the state, the law, and ideology allow institutions, organizations and practices to rule over individuals and (re)produce social relations between them.

Althusser's vision of ideology builds on the work of Antonio Gramsci. While Gramsci focused on the function of intellectual work and popular culture, Althusser focuses on the state apparatus (Peter, 2009). Althusser suggests that subjects are created through knowledge in written and oral discourses embedded in institutions and practices. He believes that "ideology is an imaginary representation of individuals' imaginary relations to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser, 1971, p. 109). This meaning that individuals do not understand directly their own conditions in society, rather they use representations of their relations to existing conditions. In

this sense, ideology pertains to a ‘system of ideas’ that is not only a part of institutions but also a part of people’s consciousness (Filippini, 2017).

For Althusser, ideology, the state, and institutions in society work simultaneously as the ideological apparatus that constitutes a particular illusion. This illusion refers to an ideology that interpellates individuals as subjects and establishes the class positions of members of society (Filippini, 2017). This meaning that ideology (e.g. knowledge, ideas, and common sense) have the ability to (re)produce class struggles and ideological subjects. This occurs through different institutions such as the church or the media (Bargu, 2019). Althusser also identified systems of representation such as images, myths, and concepts as significant aspects of ideology. These elements exist before a subject, in terms of culture and practices, and later “absorb the subject” (Diefenbach, 2013, p. 295). Diefenbach (2013) analyzes Althusser’s work to build on the relationship between politics and ideology. He explains that knowledge plays a role in systemizing individuals, ideas, and practices which are open to different interpretations and changes. Moreover, this relationship creates room for an individual or group to take a stand, accomplish a political task, and create new possibilities (Diefenbach, 2013, p. 333). However, for Althusser, this last aspect (the creation of new possibilities) is impossible as subjects are trapped within ideology.

Althusser refers to ideological subjects as individuals who are recognized and misrecognized through the process of ideological interpellation. The process can be seen through a hierarchal interaction with authorities and members of society. Choi (2013) explains the theoretical process through Althusser’s example of a police officer and a pedestrian. In this situation, a cop calls to the pedestrian: “Hey, you there!” The pedestrian turns around. The moment the pedestrian turns around and responds to what they are addressed, they are constituted as a subject (Diefenbach, 2013). As a result, Althusser indicates that an individual becomes a subject

(Lloyd, 2007). He conceptualizes interpellation through language which for him allows people to understand one another (Diefenbach, 2013). As a result, hermeneutics plays a significant role in the process of interpellation because interpellation arises from a struggle that involves language (discourses, tropes), interactions, and representations (stereotypes). In other words, Althusser believes that subjects are defined by their position in language and in systems of representation, ideas, and beliefs (Diefenbach, 2013).

Ideological interpellation from Althusser's perspective is a process of hegemonically providing an identity (Bassel, 2008). Although Althusser refers to the phenomena as ideological interpellation, scholars highlight that there are different types of interpellation which render Althusser's scenario as public interpellation. This is because individuals are given an identity through language and knowledge which means that subjects are constituted as a result of different types of discourse. Interpellation works as an unnoticed process. This refers to subjects being unaware (unconscious) of their imposed subjectivity. With the previous example of the cop and pedestrian in mind, Diefenbach (2013) suggests that while interpellation consists of an internal element of subjectivity, it also pertains to structural conditions such as the relationship between the state, practices, and individuals. This relationship will be further explored in the analysis chapter.

Althusser indicates that nine out of ten times, the subject responds to the hail that was directed to them; thus, proving themselves as a good subject. Hence, Althusser differentiates between the good subject and the bad subject. Good subjects are honourable individuals who are politically passive, economically productive, and ideologically submissive (Azeez & Gaitan-Barrera, 2017). These subjects abide by the institutional framework they are presented with such as representations and ideologies in society. Spivak (1994) further explains good subjects by

referring to them as legal subjects who hold strong western values and abide by them. In comparison, the bad subject refers to individuals who do not respond to their subjectivity. Scholars who discuss Althusser indicate that these subjects tend to question society's structure and attempt to rebel against normalized representations and beliefs. This also refers to individuals who are not a subject yet in the process of interpellation. With this in mind, let us stress the fact that Althusser presents the subject as unconscious when in reality the subject can be conscious and aware of his or her interpellation (Lampert, 2015). While unconscious subjects refer to individuals who are unaware of their interpellation, the conscious individual is someone who is aware of their subjectivity and social relations.

So, Althusser's vision of interpellation succeeds nine out of ten times. In these cases, interpellation is successful in creating a subject who submits to ideology (Diefenbach, 2013). However, what happens if we focus on the ten percent? (Martel, 2017). Althusser indicates that when the process fails, it does not fail as a result of resistance, but it may fail when interpellation is misrecognized. While interpellation succeeds as a sort of recognition, Althusser highlights that individuals may misrecognize their subjectivity. As a result, interpellation does not allow freedom of identity to persist. For Althusser, there may be freedom but only in the sense of "shifting from one identification, one interpellation to another" (Balibar, 2015, p. 13). Interpellation also persists as a mirror structure which "subjects the subjects to the subject" (Althusser, 1971, p. 180). For example, the mirror structure demonstrates the process of interpellation by using a mirror as a tool that subjects use to contemplate their own image. As a way for individuals to recognize the way, they are seen by others. This leads to mutual recognition among subjects and also leads individuals to behave according to their subjectivity.

Scholars have argued that Althusser presented a philosophy in which there were ‘unresolved challenges’ (Diefenbach, 2013). What this suggests is that interpellation, as presented by Althusser, is limited because the process does not always succeed. Consequently, there is an aspect of interpellation that can be left unfinished and interrupts the full submission to the ideological command (Choi, 2012). However, Balibar suggests that Althusser does not offer an escape to interpellation (Bargu, 2015). While he suggests that knowledge is produced through encounters, he dismisses the potential of resistance when he believes that subjects’ submission to ideology is unaware (Diefenbach, 2013, p. 146). Diefenbach (2013) highlights that it is not enough to say how resistance can occur, rather individuals and communities must first understand the relations of domination in which they live. In the previous chapter, these relations of domination were explored in terms of race, racialization and racism in North America.

As indicated by Zizek (1999), Althusser fails to go beyond interpellation to a point in which the subject negotiates and plays an active role in his or her subjectivity. Therefore, Althusser’s theory lacks a performative element. This is because he believes that interpellation succeeds in constituting subjects (even in contexts of misrecognition). However, interpellation may not always succeed and may not reproduce the same relations that it seeks to. In some instances, the subjectivation may be misunderstood as identification. This is because interpellation creates a subject when a person is hailed. However, for Althusser, the subject is already a subject and does not necessarily need to identify themselves with their position. This is because they are preconstructed as a subject through ideology (Diefenbach, 2013). While subjectivation is one’s established identity and identification is what an individual is recognized as by society, both play a crucial role in interpellation because they present the social relations of the subject¹. Bittle &

¹ Aoki (1995) discusses both Althusser and Lacan in order to reveal that subjectivity comes from the elements of the symbolic, real, and the imaginary. It also places human beings in relation to one another.

Frauley (2018) extend this notion by suggesting that certain types of identities and categories are reproduced for the reproduction of the state.

Althusser believes that freedom is only possible with the acceptance of imposed conditions, which involves forms of unfreedom and inequality (Diefenbach, 2013, p. 325). Authors use the example of the freedom to vote which comes with the acceptance of the possibilities and conditions part of the political system. They also suggest that there is a dialectical relationship between knowledge, politics, and change. We hold on to this idea in this research to understand the potential of resistance by racialized minorities. In this research, attaining freedom from interpellation starts by recognizing interpellation (conditions of unfreedom) and reacting in various ways such as through stand-up comedy. Above All, Althusser's theory is rooted in a conception of capitalism in which ideology and ideological subjects can only be challenged through humanism. While Althusser did not address the potential of human beings in terms of resistance, he did highlight how interpellation may fail (in creating a subject). From his discussion of interpellation, I will move on to Judith Butler who addresses the role of subjects in this theoretical process.

1.2 - Judith Butler: interpellation

As an American philosopher and gender theorist, Judith Butler influenced political philosophy through her discussions of subjectivity, identity politics, and resistance. While Althusser discusses interpellation from a structural-Marxist lens, Butler goes beyond the structural framework of interpellation (Choi, 2012). More specifically, she builds on Althusser's work by suggesting that conditions of naming and categorizing individuals refer to a process of subject making ² (Snider, 2016). From her perspective, interpellation is a social scene that occurs through language and

² For Butler, subject making occurs through subjection which is the process of being controlled by power and the process of becoming a subject either through Althusser's notion of interpellation or Foucault's notion of discursive productivity (Butler, 1997).

involves a performative aspect of naming, addressing, and calling (Butler, 1997, p. 95). As mentioned previously, this interaction is also referred to as hailing. A performative aspect leads the individual to be an active subject in their interpellation and accept the terms and conditions which he or she is hailed by. For example, by answering the hail, individuals turn back and respond. In this sense, Butler addresses why an individual accepts and holds on to their position as a subject. For her, individuals unconsciously admit themselves as subjects by engaging with social and institutional practices (Butler, 2014). Interestingly, this involvement allows (mis)recognition and, in a certain way, resistance to occur. Butler uses Althusser's example of the police and pedestrian in which the policeman hails to an individual. In this case, the person who is being called upon may not turn around because they may insist on being addressed in another way. This is because they may perceive the name as a social category that could be interpreted in conflictual ways (Butler, 1997). Hence, naming and calling to someone is interpreted in different ways depending on the context. In addition to this, she reiterates that the process of becoming a subject remains the same as in Althusser's vision, but individuals, language, and symbols change. As a result, Butler develops an interesting question concerning the process of interpellation, one that Althusser does not elaborate on: the idea of context.

Butler emphasizes context and refers to interpellation as a staged call that is politically strategic because it is structured by the law and results in consequences pertaining to this same law (Butler, 1997). Since interpellation is a political phenomenon, she argues that the call to individuals does not necessarily guarantee that they will obey. From this point, she builds on the notion of power as something that produces resistance (Butler, 2014). She highlights this by differentiating between the power that interpellates a subject and the power of the subject itself (Bidet, 2011). Whether this subject is good or bad from the lens of interpellation, it indicates that seeing is a

political act in which people are homogenized through certain representations and discourses (Byrne, 2000). Butler suggests that the bad subject in interpellation is relevant because this is the individual who is not a subject yet. The individual who has not responded to the hail. While this person may resist a certain name or category, they cannot transform the laws in place. However, they are capable of challenging and negotiating them through speech and images (Butler, 1997). For her, this is different than the good subject who is constructed for the purpose of power and the state. It is someone who is tied to state ideology and may be (un)aware of his or her position. Nonetheless, this is the person that even if made aware of their position, does not act on it or resist it in any way.

As we have seen, Althusser focused on the creation of subjects in language, particularly in a direct situation of addressing individuals (Žižek, 1999). However, Butler suggests that subjects do not always turn to respond to the hail within an interaction because they may not be aware of their subjectivity, but they may still be interpellated. Lloyd (2007) indicates that Butler refers to this as a situation in which an individual is constituted as a subject without being aware. While language constitutes a subject and is a central component of interpellation, Butler indicates that interpellation functions beyond language by proceeding through contexts involving rituals, practices, and representations.

Butler builds on the work of Althusser & Fanon by adding a particular conception of subjectivity (Snider, 2016). For her, Althusser mentions subjectivity but never reveals the true nature of it within interpellation. Hence, Butler replaces his account of the theory with the inclusion of performativity and resistance. Now, the performative nature of interpellation requires individuals to become subjects first. For Butler, individuals do not decide which race to be, rather their identity is shaped by the power of discourse (Byrne, 2000). In this sense, Butler combines

these notions to represent interpellation as a process in which subjects are called upon, but never perfectly (re)produced.

Since interpellation does not always succeed, there is potential for the subject to negotiate. However, resistance comes with a price which consists of the inability to separate oneself from being an interpellated individual who is categorized and named (Azeez & Gaitan-Barrera, 2017; Davis, 2012). While a performative element of interpellation can include resistance, Butler's addition of subjectivity dismisses the reality that "subjectivity is never free from regulation" (Davis, 2012, p. 886). This meaning, again, that there is a price to pay for subjectivity. For example, Butler indicates that an individual may turn around and resist during the way they are addressed. They may protest or negotiate the category or name they are given by the person calling to them. Although, the individual attempts to resist, the name or category will continue to follow the individual in another situation or context (Butler, 1997).

Throughout her analysis, Butler establishes the process of interpellation as a staged call in which the subject turns around and responds to the name being called. As previously mentioned, she questions why individuals turn and respond in the first place when they know there is nothing to be gained from the encounter (Butler, 1997). While Butler believes that individuals are aware of the fact that there is nothing to be gained from the encounter, not every individual will be aware that when they turn around and respond, they are turning against themselves (Butler, 1997). In this sense, Butler's analysis is limited because she renders interpellation as a powerful phenomenon, yet places a significant amount of power on subjects as they are seen to be aware of what is happening. For this research, interpellation goes beyond this analysis as not every subject will be aware of the fact that responding to the hail leads them to go against themselves. Moreover, this

goes back to Althusser's idea that individuals may be seen to have a choice in this process, however such choices are forced aspects, especially with regards to the social structure and social relations.

Snyman (2008) indicates that Judith Butler has not incorporated race in the process of interpellation. While Butler discusses how race is performed, she does not indicate that the performance of race is done according to recognized and internalized representations and discourses (Byrne, 2000). For example, Butler analyzes the 1991 Rodney King Case. Within her analysis, she highlights police brutality, the power of visual representations, and people's perceptions of race. Snyman (2008) indicates that King had his hand positioned above his head which was not seen as a sign of self-protection, but as an indication of physical threat. Thus, before anything else, the racialized body is seen as dangerous. Snyman (2008) argues that King was hit "for the blows he never delivered, but which he is, by virtue of his blackness, always about to deliver" (p. 104). For Butler, this is a form of interpellation in which the black body is perceived as dangerous even when it is attacked (Seyhan, 2016). She also discusses how race becomes a form of paranoia for non-racialized individuals, but does not elaborate on how subjects engage with race (Snyman, 2008).

So, according to these authors, Butler does not value in a consistent way the element of conscience in interpellation. Also, in spite of her introduction of the notion of context, she seems unable to overcome Althusser's conceptualization of interpellation as language when in reality, the process goes beyond it. For example, she emphasizes that the staged call of interpellation creates subjects through language and concerns the fact of who is called (Butler, 1997; Macherey & Bundy, 2012). As a result, for Butler, a subject is constituted through communicative processes of exclusion and marginalization (Byrne, 2000). In terms of resistance to interpellation, Butler situates herself in line with Althusser. They argue that emancipatory subjectivation is possible in

interpellation by shifting from different identifications and forms of interpellation. Slavoj Žižek addresses the fact that Butler believes performative practices have the ability to shift symbolic norms yet continues to present a subject (similar to Althusser) who is trapped within ideology (Butler, 2014). Moreover, he refers to Butler's analysis of interpellation through the question of identity given to individuals as a forced choice. When this identity is resisted, it may be "doomed to perpetual defeat" (Žižek, 1999, p. 311). In this vein, Lampert (2015) indicates that Butler misinterprets Althusser and that her conceptualization does not provide insight on political practices and forms of action for interpellation. Interestingly, forms of action can be explored through Frantz Fanon's vision of interpellation.

1.3 - Frantz Fanon: racial interpellation

As a postcolonial writer, Fanon explored meanings, impacts, and experiences of racism in the context of European colonialism. He was born in the French colony of Martinique and later became a psychiatrist in Algeria. He used his personal experiences of racism and colonialism to discuss the experience of a black man, the effects of racial prejudice and violence (Fanon, 1963). Fanon is partially a Marxist because he rejects some Marxist idea that economic change alone transforms society. However, he maintains the belief that social classes and historical events are significant for emancipation (Fanon, 1963). This aspect of his thinking could have been influenced by his upbringing in a middle-class family and his exposure to racism during his time in the French military. Fanon's discussion of race, politics, and colonization reflects a representation and critique of hegemony, decolonization, and identity.

In Fanon's discussion, the racialized individual is referred to from different points such as the colonized person, the wretched and the lumpenproletariat, all of whom are made to feel inferior,

struggle for recognition, yet can resist for freedom and identity³ (Fanon, 1963). In this case, he places revolutionary powers in the hands of the proletariats. Fanon gives the example of racial stereotypes from which the peasants (the wretched) must discover their human dignity and destroy the branches and roots of colonialism (Fanon, 1963, p. 15). He extends this idea by arguing that, as long as people are deprived, oppressed, and mistreated, people will continue to struggle for recognition (Fanon, 1963). I use this idea to understand political satire as a tool from which racialized individuals continue to struggle for recognition, truth, and freedom. For Fanon, freedom is about being free from misrecognition. Regardless of the kind of freedom you have, it is important to note that it can be taken away, particularly when you are a person of “colour”. Fanon differentiates between the freedom of a person “of colour” and white freedom to highlight that freedom is determined and influenced by the colour of your skin (Martel, 2017). Although, literature reveals that racialized minorities are oppressed and deprived in different ways (such as stereotypical representations, misrecognition, and mistreatment), Fanon’s analysis can be used to understand the need and potential for resistance among members of racialized communities.

Web Du Bois’ analysis of subjects “of colour” and double consciousness leads Fanon to consider race and ‘being black’ as a problem examined by society. For this reason, before exploring Fanon’s analysis, it is useful to understand Web Du Bois’ notion of double consciousness. In Fanon’s book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, he relies on Du Bois’ analysis to highlight that there is a division between a racialized persons’ true self and the self they are required to portray to the world to be recognized and included in society. Although, both Du Bois

³ Marx refers to the Lumpenproletariat as the lowest members of society who live in urban slums or the countryside. For Fanon, these subjects have more revolutionary potential than the middle class because they do not hold a comfortable position in colonial society (Fanon, 1963). In the literature review, we saw that racialized minorities (Arabs & Muslims) do not hold a comfortable position in society not because of their class, but because of their race.

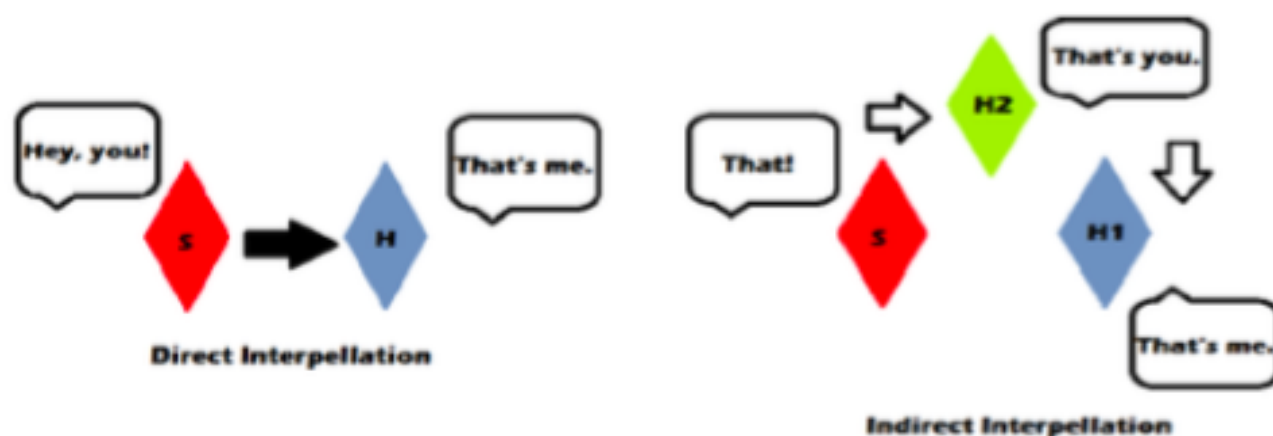
and Fanon discuss this in the case of African Americans, their analysis can be applied to other racialized groups such as Arabs and Muslims in North America.

For Fanon, race is a social problem and a mental condition reflecting characteristics of a person (a subject) that are both internal and external (Fanon, 1963). Fanon uses Web Du Bois' example of looking through oneself through the eyes of others when referring to his experience as a black man who is perceived as dangerous by different members of society (such as the already mentioned little girl calling to her mother). As noted in this scenario, he attempted to 'laugh himself to tears', but that was not possible. This situation is crucial for this research because it prompted his perspective of interpellation to emerge. In this way, Fanon builds on the experience of black people who see themselves as themselves, but "measure their worth by a white yardstick of what is 'normal' or 'desirable' (Fanon, 1963, p. 25).

Fanon's analysis approaches subjects as individuals who are responsible for their social standing and also for their culture. He indicates that "to fight for culture means to fight for liberation" (Fanon, 1963, p. 168). He believes that this will allow the racialized person to truly acknowledge his or her position as a subordinate subject who must prove the value of their culture and identity. This is because historical events and representations of racialized individuals continue to follow them. However, he stresses the fact that in some cases, the subject learns to accept his position and how he is addressed by the dominant culture. This is a result of the varying types of interpellation and the differentiation between good subjects and bad subjects. When we shift the narrative away from 'bad subjects', Fanon highlights that the opposite of his approach to subjects are those individuals who are described by society as people "of colour". These individuals are supposed to be good in terms of following the way the state treats and imprisons you because of

the way you look (Fanon, 2008, p. 22). It is about the person fixing their traits to fit society's image and perception of them and to fit the needs of the state.

For Fanon, interpellation occurs in two forms: direct and indirect interpellation. While direct interpellation consists of acknowledging and responding to the hail of communication, indirect interpellation is when a subject is presented by others and the person accepts the representations, stereotypes or labels from which they are addressed (Pitts, 2015). The following figure illustrates the two forms of interpellation.



[Figure 1. (Pitts, 2015) direct & indirect interpellation]

Both direct and indirect interpellation present subjects as active agents who can be aware of how they are addressed. In this sense, Fanon refers to interpellation as a process in which an individual is encouraged to recognize himself through both subjectivity and objectivity. Based on this perspective, it is possible to say that interpellation is about accepting one's categorization as a subject in plain sight (Macherey, 2012). This acceptance is maintained when subjects cannot reflect or resist interpellation. Fanon's version of interpellation can be seen as a process that is non-reflective and as a process that most of time, involves the unconscious acceptance of one's subjectivity. Not only that, but the subject shifts from being a universal individual to a specific

being (Hage, 2010). By recognizing individuals as racialized individuals, interpellation occurs as people are labelled and categorized.

Interpellation in the Fanonian sense constitutes a subject through visibility (stereotypes, symbols), whereas for Althusser the subject is constituted through language and knowledge (discourses, tropes) (Macherey, 2012). Visibility refers to interpellation delivered in plain sight. Fanon uses the example of a black man who represents race and also has to be (or act as) black in the presence of a white man (Macherey, 2012, p. 42). In this case, Fanon's analysis is different from Althusser's because for him the process does not have to be verbalized, rather interpellation can occur as people submit themselves to visual stereotypes (Macherey, 2012). Pitts (2015) suggests that this means that interpellation goes beyond speech and narratives to a point of recognition, acknowledgement, and understanding derived from common-sense approaches.

For Fanon, interpellation consists of false hope, a false consciousness of forming one's identity that is free from perceived (mis)recognitions. Like Althusser's discussion of false consciousness, Fanon refers to this as a form of deception. For him, subjects may have an active role in their recognition of interpellation, but they face barriers in escaping their interpellated position. For example, members of society have pre-existing notions of racialized bodies. These assumptions problematize racialized bodies before they enter the white world. "It's like going to a place for the first time but realizing that the residents of that place have pre-existing knowledge of you" (Adjei, 2013, p. 29). Although subjectivity may be recognized by racialized folks, Fanon indicates that interpellation maintains the way racialized individuals have been portrayed within discourses and representations. In other words, racial interpellation succeeds as a result of a common consciousness which pertains to the awareness of particular racial and religious categories (such as Blacks, Arabs, and Muslims in the context of this research).

Racial interpellation refers to the process of constituting a racial subject who is expected to behave and appear in certain ways. While racialization portrays what individuals face as a result of race, racial interpellation is the relationship between subjectivation or (mis)recognition and racialization. This meaning that racial interpellation consists of an active role of subjects and their racialization. Moreover, it is a process in which racialized subjects can interact with racialized ideology (Chong, 2008). Fanon highlights that racial interpellation includes conscious and unconscious beings. In this sense, racialized individuals are encouraged to become conscious of their appearance. For Hage (2010), Fanon's inclusion of racialized subjectivity problematizes the position of subjects. By being constituted as a particular kind of subject, individuals engage with their negative conditions (which contribute to a degrading and dehumanizing treatment by others) and a view of oneself that reflects an external gaze.

Fanonian analysis has been critiqued for having a teleological belief which is similar to that behind Althusser's theory. This pertains to the fact that both theorists represent a logic that can be considered as a cycle that is ongoing and unfinished. Moreover, his theoretical analysis is focused on the colonial condition in which identity and racism are linked to colonization. Frazer and Hutchings (2008) indicate that Fanon refers to politics in three ways. As the politics of domination, the corrupt party politics, and the politics of the people. This research focuses on the politics of domination and on the politics of the people. While politics as domination concern domination and exploitation by the capitalists; the politics of the people allow a new world of humanity in which politics and society function without violence (Frazer & Hutchings, 2008, p. 95). While Fanon was critiqued for glorifying violence, Frazer and Hutchings (2008) suggest that Fanon has different visions of violence and argued that politics and violence were embedded in practices and institutions.

Scholars who analyze *The Wretched of the Earth* highlight that Fanon's ideas influenced Edward Said's *Orientalism*. For Said, colonialism is not only about physical domination, but about feelings of inferiority invoked in the colonized person through representations such as scholarly and literary descriptions and characters in films that reproduce feelings of inferiority (Fanon, 1963, p. 58). More importantly, Fanon's work influenced postcolonial thinkers such as Gayatri Spivak who further his example of Arabs and Muslims within representations and discourses as "threats to be managed" (Fanon, 1963, p. 59). Nonetheless, this has sparked a debate between scholars in terms of the classification of Arabs and Muslims and the new space it has created for politics in terms of freedom and identity. In this research, I use critical Fanonism to explore the (re)production/contestation of systems of ideas (discourse and representations). I use Fanon's idea that politics goes beyond power relations of domination and it is about life and creation in which individuals and communities come together to create something new and potentially resist domination (Fanon, 1963, p. 58).

1.4 - James Martel: misinterpellation: beyond Althusser, Butler, & Fanon

As discussed by different scholars, the outcome of interpellation varies. For Althusser, interpellation succeeds most of the time, whereas Butler argues that subjects can in a certain way resist through subjectivity. However, resistance comes with a price which is that subjectivity is never free from regulation (Davis, 2012). Similarly, Fanon also highlights that resistance through subjectivity can be a set-back. However, for him, interpellation may not always succeed because there is a possibility for revolutionary action and resistance. Martel refers to this as interpellation that "gets it wrong, renders subjects by projecting them in categories, being false which offers nothing to know at all" (2017, p. 109). In other words, he suggests that misinterpellation is the failure of interpellation in which knowledge, representations and language constitute wrong

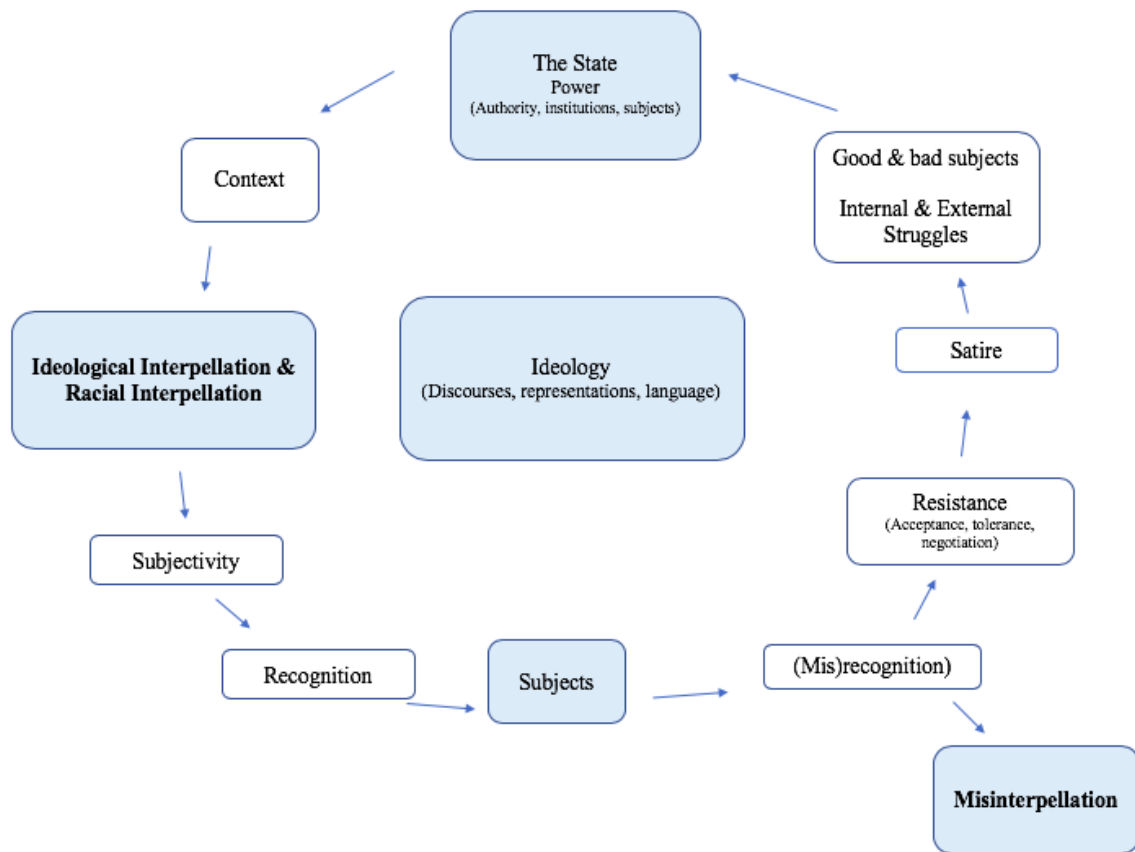
subjects. For him, interpellation is not accurate and the categories of ‘good subjects’ and ‘bad subjects’ are not fixed; thus, leaving room for disruption and resistance in the process of interpellation. Lampert (2017) raises the possibility of resistance, but he highlights that resistance may be a form of ‘hopeless politics’ in which interpellation is maintained as a cycle. The question of resistance is questioned by different scholars as resistance can take the form of interpellation that is not recognized or unnoticed. This meaning that individuals may believe they are resisting dominant representations, when in reality they may be misrecognizing themselves and be misrecognized by others.

The concept of misinterpellation will be used to address the potential of interpellation in the success or failure in creating subjects. Martel’s (2017) interpretation of the concept allows us to be suspicious of any truth claims and their authenticity. More specifically, his discussion creates room for alternative representations and discourses, such as those of the comedians studied in this research. This perspective of the theoretical process goes beyond interpellation between structures of domination (government & media) to a relation of power between everyone. That is to say, members of society all contribute to the consumption, production and reproduction of popular discourses and representations. With different members of society involved in interpellation, there is the possibility of alternative representations and truth claims. For Martel (2017), interpellation may be an ongoing cycle, but alternatives will always continue to exist. As a result, resistance and negotiation to interpellation exist along with barriers, but maybe attained through the transformation and critique of dominant ideas, beliefs, and representations.

To understand resistance in interpellation, I refer to Hall who explores resistance through a combination of Gramsci’s notion of hegemony and Althusser’s rendition of relative autonomy (individuals’ and their relations with real conditions of existence). Although Gramsci did not write

about race, ethnicity, or racism, Hall points to the fact that his concepts are still useful today. In this respect and for the purpose of this research, resistance stems from the relationship between domination and subordination. It can be referred to through political movements that concern the connection between culture and power. Hall and Jefferson highlight how different groups and classes are 'unequally ranked' in relation to one another (2006, p. 5). This ranking and inequality create an atmosphere in which the dominant group rules over the subordinates. In this situation, other cultures (e.g. groups) will attempt to modify, negotiate, resist and sometimes overthrow this hegemony. However, it is important to note that for Althusser, this dynamic ensures the acceptance and reproduction of capitalism. For Hall and Gramsci, this provokes resistance especially through symbolic means such as pop culture and creative expressions which are a source of collective power in the struggle against repressive forces such as the police and state institutions.

In the following figure on page 27, I present the way I will use the main concepts from each scholar for my analysis.



[Figure 2. Interpellation scheme]

Figure 2 portrays the way I will approach racial interpellation and comedy in this study. The scheme leans on the main concepts taken from each of the reviewed scholars. As we can see, interpellation is understood as an ongoing cycle presented through different versions (Ideological, direct, indirect, racial) and concepts such as subjectivity, recognition, and resistance among a few others. It involves a source (the state) and a target (the created subject). Figure 2 shows that ideological and racial interpellation originates from the state apparatus through discourses, representations, and language (Althusser's ideology). Through these elements, a subject is created and recognized by authorities, institutions and members of society. Context and resistance influence the whole process (Butler). Nonetheless, the role of subjects (subjectivity, recognition, power, resistance good subjects and bad subjects) is crucial to both ideological and racial

interpellation (Fanon). In this respect, it is important to acknowledge that this process may fail to create the right subject and may create the wrong subject through misinterpellation (Martel). This figure can be illustrated through an example of politician Jagmeet Singh who was targeted with racial slurs at a public event in 2017. A white woman approached him speaking about discourses and representations concerning Sharia Law and extremist beliefs. In front of an audience, he was subjected to the identity of a Muslim and was forced to react and respond. This refers to his interpellation in this context because an identity was imposed on him. Thus, leading him to be recognized as a Muslim. While we know that he is not Muslim, but Sikh and was misrecognized in this scenario, he does not argue against being a Muslim but simply responds with “We believe in love and courage and an inclusive Canada where no one is left behind” (McLaughlin, 2017). For him, correcting the woman with, “No, I am not Muslim” would make it acceptable to hate. The way he negotiates his interpellation may allow him to resist the label in this context, but does not stop the process of interpellation. Singh can be interpellated as a Muslim again because of his appearance that reflects dominant ideologies.

Another way to understand Figure 2 is through a personal example. Growing up, there were many stereotypical representations and narratives in the media, particularly after 9/11. The idea of problematic minorities was imposed in different media platforms. By acknowledging the same content, this idea was not only imposed on me, but also internalized by my family. This refers to my interpellation as a first-generation Muslim immigrant in Canada. In this context, I realized that the way I was seen was not only representative of the way I present myself to others, but the way minority groups are presented in discourses and representations. In a way, these discourses and representations were internalized because I did not want to become the subject depicted by the media or be misrecognized in any way. Hence, the way I approached this was by mimicking

identities of “good subjects” such as notions of “model minority citizens”. This also led to my disassociation from certain cultural traits such as language in public spheres to be understood and accepted. This refers to my interpellation as a minority because I internalized both discourses and representations and only negotiated in a form in which I was accepting my interpellation. In my personal experience, I became more critical and aware of my interpellation through satirical shows in which similar struggles were recognized. It also led me to acknowledge that my subjectivity was never for my benefit, but for the purpose of maintaining and reproducing the same ideas created by the state and for the state. That no matter how I present myself, there is always a chance of interpellation and misinterpellation.

1.5 – Conclusion

Ideological interpellation originates from Louis Althusser’s theoretical work. This refers to interpellation as the process in which subjects internalize norms and are given an identity and social position. This can be understood through a situation in which a subject is ‘hailed’ and responds to the name being called. In this respect, interpellation seems to succeed in creating a subject and leaves no room for negotiation. In our analysis chapter, we lean on the Althusserian notions of subjectivity, written and oral ideology, power, recognition, representations, choice, good subjects and bad subjects.

The concluding chapter also provided Judith Butler’s rendition of interpellation as a process of subject making in different contexts. According to Butler, subjects can have an active role, particularly because this author distinguishes between the power that interpellates a subject and the power of the subject itself. Regardless of how the subject responds in this scenario, they are never truly free. In our analysis chapter, we use the concepts of subjectivity, resistance, good subjects and bad subjects discussed by Butler to understand how a subject can play an active role

in their interpellation. We also use her understanding of choice in interpellation to understand how subjects submit themselves to different contexts, rituals, practices, and representations.

When we shift the focus to race, the theoretical work of Frantz Fanon is significant, particularly in terms of racial interpellation. In this perspective, the process is understood as one in which the subject looks at oneself through the eyes of others. As a matter of fact, this can occur through direct or indirect interpellation; both of which entail false hope of forming an identity that is free from perceived (mis)recognitions. In our study, we use Fanon's concept of race, racialization, inferiority, superiority, recognition, resistance, and freedom to analyze the struggles of racialized subjects.

Finally, James Martel presents the flaws of the processes of interpellation through the notion of misinterpellation (which creates the wrong subjects and provokes resistance as negotiation). In our analysis, we rely on his concept of resistance and (mis)recognition in the study of interpellation. Martel creates space for alternatives in interpellation, particularly concerning resistance and recognition of the (re)production of popular discourses and representations. To explore the potential of negotiation in comedy, the following chapter will present a breakdown of the methodological aspects of this research whose main research can be now be formulated as follows: How racial interpellation tropes that convey stereotypes and representations of racialized minorities are negotiated (accepted, refused, tolerated, resisted) through humour (comedy, satire) by the productions of comedians in North America?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 - Introduction

In Ontario, people “of colour” are often classified, categorized and referred to as dangerous subjects within a logic of racial profiling. Thus, although the Toronto police system has constantly dismissed the existence of racial profiling in their practices, public data seems to contradict this assertion (Abott, 2017). For example, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) raised concerns on the existence of this problem in the Racial Policy Dialogue, which was hosted by York University in 2016. At this dialogue, five themes emerged: social and historical contexts and experiences of racial profiling, definitions of racial profiling, types of racial profiling, new types of racial profiling, prevention and responses to the issue. As a result of this reflection, the OHRC defines racial profiling as “any action undertaken for reasons of safety, security or public protection that relies on stereotypes about race, colour, ethnicity, ancestry, religion or place of origin rather than reasonable suspicion to single out an individual for greater scrutiny or different treatment” (OHRC, 2017, p. 6). The OHRC also includes in its definition different elements such as the structure, social institutions and everyday practices. Although this definition is broad, what is important to consider is that it points to the fact that racial profiling stems from the sociopolitical structure in which people “of colour” are referred and restricted to stereotypes, particularly those aimed at identity.

The OHRC used the example of *The Peel Law Association v. Pieters Case* in which a group of Black lawyers were asked for identification by a librarian (OHRC, 2017). In this case, their appearance and their race played a role in not only how they were seen, but also how they were treated. This not only goes back to the OHRC’s definition of racial profiling, but it also reflects racial interpellation. This is because the racialized individuals, in this case, were at a disadvantage

by being treated as racial subjects before having a say. In other words, they were racially profiled when their identity as lawyers were questioned based on the colour of their skin and the type of hair they had (dreadlocks).

Scholars have looked at race rhetoric in North America in terms of meanings, interactions and practices that are both cultural and political. What I mean by this is that cultural controversies exist around race and are often legitimized politically (Donald, 2012). In this research, these cultural controversies are seen as a field of cultural and social institutions that conceptualizes and maintains the notion of the ‘other’ as someone radically different. In the Canadian and American context, racist rhetoric, particularly that concerning Arab and Muslim population, prevails through state institutions, racism, and constructs of racialization that continue to impose a sort of racial identity on people “of colour”. This brings me to the goal for this chapter, which is to present an overview of the current research on the process of racial interpellation. To do this, I will first list and describe some theoretical questions that are pertinent to both this chapter and this study. Now, it is important to understand that these concepts and approaches are not presented in a classical or typical way. Instead of presenting them in terms of classification of approaches, concepts, or authors, I seek to present them in a way that allows me to not only describe and refer to the notion of racial interpellation but also outline different aspects of the problem I am studying. I utilize them as tools that lead me to the underlying problem of my research, which is the racialization of people “of colour”, particularly Arabs, Muslims, and those who are (mis)recognized as such.

As we will see in chapter two, the notion of racial interpellation stems from Louis Althusser’s rendition of ideological interpellation as a process from which subjects are addressed and called upon (Diefenbach, 2013). Here, the underlying idea is the fact that, regardless of the position of individuals, they are given a subjective consistency as subjects and that this subjectivity

stays in line with representations, ideas, and beliefs embedded within cultural institutions and practices that are sanctioned by the state. In other words, ideological interpellation (re)produces subjects and their social relations through social processes. What is important to take from this process is the fact that it operates as a mechanism that enables the creation and (re)production of subjects who face struggles and conflictual relationships between a given identity and some forced choices.

In general, Althusserian interpellation refers to a dynamic of subjectivation in which a subject is created by the external world: the state, media, and institutions as the ideological state apparatus of domination. Interestingly, ideological interpellation has been approached from different perspectives and by different theorists and scholars. In this work, I will evoke some of these perspectives, but when looking at the interaction between ideology and racialized subjects, I will mostly rely on Frantz Fanon's vision of racial interpellation. I seek to stress his vision as it enables an understanding of both the creation of subjects and the subject's role as an active agent.

While ideological interpellation and racial interpellation guide this study, other concepts are also present. These concepts are important to present an overview of the research on racial interpellation. In this sense, in literature, a common understanding is that Western contemporary society promotes a sort of colour-blind racism which is both a response to racism and a common-sense approach. It reinforces, among dominant groups, the idea that "I am colourblind, I see people, not colour" (Bostick, 2017). This not only strips individuals of their racial identity, but also dismisses experiences of racism. For some and for this research, "colour-blind racism" is an approach by the state and for the state to maintain its power and (re)produce its political, social, and legal agenda (Donald, 2012). In this sense, it is important to acknowledge the fact that (if

present) a colourblind approach dismisses racial identity, racialized experiences, and also assumes that everyone is treated equally when in reality this is not the case.

As we will see later in this literature review, colour-blind racism stems from the narrative that we live in a post-racial era. To understand this rhetoric, it is important to realize that this allegedly post-racial era is the shift past oppression and brutality of people “of colour” to the desires of white individuals (Donald, 2012). As noted with colour-blind racism, post-racialism also dismisses experiences of race and sometimes denies the existence of brutality (e.g. racial profiling, violence, and misrecognition of people “of colour”). The problem with this type of approach is that it seems to dismiss the fact that racism may be hidden because racial discourses are restricted (because there is an attempt to move past race). For this research, post-racialism is understood as a device of silence and dismissal.

With the two concepts previously mentioned (colour-blindness and post-racialism), there is an important point to consider. This refers to the fact that these concepts operate in relation to whiteness. Since they operate in relation to whiteness, colour-blindness and post-racialism are part of a power structure supporting those at the top of the racial hierarchy; thus, influencing the recognition and treatment of those below (Snyman, 2008). More importantly, in the discussions that follow, I seek to demonstrate how the white world polices and oppresses racialized individuals before they can cause any harm (Adjei, 2013). In other words, they are (mis)recognized as a problem even before an issue occurs. When something happens, it is seen as representative of the actions of a whole race that threaten the power of whiteness in the West. As part of this process, people “of colour” see themselves and their race in relation to whiteness. As a result, whiteness is not only seen as a point of reference, but also as the norm in Western society.

To present an overview of the study of racial interpellation, in what follows I will discuss various elements concerning the experience of race in North America. Section 1 includes topics concerning racialization in both Canada and the United States. This consists of discussions of race and factors that surround it. I include both Canadian and American examples not because I seek to show similarity or differences between the two, but because both are representative of the existence, function, and consequences of racism. I present this section through various sub-themes that will follow to emphasize the construction, function, and consequences of race as a complex phenomenon consisting of numerous aspects. I present discussions in this manner to highlight the existence and function of race and to present the problem in a way that leads me to the notions of interpellation and subjectivity. Section 2 refers to the role of minorities. I seek to study the reaction and possible engagement of minorities in the issue of racial interpellation. By presenting a particular phenomenon (e.g. race relations) and the role of racialized minorities, I intend to lead the reader to the subsequent presentation of my theoretical framework.

2.2–Topics concerning racialization

Whiteness in North America

In academic studies of racialization in North America, race is referred to in different ways and concerning different aspects of social life. Thus, while for some scholars the key question is the one of defining race, for others the concern is not the definition of race as such, but rather the understanding of the way it operates. Let us first explore the question of what race is before discussing how it operates. According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC), race is a social construct consisting of categories based on perceived characteristics (OHRC, 2017, p. 15). For example, based on phenotypic features, Statistics Canada refers to race as categories of people including South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian among a

few others. While these categories may appear as innocuous types used to refer to people, they are above all methods of identifying differences to not only refer, but also categorize and govern. In addition to this, Byrne (2000) argues that although categories are meaningless, they continue to have a significant impact on not only the way racialized folks are (mis)recognized and treated, but also on how they can navigate the world.

In the North American region, the social landscape to be navigated is a racialized one in terms of the relationship with whiteness (Adjei, 2013). As a position and characteristic that racialized individuals are unable to attain, whiteness involves a power structure in which racialized differences are looked at and defined in relation to the “white race” as a norm (Adjei, 2013). It is in this way that the non-white racialized body becomes trapped in race; thus, making that person susceptible to judgements and categorization (Fanon, 1952). As a result, race manifests as a subjective experience and a political act in which meanings and positions are imposed on the racialized person. This leads the racialized person to become visible and (mis)recognized in the same space and by the same people that dominate them (Ahmed-Ullah, 2017; Lorenzini & Tazzioli, 2018). In this sense, race can be depicted as being part of the mechanisms of domination in contemporary society and as a tool that enables division and differences to persist. More precisely, race consists of classifying individuals based on differences that tend to be re-created because social relations of domination often rely on differences that categorize and name people. In this sense, race and racism are closely tied, particularly because as a mechanism of power, race plays a significant role in social relations of domination, especially that of racism.

Exclusion as the ‘Other’

For some scholars, race operates at the level of visibility, it is something that is “unavoidably visible” and that reinforces a certain gaze in which members of society, particularly racialized

folks are looked at from the outside (Chong, 2008). More specifically, this gaze that is imposed on racialized individuals deems them as ‘others’ and as outsiders who do not necessarily belong in the West. To elaborate, Adjei (2013) highlights that racialized folks often experience race through a white glance, a process that results in a feeling of inferiority. Frantz Fanon’s approach to race as well as his ideas on the internalization of inferiority and superiority are pertinent here. For him, the racist individual presents himself as a superior person who creates and controls the “inferior” person, the racialized ‘other’. Individuals who are inferiorized are given a specific social position and subjectivity. This position and subjectivity is limited in terms of opportunities and is not heard or seen through the identity of the inferiorized person. For example, Fanon gives the example of black males who suffer as a result of not being white and hold a subordinate position. While he uses the example of black males, other racialized individuals also suffer. Gerhauser (2013) stresses the fact that Arabs and Muslims suffer tremendously because they are considered subordinate as a result of their differences in contemporary North America.

Knowledge as ideology

In this way, there is a certain ideology of superiority underpinning the idea of race which is maintained as common sense rhetoric with the support of social structures, institutions, language, practices, and representations (Perigoe, 2012). We can use Fanon’s work to understand this. As a black man, his “race” led him to be perceived as a type of danger. Thus, he discusses a scenario in which he is perceived as danger by a little girl who is speaking to her mother. “Mama, look at the nigger! I’m scared! Scared! Now they were beginning to be afraid of me. I made up my mind to laugh myself to tears, but that had become impossible” (Fanon, 1952, p. xvii). Here, Fanon is perceived as dangerous before being given the chance to present himself. His experience can be used as a glimpse to racial interpellation, as a process in which individuals are given an identity

based on pre-existing “knowledge”. Such pre-existing knowledge refers to the dominant ideology by which subjects are put in hierarchical categories based on hegemonic representations present in the public realm (media’s depiction of ethnicity in relation to whiteness -Adjei, 2013). Fanon’s scenario portrays how racialized bodies experience race as a result of the white gaze that (mis)recognizes and calls upon members of society (Adjei, 2013, p. 27). This results in a vicious cycle in which the racialized person is perceived as an ‘outsider’ who does not truly have their own identity.

Moderns and “antimoderns” in the West

Race rhetoric is also seen by some authors as related to the idea of western values (freedom, secularism, capitalism, individualism, and democracy), which are often presented as being constitutive of modernity in place of different elements such as global capitalism, transnationalism, and local culture (Williams, 2007). According to Mamdani (2004), racial representations in North America include African Americans portrayed as incapable of modernity and Arabs and Muslims as resistant to it. In both cases, the supposed western values of modernity are seen as threatened. According to Mamdani (2004), western modernity tends to view any of these “anti-modern” individuals as someone who has a ‘destructive ability’. Thus, instead of the depiction of racialized identities as being cultural, Mamdani refers to them as political. This difference between the political and cultural identity is significant as it leaves room for different interpretations.

Volpp (2002) states that political identities are tied to citizenship and belonging. It refers to the way others see you and pertains to who you are with something such as institutions and practices (Hoedemaekers, 2010). For Bassel, the cultural identity is how social institutions view you and how you view yourself with regards to aspects of identity that are deemed important (Bassel, 2008). Despite their differences, both authors present the subject (the person) with dimensions of

identity that are given to them and overpower their personal identity. In this sense, we can say with Adjei that once marginalized groups of people are associated with politics, they begin to represent a “homogenous social group in which criminality, destitution, illiteracy, immorality, and violence” become a part of the racialized communities’ history, culture, and identity (Adjei, 2013, p. 28). As a result, marginalized individuals do not only become the suspected enemy in Western society, but they also step into the world with a racial mark.

Fear mongering

Scholars have raised the concern that the way race is depicted translates into fears, actions and treatment that reflect forms of oppression. In Canada, fear of Arabs and Muslims contributed to the passage of *Bill C-36*, which reflects the belief that being Muslim is the same as being Arab (Perigoe, 2012). Perigoe’s discussion of race rhetoric in Canada reveals that the media shapes racialized public opinions that lead to legislation and state measures. Certainly, institutions that shape public opinion do not necessarily know much about Muslims or how to distinguish between Muslims, Arabs, and Sikhs (Perigoe, 2012, p. 33). Other racialized groups are also the target of this public opinion. For example, racialized minorities who appear similar to Muslims and Arabs are grouped in the same category. Here, the underlying concern is that stereotypes evoking danger are imposed on different minorities as a result of racialized constructions.

Problematic subjects

Scholars have emphasized that Arabs and Muslims are demonized in the public realm and presented in a way that has led to their (mis)recognition as problematic subjects. In Perigoe’s discussion, it is evident that racialized minorities who fit the category of Arabs and Muslims have been problematized not only after 9/11 but also before it. Thus, before 9/11, they were depicted as anti-modern and ignorant individuals who did not value their position in the West. Many scholars

indicate that after 9/11, they were referred to through labels of terrorism (Gerhauser, 2013; Hage, 2010; Alsultany, 2013). For example, West & Loyd (2017) consider that current prejudices towards Arabs and Muslims originate from representations that constantly portray Muslims, Arabs and those who appear as such as perpetrators of terrorism. Shah (2017) illustrates this by highlighting that in 2003, Immigration, Refugee, Citizenship Canada (IRCC) labelled twenty-three Muslims of Pakistani and Indian origin as terrorists without a valid piece of evidence. The repetition of these “problematic minority” incidents resulted in a belief that stereotypes and representations are not the origins of the problem. Instead, the racialized person is the problem and remains responsible for himself.

The way a racialized individual appears becomes indicative of the treatment they will receive not only by authorities but also by ordinary members of society. Saha (2013) considers that stereotypical representations not only allow constructions of race and racialization to exist but also make it possible for them to be reproduced time and time again. For example, Shah (2017) explores discourse on Muslim minority groups in Canada post 9/11 through newspapers such as *The Globe and Mail*, *The National Post*, and *The Phoenix*. He reveals that the factors previously mentioned allow ethnic minorities to be (mis)recognized in the category of Muslims. While this category represents the religion of Islam, it tends to include racialized bodies who fit the stereotypical media representations of racialized males with a beard or racialized males that have similar physical features to the perpetrators of violence often shown on television and in newspapers. For Shah (2017), the identity of Muslims is constructed by negative media representations including movies and cartoons that have a pattern of (re)presenting Muslims as villains. While there are problematic representations of females as minorities who need to be saved, stereotypical representations of violence and danger are often associated with racialized males

(Shah, 2017). Both Razack (2005) and Shah (2017) emphasize the fact that in North America this does not openly qualify as racism because actions and attitudes towards racialized minorities occur through hidden forms of racism and discrimination. The manifestation of these hidden forms in the realm of public security will be explored in the following sub-sections.

Neoliberalism and self-regulation

When discussing power, the contemporary state, and its people, scholars refer to a tendency of institutions and the state to not only produce but also maintain self-regulating subjects (Gray, 2013). According to Gray, this is because the neoliberal gaze (in particular, Canada and The United States) promotes the idea of self-regulating communities in which individuals are responsible for regulating the good and the bad. For Mamdani (2004), members of modern society are perceived as possessing the ability to separate and regulate themselves, except for Muslims and those who are perceived as such. This is because regardless of the racialized person's attempt to regulate themselves, they are seen as inherently bad. Saha (2018) relates these political uses of the imperative of self-regulation to the "neoliberal governance of race" in which meanings are ascribed to people based on their appearance by different institutions such as the media. What is concerning is that the racialized person is supposed to adapt to these imperatives by facing, acknowledging, and responding to derogatory neoliberal meanings and constructions. The question of neoliberalism draws our attention to that of the relationship between capitalism and racism.

Race and capitalism

An issue commonly discussed among academics is the link between race and capitalism. Capitalism is seen as a social formation governing differences among people through rhetoric that manages and ranks the 'other' within a logic of exploitation. (Saha, 2013). According to Perigoe (2012), although this logic was prevalent in the 19th and 20th century, during the expansion of

modern industrial capitalism, it still exists today. Racialized minorities are seen as exploitable beings behaving as the inferior racialized person who “stays inline” (Fanon, 1952, p. 24). For Volpp (2002), this gives place to the reproduction of individuals functioning not only as agents of their own imaginings but also as the ‘objects of the others’. According to Volpp, race is a subjective experience and a political act in which meanings and positions within society are imposed. In some cases, this shapes the ways in which minorities see themselves.

Fanon, in his discussion of how colonial societies intentionally instill fear and inferiority among different types of race, links the problem of racism with that of extraction. He illustrates this through his study of blackness in colonial Africa. He argues that blackness was constantly reproduced by the social link between the racialized body and extraction (Fanon, 1963). This link makes the racialized individual an exploitable object whose identity is produced in history (Gray, 2013). Despite this link between capitalism and racism, the West claims to be post-racial and colourblind even though racism persists through negative representations, practices of exploitation and narratives of racialized minorities (Donald, 2012). Examples of these notions will be depicted in the following sub-section.

Racial interpellation and racialization

Throughout scholarly literature, there have been discussions of race as a social construction, specifically created by the state and for the state. Chong (2008) refers to race as an aspect that is “unavoidably visible” and places a burden on the person “of colour”. He looks at how racialized subjects interact with racial ideology and considers this through the notion of racial interpellation. For Chong (2008), the notions of interpellation and racialization refer to two different questions. For him, both are crucial in understanding the constitution of a racialized subject and the social relations and conditions that follow. Chong considers that interpellation reflects the process of

creating a subject who faces race. In fact, racialization pertains to what is done to the subject (the racialized minority). While racial interpellation emphasizes the creation of a subject, racialization depicts the social relations that follow individuals (Collins, 2002).

Racialization could be seen as the act of referring to a system of classification in which one's skin colour or physical features are embedded (Saha, 2011; Wortley & Bempah, 2011). In other words, it refers to the idea of looking at people, interacting and engaging with them through their race. Some authors consider racialization as solemnly looking at someone through skin colour and physical features (Wortley & Bempah, 2011). However, others such as Melchers (2006) consider it as any point of reference and judgement based on specific characteristics that might include skin colour, physical features, along with other factors such as ethnicity, clothing, and hair texture. Interestingly, Saha (2018) believes that this is too general and can include a variety of people. She emphasizes physical appearance along with religion, culture, and other factors in racialization. More specifically, she uses it in relation to media representations in order to understand how cultural productions (e.g. media representations) maintain the racialization of particular subjects.

Racial profiling as an accident

A Maclean's article by Domise (2019) reveals that racial profiling is often seen as an accident or as something done in a discreet way. More importantly, it shows that racialized communities must remain vigilant of every offence that occurs in order to avoid a pattern of negative experiences. Domise (2019) uses the example of Masai Ujiri who is the president of the Toronto Raptors. In this case, what was seen to be the 'proudest moment' for the team and for Canada turned out to also be an incident of racial profiling. In this situation, Ujiri was approaching the court in order to celebrate with his team as he was stopped by a deputy of the Alameda County Sheriff's Office

who asked Ujiri to present his credentials. According to Domise, while this instance may be seen as a simple security measure, the underlying issue is that Ujiri was profiled and had to prove himself and his worth. In the case of people “of colour” who fit the categories of Arabs and Muslims, Perigoe (2012) indicates that racial profiling in the form of Islamophobic insults and (mis)recognition is often faced by these racialized minorities.

Colour-blind racism

Donald (2012) argues that today, we are living in an allegedly post-racial era in which experiences involving race are silenced and denied to uphold claims of colourblindness. As we have seen, as a prominent factor of identity and experiences, race tends to be an indicator of how individuals are looked at and treated, and sometimes of how they present themselves. In a supposedly post-racial society, experiences involving this are often dismissed because they are combined with the knowledge that is considered common sense (Leonardo, 2009). Interestingly, this so-called “common sense” knowledge requires individuals to be given the chance to represent themselves in situations and interactions. However, in many cases, this chance is “rigged” since there is already an identity and an assumption placed on the individual. This is not widely discussed due to claims of colourblindness in our “post-racial” society. In this sense, post-racialism relies on the belief that race is a concept of the past that is not relevant in today’s day and age. Some scholars highlight that post-racialism is a “device of silence” (Kelley, 2018). A concept that not only silences race talk but also dismisses the complex experiences associated with racialization. It is problematic because it argues that racism is an issue of the past and promotes the assumption that racial equality persists (Mohamed, 2019). In terms of experiences of racism, this is concerning because colourblindness becomes a tactic for the state to reproduce its political, social, and legal agenda over racialized minorities (Donald, 2012).

Donald (2012) argues that the colourblind security practices dismiss cases of over-policing, racial profiling, and police brutality of racialized individuals. He also stresses on the fact that notions of colourblindness and neutrality towards race dismiss the “complex experiences of race and denies the existence of violence against racialized people” (Donald, 2012, p. 52). When discussing cases that reflect post-racism, Adjei (2013) refers to the United States’ case of Trayvon Martin, who was shot by a policeman who claimed it was an act of self-defence. However, Adjei (2013) argues against this claim to reveal that post-racial rhetoric results in an “ugly truth about the unforgivable blackness”. For Alsultany (2013), post-race hides violent incidents of hate crimes and discrimination faced by Arabs, Muslims, and racialized minorities who are misrecognized within these categories. She argues that history follows the racialized person through representations and narratives that make incidents of racism inevitable. Take the example of racialized minorities who are removed from flights, discriminated at work, and dehumanized in interactions (Alsultany, 2013). What these examples reveal is that the racialized subject is often seen in relation to a specific aspect or context. This means that no matter how the racialized person attempts to navigate the world, they are constantly seen in relation to state representations and narratives, whiteness, and cases in which a racialized person threatens the values, safety, and security of the West. As a result, these factors become representative of the racialized person and results, in some cases, in a struggle for recognition and liberation.

Racism through modern policing

So, claims of colourblindness may silence experiences of a race that are indeed maintained even in institutional settings such as policing. According to Donald (2012), police practices in the past focused on structural issues of poverty and unemployment. For example, Donald uses Tupac Shakur’s lyrics: “Instead of a war on poverty, they got a war on drugs, so the police can bother

me”. He uses this to illustrate the way structural issues affecting minorities have evolved. Today, modern neoliberal policing focuses on an idea of self-governance and race. Interestingly, Armstrong (2004) points to the fact that self-governance and neoliberalism are related to societal fears and to the positions people “of colour” occupy in society. Politically and socially, the modern focus of the rights of people “of colour” shifts to the neoliberal focus of the obligations of people “of colour” as residents and citizens of North America (Reynolds, 2013). In terms of self-governance, Reynolds (2013) indicates that it usually pertains to newcomers and racialized minorities who are expected to engage in practices through self-management. In this case, racialized minorities are expected to appear in line with institutional representations of racialized folks; all while remaining obedient to state representations and norms.

By keeping the notion of self-management in mind, Trussel & Mair (2010) and James (2010) emphasize that elements of self-governance and neoliberalism allow the state and members of society to avoid the flaws in institutions and practices to focus on individuals as good citizens and bad citizens. This type of label racializes individuals and puts them in a position of subordination in which one’s social position is linked to dominant representations of good racialized citizens that are non-threatening to the state and its majority. For those individuals who do not fit the category of good citizens, they are seen to be dysfunctional members of society that potentially pose a threat (Chan & Chunn, 2014). Institutions such as the police view these individuals in relation to race and to the social position that a person occupies. This process leads racialized folks to be seen as a proxy for what is considered dangerous (Donald, 2012).

Internalization of stereotypes and struggles with (mis)recognition

Gerhauser (2013) suggests that the most common stereotype of Arab-Americans is their association with the religion of Islam and terrorism. These stereotypes not only influence

individuals externally (societally) but also internally (psychologically) (Pyke, 2010; Farmer, 2010). Certainly, this use of the term internalization evokes the one of interpellation. Stirler (2017) recognizes internalization as the incorporation of a narrative (ideology) whose main goal is to remind individuals of “their” status within society. More importantly, Gomez indicates that internal and external realities pertaining to stereotypes are related to (mis)recognition, whose acceptance and acknowledgement has legal, political and psychological consequences (1999, p. 3). This leads to the acceptance and acknowledgement of stereotypes to be a political and psychological phenomenon because it involves (mis)recognition. Gomez (1999) highlights that there may be a difference between what we see and what we know. However, in general, what we see and what we know about race tends to coincide as a result of the politics between institutions, social interactions, recognition, and misrecognition, which include the recognition of a particular reality (e.g. tropes of racialized minorities).

Pyke (2010) uses W.E.B. Du Bois’ analysis of internalized oppression to discuss the internalization of racial oppression. For example, he refers to internalization as situations in which individuals continue to see themselves through the perspective of others. This is (re)produced as a result of the way racialized individuals and communities view themselves and their social positions. Many times, the way racialized folks see themselves is by internalizing stereotypes and potentially becoming what the stereotype entails (Farmer, 2010). What is interesting in this aspect is the type of narratives and representations that become internalized. For example, is it the overwhelming portrayals and discussions of racialized minorities as problematic subjects or is it the minimal emphasis on the success and positive experiences of racialized individuals? Lorenzini and Tazzioli (2018) use Ghassan Hage’s interpretation of interpellation to suggest that the way individuals see themselves is a result of the dominant gaze (e.g. the state, whiteness). Here, it is

important to realize that stereotypes are significant since they are a common way of understanding meanings associated with race and racialized communities. While a particular kind of understanding and internalization exists for some individuals, others may negotiate to reposition themselves (Golden, 2017).

Bittle & Frauley (2018) speak of corporate misdoings through an Althusserian framework of (mis)recognition. Although Althusser's concept of misrecognition will be explored in the theoretical chapter through interpellation, it is pertinent to mention here Bittle and Frauley's use of the concept because it allows an understanding of recognition and misrecognition in relation to a political and psychological framework. For example, they use Althusser's Marxist analysis to discuss reproduction in terms of repression and domination. In this case, they highlight that class interests are located in the state apparatus within which individuals struggle for recognition, rights, fairness, and equity. Within this struggle, Bittle and Frauley highlight acceptance, internalization, and negotiation as elements that are a part of resistance and intertwined with internal and external reality. This results in the individual to recognize their social conditions and relations and potentially struggle for recognition, rights, fairness, and equality (Bittle & Frauley, 2018).

Acceptation and struggle

According to the literature on the subject, the persistent way a racialized person is seen and treated results in that person accepting stereotypes and unquestioningly accepting one's position as a passive subject "of colour". Nguyen (2017) refers to it as individuals recognizing themselves as subjects of the state and acting by their representations as passive individuals. This type of behaviour leads racialized minorities to be seen as good subjects that are honorable citizens by being "politically passive, economically reproductive and ideologically submissive" (Azeez & Gaitan-Barrera, 2017, p. 502). This not only entails the person accepting and perceiving the way

they are addressed, but it also leads society to expect this from the person “of colour” (Bowman, 2014). Often, this results in the acceptance of negative representations and narratives without resistance (Cox, 2017). Similarly, several scholars have used Frantz Fanon’s discussion on the consequences of stereotypes, one of which is the internalization of the dominant ideology (Farmer, 2010; Lorenzini & Tazzioli, 2018). This results in the risk of reproducing stereotypes, representations and narratives that problematize the racialized person in the first place.

Adjei suggests that the acceptance of stereotypes is part of the process of being expected to appear, “How you have been detailed within stories and gazes of suspicion” (2013, p. 30). For example, black bodies are categorized as a sign of fear, threat, and criminality. This categorization not only influences members of society in their perceptions but also has an impact on the way people “of colour” perceive themselves. For Nguyen (2017), this constitutes a reality in which racialized individuals comply with their representations by accepting their positions as passive subjects. When looking at the atrocities faced by black people, Fanon once argued that the person feels so alienated that they accept their position, regardless of what that position entails. This can be seen through the police creating subjects of street gang members which leads youth to recognize themselves in this category (Gonzales, 2016). While they recognize themselves as a particular class or group, this does not mean they accept the ways in which they are perceived. Sung (2015) discusses race and class consciousness and indicates that conformity is not necessarily acceptance. In fact, Hurwitz & Peffley (1997) suggest that stereotypes can be accepted because racialized youth and adults may fit the global category of violent subjects. For example, these authors refer to categories such as thugs, gangsters, and terrorists as names that are attributed to individuals through narratives and institutions. As we will see in the following section, when an individual

contradicts this reality by negotiation, they may threaten the political and social stability of the state, institutions, and practices.

2.3 – The role of minorities

Escaping the grip

For some scholars, stereotypes and narratives are too powerful to overturn (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997; Farmer, 2010). As we have seen, Bittle & Frauley (2018) discuss this issue with corporate crime. They use Louis Althusser's approach on the state as a repressive mechanism that functions through violence and symbolic domination. More specifically, individuals understand and recognize the world as a result of social relations and processes associated with the operation of the state and class domination (Bittle & Frauley, 2018). This points towards the idea that class struggle (whether reflecting resistance or oppression) is present (but also challenged) through one's position in society alongside societal practices and state institutions. However, Sung (2015) suggests that individuals attempt to oppose representations and narratives that confine racialized minorities to stereotypes. This opposition can be considered as an attempt to reverse stereotypes. Williams (2007) refers to this as a sign of opposition to existing power relations which can be seen through resistance. Hall & Spivak (1994) argue that reversing a stereotype is not only about overturning it, but it is also about attempts of escaping the stereotype's grip.

Diefenbach (2013) considers that it is not enough to say how resistance is possible or that the means that allow resistance to exist. Instead, resistance requires people to understand relations of domination. The achievement of this understanding reflects the struggle for recognition by racialized minorities. With similar logic, Sung (2015), for instance, explores the reproduction of mainstream narratives that problematize people "of colour". He argues that being seen in a particular way (being problematized) is not only a form of oppression but also a site for resistance.

This meaning that atrocities of various forms reveal experiences, yet leave room for a reaction. In other words, a type of engagement in which the racialized person interacts with their label and treatment. As we will see in the following chapter, the way Sung treats atrocities faced by people “of colour” is the way I seek to use the framework of racial interpellation.

Resistance

To explore the different forms of reaction, we must first understand the conceptualization of resistance. For this matter, I refer to Hollander & Einwohner (2004), who allude to resistance as breaking silence, active behaviour, and personal accounts of oppression that seek to counter dehumanization. Williams (2007) reveals that research on resistance is framed in terms of class, race, ethnicity, or gender. The reason behind resistance vary, but the forms of resistance commonly used by racialized minorities tend to remain the same: they are artistic forms of expression such as hip-hop, visual art, rap, and comedic performances. For Fanon, language is a powerful form of expression commonly used by Antilleans (Fanon, 1952). Similarly, several authors have referred to creative and artistic forms of expression as tools for not only facing atrocities but potentially resisting them.

Resistance and laughter

In the field of Criminology and criminal anthropology, different aspects of race, criminality, political processes and social ordering are discussed. To place resistance and humour in the study of Criminology, I use Frauley’s (2015) idea to move beyond ‘crime-ology’ and move beyond conventional criminological enquiry (2015, p. 623). In this sub-section, I evoke various types of thinking on humour and resistance. I seek to present humour as an aspect that, although has the potential to act against racism, also has the capacity to (re)produce it (Weaver, 2010).

Bakhtin (1977) & Lowe (1986) expanded the study of satire and claimed that political satire is a rebellious weapon because of its ability to unveil a particular reality that is not necessarily revealed in dominant representations and narratives. It not only functions as a tool for the power of human beings to transform the social order but also as a tool for affirmative action. In the case of laughter, Bakhtin (1977) highlights that laughter is associated with comedy and satire in two different ways: while comedy reflects acceptance, satire involves rejection. Bakhtin (1977) links satire with rejection (for example, in the case of carnival) as it is a form of comedy that may not be accepted. As a result, political satire in relation to social processes, relations, and conditions will be explored throughout this research. Both humour and satire will be discussed simultaneously, particularly because both offer insight into this topic. For Amarasingham (2010), laughter is a form of expression that not only reveals atrocities, stereotypes, and challenges but also uses them in a way they can be questioned. In the same vein, Zekavat (2017) refers to political satire as a form of resistance that intervenes social, political, moral, ethical, and religious matters. In this sense,

Individuals who resist through satire use stereotypes to not only emphasize mistreatment and misrepresentation, but to also exaggerate representations to the extent of transformation. Satire leads stereotypical representations to be challenged and questioned through portrayals and rhetoric of race that potentially opposes negative representations and racist discourse. For example, the stereotypical belief of Muslims and Arabs as a national threat led to the formation of 'The Axis of Evil' comedy group. George Bush coined this term to categorize countries in the Middle East and North Korea as nations that threaten the West. This led to a political stereotype negatively categorizing Muslims, Arabs and other visible minorities who appeared Arab or Muslim (e.g. Sikh

individuals). As a result, four Middle-Eastern individuals put “comedy tour” as a suffix to George Bush’s statement (“Axis of Evil”) to start a national form of activism and resistance⁴.

Individuals and groups such as The Axis of Evil Comedy group use this method as an effective tool for challenging racist rhetoric, specifically stereotypes that tend to silence people “of colour”. Instead of keeping quiet, satire ensures that voices are heard through both comedies of distortion and comedy of frustration (Bakhtin, 1977). Lowe (1986) furthers this notion by explaining the distinction between the two forms of comedy. For him, comedy of distortion refers to distorting the idea of what is considered ideal or normal. He uses the example of “ethnic comedians” who represent a new version of what is considered ethnic. In other words, they distort their original representation and social construction. In addition to this, we have comedy of frustration which pertains to comedy that seeks to transform one’s struggle into action. Furthermore, Crath (2012) suggests that some individuals may not create contents of satire themselves, but the act of sharing content is an act of activism and agreement for this genre. In addition to this, Newell (2012) highlights that such content tends to reflect shared experiences. Therefore, satire is not only used because of its easy access in virtual spaces but also because it is easily understood by different populations and utilized as a tool of connection and social engagement.

Satire and racialized minorities

In this way, racialized minorities can use different tools to engage with racism, racialization, and other social and political issues. Abdullah (2017) emphasizes the fact that comedy has the potential

⁴ *The Axis of Evil Comedy* Group mentions that: “Every time they show us in the media, they always show us as the crazy people burning the flag, going like ‘Death to America!’ It’s always that guy. Just once, I wish they’d show us, I don’t know, baking a cookie” (Amarasingham, 2010: p. 469). Here, satire is used to question portrayals of Arabs and Muslims. By combining western hate with something simple such as baking a cookie, humour challenges the stereotype of Arabs and Muslims as violent people. As we see here, political representations and messages can be transformed to challenge negative assumptions about racialized minorities. Although, these statements are open to different interpretations, they reveal atrocities while including the sentiments of those facing oppression.

to speak about conditions and relations faced by people “of colour” in our supposed post-racial era. He indicates that the underlying problem is that experiences of race and racism are often overlooked and (re)produced (Abdullah, 2017, p. 5). Now, while comedy reveals racial differences and experiences, performances by comedians “of colour” may (re)produce the same relations and conditions it seeks to undo. For Abdullah (2013), these relations and conditions could be reproduced through the process of racial interpellation in comedy. As a result, when combining race and comedy, topics are brought forward, but at the expense of possible misunderstandings and misrecognition (Hirji, 2009).

Hirji (2009) values the use and combination of racial topics and comedy, particularly because she views it as a tool to reveal racist rhetoric and to encourage discussions pertaining to race. Interestingly, she presents both sides of this phenomenon. For example, while she values the fact that it reveals experiences and discourses typically silenced, she also critiques it for sometimes legitimizing racist discourse. More importantly, she fears that humour and satire may become a commodity that will lose its initial purpose of provoking laughter and revealing experiences. To justify comedy as a tool for resistance, Pérez (2013) emphasizes the fact that comedy releases social tensions, but also confronts sensitive topics such as racist rhetoric that are often hidden in claims of post-racialism and colour-blindness. As a result, comedy is both a production and a perception that allows one to exert influence over sensitive social issues (Hirji, 2009; Turk, 1979).

Pérez refers to stand-up comedy as a vehicle for making the familiar strange by challenging commonly held notions through jokes (2013, p. 499). Stand-up comedy works as a mechanism that challenges different elements such as power and social relations. Campbell (2011) refers to Bakhtin and Habermas to highlight that stand-up is a form of social critique. At first glance, it appears to be a one man or woman show by a comedian who is paid to be present. The main

purpose is to make the audience laugh and to entertain them. The language and script that is used by comedians conveys knowledge, experiences and different understandings (Glick, 2007, p. 294). It is important to note that this type of script is not evident, but requires an interpretive audience to understand the logic behind dialogues. For example, it involves a balance of both truth and irony and allows the audience to distinguish between them on their own (Quirk, 2015).

Comedians take personal responsibility in their performances and often engage with race rhetoric strategically. For example, Pérez (2013) highlights that the main goal of comedians is to entertain their audience rather than offend anyone. Hence, this allows the performer to distance and detach themselves from the sensitive topics they allude to. They master techniques such as puns, on-liners, storytelling, comic timing and vocal impersonations (Campbell, 2011, p. 165). However, their performances can create discomfort. When comedians perform on different topics, their ideas can clash with dominant societal values (Quirk, 2015). Interestingly, Bilici (2012) argues that “ethnic comedians” may face unpredictability in terms of how their performance is seen. However, they hold a significant and privileged position because they can see and discuss aspects in two ways: the first one being their self-identification as comedians “of colour” and, the second one, alluding to their perspective and experience as someone living in the West. In other words, their hybrid identity allows them to associate and disassociate with their racialization and racial identity (Shahreza, 2017). Whether this is successful or not will be explored in Chapter 4.

As previously noted, comedy is a type of reaction that can also be a form of resistance. Research on comedy and race is under-developed, yet seen as an emerging field (Bilici, 2012). Although there are different interpretations and meanings about the social importance of humour, we can rely on Sigmund Freud’s view of comedy. For him, jokes (humour and satire) hold two thoughts including one that is acceptable and the other which is not. (Seizer, 1997). Nonetheless,

both allow us to laugh, dissect, reflect, and help us understand and “hopefully help us feel better even if it is just for a moment, about the messiness of being human” (Fontoura, 2019, p. 1).

Comedy as social criticism:

Stand-up comedy is a rhetorical form of popular culture (Meier, 2017). It typically involves a ‘rhetor’ who speaks through various dialogues (punchlines) to their audience for the purpose of evoking laughter. The structure goes as follows: the comedian constructs ethos (credibility) by creating a comic persona (character or voice) while negotiating kairos (timing) to ensure the maximum impact of their performances/dialogues (Meier, 2017, p. 24). Often and as seen in my analysis, the comedian makes themselves the target of the joke but at the same time highlight the imperfections and flaws in the social structure. For example, they speak about social rules in order to undermine them through language, art, and symbols (Meier, 2017). In the following chapters, we will see how I refer to comedians as ‘organic intellectuals. Through this, they are acknowledged as individuals who use comedy to expose oppression, chauvinism, ineptitude and pretentiousness (Amarasingham, 2010). As a form of non-violent resistance, they use rhetorical strategies to reveal and possibly challenge existing structures and meanings. Pérez (2013) justifies it as a form of social criticism by highlighting how it confronts and criticizes through hidden ways (strategies). For example, when comedians make fun of their experiences and their identity, racial discourse is not only normalized but also hidden as the underlying goal is to provoke laughter.

The problem with resistance

Pyke (2010) asks us to avoid exaggerating the importance of resistance by indicating that it is important to situate this question in a more general frame. He urges us to speak about the political needs and outcomes of resistance (Way, Hernandez, Rogers, and Hughes, 2013). For example, some forms of resistance have the limitation of maintaining dominant representations of racialized

minorities along with racist rhetoric (Spivak, 1994). For instance, as a form of resistance, hip-hop allows individuals to express themselves, but this expression can be twisted to portray the artist as someone violent (Hemphill, 2017). This shows that artists may not necessarily escape the “grip” of the stereotype (Hemphill, 2017). As a result, scholars suggest that because stereotypes and resistance work in relation to politics and the notion of “otherness”, attempts of resistance may lead stereotypical representations to become a trope (Donald, 2012; Hemphill, 2017; Pyke, 2010; Volpp, 2002). Following Donald (2012), when stereotypes become tropes, the state can use racialized individuals as a proxy for what is considered dangerous. Therefore, racialized folks become representative of negative categories such as that of violence and danger.

With similar logic, Gray (2013) and hooks (1988) indicate that there is a ‘slippery slope’ in what concerns resistance to stereotypes. They highlight that stereotypes tend to be intertwined with other representations and experiences; thus, resistance to one stereotype may reinforce another. This can be shown through the case of young black males as gang members and thugs. This stereotype is often intertwined with the broader black community in which women are often shown in relation to violent men. While black males may attempt to resist their violent categorization by forms of resistance such as music, their relation to black women could be negatively represented by their own actions. This is because black women are often represented in relation to young black men in terms of protection (Hemphill, 2017). Hence, resistance to one stereotype may continue to maintain another.

Spivak (1994) refers to this as the politics of people outside and inside stereotypes. This meaning that resistance to stereotypes and negative representations is not only about those inside the stereotype and their representation, but it is also about factors and individuals outside this framework. This can also be seen in the case of the (mis)recognition of Sikh individuals as

Muslims, a situation that demonstrates the involvement of people outside a stereotype. For example, while stereotypes of terrorism are associated with Arabs and Muslims, Sikh individuals become a part of this category as a result of misrecognition. This relates to the politics of interpellation. Althusser's theory of ideological interpellation is crucial here as it suggests that subjects are made as a result of an ideological process. Interestingly, the way we answer the call of interpellation (e.g. the name) positions us as particular kinds of subjects within society (Gomez, 1999).

2.4 - Conclusion

Contemporary studies on racism and racial profiling in North America lean on concepts that stress the hidden prevalence of racism in an allegedly post-racial society. This hidden racism is approached in terms of ideology and exclusion of the 'other' often presented in various studies. These studies have stressed the important role played by whiteness as it emerged from colonialism, western modernity, and capitalism in the construction of a racialized order. In literature, authors have studied the consequences of this racism for different minorities through the internalization of stereotypes, the emergence of problematic subjectivities, acceptance of conditions and relations, and the struggle for recognition. In addition to this, studies on the subject pointed towards the potential of comedy as a form of resistance to race. In this sense, this research intends to contribute to the exploration of this question through the study of comedy from the perspective of interpellation. To explore the struggle faced by racialized minorities with the factors mentioned, the initial research question proposed is: How racial interpellation tropes that convey stereotypes and representations of racialized minorities are negotiated (accepted, refused, tolerated, resisted) through humour (comedy, satire) by the productions of comedians in North America? In the following chapter, I will explain the theoretical elements of this research question.

Chapter 3: Methodological Approach

As we have seen in the previous chapters, the key theoretical concepts for this research on racism and satire are racial interpellation, subjectivation and resistance among others. In this chapter, I will present the research design, data sampling, and techniques of data collection as they arise from this theoretical framework. As we will see, the methodology of this research is qualitative and interpretative. This chapter also presents the ethical considerations of this work. The structure of this chapter is as follows. First, I present the research design and highlight the use of thematic analysis in this study. This is followed by a section on sampling to introduce each comedian in this study and highlight the reasoning behind the data chosen. In addition to this, I present the techniques used to analyze different productions. I also explain the data source from which these documentaries are derived as well as my data analysis methods and techniques. The initial goals guiding this research are to present an overview of the current research on racial interpellation, explore its different accounts, present the ways in which resistance occurs, and assess whether political satire can intervene and/or negotiate racial interpellation. I also explore how interpellation succeeds or fails. How are subjects created through the process of interpellation? Is the fight against racialization part of the mission that popular comedians of minority communities have given to themselves? Can racial interpellation be resisted or challenged through humour?

3.1 - The Research Design

Discourse, representations, and language are key aspects of the theoretical framework of this research. As we saw in Chapter 1, the notion of racial interpellation points towards the exploration of tropes, stereotypes and discourses of racialized individuals and how these elements can be resisted through political satire. Although this research focuses on the reproduction of subjects in relation to racial interpellation, the goal is to not only discuss how subjects come to be, but to also

explore the role of resistance in the process of racial interpellation. This will be done through a thematic analysis of the shows of four successful comedians and two emerging ones: Hasan Minhaj, Maz Jobrani, Russell Peters, Hari Kondabolu, Azhar Usman, and Ramy Youssef (more on this sampling later).

In terms of methods, I pursue this research through the adaptation of thematic analysis to my theoretical interests. All the performances include a stage, lights, and comedians who are dressed similarly in casual clothing such as jeans and t-shirts. Although, there are visual cues in each performance, I focus on the script particularly because language is a central dimension of both interpellation and thematic analysis. In this sense, I focus on the scripts and combine scripts to explore both ideological interpellation and racial interpellation. The script is also the main focus of this study for reasons of space and time. As a linguistic professor, Norman Fairclough is particularly important for this research as he focuses on creating a systematic method to explore how power is exercised through language and how language is socially shaped and socially shaping (Fairclough, 1995). As mentioned by Fairclough, linguistic analysis engages in content to explore issues of power and hegemony. According to Fairclough (2003), discourse consists of relations between people, interactions, languages, and genres which function to create meaning within social life and social relations and remain crucial when studying discourse in any dialectical interaction (p. 9).

I use Fairclough's interpretation because he refers to Althusser and Gramsci when discussing ideological processes and uses this type of analysis to explore interpellation. To be specific, he uses both language and representations to analyze the complex interactions and interrelations of social life (Waller, 2006, p. 10). He provides a linkage between method and theory that explores critical discourse analysis as not only the analysis of a text, but also the analysis of

discourse in relation to the social structure, social relations, and sociocultural practices (Waller, 2006). For example, he explores the relationship between language and ideology, particularly Althusser's work on the theory of ideology. In this respect, both language and ideology allow us to explore theories and 'analysis of power' (Fairclough, 2010, p. 56). Traditionally, linguistic analysis also refers to the study of language and the history and structure that make language possible. The structure of language refers to phonetics and semantics, whereas when we concentrate on the critical 'use' of language, we can focus on conversation, discourse, and sociolinguistic analysis. I use his work to highlight that the relationship between language and society is not direct and conveys values, beliefs, conventions, and norms of society (Fairclough, 1995).

Fairclough provides an understanding of linguistic analysis as an evolution of critical discourse analysis in which language (e.g. texts, scripts) can be used to interpret social circumstances. Fairclough highlights how this type of analysis combines language and social context and can have the potential to transform or draw attention to different aspects (p. 195). It allows us to see how change can be created and can also be seen as a mechanism of power. Sheyholislami (n.d.) explains this by highlighting that it looks at how ideology and ideological processes are manifested in language. This includes the experience of the speaker, their attitudes and evaluations, and their relationship(s) with the audience. This can also be approached through thematic analysis because it allows researchers to focus on argumentation, legitimization, classifications, contradictions, direct address to audiences, inferences, metaphors, overstatements, rhetorical and persuasive features (Fairclough, 2006, p. 148).

While this evolution of critical discourse analysis can be studied from a variety of approaches, its underlying principles consist of description and interpretation (Cech, 2014). I use

his systematic method which is an interpretive activity and depends on the researcher's personal judgement and experience (Fairclough, 1995). When we examine language and ideology, various themes emerge. These themes will be explored in the analysis chapter.

As noted within the theoretical framework, interpellation takes forms such as direct, indirect, public, ideological, and racial. Although these variations come from different theorists and contexts, what they share is an interest in the constitution of subjects and the existence or nonexistence of resistance. In this research, we see tropes as a significant aspect of racial interpellation. Racial tropes consist of different discursive and visual ideas such as skin colour, language, labels, and consequences of racism that represent race in terms of an "us versus them" dichotomy, acceptance and unacceptance, internalized oppression, recognition, and racialization.

Symbols are also important for this research. This is because racialized symbols allow us to identify experiences of racism that are related to different aspects of interpellation, such as (mis)recognition, for example. Tropes and symbols can also be approached as involving repeated patterns and themes. For example, my theoretical frame will allow me to identify recurrent tropes that exist and the responses, experiences, and reactions involved. This will also allow us to look at the performances to be studied in terms of language (naming and categorizing), and representations. For example, comedian Hasan Minhaj refers to a post 9/11 context in which his family, he and members of minority groups were racially profiled through recurrent stereotypes. In this way, he speaks about his school experience of being constantly called "Sadam Hussein". In this case, my research design allows me to look at tropes in relation to the different aspects mentioned in Hasan's experience. We will also see how tropes contribute to the process of interpellation and how they are reproduced as a result of different elements such as one's accent or religion. Finally, this research will allow us to evaluate the role of resistance in relation to

interpellation. From the perspective of misrecognition and misinterpellation, I will explore how political satire relates to the question of resistance (e.g. negotiation).

A note on the deontological dimension of the research is pertinent here. It is important to mention that comedy includes content that may be interpreted as offensive and degrading for some individuals. While being aware of this, I sought to include content that was relevant to the overall study and I attempted to remain critical of every segment that I presented. In other words, I attempted not to take a side or agree with particular dialogues. Instead, I assessed comedic segments in relation to racial interpellation in order to further analyze my research question.

3.2 - Sampling

As seen in the literature review, resistance varies in its form, subjects, and reactions. In the case of satire, there tends to be one speaker or one group that takes the stand for their racialized community and anyone else who is associated with stereotypes and representations that their racialized group faces. Amarasingham (2010) uses Gramsci's notion of the organic intellectual as someone who voices the interest of a group, defends themselves and their group in public, and fights for recognition. Although this person may believe they are functioning without being influenced by the dominant group, they may continue to perpetuate and reflect dominant values. Nonetheless, Amarasingham argues that these individuals are crucial for resistance as they challenge conventional ideologies while exposing scrutiny faced by racialized groups (2010, p. 470).

For Gramsci, in any act of resistance, organic intellectuals exist. These people possess the knowledge to 'work with hegemonic boundaries' and they are uniquely suited to challenge the dominant landscape (Simon, 2013, p. 57). It is important for them to possess the ability to convey the needs and desires of a particular community and to see themselves as part of it. Traditionally,

organic intellectuals were scholars, but today, these refer to journalists, publishers, and tv personnel who are associated with cultural industries (Amarasingham, 2010, p. 467). Through their experience with being dominated, they interpret and convey different messages to different groups. Since they reflect different experiences and groups, they are suited to expose certain aspects of domination that may be shared among others. It is important to note that Gramsci spoke about these individuals in terms of social classes. However, similar to Amarasingham (2010), this research incorporates comedians who have a ‘hybrid identity’ that allows them to associate and disassociate with different opinions, social relations, and practices apart from social classes.

With this logic, comedians can be seen as organic intellectuals and, then, as key informants since they voice the interest of their groups in contexts in which they tend to be burdened with racialization, tropes, misrepresentation and (mis)recognition. For example, Amarasingham (2010) studies dialogues by different comedians such as Dean Obeidallah who shares similarities with the comedians included in this research because he deals with similar topics. Obeidallah argues that people have the choice to represent themselves because “the burden is on them to tell their own story and create a type of subject that is not necessarily depicted in the dominant culture” (Amarasingham, 2010, p. 474).

In this research, I will focus on stand-up performances by Hasan Minhaj, Russell Peters, Maz Jobrani, Hari Kondabolu, Azhar Usman, and Ramy Youssef. I analyze 6 comedic shows produced between 2006 and 2018 in the United States and Canada. Although many of these comedians are famous stars in mainstream media and have attained privileged positions, this research will not explore the consequences of this aspect due to reasons of space, time and context. These aspects are not necessarily explored in literature and would be useful for a future study. Moreover, I include American comedians, particularly because it was difficult to come across the performances

of racialized comedians in Canada. Many do not have accessible content or do not have performances sufficient for analysis. In this sense, future research may also benefit from the differences between performers in Canada and performers in the US.

In what follows, I provide a description for each of the comedians chosen for this study. They place themselves in situations in which they are among people, “while being in front of them” (Greene, 2018, p.1). What this means in this research is that they represent a perspective that is commonly shared with the public yet conveyed through a different position. Although their positions as well-known comedians may problematize their stance as individuals who allegedly give voice to their community, I use Hirji’s (2009) argument in the sense that comedians are successful in contributing to a pluralist system by serving an ideological function but also provoking laughter. The comedians included in this study self-identify as comedians, artists, performers, and sometimes activists. I refer to comedians from their first names as they tend to be introduced as such in shows and also introduce themselves and their stories through their first names.

Hasan Minhaj

Minhaj is a 34-year-old Indian-American actor, television host, political comedian and writer who is known as a member of The Daily Show in the United States (Ryan, 2019). Before becoming a correspondent in The Daily Show with Jon Stewart and Trevor Noah, Minhaj worked as a stand-up comedian and had minor roles in television. The Daily Show on Comedy Central allowed Minhaj to gain status due to the fact that the show was a well-known comedy show consisting of mockery, satire, and critiques of conventional news. Minhaj is also well known as the host of the 2017 White House Correspondents Dinner during which he jokes about the state (e.g. Trump administration), major news outlets such as Fox News and CNN, and the representations and

treatment of racialized minorities, especially Muslims (Ohlheiser & Yahr, 2017). Since Minhaj gained fame and appreciation from his presence in shows and talks that are relevant and well known, his stand-up performance became a successful Netflix production known as *Hasan Minhaj: Homecoming King* which is a part of the data set. This performance was filmed at the Mondavi Center at Hasan's university in California on January 27, 2017. The total duration of this performance is one hour and thirteen minutes.

Russell Peters

As a 49-year-old Canadian who obtained success internationally, Russell Peters demonstrates the potential of comedy through his presence in different media. Today, he is one of the most successful comedians in the world. His success stems from his performances on racial stereotypes, experiences in Canada and the United States. According to the Canadian Encyclopedia, Peters is a well-known Indo-Canadian who was born and raised in Brampton, Ontario. Throughout his childhood, his experiences of racism consisted of being called a "Paki" or being mocked for the colour of his skin. Peters first gained recognition as a performer and stand-up comedian in CBC's Tv show *Comics* and CTV's *Comedy Now*. In 2006, Peters recorded his first sold-out performance in Francisco at Warfield Theatre known as *Outsourced* which will be a part of this data set along with Minhaj's work. The total duration of this performance is one hour and twelve minutes.

Maz Jobrani

Similar to Minhaj and Peters, Jobrani became a well-known comedian as a result of small performances that led him to be noticed by the North American society and internationally. According to Murphy (2017), Jobrani is a 48-year-old Iranian American who gained status through his 'Axis of Evil' comedy special with other well-known comedians such as Ahmed Ahmed, Aron Krader, and Dean Obeidallah. Following Jobrani's appearance in comedy specials, he also

appeared in films and TV series. Murphy (2017) highlights that his performances emphasize the commonalities between cultures, experiences of racialized individuals and their communities, and the political climate in North America. Murphy (2017) also argues that Jobrani's performance is as strong as the most known and accepted satirical show (The Daily Show). His Netflix show titled *Immigrant* is included in this data set. It was filmed at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC on August 1, 2017. The total duration of this performance is one hour and fifty-two minutes.

Hari Kondabolu

Similar to Hasan, Russell, and Maz, Hari self-identifies as a 37-year-old comedian of Indian background. He was born in New York to Indian immigrant parents and began his comedy career in the US. As a political comedian, Hari uses comedy to raise various concerns through everyday experiences (Avalon Management, 2019). His 2018 Netflix special known as *Hari Kondabolu: Warn Your Relatives* is included in this data set because Hari refers to many themes reflective of the process of interpellation. It was filmed at The Neptune in Seattle, Washington. The total duration of this performance is one hour and seven minutes. He discusses North American culture, white supremacy and his journey as a racialized man. For him, revealing the journey and the struggle is important in order for others to understand the way he feels about different situations and circumstances (Greene, 2018). Hari reveals that he wants his content to be seen and heard not only by a specific population but by a wide variety of people who are able to hear his content but also laugh at it (Greene, 2018).

Azhar Usman:

While the four previous comedians have an established career in stand-up comedy, Azhar Usman is a 44-year-old comedian whose career is growing. He is also of an Indian descent, yet born and raised in the United States of America. He is connected to Hasan Minhaj as he wrote Hasan's

speech for the White House Correspondents Dinner and also has a role in Hasan's current Netflix series *The Patriot Act* (Aga Khan Museum, 2019). Similar to the other comedians, he also speaks about personal experiences involving interactions with ordinary community members and authorities. His short YouTube clip about identity in the West is included in this data set. His clip titled "Flying while Muslim" was filmed at the Muslim Funny Fest in 2015 at Comic Strip Live in NYC on August 22nd, 2015. It is a six-minute clip that is a part of a full performance including other comedians that is not included in this study.

Ramy Youssef

Ramy is a 28-year-old Egyptian-American who is just starting his comedy career. As a young Muslim in America, his comedy routines often reflect his conflicting identities and a need to belong both in the cultural sphere and the public sphere. His performances reveal experiences concerning identity and his attempts to clear misconceptions about racialized identities (Sullivan, 2019). It was filmed at the Muslim Funny Fest in 2017 at Comic Strip Live in NYC on August 16, 2017. Although, he later released a Netflix special, his short YouTube clip of eight minutes was studied particularly due to time and access. According to Husband (2019), Ramy's performance reflects the role of an activist who uses story-telling as a mechanism to provoke laughter and challenge experiences. Similarly, the comedians included in this data set do the same. They use humour and satire to disguise their positions as activists. Although they do not refer to themselves as such, some of the comedy routines reflect critical rhetoric that challenges people, practices, and situations without directly claiming to do so. This will be seen in the exploration of my themes in the following chapter.

3.3 - Techniques and data source

The data in this study include the transcription of four Netflix documentaries and two short YouTube videos. The total duration of all these videos is six hours. These documents were produced during the last 15 years and involve standup presentations, monologues, visuals, and engagement with audience members often in the form of questions and answers. They were chosen not only because of their content but also because of their accessibility. While videos include symbols, gestures, and images, I focus on the verbal performances because they allow me to study and de-construct segments relevant to this research. In other words, I paid attention to the script, particularly because the focus is on the jokes conveyed and the meanings and interpretations that arise from them.

The documents chosen are part of what some scholars call transmedia: a technique in which the narrative starts with a basic content (e.g. individual experience) and later incorporates a set of diverse experiences often shared by audience members. Scholars have discussed transmedia in reference to Henry Jenkin's initial definition of the concept, which refers to this technique as a popular practice that utilizes multiple media technologies to present information (Evans, 2011, p. 14). Scholars have taken this definition and gone beyond its original framework. Today, transmedia can be referred to as narratives across multiple platforms that are not only shaped by original texts such as newspapers or reports, but that create new meanings associated with original texts (Evans, 2011).

What is important to consider is the role transmedia plays in taking narratives and going beyond them through different formats. In this sense, it is possible to describe the work of comedians as a form of transmedia. For example, comedian Hasan Minhaj uses his experience, news and other elements to perform comedy in different formats. Thus, he has TV shows, a

documentary, interviews, and speeches that in a certain way show the influence transmedia has in his work. Similarly, other comedians included in this research also perform within different platforms such as through interviews, comedy nights, personal websites, Netflix productions, and short YouTube clips.

Belanger (2015) presents transmedia as a method of storytelling that allows comedians to perform through different media forms, “branding oneself across multiple platforms” (p. 143). In her article on comedy and the media, Belanger (2015) addresses how comedy and the media intersect as a result of the changing nature of comedy and the way it is viewed. An example of this is prosumer-producer material, transmedia journalism, and culture jamming. For this research, comedy will be discussed as a form of transmedia production that is consumed through culture jamming. Belanger (2015) refers to culture jamming as mainstream ideas and media culture coming together to challenge notions. She uses *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart as an example of the idea of “dismantling the master’s house with the master’s tools” (p. 145). Through this, mainstream notions are allegedly challenged through comedy from various platforms. By using *The Daily Show* as a prime example, we can acknowledge how comedy is a tool for laughter, but also for revealing stories and situations in a strategic manner.

Story-telling across various platforms often parodies and exaggerates personal and others’ experiences, yet also provides some insight. For example, when comedians rely on stereotypes to convey jokes, they talk about their personal experiences but do so in a manner that conveys their points and also releases tension (Perez, 2013). Now, it is important to note that this study considers the experiences of comedians as indicators and not as factual situations. That is to say that I do not see the scripts as real experiences, but as a form of cultural jam that projects stand-up mechanisms and that allow me to explore the theory of racial interpellation. In fact, stand-up comedy is seen as

a staged performance that includes self-presentation that can be influenced by the broader structure and context (Lindfors, 2019).

3.4 - Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis

In order to relocate the collected data in the process of interpellation, thematic analysis was conducted as a key element of linguistic analysis. Thematic analysis is used to identify and analyze patterns and meanings (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Scholars highlight that this type of analysis can be used across different social science paradigms. According to Sen (2012), thematic analysis in qualitative research usually takes the form of transcribing interviews or noting observations. She suggests that the analysis of humour can be similar to the analysis of interviews or field notes because it allows the researcher to explore verbal information in relation to a phenomenon or a specific context (p. 2). Furthermore, she highlights inductive analysis as a useful method to identify patterns and themes in the qualitative research of satire. In this research, I use thematic analysis to identify particular patterns and meanings in relation to racial interpellation. According to the critical paradigm, thematic analysis is used to critique a phenomenon and the elements that surround it such as race and politics. Braun and Clarke justify the use of thematic analysis by referring to it as a method that enables the researcher to organize patterns, interpret meanings, and analyze the content (2017, p. 297).

Thematic analysis was done with the help of the software NVivo. After organizing the contents of the shows, I identified themes and subthemes. For example, following the transcription of each video, I repeatedly scanned each file of separate videos in order to come across patterns and concepts between the performances. Now it is important to recognize that this research began with inductive analysis and later used deductive analysis. In other words, I combined both

inductive and deductive procedures. I did it this way because I wanted to use the strengths from each approach to evaluate my research question. For example, the inductive (data-driven) approach complimented my deductive (theory-driven) approach by allowing me to look at the performances presented to evaluate and explore interpellation. I ultimately searched for three main codes. These themes are tropes and experiences of racialized minorities, challenges with racialization, and negotiation to interpellation. While the first two themes were much easier to identify, the final theme of negotiation led me to search for interactions and experiences in which interpellation was portrayed or discussed. Each theme consisted of subthemes such as references to skin colour, experiences of racial profiling, and participation as a racialized minority among a few others. Once identified, I began to explore these codes to understand and analyze the process of racial interpellation through political satire. I completed three rounds of coding in order to interpret the performances. These themes and subthemes will be presented in the following chapter.

3.5 - Conclusion

Thematic analysis is used in this research to explore concepts pertaining to the process of racial interpellation. This is done through the study of comedic performances by six different comedians from Canada and the United States. The notion of transmedia has also been useful to approach the performances by racialized comedians across multiple media platforms. In the following chapter, I present the results of this analysis.

Chapter 4: Analysis

In chapter 2, we saw that tropes and stereotypes in the form of common narratives and representations interpellate individuals in a re-occurring way and become patterns over time. Naming and referring to individuals through pre-conceived notions is a trope in itself. Concerningly, this entails what an individual is or ought to be (e.g. subject) instead of who they are (Canadian, Indian, male, female) (Laitila, 2018). This concerns the identity given to them by others instead of the identity they choose to present. In this chapter, I analyze three questions related to racial tropes in satire on racial interpellation. These questions are 1) tropes and experiences of racialized minorities; 2) challenges with racialization; 3) negotiation towards interpellation. These subjects will be discussed through the analysis of various performances by racialized comedians. As we will see, when tropes and stereotypes are (re)produced, they lead to various challenges, particularly in what respects racialization. This includes forms of oppression and atrocities commonly faced by racialized minorities. When tropes and challenges are present, this process leaves room for a type of engagement and reaction. This engagement reveals these experiences and problematizes them. It is important to note that, in this research, I explore performances not as they interact with the audience, but as they evoke meanings throughout the scripts.

The first section of this chapter refers to the way comedians deal with racial tropes and with the different experiences and contexts in which minorities are often ‘hailed’. As we will see, these examples evoke various elements of interpellation. Then, I approach the way comedians face challenges of race, racialization and racism (particularly as forms of oppression in the process of racial interpellation). The final section of this chapter seeks to analyze dynamics of negotiation with interpellation in the shows of comedians. This type of engagement builds on the two previous

themes by referring to how engagement is possible and the difficulties that surround it. Although each section begins with a dialogue, each is interpreted as a particular aspect of that theme and offers insight in different ways as we will see.

Prior to exploring the performances of comedians, it is important to highlight the main issues and topics discussed by them. All the comedians in this study speak about a variety of topics that concern the initial research question. To begin with, Hasan Minhaj performs his origin story through general topics such as marriage, comedy, childhood, family, careers, education, social events, religion, patriotism, language and cultures. He speaks broadly about these subjects, but also gives an example for each topic through his personal experience. For Hari, the main topic of discussion is American culture, family life, the political climate, Canada, immigration, and the LGBTQ community. I include Maz Jobrani in this study because of his discussions on the political environment, anti-immigrant politics, protests, family, childhood, and cultures. Similarly, Russell Peters also dwells on topics of language, travel, families, accents, American and Canadian culture, and ethnicities. I also explore the work of Azhar Usman who performs about airports, citizenship, racialized appearances, historical figures and terrorism. Lastly, as we will see in this chapter, I also include some work by Ramy Youssef who conveys dialogues on childhood, identity, social life, religion and family. While each comedian offers insight, I was able to explore interpellation mostly through the work of Hasan Minhaj as his topics were broader, but also included specific examples about identity, subjectivation and resistance.

4.1 - Tropes and experiences of racialized minorities:

As we have seen, a subject can be interpellated in various scenarios and ways. Comedians indicate that racialized subjects are repeatedly problematized as a result of skin colour. Authoritarianism, violence, and forced-choices reflect the ways in which comedians describe situations of

interpellation. Their performances point to experiences of authorities that target individuals through mechanisms and practices embedded in institutions that perpetuate violence and oppression against racialized folks. Thus, imposing social relations and positions on minorities that subject them to “avoid trouble” and to belong as a person “of colour” and as a visible minority in the West. This results in different stances, situations, and experiences of racism in which interpellation is either tolerated, reinforced, or negotiated.

In this chapter, I come across and examine different tropes and challenges that racialized minorities can face. Through political satire, these tropes and challenges are sometimes undermined. Comedians refer to common tropes such as skin colour, treatment by authorities, hate crimes, the positions of a good subject, racialized appearances, media narratives and portrayals, and experiences of ‘othering’. These tropes can also be seen through different challenges pertaining to belonging in the West, post-racialism, fear of skin colour, dominant constructions of minorities, speech that confronts racism, and notions of identity. As we will see in this chapter, comedians attempt to evoke and undermine these aspects through discussions of a generational divide, common stereotypes, experiences with authorities and racial slurs.

“People see race, people see colour”: skin colour as a visible marker

Tropes take the form of labels and representations that are constantly imposed on racialized individuals and their communities in modern societies. Individuals are interpellated in concrete situations through labels that push members of society, institutions, and authorities to refer and interact with them in particular ways. All this is related to the question of culture. In this study, culture refers to values, narratives, representations, and practices that reflect society’s views and also place a responsibility on individuals. This includes both practices and customs involving

authorities as well as self-management practices that racialized minorities are expected to engage in.

Often, the behaviour and appearance of racialized minorities must align with institutional customs and practices that are conveyed through state representations and norms (Reynolds, 2013). This can be seen through Mamdani's (2004) discussion on race and identity as operationalized through fear. For him, western culture is 'self-reflexive' and focuses on dividing the good and the bad. It focuses on separation and in correcting the bad whether it is people or their behaviour. He indicates that, in North America, for Muslims and Arabs and those who are (mis)recognized as such, this separation places them in negative categories regardless of their behaviour. This leads to a culture of fear of racialized minorities, specifically Arabs and Muslims and leads culture to become politicized altogether. Comedians challenge these narratives that present racialized folks as subordinates.

The comedians in this sample speak of experiences that make sense in a post 9/11 context and in an allegedly post-racial condition in which the idea that society has overcome race is promoted (Donald, 2012). This pertains to the belief that racism is something of the past and that today racial equality exists. In my view, this belief also refers to the idea that overt racism is an issue of the past. This whole post-racial narrative is challenged by comedians who highlight that the notion of the racialized outsider or the 'other' is still active, particularly when the state apparatus calls people by activating racialized subjects (Pitts, 2015). In contemporary society, this call to racialized subjects leans on institutions, authorities, and practices that, as we have seen, function in terms of risk control (Snyman, 2008). In this context, race is seen as something unknown, something that one needs to be protected from.

In some cases, the intended racialized subject fails to be (re)produced and an unintended subject emerges (Arthurs & Little, 2017). This subject is reflected in the performances of racialized comedians, who in this way enact a struggle for recognition among racialized communities. Thus, according to comedian Hari Kondabolu, the fact is that:

People see race. Let's not bullshit. People see race. People see colour. I know. That's why I'm afraid to tour the country. I got offered a gig in North Carolina, and I was nervous about it. Some of that has to do with my preconceived notions and fears about the South, 'cause I read American history, and ... So, some of it's on me, and, umm...My friend's from North Carolina. He's like, "You're being ridiculous. You're performing in Asheville. Asheville's the most liberal part of North Carolina". What does liberal mean for me? Does that mean I'll be hit over the head with a bottle of kombucha? What does that mean? (Welch et al & Cooper, 2018, 00:14:00).

Here, Hari evokes the belief that race is the first thing people see when facing another person. What is important from this segment is the fact that even before an event occurs, Hari prepares himself for scenarios in which his race is not only recalled, but also targeted. I use his segment to emphasize the idea that race is not only used as a visible marker for racialized minorities, but also translates into the way minorities participate in the world. For example, as we see in Hari's segment, he seems to be aware of his interpellation as a racialized male and manages his participation based on this. For example, by being aware of history, he understands that he may be "interpellated" in specific areas. This raises the question of the effects of racial interpellation because as a racialized person you are not only seen through your race, but also have to manage yourself in terms of the way people, authorities, and institutions will acknowledge, engage, and treat you.

Furthermore, the segment presented does not only reveal the prevalence of race, but also suggests that individuals which are trapped inside of race (and remain in this place) may be able to avoid forms of ‘othering’ and discrimination (Fanon, 1952, p. 89). In this sense, comedians represent a risky position since they try to not remain in their place because they attempt to raise concerns and challenge racialization. Similar to Hari, the other comedians included in this study also discuss a North American context that reflects experiences of racism in Canada and America. These experiences of racism reveal patterns (e.g. tropes) that remind racialized individuals of their social positions and identities which were given to them without a choice and often in a rude way.

“Learn the language or go home”: the role of authorities

Tropes are often evoked by authorities in the form of insults and violence in concrete situations. For comedians, interactions with authorities tend to be insulting and also represent a barrier to resistance. In fact, institutional settings such as the police expect people “of colour” to engage in self-management practices (Reynolds, 2013). In this sense, comedians included in this data set indicate that when facing the invocation of a trope (e.g. a common stereotype) relating to their race by authorities, some of their attempts to negotiate are dismissed by those in charge. For example, police interactions can result in the police questioning a racialized individual’s background by asking: “Where are you from”? The person responding to this statement will have different ways of interpreting the scenario. It may be perceived as a question about ethnicity, belonging, or race. What is concerning is that the authority who is questioning expects the person to respond in a particular way. Whether this particular way refers to the individual acknowledging their race or their place in society is unknown. I refer to comedian Azhar Usman’s interaction with the police to highlight that when race is negotiated in interactions with authorities, interpellation often trumps resistance because of the power of authority. Azhar Usman expresses that:

If you are not white, you are Black in America. I got pulled by a cop and he said where are you from? I said Chicago? He said no where are you really from? He said Chicago. Saudi. No, what are you? A human being. What is your nationality? Nationality is a function of citizenship. I'm pretty sure I asked you about your ethnic background, but you are stupid. You do not know the difference between ethnicity and nationality. This is America, learn the language or go home (Usman, 2015, 00:02:23).

Here, while Azhar appears to resist the question asked by authority, he is perceived as incompetent because of the way he responds. I use his example as a glimpse towards what guides this analysis: the theory of racial interpellation. In the statement above, we see race, nationality, citizenship, ethnicity, and belonging. All these elements are present in state methods and categories of labelling racialized minorities. While this not only raises the concern of the different categories imposed on racialized minorities, it also points to the question of the difficulties faced by resistance in the process of interpellation. This is because it reveals that no matter how racialized individuals respond to the ways they are seen and referred to, they are often brought back to an institutional label. What Azhar Usman possibly reveals in this segment is that as a member of the West, you are expected to be aware of the categories you may belong to and answer accordingly. In other words, he is expected to stay in line with authority and behave in the manner authority expects him to (Fanon, 1963).

However, the police officer's interaction with Azhar represents a certain weakness of interpellation as well as the existence of misinterpellation (Martel 2017). As we have seen, this refers to the idea that referring to someone as "you" does not ensure identification as a result. Instead, it points towards a possible failure of interpellation (which manifests as a failure of the subject). In the example, when Azhar is questioned in terms of belonging and his racialized

background, he fails to respond in the way authority wants him to. The key question is that, in the interaction, the determining factor seems to be the recipient of the interaction (e.g. Azhar) rather than the person calling to another (the police officer). In the whole segment, what Azhar seems to revendicate is his willingness to negotiate the way he is treated by the authority. Here, I use Martel's (2017) argument that interpellation seeks to create a particular kind of subject, but several times it ends up creating misinterpreted subjects who are rebellious. This can be seen when Azhar questions the cop: he represents a subject who is a failure to become the subject initially targeted by authorities.

“Let them call you whatever they want”: violence and racial interpellation

The label that is imposed on a racialized person or a racialized community not only entails meanings and interpretations but also provokes situations of danger around racialized folks (Saha, 2013; Shah, 2017). In Hasan Minhaj's performance in his show *Homecoming*, he points towards certain experiences faced by racialized individuals. His performance raises the issues concerning the treatment of racialized minorities; specifically, Arabs and Muslims. He highlights that racialized individuals are not only reminded of their race but are also subjected to differential treatment and hate crimes that force them to respond to instances that are out of their control. Hasan's segment on his possible experience of a hate crime reflects this discussion since it shows that racialized individuals not only respond to labels but also respond to the way they are treated, particularly due to the fact that as racialized individuals they are given a limited choice (a forced-choice). He uses the post 9/11 context to highlight that race is not only troubling but also forces racialized minorities to seek different avenues of facing their racialization. In other words, their interpellation. For example, Hasan highlights that:

So, when 9-11 happened I was in high school. We're sitting there. Phone rings. I run, but my dad beats me to the phone. "Hello?" I grab the second phone. I hear a voice. "Hey, you sand nigger, where's Osama?" He looks at me. "You can hear me, right? Where's Osama?" "Hey, 2631 Regatta Lane, that's where you live, right? I'm going to fucking kill you." Click. And my dad's looking at me. Do you ever see your parents, and you see the mortality in them? I'm looking at my dad and I see all five-seven of him. I should have said something. I didn't. We sit down. I hear "thud, thud, thud" outside. Me and Dad run outside and all the windows on the Camry are smashed in. My backpack's open. "Fuck, they stole my stuff." I reach and I pull out my backpack. Pieces of glass get caught in my arm. Now blood is gushing down my arm, and I'm pissed! These kids know where we live, they're timing this, so they're watching us. So, I'm looking in the trees, the bushes... I look back in the middle of the street, my dad is in the middle of the road sweeping glass out of the road like he works at a barbershop. "We've got customers. We've got to clean this up." (Minhaj & Storer, 2017, 00:26:30).

In Hasan's experience of violence, his father was referred to as a nigger and as Osama Bin Laden. Both names are representative of "bad subjects" that dominate the media (Gerhauser, 2013, Hage, 2010, Alsultany, 2013).

Now, since Hasan and his father are attempting to integrate into western society, they can be considered "good subjects": they seek to live an ordinary life by abiding by the way they are seen and treated as racialized individuals. While Hasan's father represents the element of interpellation in which individuals accept and tolerate the way they are seen and treated, Hasan seeks to resist and demand equality. This attitude reflects Fanon's vision of interpellation. This is because he seems to present himself as someone who continues to fight for liberation despite constantly facing forms of oppression such as the hate crime expressed in his performance. For

example, his willingness and desire to speak up in this situation reflects a subject who struggles for liberation. However, both positions demonstrate that individual choice is limited by the political identities imposed on those who are racialized (Mamdani, 2004).

As a matter of fact, while being terrorized, Hasan and his father are burdened with the identity of terrorists. In other words, they are interpellated as violent subjects while facing violence. Therefore, what this comedy routine demonstrates is that when individuals are seen through race, racial interpellation occurs as minorities are expected to not only be aware of their race, but also be aware of their social conditions and social relations and to act in a corresponding way. For example, Hasan and his father were labelled as terrorists and victims of a hate crime, yet they were assumed to be responsible and deserving of the act of violence against them. The insults and names conveyed to Hasan and his father lead them to acknowledge their interpellation, but in different ways. We will explore this possible generational divide later in this work.

In this segment, Hasan may not change anything by bringing forward his experience with racism. However, his routine does reflect the process of racial interpellation and allows the audience to see that racism exists as a situation that places a forced choice on the racialized individual. As noted in the theoretical framework of this study, interpellation involves a forced choice. We can see that here since Hasan and his father's way of responding to their interpellation is limited. Here, I refer to Žižek's (1999) discussion on the forced choice of freedom in which he reveals that there is always the paradox of 'Choix forcé' which means that choice exists in two forms. On one hand, this refers to choosing the right thing which refers to the community the person belongs to. On the other hand, we have the wrong choice, which entails rejection and the loss of freedom (Žižek, 1999). What is important from Žižek's analysis is that the individual is

required to choose the good choice that is already given to him. Now, regardless of the final choice (good or bad), the racialized person is still violated as a result of their race.

Hasan and his father's experience demonstrate that although they seem to have the choice to respond back to strangers on the phone and to hate crimes against their family, their choice is limited because their safety and freedom are already targeted and may even be targeted in another instance. Now, while Hasan portrays the notion of choice through his limited position in this scenario, his experiences seem to go outside the parameters of interpellation: he does not appear to be completely trapped. As we will see, this is evident in other comedy segments. Interestingly, as a racialized subject, he seems to negotiate boundaries and seeks different avenues of resistance to challenge the same system and environment that seeks to trap racialized bodies.

"Convinced they are racist": societal stances towards race and racism

There seems to be two opposing stances when it comes to describing racialized minorities. One manages their speech in order to avoid "being racist" whereas the other explicitly uses race to refer to people. For example, Russell mentions that:

I was working at this comedy club. One of my black friends came down to hang out with me, and the doorman comes up and goes, "Hey, Russell. One of your friends came by." "He was a black guy?" "I don't know." "I didn't notice." "What do you mean, you didn't notice?" "What he look like?" "He was tall." "Curly hair." "What was his name?" "Uh, LeRoy." "Was he black?" "I don't know, uh, I..." "He could've been. I mean, maybe, I don't know." "If you say he's black, maybe he was. I don't know." We've got white people so scared to describe things with color, we've got them so convinced that they're racist (Peters & Blomquist, 2006).

Russell shows that race and racism exist even if people are aware of the problems concerning it. For example, the doorman is reluctant to use skin colour to describe individuals. This shows that

race is a sensitive topic which may be avoided by some individuals. This is because they may be afraid of being “interpellated” as a racist person. Certainly, the problem of racial interpellation is not limited to the level of individual behaviour.

In general, most people explicitly adopt stereotypes by taking already made meanings and applying them to racialized individuals and communities (the second stance). For example, a common stereotype associated with Muslims is that of terrorism (Bowling & Phillips, 2010). If you are racialized (specifically brown) and have facial hair, you are perceived as a suspect by authorities and members of society (OHRC, 2017). Comedians’ performances show that this label comes with a lot of set-backs because it goes beyond Muslims and tends to include any male who fits the descriptions previously mentioned. In this way, comedians such as Hari Kondabolu highlight that Sikh individuals are stereotyped as Muslims. As a South-Indian American, Hari highlights that Indians are also forced to respond to stereotypes in which they are misrecognized as another race, ethnicity, or religion. He points to the fact that:

The people who had it worst at airport security after 9/11 were Muslims and Sikh men, Sikh men who wore turbans and beards. And a few years after 9/11, I was at Heathrow Airport in London, and at this particular terminal, a lot of the airport security was done by Sikh men wearing turbans and beards. And the look on white American faces (Audience laughing). Mm.

“But if you’re there, then who’s—? Huh (Welch et al & Cooper, 2018, 00:06:33).

Hari mocks the fact that it surprises people when racialized individuals are those in charge of security (Welch et al & Cooper, 2018). He uses this example to problematize authority and to indicate that authorities are the problem because these are the people who reinforce interpellation by repeatedly placing racialized individuals in specific categories and situations reflecting racial profiling. Although Hari is not a Sikh man himself, he finds commonalities with Sikh people

because of mutual experiences of racism. Following the previous segment, he indicates that: “I was having a wonderful time. I guess I’m not getting searched today... (points to someone) “brother” (high fives a man with a turban in the audience followed by the audience cheering and then Hari points at him again)” (Welch et al & Cooper, 2018, 00:07:03). By ridiculing his own experience, Hari’s comedy routine reflects the notion that regardless of one’s race, ethnicity, religion, or social position, individuals are problematized by authority and institutions that “interpellate” them as racialized subjects. Hari succeeds in pointing to the fact that racialized individuals of different backgrounds go through similar experiences of racism in similar contexts.

“They think we are all the same”: racialized appearances and language

Language leads racialized minorities to become aware of their social positions and to interact with their interpellation. Maz Jobrani highlights that language places minorities in a specific position. I argue that this is the position of a racialized subject that is maintained in stereotypes, representations and common narratives that dehumanize racialized bodies and are a key aspect of interpellation. In other words, their positions as racialized subjects of the state is reinforced through them. Moreover, although this position exists in language, the comedy routines reveal that physical features are also a significant factor contributing to one’s interpellation.

Interestingly, when racialized individuals reflect the appearance of a certain race, they tend to be referred to as well-known racialized figures. In this sense, these racialized figures tend to be seen through misleading historic associations (Bowling & Phillips, 2003). For example, Azhar Usman recounts that he was referred to as both Osama Bin Laden and Gandhi in the same interaction. He says:

I was down in the south recently and I got profiled. Stopped at a red light minding my business. These guys pulled up next to me looking like a bunch of skin heads. But I wasn’t gonna judge

them based on their appearance. Then the driver looks at me like, what is up Osama? Before I could say anything, his friend goes: ya what's up Gandhi? How can you use Osama and Gandhi at the same time? Btw, how did calling someone Gandhi turn into an insult? Did you just call me one of the greatest people in history? Is that what you do to others: what is up Martin Luther King, Mother Theresa, etc. (Welch et al & Cooper, 2018, 00:04:40).

Regardless of whether these historical figures are good or bad, they are used to refer to people simply because it is an easier way to allude to them. History continues to interpellate individuals by assuming that their identities are a threat and that every minority is potentially bad (Mamdani, 2004). However, it is concerning that when racialized folks are profiled as suspects or considered a national threat, they are problematized through constructions by the West. In other words, they are threats to be classified, managed and securitized (Fanon, 1963).

Azhar seeks to resist racial profiling by ridiculing it. However, the problem is that when faced with the situation, there is nothing that Azhar can do. No matter how he responds, he will continue to be interpellated as a racialized subject. For example, in news media, brown skin and beards are often described and portrayed as features of suspicious persons (Weitzer, 2017). Azhar's performance shows us that it is difficult to resist experiences of racial profiling and racism because you cannot change the way others see you. The racialized individual is stuck with this gaze which entails a belief that they are problematic and incapable of representing a true version of themselves (Lorenzini & Tazzioli, 2018). In this sense, it is possible to say that resistance to one's interpellation is not easy and often leads minorities to tolerate experiences rather than to resist them.

For Hari, white folks are also put in the same categories because they can have similar appearances. Interestingly, through his comedy routine we can see how interpellation also subjects white folks as a result of appearance. For example, during his comedy routine he mentions that:

What's happening in this country now? People are shooting everything up. Nazis walking around. Oh, that's another thing, I got fact-checked for. Somebody comes up to me. He's like "All these racists aren't Nazis. Some of them are Nazis, wheels of Aryan Nation, KKK, Proud Boys – "Are you kidding me? They think we're all the same. You think I give a fuck what they call themselves? I'm sorry Nazi, did I insult your identity" (Welch et al & Cooper, 2018, 00:7:33).

Here, Hari seems to feel offended by being expected to be able to distinguish between white supremacists (when minorities are not given that respect). He seems to be concerned with the idea that minorities are expected to give respect to others. As a minority himself who may have not received respect in terms of identification, he does not care about how he addresses racist folks. We can also see through Hari's performance that the perception of racialized and white appearances is influenced beyond the point of appearance. What I mean by this is that appearance is influenced by different factors. As we saw previously, for minorities it can mean that they are the same whereas for white individuals, there is an expectancy to distinguish between them even though appearances may be similar. In this case, racist groups are possibly made superior by an audience member who expects the performer to validate their identity. Opposingly, Hari hints at the fact that the identity of racialized folks is not given that respect and made inferior instead.

Maz highlights that the misrecognition of racialized bodies leads more racialized individuals to be subjected to differential treatment. He mentions that: "There was that guy in Kansas who went out and shot two Indians, and then went and told someone that he shot two Iranians. Got the wrong

people, but he still... whatever. It's crazy" (Bain & Jobrani, 2017, 00:28:12). In this example, we see that Indians and Iranians are misrecognized as the same people (when the target was supposed to be someone who is Iranian). In this case, ethnicity does not play a role because it requires speaking to individuals and giving them a chance to present their own identity. In cases of racial profiling and hate crimes, this chance is non-existent because there is an attack on race perceived through skin colour and physical features. As a result, this demonstrates that while the racialized subject could be made aware of their race through language (word), they are also constituted through representation (image).

Enduring Microaggressions:

The comedians studied in this data set point to the commonly held belief that achieving the American or Canadian dream and changing your social conditions may change the way you are treated. However, Hasan offers a particular point of view by highlighting that the dream is yours and you are responsible for both creating and achieving it. For example, he alludes to his experience which goes as:

Growing up, we just want that co-sign. To tell them you're good enough. "Sit here. You're good enough." But that's not the American dream. It's not asking for a co-sign. It's what every generation did before you. You claim that shit on your own terms. That's you. You're not Hasan Minhaj. You're "Hussan Minhajj". This is new brown America. The dream is for you to take, so take that shit. Stop blaming other people (Minhaj & Storer, 2017, 01:03:29).

The American and Canadian dream both highlight life, liberty and pursuit of happiness in which equality is guaranteed (Gilmore, 2017). Hasan reflects on this to allude to what his show entails: 'the American dream tax' (Yam, 2018). This refers to the idea that to survive in the West as a racialized minority, you have to endure microaggressions. It is the metaphorical tax you pay as

outsiders to North America, the price you pay as a racialized minority who struggles for recognition, acceptance and belonging in the West. Thus, while the American and Canadian dream does exist, there lies a reality (outside of these dreams) which reflects the atrocities faced by racialized minorities. For Maz, this reality relates to the struggles faced by racialized minorities in terms of racism, barriers such as the American travel ban, and representations of the ‘other’ that continue to follow racialized people. For example, he expresses that:

People are afraid of immigrants. And if you watch Fox News or any of those networks, you, too, will be afraid of immigrants. Oh, my God. I tried to watch a half an hour of Fox News. I was afraid of immigrants. Guys, I swear to God, there’s so much death and destruction and Armageddon on the... There’s a lady... Judge Jeanine Pirro... Oh, my God. This lady is always screaming at the TV, like, “The end of the world is coming.” And she’s really upset and angry. “Yeah, here we go...” I tried watching once. She was freaking out. She has this digital American flag behind her. She’s like, “The Mexicans are gonna take our jobs, and the Muslims are gonna kill us, and we’re gonna get eaten by sharks. We’re gonna get eaten by Mexican Muslim sharks! With the Zika virus!” I was like, “Aah!” (Bain & Jobrani, 2017, 00:30:00).

Racialized people are feared regardless of how they engage with the world. There is a type of narrative that continues to follow the racialized person; thus, imposing both a name and a representation on them. In this segment, Maz ridicules how the rhetoric of fear is operationalized through representations and narratives that make no sense but are conveyed nonetheless. For example, he combines Muslims, Mexicans, and sharks to mock a danger that does not exist. He uses this to indicate that the fear of minorities created by news media is often unnecessary and exaggerated similar to his joke of Mexican Muslim sharks.

Experiences of ‘othering’ through language, appearance and interactions

Racial interpellation occurs as a result of ‘hailing’ to others. As we saw previously, racialized minorities are sometimes aware of what the other wants from them and sometimes, are not (Zizek, 1999). Interestingly, the comedy routines give the impression that individuals can become aware of their interpellation through language. This points to the fact that language is both a mark of cultural membership and a tool of political power (Brayton, 2009). For example, Hasan Minhaj tells us that his name was constantly mispronounced as “Hussan Minhajj”. Although this is a slight difference and does not appear to be indicative of an issue, Hasan later reveals that the ignorance of his name results in being referred by a label that is well-known, but problematic. He evokes the practice of roll-calls in schools to highlight how he was reminded of his racialized position. He mentions that: “Roll call was a problem. It was a big deal for a lot of us. – Like, what’s your name? – Jasura. Okay. What would you get? – Jasuriah. – Jasuriah? Yeah. I would get, like, “Hanson Minaja...” “Sahan Minha.” “Saddam Hussein.” It was my English teacher. “I’m not Saddam.” – What’s your name? – Biju. – What would you get? – A blank stare. A blank stare” (Minhaj & Storer, 2017, 00:05:44)?

His statement is not intended to discredit efforts in understanding culture or differences, but it is rather seen as a hint about how stereotypical names are given to racialized minorities. This situation often leaves them in interactions and situations in which they simply do not know how to respond. In other words, their interpellation as a specific kind of subject is imposed on them and leaves them with limited power to alter the situation. This can also be seen when Maz Jobrani is given the label of an immigrant and Russell Peters a terrorist. For Maz, the way language constitutes him as an immigrant becomes a barrier to his social participation. In his comedy routine, Maz reveals that he could not protest freely during the Muslim ban because of his identity

as an immigrant. He alludes to the fact that: “Guys, I was so scared at the protest. I’ll tell you how scared I was. I took my passport to the protest. Yeah. Who takes their passport to a protest? Immigrants. I wasn’t gonna get deported. If the cops stop me, “Officer, I’m with you”” (Bain et al & Jobrani, 2017, 00:19:34).

For Maz, being labelled as an immigrant means that he is required to manage himself in order to avoid being profiled by the authority. Unfortunately, labels given to racialized comedians and their communities result in the creation and reproduction of meanings that are often left unproblematized. Similarly, Russell’s comedy routine shows how the label of a terrorist follows him and results in him being ‘othered’ and feared. He adds that:

I was on a flight like two weeks after 9-11, I sat down beside this white guy, he almost shit his pants. I sat down, the guy goes like this. [BREATHING NERVOUSLY] About half an hour into the flight, I reached for my bag, the guy goes, “Oh my God! No!” “What? Relax, you jackass.” “Just getting my Discman.” “Gotta listen to my instructions” (Peters & Blomquist, 2006).

Similar to Maz, Russell’s experience in being labelled also results in being burdened with experiences that other you. In other words, experiences that single you out as the problem, mainly because of the colour of your skin. The experiences outlined can be seen as examples of both direct and indirect interpellation (see Figure 1 on page 21 of this document). It seems to me that direct interpellation reflects Hasan’s experience of being labelled because he is directly called a name (e.g. Saddam Hussein). In comparison, we have Maz and Russell who are constituted as a subject in an indirect way, through a general category (e.g. immigrant and terrorist). In both cases, comedians seem to recognize their interpellation.

For Hari, the point of concern is his identity, which is perceived as something that is imposed on him before being given the chance to represent himself in social spheres. For example, he refers to the recognition of racialized men with beards and brown skin at airports as a threat. When supporting a beard himself, he becomes aware of his interpellation and, as a result, attempts to respond to it. He refers to his experience by conveying that:

After this point, people get patted down. Some of us more than others, you know (Audience laughs)? 'Cause I'm very handsome. And moderately famous, you know? I have brown skin, and sometimes I stupidly grow a beard, right? Airport security doesn't like this. You can't reason with them. Like, "You have nothing to worry about. This is a depression beard. I am depressed right now". I am just a threat to myself. You have nothing to worry about (Welch et al & Cooper, 2018, 00:06:08).

Here, we see that Hari is prepared to be treated differently by authorities because his appearance is often considered as "Muslim". He jokes about himself and his mental health to point towards authorities and labels.

4.2 - Challenges with racialization

For Fanon, oppression and atrocities have to be challenged to attain freedom and recognition (Fanon, 1963). This section reveals challenges conveyed by comedians ranging from forms of oppression, struggles, and the personal thoughts of comedians. In spite of being ambiguous, many of these challenges seem to be presented and performed in a general way to build a connection and find commonalities among the audience. They concern questions of belonging, interpellation, and appearance. However, similar to the previous section, this section also focuses on the way comedians evoke interpellation and not on how they may interpellate their audience. The following pages will provide examples of how these challenges can lead to a variety of discussions on racial

interpellation. As we will see, these discussions concern questions such as feelings of inferiority, divisions between generations, experiences of ‘othering’ all reflective of a process that imposes an identity.

A sense of bigotry and a sense of belonging

Comedians portray race (e.g skin colour) as being at the forefront of different experiences. The position of a racialized subject is set the moment their skin colour is not only noticed but also used by those who interact and engage with them. This is related to the question of belonging and reminds us of Martel’s (2017) ideas in the sense that racism involves two processes. One is the process of interpellation of the racialized person as a subject and the other consisting of this person holding on to their interpellation to belong. In other words, one is about what you are perceived as and the other is reflective of the validity you give to that interpellation. Nonetheless, the problem is that both are forced upon the individual especially when racialized minorities seek to belong to the West. To illustrate this, I use Azhar Usman’s example in which he indicates that: “I get profiled all the time, especially when I am at airports. Airports put a Tv screen at every boarding area showing ISIS. Everybody at the gate look at ISIS, look at that man. I just wanna be like I didn’t do it. Look it’s live, how can I be at two places at once” (Usman, 2015, 00:05:52).

In this statement, Azhar affirms that, as a racialized man who fits the conventional representation of an Arab or Muslim, he is often interpellated as a terrorist, in particular, as a member of ISIS. Azhar stresses the fact that to avoid being profiled, he must respond in any way that will allow him to avoid trouble. For him, this is achieved by convincing others of the fact that he is a part of the West and that he cannot be someone (e.g. an extremist) against it. In comparison, Hasan faces this kind of situation differently, possibly because he became aware of interpellation and its consequences earlier on. For example, he says that he was supposed to attend his high

school prom with a non-racialized female, yet did not do so because the female's parents wanted her to attend with a white person. As his following comment expresses: "And it's not like they were yokels yelling "sand nigger!" I could let that pass. I'd eaten off their plates, kissed their daughter. I didn't know that people could be bigoted even as they were smiling at you. It's hard when you see people saying they love you but they're afraid at the same time. And I didn't know what that meant" (Minhaj & Storer, 2017, 00:44:54).

In Hasan's case, interpellation is about either being recognized and accepted or being misrecognized and rejected. His experience of racism made him more conscious of his existence as a racialized person (Martel, 2017). Moreover, it also led him to become conscious of his belonging to the West. This is because he realized that, in certain contexts, he could not belong because of the colour of his skin. What options are left for him when he is excluded, misrecognized and problematized because of his race? For Hasan, the answer was not to give interpellation validity but to rise above it. However, to rise above it, one needs to engage with it first, which may be mistaken as accepting interpellation.

Certainly, engaging with racism does not mean conforming to interpellation. Instead, it reveals the strategy of accepting certain experiences only as an avenue of attaining freedom (Diefenbach, 2013). For example, Ramy Youssef dismisses the existence of negative reactions to comedy by evoking the fact that the West is a place of freedom. He seems to suggest that comedians should accept certain aspects only to attain a position or platform that will allow them to control their own rhetoric. Ramy expresses that:

I never feel like I have to worry about fundamentalist reaction because I live in America. That's why I think being Muslim in America is the best place to do it. Ya okay, there is all this politics but I think we get to be ourselves in a way that we can't anywhere else which is why our parents

came here. Cuz they want to be Western because they feel that that's the thing that would allow them to be Muslim (Youssef, 2017, 00:06:45).

It could be possible that, as a young American, Ramy uses his platform to deal with issues of identity without targeting struggles of recognition by minorities. Although it appears that Ramy accepts his current position in the West, he points towards a desire for freedom and identity. However, the problem in his comedy routine is that he associates one's position in the West with freedom when in reality freedom is never truly attained.

"We're all very racist": racial interpellation among members of communities

Interpellation of racialized folks is often a question of racialized individuals being targets of non-racialized perpetrators. However, Hasan's comedy routine reveals the existence of this problem between people and communities of the same marginalized group. Here, when we shift the narrative to racial interpellation, we can understand that it is not just the state and authority who is able to interpellate. For example, in some of the comedy routines, comedians accept that they have been targeted because of the colour of their skin by members of their own racialized community. Could this be an effect of interpellation? In Russell Peters' comedy routine, he portrays himself as someone who attempts to reveal experiences of racism, yet problematizes his community. As someone who self-identifies as an Indian, he reveals that Indians are very nosy and love to conceal information. He also iterates that racialized people are more racist than non-racialized individuals. For example, he affirms that:

Indian people, Asian people, we're all very racist. Every group is racist. White folks will see a group of Indian people. They're like, "Oh, look at all those brown people." "They're probably all very happy together." Then you get in that group. We're like, "Hey, you're from India?"

“I’m from India. What part?” “Oh, not that part. Go to hell, you bloody bastard!” “I don’t want to know you” (Peters & Blomquist, 2006).

In a certain way, Russell reinforces the same narrative he seeks to challenge. His routine comes with the risk of being “re-interpellated”. For example, he tries to highlight that racism exists in every community, yet problematizes people from his race and ethnicity. He reinforces stereotypes on a community (Indians) who are already infused with mainstream representations and common narratives. In this sense, his routine could mislead an audience who may continue to be (mis)informed in terms of different types of race and ethnicity (Brayton, 2009). While Russell’s routine reveals racism within races, his routine does not provoke a change in meanings. This could be because Russell’s mission does not appear to be one that seeks to change how racialized minorities are recognized. Instead, his purpose would only be of provoking laughter.

When race and comedy intersect, there is a ‘slippery slope’ because negotiating one stereotype may repeat another (hooks, 1988). This can be seen when Russell reveals his experiences of racism in which the stereotype of Indians as terrorists prevails. Throughout his comedy show, he attempts to separate Indians from this label by revealing that:

The security at the airport, the Custom, Immigration, they really need to learn the difference between a terrorist and an Indian. We’re not the same! We’re not! We’re not from the same part of the world, we don’t speak the same language, we don’t eat the same food. We don’t even hate the same people. Terrorists hate Americans. Indians hate each other. A terrorist will blow up an airport. Indians like to work at the airport. “That will be counter-productive” (Peters & Blomquist, 2006).

By informing his audience about the stereotype of brown racialized minorities as terrorists, Russell repeats the stereotypes of Indians working in airports and their dislike towards one another.

Beyond what his comedy routine represents, there is the insight that the politics of interpellation relates to contradictions rooted in the struggle for recognition (Gomez, 1999). As we see in Russell's segment, he seeks to attain recognition for the Indian community by attempting to separate them from the stereotype of terrorists. Unfortunately, he maintains at the same time the social construction of terrorism and the portrayal of Indians as problematic subjects.

Afraid of your own skin: the power of interpellation

As we have seen in the previous segment, Russell focuses his attention on provoking laughter, possibly with the risk of reproducing the categories, labels, and names other comedians and activists seek to undo (Riach, 2017). Instead of representing resistance and negotiation toward one's interpellation, Russell Peters' comedy routine does not seem to resist any stereotypes. Instead, his routine may represent the power of interpellation in the sense that it can lead to internalized racism. For example, Russell mentions that: "Indian people are the worst. 'Cause uh... You tell my name to a white guy: "Russell Peters." "How're you doing? Nice to meet you." Indian people, they'll first want to question you. And the Indian people, when they try to get information out of you, they're the worst at it. They're not very convincing" (Peters & Blomquist, 2006).

In the previous segment, it is as if Russell felt responsible for the Indian community and, as a result, he attempted to alienate himself from it. Interestingly, it shows that during interpellation the person may not only see themselves and their community in relation to whiteness, but also react to their interpellation by disassociating themselves from their racialized community (Lorenzini & Tazzioli, 2018). What interpellation allows us to see is that this disassociation only leads to "partial liberation" which is not enough for resistance to succeed. Through a Fanonian lens of interpellation, we can say that to resist, the individual must learn to look at themselves in a

manner that is not reflective of whiteness (Lorenzini & Tazzioli, 2018). That is, to be effective, resistance and negotiation can turn into a struggle for recognition.

Hasan's experiences of racism were so perverse that he wanted to be non-racialized. For him, being non-racialized meant acquiring acceptance and privilege, as white people. He learned from an early age that being white meant being questioned less. It meant choosing who you want to be without suffering from pre-conceived notions. In this sense, colour prejudice is reflected in identities and can also give place to racialized minorities being afraid to interact with non-racialized people. In this way, after a troubling experience concerning the possibility of going to his high school prom with a white woman, Hasan explains: "You knew how hard it was for me, and then I was so insecure at that age that I couldn't date another white person, because I was afraid of not being able to be with them, because of the colour of my skin. Do you know what that's like" (Minhaj & Storer, 2017, 01:00:39).

In his early years, Hasan used to see himself as someone who had integrated into a predominantly white society. He attended school and social events with non-racialized individuals and also spent time with the same people after school. In this context, the prom situation put him back "in his place" as a racialized person who was not worthy of attending ordinary events alongside a non-racialized person. He was separated and made aware of his visible differences as a minority. Although Hasan had an urge to resist this experience, he finally accepted his position as the 'other' (Fanon, 1952). He speaks of this experience in the following way:

Mrs. Reed opens the door. She has this look of concern. And I look over her shoulder, and I see Jeff Burke putting a corsage on Bethany's wrist. And she's like, "Oh, my God, honey, did Bethany not tell you? Sweetie, we love you, we think you're great. We love that you come over and study. But tonight, is one of those nights... We have a lot of family back home in Nebraska

and we're going to be taking photos, so we don't think you'd be a good fit. Do you need a ride home? Mr. Reed can give you a ride home." And I was like, "No, I have my bike." And I just biked home and played Mario Kart. That's the nicest I've ever been dressed, playing Mario Kart. I wish I had said, "Fuck that, I'm going to the dance." I didn't. The sad part is, I felt bad for being there. Who was I to ruin their picture-perfect celebration? You've seen movies. How many times do you see that on screen (Minhaj & Storer, 2017, 00:43:51).

Hasan's comedy routine conveys a feeling of suffering as he attempts to belong to a non-racialized society that rejects him. Although one may attempt to resist this experience, things come back to the condition of what is typically seen and done as racially acceptable. Here, we can see that this condition is not only imposed on Hasan, but also on the female's family. For Bethany's family, the representation of the 'other' leads them to fear Hasan and reject him. In both cases, a certain representation is imposed (Hasan and Bethany's family), a representation that controls the way Hasan and Bethany's family perceive the situation.

In some cases, racialized people are willing to frequent the "multiracial" spaces in which they might fit. However, the problem is that this acceptance is not achieved in the way racialized minorities struggle for. Instead, it is acceptance by non-racialized individuals who acknowledge the "other" only in the way they want to. For example, Maz Jobrani highlights that he can be a part of Hollywood movies only as certain types of characters. He can play the role of a Muslim in a movie because he looks the part and also speaks the language (e.g. racialized and speaks Arabic). As a result, both his appearance and his speech become factors of interpellation. These factors become barriers to resistance. For example, he reveals that:

I'm not really Muslim. I'm more like Muslim-ish. You know? This is how Muslim I am: I could play a Muslim in a movie. You'd go see it, you'd believe it. You'd go to a movie, you'd see me

on the screen. “Allahu Akbar!” “Oh, he’s good. Look at that. Wow.” “He speaks the language. Wow. He’s... He’s fluent in Muslim-ish. Wow.” But the honest truth is I’m not that religious (Bain et al & Jobrani, 2017, 00:09:25).

Maz represents individuals who are aware of their interpellation and respond as if they were something they do not identify with. He ridicules the fact that language and appearance lead to his position and recognition as a Muslim. The only way that he can face this is to refuse the social positions that reinforce stereotypes such as the one of Muslims as terrorists. Paradoxically, he previously accepted performing stereotypes in movies and shows such as his small role in the television series *24*. In Maz’s case, he received numerous offers that involved representations of minorities as terrorists. However, as a member minority in the comedy industry, Maz is aware of the representations and narratives that are reproduced in cultural industries such as the media (O’Connell, 2017). This contradictory awareness differentiates him from those who internalize racism because he struggles for recognition apart from the stereotypical association of Arabs and Muslims as terrorists. With comedy, he obtained a platform in which he was able to speak about experiences of racism and create material that reflected him.

“It’s a fair and lovely world”: self-management in interpellation:

When looking at the social positions and identities of racialized individuals, I notice that public institutions seem to place a burden upon racialized minorities to prove their worth and their experiences. The comedy routines are reflective of the responses of racialized minorities, who manage themselves in order to avoid trouble. Paradoxically, in order to do this, they often ensure their appearance and behaviour is aligned with state expectations. For example, public institutions such as schools are spaces in which young racialized individuals are reminded of their race by other individuals. What this suggests is the existing privilege among non-racialized individuals,

who are able to manage themselves and navigate the world through the socially structured correspondence between freedom and choice. That is to say that when you are racialized, navigation demands hard work, explicit recognition, adjustment and acceptance. Let's take a look at Hasan's experience in elementary school:

As immigrants we always have to put on these press releases to prove our patriotism. We're auditioning. "We love this country, please believe me." Nobody loves this country more than us. I fell in love here. Six years old, Janice Malo. I saw her in the sandbox. I run up to her. First grade. "I love you!" "You're the color of poop." That's memory number one. The first time you experience racism? I was like, "What? Oh, no! It's not rubbing off!" I was fucking terrified. It was like *Inception*. There were so many levels. I just wanted to wake up and be like, "Oh, it was all a dream." But it's not a dream, it's the universe telling you, "It's a Fair and Lovely world. Navigate accordingly." (Minhaj & Storer, 2017, 00:30:46).

In this case, Hasan reflects on the fact that there is a racial hierarchy influencing the ways in which racialized individuals of different backgrounds navigate public institutions. He also refers to his failed attempts of removing his skin colour by evoking the notion of inception. Similarly, Choi (2013) explores interpellation in relation to the movie *Inception* directed by Christopher Nolan. In this case, inception is referred to as the beginning, possibly, as the origin of interpellation. Similarly, Hasan's first experience with racism can be seen as the beginning of his interpellation. More specifically as the beginning of a cycle in which he is constantly reminded of his race through interactions with people, practices, and institutions.

Racial interpellation reflects a political process in which the acceptance of racial hierarchy is used as an indicator of recognition and privilege (Colling, 2002; Saha, 2011). While these elements are of concern, what is even more concerning is the absence of public acknowledgment of the

violent experiences and situations that are part of the whole process such as those of racial profiling and discrimination. Thus, when situations of racism occur and the damage is done through racial profiling or discrimination, institutions and authorities often dismiss the fact that there is a race problem (reaction that evokes the “post-racial” narrative -Donald, 2012). Comedians seem to negotiate this aspect by raising awareness through comedy. For example, Hasan alludes to his experience in elementary school:

In the third grade, Miss Anderson said, “Write what you want to be.” Some kids were like, “an astronaut,” or “a firefighter.” I was like, “I want to be white.”. “What do you mean?” “I want this part of my skin to be all of my skin.” And it wasn’t like, “I hate melanin.” I love melanin. I’ve never gotten a sunburn. I’m blessed. But when you’re white and you’re playing the video game of life, and your avatar is white, you just get asked less questions along the way. “I want to be Batman.” “Well, of course. Batman is white. Duh!” “I want to be president.” “Duh! Forty-four-and-a-half presidents are white.” And I know the privilege debate is very heavy for white people (Minhaj & Storer, 2017, 00:30:46).

When Hasan seeks to be non-racialized, he engages in a mission for recognition in which he is not seen or judged through his race. He refers to a “fair and lovely” world (which is also a skin lightening cream marketed in South-Asian countries, particularly due to the fact that lighter skin tones are valued more than darker complexions). For Hasan, being racialized results in being de-valued and sometimes rejected from social spheres. Interestingly, this reflects Fanon’s belief that as long as racialized individuals are deprived and dehumanized, they will continue to struggle for recognition (Fanon, 1963, p. 68). Hasan’s segment suggests that this struggle for recognition starts in an early age. In this case, he understood his interpellation when he was recognized as

someone who was different and as someone who had different desires in a predominantly white society.

Hasan's recall of his first experience of racism can be used to explore the limitations of interpellation as discussed by theorists such as Žižek and Dolar. For example, he recognizes that he is different because of his skin colour, but also understands that privilege operates based on one's skin colour. That is, the recognition of exclusion involves the identification of privilege. In this sense, there are different levels pertaining to the recognition of interpellation. These levels seem to span from recognition to realization or internalization and even to negotiation.

Thus, when Hasan realizes that his first experience with racism was only the beginning of a long process, he links the social structure to his experience. By the same token, he appears to understand what being interpellated entails (privilege by non-racialized individuals and privilege in navigating the world). In fact, his experience indicates that racism begins when an individual is labeled as "not-white", which results in dehumanization and suffering (Fanon, 1952). As previously mentioned, according to Fanon, interpellation also entails a struggle for recognition. In Hasan's segment, we see that this struggle is ambiguous and may translate into racialized individuals seeking to be non-racialized. The fact that Hasan seeks to be white in grade one is indicative of the acknowledgement that his race will be a barrier to interactions and opportunities for the rest of his life.

Although experiences of racism often involve racialized individuals who tolerate the treatment of race, comedians may represent the opposite. Fanon's conceptualization of interpellation revealed that as long as the racialized person is burdened, a solution cannot occur. Racialized comedians bring an answer forward by engaging with interpellation, representing and evoking scenarios of interpellation. In other words, interacting with the burdens they face in order

to possibly reveal and challenge them. As previously suggested, they could be represented with Gramsci's notion of 'organic intellectuals', those who try to represent the conscious of a specific community. The comedians included in this data set use their platforms to raise awareness and sometimes resist the process of racial interpellation. Even if the performers do not directly state they are resisting interpellation; they are representative of the notion of resistance within interpellation as we will see. They use humour and irony as a tactic to demonstrate possible ways of engaging with the process.

"That's the price we pay for being here": a possible generational divide

For comedians, a generational divide seems to be present in the way individuals engage with experiences of racism. It is as if the older generation thinks that the colour of your skin will not matter when you obtain a highly respected social position such as the profession of a lawyer or a doctor, so they tolerate racism in the meanwhile. In comparison, the younger generation seeks to confront racism and tends to be more concerned by their interpellation. This could be because the younger generation becomes alert of their interpellation based on how their parents are treated and the way they are treated by Western society. In this sense, comedians (who are part of the younger generation) appear to represent racialized minorities who seek to stop situations and labels from defining them. This is not to say, that resistance does not occur within the older generation, but it is to highlight that comedy routines reflect a pattern in which resistance and confrontation to interpellation are commonly held objectives by racialized individuals.

In this way, Hasan says that, after noticing that his father seemed to accept the consequences of a hate crime after 9/11, he mentioned to him:

Why aren't you saying something? I'm asking you, say something!" He looks at me and goes, "Hasan..." "These things happen, and these things will continue to happen. That's the price we

pay for being here.” That’s when I was like, “We really are from two different generations.” ...My dad’s from that generation where he feels like if you come to this country, you pay the American dream tax. You endure racism, and if it doesn’t cost you your life, pay it. There you go, Uncle Sam. But for me, I was born here. So, I actually have the audacity of equality. I’m like, “I’m an Honors Gov, I have it right here. Life, liberty, pursuit of happiness. All men created equal.” It says it right here, I’m equal. I don’t deserve this. But as soon as I say that... He looks at me like I believe in Santa. “Hasan, you’ll never understand.” “I’ll never understand? Dad, you’re the guy that will argue with the cashier at Costco when he doesn’t let you return used underwear. And now you want to be the bigger man? Now you’re like, ‘Let’s be reasonable with the bigots.’ What?” And then he just walks back into the house with glass in his feet (Minhaj & Storer, 2017, 00:29:20).

In Hasan’s comedy routine, the older generation (e.g. his father) is that of individuals who accept experiences of injustices to maintain their positions in the West. They fit in the notion of good subjects and good Muslims, as those who remain silent even in situations of inequality and dehumanization. In contrast, Hasan reacts to the same experience as someone who is struggling for equality in terms of recognition. Instead of seeking equality somewhere else, he demands and expects it in this situation.

Now, if we take a look at Fanon’s vision of racial interpellation, we can understand this generational divide, particularly because for him, each generation has its mission. Sometimes, this mission is achieved in terms of breaking silence and negotiating barriers, whereas in other cases, the racialized person is silenced. Could these comedians reflect a generation of minorities who negotiate their exploitation and oppression? Their efforts in presenting their experiences position

them as minorities who do not “remain in their place” as silent subjects. Instead, they appear to “overstep their limits” by choosing to present a desire for freedom (Fanon, 1963, p. 5).

Interestingly, Hasan also mentions that comedy as an avenue of resistance and recognition may not be accepted by his father’s generation. For example, he indicates that: “I know the older generation doesn’t like those jokes...That’s when I realized there’s a generational gap between us and our parents” (Minhaj & Storer, 2017, 00:29:48). However, regardless of age or the generational gap, comedians have been able to show that experiences of racism exist and continue to exist as challenges.

Saving yourself in interpellation

Comedians ridicule experiences of racialized minorities to present them as challenges and to possibly negotiate them. Their job is to convey common experiences and highlight concerns, but resistance is not always present in their comedy routines. This is because according to some of the comedians studied, resistance is not in the power of the racialized. Instead, it is non-racialized individuals who have the power to reverse stereotypes and representations. For example, Hasan places the power of resistance in the hands of the non-racialized. This can be seen when he discusses his experience watching television:

So, I’m watching the show Real Time with Bill Maher...Bill Maher is like, “These Muslims, 85 percent of them hate our freedom. We’ve got to round them up, we’ve got to contain them.” And Ben Affleck’s like, “Are you crazy? Round them up, contain them? Dude, we did that to the Japanese. You can’t do that. Am I crazy?” And I was like, “No, you’re not crazy. You’re my white prince.” Don’t you realize what happened in that moment? We got our first A-list celebrity to back the Muslim community. We got Batman, baby! “He may not be the hero we want, but he is the hero the Muslim world needs” (Minhaj & Storer, 2017, 01:05:18).

In this segment, it seems that Hasan believes that the only people who can save Muslims are well-known non-racialized individuals such as Ben Affleck. In my view, this reflects in certain ways the idea that racialized minorities cannot speak because they are spoken for (Riach, 2017). It refers to the idea that the Muslim community is so marginalized that it requires saving. However, the experiences provided by different comedians while reflecting the marginalization of racialized minorities, specifically Arabs and Muslims, demonstrate that they do not need to be spoken for by white celebrities.

So, Hasan values the support of a white celebrity. It appears as if he appreciates the support, particularly because it is seen to be good for the Muslim community. This brings the rhetoric back to the distinction of inferiority and superiority among racialized people and non-racialized individuals. This is because Hasan's segment establishes the white person as superior and the Muslim community as inferior. Similarly, Hasan compares his accomplishments to Jon Stewart's; who is an award-winning comedian and television show host. Maz Jobrani also compares his participation in the West to non-racialized individuals to portray the differences in identity and perceptions of it. Hari Kondabolu does the same by revealing that when racialized symbols are a part of your identity, the way you navigate the world is through an awareness of race and racialization. This recalls to Fanon's analysis as he emphasized the fact that black people measure their worth in relation to whiteness (Fanon, 1952). In the examples previously mentioned, the comedians make comments on racialized groups and their race, but always in relation to whiteness.

In spite of this, comedians are capable of developing a small glimpse of resistance when their behaviour does not mirror dominant representations of racialized men. Although they may see themselves in relation to whiteness, their role as comedians with a given platform proves otherwise. More specifically, it could indicate that they are already stepping towards resistance by

shifting from mainstream narratives and representations of racialized individuals. By being seen as individuals who make people laugh, comedians do not stay in line with their interpellation as violent individuals.

“What language are you guys speaking?”: managing speech

In the previous examples, it may seem that racialized minorities can choose the way they respond in different scenarios. However, this is not the case: racialized subjects are never truly free. This can be seen through the allegedly freedom to speak a language that is different than the official languages of North America (e.g. English and French). In the comedy routines explored, racialized individuals are depicted as those who are not necessarily given a choice, but obliged to speak the official language of the state. For example, Hasan advises his family to change the way they behave when a non-racialized female is coming to his home. He asks for this to his family by indicating that they must change their behaviour and language for a stranger because she won't understand anything. This illustrates Fanon's idea that language is not spoken for oneself but for others (Fanon, 1952). This can be seen in Hasan's conversation with the non-racialized guest which follows as: “Then Bethany's like, “Hey, we always study at my house. Why don't we study at your house?” I was like, “I've got to go.” What, invite you over to my house? You walk in: “What language are you guys speaking? What's that smell?” I'm not going to open myself up to that” (Minhaj & Storer, 2017, 00:36:15).

While Hasan refers to a private situation, Maz speaks about language in the public sphere. He advises racialized minorities to manage their speech to avoid conflict. Here, it appears that both Hasan and Maz recognize that they may be constituted as a racialized subject through both their appearance and their language. For example, Maz advises minorities against speaking Arabic in

public institutions because their race, ethnicity, and language will result in their interpellation. Maz advises his audience that:

Don't speak Arabic on an airplane, or you're not going anywhere. You know what I'm talking about? Even before Trump was president, did you hear about the Iraqi guy who was on a Southwest flight going from LA to San Francisco? He was on the phone, speaking Arabic to his father on the phone. Passengers overheard him, kicked him off the plane. This poor guy was just walking down the aisle. Just walking down, like... "Halamaha, halamaha." That's not Arabic, but that's what it sounds like. Isa, does that mean anything... "Halamaha, halamaha"? Am I getting close? I'm telling all my Arab friends, do not "halamahala" on a plane. Because "halamahala" is not flying. You "halamahala," you're gonna end up on a bus. Not sure where you're going (Bain & Jobrani, 2017, 00:28:31).

Here, it may appear that Maz is only ridiculing the social features of Arabs, but, in fact, he is also challenging an existing practice by revealing it. He demonstrates that language is problematized as a racialized symbol. It not only reveals the race or ethnicity of an individual, but it is perceived as a potential threat that must be managed. More specifically, Maz mocks this situation to highlight how the freedom to speak one's language is perceived as a problem. This is because of stereotypical representations that have dominated the media and categorized certain languages and appearances as dangerous.

In the examples explored in this section, interpellation presents itself in different ways and to different people. While comedians show how they face their interpellation through tolerance and acceptance, they do not show any successful resistance. Instead, many of the examples problematize experiences and raise concerns about how resistance to interpellation is trumped by external forces and events that maintain one's social position and identity based on common

stereotypes, representations and narratives. While comedians are successful in revealing this phenomenon, they also shed light on controversial topics and experiences that are not always revealed. This will be explored in the following section.

4.3 - Negotiation to interpellation

Racial Interpellation projects subjects who can interact with racial ideology. Racialized subjects can participate in negotiating their identity and social position through acceptance, tolerance, and resistance. This entails the negotiation of social culture and practices that can challenge and reposition individuals (Golden, 2017). However, negotiation may (re)produce the same effect of interpellation that it seeks to challenge. In this section, negotiation will be explored through reactions, identity management, and personal experiences of bigotry in comedians' performances. These elements will present the complexity behind the power of interpellation and the power of the subject; thus, demonstrating the political and social struggle of racialized minorities.

"Everybody's afraid of everybody" negotiating racial interpellation

Comedians occupy a significant social position because they challenge narratives and question how racialized individuals and communities are referred to and treated. Although they connect with their audience through shared experiences and laughter, they also challenge elements that reflect racial interpellation such as ideology in the form of narratives, representations, and tropes. Although resistance is not easy, comedians attempt to resist through refusal and negotiation to interpellation from time to time. Here, it is important to understand that what may appear as resistance, may be contradictory enough to (re)produce interpellation. For example, Maz discusses the Muslim ban in the United States to highlight his social position as someone who appears to be integrated in Western society. Due to this reason, he believes that he would not be impacted by it. For example, he says:

“So, I wasn’t too worried about the Muslim ban personally, but my cousin Majid... that guy is screwed, okay? He’s a real Muslim. He prays five times a day, fasts during Ramadan. Like, he’s gotta go, you know. No, I didn’t say it, Trump said it. He’s gotta go. I love him, he’s a nice guy, but he’s gotta go. I’m just saying, if the FBI shows up at my house and goes, “Are there any Muslims?” I’d be like, “Yeah. Majid.” I’m not gonna lie to the FBI. Actually, guys, it was kind of sad, because, like I said, I’m Iranian and my wife is Indian, so our kids are all colored up, and... it was very sad. When Trump won, my little six-year-old girl came up to me. She was scared. She goes, “Daddy, am I gonna get deported?” Yeah. And I said, “No, baby, you’re not gonna get deported. You were born here. You’re not gonna be deported. But Cousin Majid’s gotta go. You might want to say goodbye” (Bain & Jobrani, 2017, 00:15:31).

Maz focuses on how barriers such as the Muslim ban can be faced by different age groups. For instance, he speaks about immigrating to the West (cousin Majed) in comparison to being born in the West (Maz’s children) with the privilege and connotations that come along with each position. However, he associates being born in the United States as a benefit to his children’s identity because they are already a citizen of the country. Hence, Maz seems to believe that they have no reason to be afraid. Here, Maz does not negotiate dominant ideas, rather he accepts his citizenship as a privilege. In this sense, through his experience, we can see that negotiation of racial interpellation is conflicting and at times contradictory.

In Hasan’s case, he wants to negotiate his interpellation by taking revenge. After a discussion with his father, he understands his interpellation and reflects on how he can approach it. This situation includes Hasan’s father expressing that:

You know when I emigrated to this country in 1982, I thought if I let you go to a school dance, you would join a gang, get a girl pregnant and become a drug dealer, in one night. I wanted to

protect you. Her family saw stuff about us. They wanted to protect their daughter. Everybody's afraid of everybody. But Hasan...". "Hasan, you have to be brave. Your courage to do what's right has to be greater than your fear of getting hurt. So, Hasan, be brave." It's a very beautiful poem. I think about it all the time. And look, there are some days where I can forgive that person. The past is the past. Tools, Clear History. It's done. Other days, "No, fuck that. This is House of Cards. Crush our enemies" (Minhaj & Storer, 2017, 00:53:40).

Negotiation of interpellation may not be presented in the traditional way of accepting, tolerating or refusing micro-aggressions that maintain interpellation. However, Hasan represents a standpoint that articulates racial interpellation as a process that may result in contradictory and unresolved responses. As we can see in this scenario, there is a contradiction between the way Hasan wants to approach his negotiation. However, we can understand that a variety of factors lead to this difficulty of "negotiating" one's interpellated position. For example, he alludes to immigration and adapting to a society as a newcomer which entails the difficulty of acceptance and belonging. In this scenario, Hasan's father compares the representations and narratives he had with the representations and discourses of people "of colour". He highlights that both project an identity and misconceptions of people. However, for Hasan, the effect of interpellation is far more powerful, particularly because the idea of not belonging was entrenched with him over the years.

"Don't tell people you are Muslim": reactions to racial interpellation

According to Hasan's performance, when his family experienced the already mentioned hate crime, after 9/11, his father "sits everybody down at the dinner table. He's like, "Hasan, whatever you do, do not tell people you're Muslim or talk about politics." "Alright, Dad, I'll just hide it. This just rubs off" (Minhaj & Storer, 2017, 00:27:28). Hasan makes fun of how ridiculous that is because he is aware of his interpellation, he knows that he is recognized and treated in a certain

way because of how he appears to those who are not racialized. Hasan is successful in demonstrating that there is a race problem which often leaves racialized minorities with limited choices. However, these choices could be seen as involving actions of resistance through either acceptance, refusal, or negotiation to one's experience with racism and racialization in the West.

For his part, Maz Jobrani considers that although he cannot control the way society recognizes and treats him, he can change the way he raises his children. This may be to avoid the same recognition that he once received (in which he is constantly seen as a racialized subject). He highlights that he is raising his children as modern as possible. It is as if Maz were attempting to negotiate his interpellation by disassociating from his culture (to avoid being seen as a bad subject). This is because, according to Mamdani, the notions of good subjects and bad subjects are related with one's ability to be "modern" (Mamdani, 2005). For example, he asks to the public:

Are you guys raising your kids modern or traditional? – As modern as possible. I started hearing a lot of people complain about things I never knew we were supposed to complain about. I started hearing people come up and be like, "My dad never played catch with me." I tell him, "My dad, Iranian dad... Immigrant dads don't play catch with anybody." I came to America, six years old. If I went to my dad when I was six, asked him to play catch... "Hey, Dad, let's play catch," he'd be like, "You're lucky you're in America. You want to play catch? I send you to Iran. You can play catch with Khomeini and Saddam Hussein." I guess we're not playing catch (Bain & Jobrani, 2017: 00:47:46).

Although Maz presents his decision in terms of parenting, this segment reflects his identity as a racialized man in the West. This is because he seeks to prevent the experiences that he faced from happening to his children. As a result, he believes that by raising them as modern individuals, they may be exempt from certain situations because they would be considered good subjects of

the state that reflect western patriotism. He also ridicules immigrant fathers that are similar to his. While Hasan's father makes a big deal of being a part of the West, Maz highlights the same trait by revealing that for many racialized folks being a part of the West is valued the most regardless of the treatment and experiences they face. In this scenario, Maz differentiates between the way he will raise his children and the way he was raised when he arrived in the West as an immigrant. When we take a look at interpellation, we can see that history and fear of racialized minorities can be transmitted intergenerationally (Weitzer, 2017). However, through this example, we can also see that the aspect of resistance and negotiation in interpellation is based on a variety of factors such as context, privilege, and the experiences faced by racialized minorities. These factors contribute to how generations respond to their interpellation.

Although the generation of minorities today may be labelled and interpellated through similar categories and names, the consequences and relations may differ. As we see in this scenario, for Maz negotiating his interpellation is not about himself but about the way his children experience the world. It could refer to the fact that he wants to avoid the atrocities and forms of oppression faced by his father and him for his children. Maz ridicules this, but it reveals that immigrants (mainly the older generation and first-generation immigrants) have seen worse circumstances in their countries of origin which is what can make them oblivious to their interpellation in the West. Interestingly, Maz's performance also reveals that racialized minorities are struggling with different battles of interpellation.

"Don't let this experience define you": An interpellated identity

Racial interpellation can be seen as a process that provides an identity to people "of colour". It allocates relations, conditions, and recognition to minorities (Butler, 1997). In this sense, while some comedians express freedom of identity, others express it as something that is imposed and

given with forced choices. In some cases, it is imposed as a conflict between one's cultural identity and political identity. The identity that the person seeks to express to hold on to themselves (cultural) and the identity that is imposed on the racialized person through interpellation (political). For Ramy Youssef, who is a young comedian, YouTuber, and artist, growing up in the West comes with conflicting identities. For example, he highlights that: "Being a Muslim in America, it is difficult cuz like we are Muslim and we want to believe but we also want to do what everyone is doing. The hardest day is Friday...cuz there's Friday prayers and then there's Friday night. Sometimes you see the same people in both places" (Youssef, 2017, 05:54).

For him, dealing with two identities is conflicting and difficult especially when you want to hold on to both, but acknowledge that one will lead you to gain social acceptance and recognition in the West. This refers to the modern identity, also considered the political identity that is reflective of a good subject. In this scenario, Ramy negotiates between identities to decide for himself. He reveals that he sees the same people in cultural spheres such as the mosque and public spheres such as parties. Here, Ramy is conflicted between his culture and society; both of which he values. As we see in this scenario, negotiation is trumped by the need for belonging in the West.

As noted previously, identity is a complex concept referring to different aspects of social life. More specifically, it is reflective of interpellation in the sense that identity is often given to the racialized person and makes him or her appear in the eyes of others through a particular appearance (Fanon, 1963). Ramy's comedy routine simply highlights the difficulty in navigating the western world as a racialized male. For his part, Hasan considers that identity, especially as a youth, is often reflective of the way others see you. He refers to a time during high school in which he thought he was accepted and positively recognized by non-racialized individuals, yet he was perceived as an outsider and an unknown individual. For non-racialized people, he was seen as a

subject about whom they did not know much about. However, Hasan thought he was accepted and recognized by members of his community regardless of the colour of his skin. For him, being included in social gatherings meant being accepted. When speaking of the already mentioned experience concerning his prom, Hasan refers to what he told himself years later:

Hey, man, don't let this experience define you. It's good people and bad people. Irrespective of creed, class, color, find those people. Because love is bigger than fear. I wish I could tell him that. I really believe that. I really believe love is bigger than fear. Fox News has taught me that. Fox News is incredible. I've never seen so many people with spray tans hate people of color. It is amazing (Minhaj & Storer, 2017, 00:47:37).

Regardless of how Hasan responded to that situation, the underlying message is that he was seen through his race even by his white friends. Paradoxically, he highlights that society consists of good people and bad people in terms of ordinary manners. This division of good and bad is his way of facing his interpellation. He makes fun of how racist individuals fear the 'other' (someone who is racialized), yet make attempts to make their skin colour darker.

Hasan suggests that you get to choose how you want to present your identity to the world. He indicates that "This is America. We can choose what we want to adhere from the motherland" (Minhaj & Storer, 2017). However, in the scenarios provided in this chapter, it seems to me that choice and freedom remain limited. This is because even if individuals can manage their identity, they do not necessarily choose the way it is portrayed to the world. For example, Maz advises his audience members to manage their behaviour according to what they hear in the news. For example, he calls out to people of different racialized backgrounds to see who is a part of his show. When calling out to a Pakistani, the audience member yells which provokes Maz to give him that piece of advice. For example, he asks: "What other backgrounds? Who else is here tonight?"

Where? – Pakistan! – Wait, stop. Pakistan, don't yell like that. Take it easy. This guy. Haven't you been watching the news" (Bain & Jobrani, 2017: 00:05:20)?

Throughout his comedy routine, he constantly refers to stereotypes. In this segment, he participates in stereotyping by telling someone to manage their identity according to the representations shown in the media (e.g. news). This not only demonstrates the necessity of self-managing your identity to be accepted in western society but also how freedom is limited. Take the example of this audience member who is enjoying his time yet was told to be careful. Although Maz makes attempts to joke about this, his humour reveals both the threat that racialized minorities are perceived as and their limited freedom in representing themselves to the world.

Resistance in racial interpellation

A first conclusion drawn from this section is that racialized identities are (re)produced in a way that makes resistance difficult. This brings me to the way racialized minorities can resist racial interpellation. The comedians included in this study view humour and satire as a tool to reveal atrocities faced by minorities and to potentially challenge institutions, authorities, and practices. Although they may not resist in each performance, they contribute to a pluralist system in which, even if power remains in the government, marginalized groups use their resources to exert influence (Hirji, 2009). The comedy routines included in this data set reflect how comedians reveal and challenge experiences pertaining to the interpellation of racialized subjects by speaking about controversial topics and experiences. For example, Hasan highlights that he is aware that his comedy routine may be misinterpreted and problematized, yet he views it as his job to challenge the narrative. He admits that there were times when he wanted to submit to society's perceptions and simply accept the treatment given to him much like his father. He mentions: "Honestly I don't know who is more right. Maybe he's right. Put your head down. Be a doctor, get a house in the

burbs, let them call them whatever you want. But isn't it our job to push the needle forward little by little? Isn't that how all this stuff happens? I don't know. The pendulum swings back and forth for me" (Minhaj & Storer, 2017, 00:30:44).

As mentioned in this statement, Hasan believes that it is the responsibility of racialized individuals to challenge existing narratives and representations that problematize them. He believes change occurs when people question the system, its institutions and practices. Although the comedians included in this study do not change a system or the practices of institutions, they are successful in exposing their interpellation and problematizing it. They do this by highlighting that racialized folks are bigger than bigotry and the experiences of racism they face.

"Maybe we have a race problem": exposing bigotry

Hasan raises the point that when bigotry occurs in the form of discrimination and racial profiling, the burden of proof is on the victims to demonstrate that a racist act has occurred against the individual or his or her community. Furthermore, Hari raises a similar point which is that there is a significant difference in the way crimes by minorities are labelled in comparison to crimes by non-racialized individuals. For example, he highlights that:

Hate crimes and racial violence are the original terrorism in this country, but there's a high bar to prove something is a hate crime. Uh, is that a racial slur? Can you prove intent? Was there a video recording? Was there a white witness, an eye whiteness? Was whiteness present at the time? Terrorism on the other hand has a very low bar. It's like explosion. There's a falafel place. Terrorism. It's all it is. People are absurdly afraid of terrorism (Welch et al & Cooper, 2018, 00:16:33).

Hari ridicules how easy it is to perceive the 'other' as a threat, but how difficult it is to understand and acknowledge how racialized minorities are dehumanized. What is even more concerning is

that to acknowledge dehumanization, there needs to be a non-racialized entity present in situations. In this sense, racial interpellation comes a full circle because racialized minorities tend to be seen through a white gaze and to change the situation or to have others believe their struggles, the same white gaze must be present. However, interestingly enough satire has allowed us to see the dehumanization and bigotry faced by minorities. For example, Hasan emphasizes that:

Why is it every time the collateral damage has to be death, for us to talk about this? A kid has to get shot 16 times for us to be like, “Maybe we have a race problem.” For every Trayvon Martin or Ahmed the clock kid, there is bigotry that happens every day. Because we’re too afraid of the Other. Someone who’s not in our tribe (Minhaj & Storer, 2017, 00:46:53).

As mentioned previously, the comedians included in this data set successfully demonstrate how satire can be used to reveal atrocities and struggles faced by racialized minorities. As we see in this segment, Hasan urges us to speak about these atrocities and struggles before it is too late. In other words, before racialized minorities are at a point in which even their forced choice is out of the question. For him, the damage refers to death, but in this study, the damage was seen through racial profiling, racism, and discrimination mirroring the production of racialized subjects through the process of racial interpellation. In this segment, it is noted that Hasan along with the other comedians point to experiences and concerns that are not necessarily emphasized in mainstream media.

The comedy routines included in this chapter demonstrate that when comedy and race intersect, it can either succeed or fail in resisting the notion of racial interpellation. Satire and humour have potential in presenting a problem rather than resisting it. This is because the interpellation of racialized folks is in the power of the state and institutions, which may be challenged throughout these routines, but not altered. Nonetheless, it is a start in provoking change

by revealing and sometimes challenging experiences of racism. Maz's performance ends with a rap song known as "Fight the Power" by artist Public Enemy. The song goes as:

♪ We've got to fight the powers That be ♪ ♪ Fight the power. We've got to fight the powers
That be ♪ ♪ As the rhythm designed to bounce What counts is that the rhymes ♪ ♪ Designed to
fill your mind ♪ ♪ Now that you've realized The pride's arrived ♪ ♪ We got to pump the stuff
To make us tough ♪ ♪ From the heart, it's a start A work of art ♪ ♪ To revolutionize, make a
change Nothing's strange...(Bain et al. & Jobrani, 2017, 00:00:43).

Maz starts his performance with this song and also finishes his comedy routine with it. He reveals that creative expressions are tools to potentially fight the power. As we were able to see throughout this chapter, when race and comedy come together, there is a type of power that emerges, particularly since humour reveals a truth. Although this truth may be exaggerated, it reveals experiences that are common enough for an audience to connect with and ordinary enough to reflect experiences faced by racialized minorities. In other words, humour allows comedians to reveal experiences that are not usually exposed by cultural industries. In this study, the struggle for recognition is seen through racialized comedians who attempt to challenge discourses and representations of race and racism in North America. In this sense, their performances can be seen as a step towards fighting (mis)recognition and ideology that reflect racial interpellation.

For Hasan, the struggle for recognition among racialized individuals and communities is indicative of a need for positive representations. Throughout this study, we were able to see that positive representations are not always the result of comedy routines, yet there is an effect produced by racialized comedians in the sense that they represent communities and experiences that are usually invisible. The interpellation of racialized communities as problematic members is not completely changed by a couple of performances by racialized comedians; however, they are

a step towards resistance by successfully demonstrating a problem without directly claiming to do so. For example, Hasan expresses that: “You’re Hasan Minhaj. You’re going to be on The Daily Show...Don’t you know what this means? Don’t you get it? I’m the cure for racism. I cured it. Alright, maybe I didn’t cure it, but everyone has a purpose” (Minhaj & Storer, 2017, 01:10:56).

I use Hasan’s segment to show that the struggle for recognition of racialized individuals and their communities cannot be achieved by anyone else other than the racialized themselves. Throughout this chapter, we saw that some comedians hold the belief that the power of change may not be in their hands because it is non-racialized individuals who can create change. However, when exploring different comedy routines, we realize that comedians “of colour” represent a crucial position in the current “post-racial” era. This position is reflective of common experiences faced by racialized communities and common interpretations that follow. For example, I explored the performances of comedians that relate to different topics such as naming, travelling, authorities, and everyday encounters. We could see that racialized individuals, particularly those that are seen through the categories of Arabs and Muslims are fighting both an internal and an external struggle.

The internal struggle pertains to the internalization and feelings invoked in an interpellated person. This was seen through desires of belonging, conflicts with identity, and recognition of oneself through the public’s eye. In comparison, the external struggle was depicted in interactions faced by racialized comedians: encounters in public spheres, institutional practices that marginalized people “of colour”, and the recognition of tropes. This points to the fact that society needs to educate itself on racial differences. However, as depicted by comedians, racialized individuals continue to face oppression; thus, this leads comedians to take matters in their own hands by using humour to educate, reveal, and pass messages of the struggle for recognition among racialized communities.

4.4 – Conclusion

In this chapter, various aspects of comedians' performances were studied to unveil and understand the political implications of satire on racial interpellation. The studied aspects of these performances were related to the question of the presence or the absence of struggles for recognition. This study focused on a variety of factors such as tropes, challenges with racialization, and resistance to interpellation. We were able to understand that while racial interpellation provides an identity and determines the consequences for people "of colour", it can be associated with different experiences. The comedians in this study do not seem to resist successfully the role of racial in interpellation. However, they seem to be able to use humour and satire to reveal experiences in a strategic manner that sometimes challenges discourses and representations and other times, reinforces interpellation. Through our discussions of tropes, challenges and negotiation in comedians' performances, we can further the point that comedians can use their position and skills to reveal the race problem in Canada and The United States.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this research, I examined the following question: How racial interpellation tropes that convey stereotypes and representations of racialized minorities are negotiated (accepted, refused, tolerated, resisted) through humour (comedy, satire) by the productions of comedians in North America? By answering this question, my objective was to provide an overview of a process not widely discussed in academia. My research incorporated the theory of interpellation with topics such as race and comedy.

The study of the concepts of ideological interpellation and racial interpellation provided theoretical clues to understand the social interrelations, interactions, and conditions often faced by racialized subjects. These factors were presented through visible and invisible forms of racism reflective of the social constructions of race and racialization in North America. The literature review revealed that race, racialization, and racism are core issues of a North American society embedded in claims of colourblindness and post-racialism. In this sense, struggles against (mis)recognition, racial profiling, and forced choices of racialized minorities do not endorse mainstream discourses and representations. In some cases, these struggles remain unnoticeable, particularly when claims of equality and neutrality persist in Canada and the USA. To explore this, racialized comedians provide an important stance on social, political, and cultural issues.

Throughout this research, interpellation and racial interpellation was presented as an endless cycle of providing identity and social positions to people “of colour”, particularly Arabs, Muslims, and those (mis)recognized within these categories. When exploring this phenomenon, we could see that interpellation and racial interpellation produce an effect on people “of colour”; thus, leaving them entrenched in a given identity and in forced choices. We were able to see some instances of negotiation, yet this came with the understanding that negotiation was limited due to

various barriers. Nonetheless, humour and satire contribute to the struggle for respect and recognition of people “of colour”.

Chapter 1 explained the underlying assumptions of the concepts of interpellation and racial interpellation. In this chapter, the origin of the theory was explained along with its criticism, limitations, and contemporary renditions of the process such as that of misinterpellation. Each of the reviewed authors (Althusser, Fanon, Butler and Martel) were significant because each offered a different theoretical perspective concerning the concept of racial interpellation. It enabled an understanding of not only how race and racialization exist in the West, but also how people “of colour” can react and engage with experiences reflecting this. The literature revealed that one interesting way of engaging with race, racialization, and racism is through political satire in the forms of both humour and satire. Laughter is a type of resilience and an emerging industry that reveals a persistent truth and urges us to think and speak about the internal and external struggles faced by racialized minorities.

In Chapter 2, race, racialization, and racism were discussed as systems of oppression and marginalization of people “of colour”. The literature revealed that these aspects continue to follow people “of colour” even if claims of equality and colourblindness persist in North America. Experiences of race, racialization, and racism are often de-emphasized and undervalued in comparison to portrayals and discussions of violence that label minorities. In the literature review, resistance in racial interpellation emerged as an under-discussed concept in this area of research (e.g. race relations in North America). Literature on race and resistance was explored and discussed. This work revealed that when race and comedy intersect, there is potential in presenting and possibly challenging a given phenomenon.

The methodological chapter explained how comedy can be used to explore a particular phenomenon such as racial interpellation. I used thematic analysis to identify patterns, relationships, and underlying assumptions reflective of the notion of interpellation and racial interpellation. When we use Fairclough's rendition of thematic analysis, we can see that discourses and ideologies are connected to the broader social structure consisting of actions, processes, and practices that are meaningful to explore in the analysis of relationships of domination, discrimination, power and control manifested in language (Waller, 2006). Thematic analysis allowed me to explore reactions through political satire, and code this material. The central themes allowed me to identify common cultural, linguistic, and political types of rhetoric used by comedians "of colour". By exploring the productions of comedians, I was able to interpret the data and present my findings in Chapter 4.

In the analysis Chapter, I focused on three central themes that were crucial for this study. The first one was the existing problem of the deployment (context and tropes) of race in North America. The second one was about the challenges faced by racialized minorities. Lastly, I analyzed the reactions and engagement of minorities in terms of negotiation (acceptance, tolerance, and refusal). These themes allowed me to understand and discuss performances by comedians "of colour". As we saw in Chapter 4, negotiation is not always successful or possible. However, comedians represent an interesting position as they use their platform to provoke laughter, but also portray a glimpse of activism within their comedy routines. Interestingly, this glimpse represents hope and resilience and also demonstrates how race and comedy can intersect to challenge, reveal, and express experiences of race.

Concerning the limits of the research, other areas of research can be explored in future work such as the underlying consequences of the positions of comedians that may be viewed as

privileged. In this sense, it may be relevant for future research to include the element of social class and status within this analysis. It may also be useful to explore the reactions and engagement of audience members. Although this research includes performances reflective of interpellation, it is important to consider that those performances may be controlled and altered for those in charge, such as the cultural industries that provide comedians with a platform. Nonetheless, satire and comedy are successful in providing hope, creativity, and a recognition for the common struggles. Although we cannot forget the effects of racial interpellation as a repeated pattern of providing an identity to racialized groups, negotiation can exist within the process.

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