

Filtered Reality: The impact of the stereotypical  
representation of ethnic groups on reality TV series  
*"90 Day Fiance"*  
on its' viewers.

By

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**Declaration**

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of the MA in Journalism & Media Communications, is my own; based on my personal study and research, and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in this research. I hereby also certify that I have not copied in part or whole or otherwise plagiarized the work of someone else, including other students.

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**Abstract**

Salamatu Tinnet Gwadah: Filtered Reality: The impact of the stereotypical representation of ethnic groups on reality TV series "*90 Day Fiance*" on its' viewers.

(Under the supervision of Brendan OCaolain)

Diversity or the lack of diversity has always been an issue in both TV and film for quite a long time. However, another significant issue is the portrayal of ethnic stereotypes and the misrepresentation of ethnic groups. While stereotypes are consistent in scripted TV, the existence of misinterpretations or generalizations present in a program that professes to be based on the real world appears to be unfitting. It is commonly recognized that unscripted television is not entirely "unscripted" and is formed by makers and editors of these shows. While unscripted television ought not to comprise of scripted stereotypes, they have inquisitively advanced onto the screen and into our homes.

Through content analysis, this study investigates how ethnicities on TLCs' *90 Day Fiance* are portrayed on the show and whether they present generalizations and misinterpretations commonly found in scripted programming. The second source of research is a focus group to gather opinions from a third party regarding the depiction of ethnic groups on the show, including how accurate they think it is. There is also a secondary content analysis on social media content with a concentration on social networking site, *Twitter* to research further the impact and interpretation of the depiction on audience and viewers.

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Finally to myself because I did this!

## Chapter 1: Introduction

*'Reality TV is anything but.'*

So says British inventor and industrial designer James Dyson who emphasizes how less of the reality, reality shows represent.

Television is no longer what it used to be; it has significantly changed over the years. The introduction of the reality programming genre has ever since been popular amongst television creators and audiences and has taken over mainstream television programming and can be viewed everywhere, from cable and broadcast television to the internet. Reality television has generated a culture in TV programming which has created a diversified form of modern television programming and has proven to be an exciting and successful form of TV programming for it is strategically positioned in the network markets, generating high ratings and large profits.

Today's reality television genre consists of different categories, namely, game shows, talent competitions, celebrity lifestyles, social experiments and travel. Research has revealed that the viewers of these shows are from average educated people to highly educated people who tune in to these shows for entertainment purpose (Reiss and Wilts, 2001). These kinds of findings have revealed that audiences enjoy these programs as it mimics the "real world" as well as allows viewers to watch characters unfold and grow on screen. Reality TV programmes "promise more drama, suspense and laughter while pushing the envelope of what is morally and socially acceptable, funny and of course entertaining" (Frisby, 2004).

In her book, *Reality TV: Audiences and Popular Factual Television*, Annette Hill (2005) describe reality programs as popular factual television which she explains as the hybrid of factual programming - news or documentary and the fictional programming - game shows or soap opera. Reality TV is a direct format and technique of documentary genre, whereas there is focus on an "ordinary" citizen and the story is formulated based on their day-to-day lives induced by the fly-on-the-wall approach, (Taddeo & Dvorak, 2010). A pamphlet with the blaring headline 'A Truthful Terrible New Tiding of Blood and Sulphur' printed by the Amsterdam publisher Peter Govaerts in 1597 points to all the aspects of the genre of reality television and the tabloid journalism, (Wieten, 1998, p. 101). It claims to be realistic even more realistic than the actual

reality or mainstream media, reality TV and tabloid journalism according to Wieten rely on eyewitness reports, add emotions to facts and appeals to the audiences' and readers' baser instincts. A desire to consume contents of tabloids in popular news and popular factual television is no surprise as readers of tabloids and viewers of factual TV combine both mediums and turning to each simultaneously to learn about the other. Without a doubt, Fox 'redefined US network practices' (Glynn, 2000, p.28) through the production of inexpensive reality programming which could fit in perfectly in a competitive environment of network, cable and independent broadcasting.

However, reality television programming may not be as real as it seems as some might believe it does not reflect the reality it depicts. In an article, "*Just how real are reality TV shows?*" written by Michael Ventre, he states that the 1992's MTV reality TV series "*The Real World: Skeletons*" was indeed influenced by producers as confirmed by former participants (Ventre, 2009). Such findings reveal the scepticism of how many other reality series have and are being influenced by the producer, after the camera angles, editing process and intelligent positioning, what is created is a show with characters than a reality program with undiluted factual content. In the current period of television, "reality" programming has seemed to take over entertainment television more than scripted programming with an increase and focus on "real people being real" and celebrities "trying to be real people" (Kitman,2009) this spreads across different cable networks and channels under the disguise of game shows, hidden camera and dating shows. The question lies in the accuracy of such programming as producers can obstruct production at any time (Strauss, 2018 p.4) therefore causing doubt of the legitimacy of storylines and authenticity of characters and actions of personalities on these programs. This lack of accuracy may influence the way ethnic groups are portrayed in reality programs and may represent certain ethnic groups falsely.

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the portrayal of ethnic groups on the reality television series *90 Day Fiance*, and the impact it has on its viewers.

## **1.1 Summary**

This dissertation is designed into multiple chapters. The first chapter began with an introduction, background about the reality show, the research aims, research questions and expected results. The following chapter, chapter two reviews relevant study to this research with previous literature that communicates the reasoning for my research in this area and is made up of six components. Chapter three reports the methodology used in this research; chapter four presents findings and results from the content analysis and focus group. Furthermore, chapter five is the final chapter which concludes the study and arguments raised from the research findings and also includes opinions and recommendations for future studies.

## **1.2 Background**

The reality television series, *90 Day Fiance* is a mix of romance and immigration in one reality television show. It is the first of its type as there are several types of reality television series with intriguing concepts aired in recent times that depict and appeal to different audiences. The American reality television show, *90 Day Fiancé*, is about the lives of multiple interracial couples who try to navigate America's K-1 visa process. This K-1 visa allows foreign fiancés to live in the United States of America for 90 days before marriage. As the vast majority of the couples meet on the web, it has the watcher's complete attention as they mainly follow couples who meet physically on the show for the first time. Everything about each couple is documented, primarily how they handle circumstances that accompany being interracial couples. An article by Fast Company marked such circumstances confronted like culture, social practices and language hindrance faced by each couple as they sink into their recently settled lives, (Rocque, 2020). The program follows each couple and records their vulnerabilities following how their families acknowledge their marriage choice and how the outcomes of the choice influence the couple's relationship just as how they intend to deal with their choice concerning predicted weaknesses.

The most alluring aspects of the reality TV show is that it comprises of different continents, cultures and economic backgrounds, (Rocque, 2020). Through season 1 to season 7, the following nationalities have been represented on the show and in summary, 34 countries are represented by the cast, with 22 from the Americas, 17 from Asia, 19 from Europe, 14 from Africa and three from Oceania. In exclusion of the countries of the Americas, the countries of the foreign nationalities have been broken down; Colombia, Brazil, Philippines, Russia, Nicaragua,

Tunisia, South Africa, Israel, Thailand, Jamaica, Czech Republic, Morocco, Nigeria, Ukraine, Dominican Republic, Moldova, Spain, Mexico, Samoa, Indonesia, Turkey and Finland.

This TV show first aired on the 12th of January 2014 and has ever since recorded millions of viewership since February 2020 with a viewership average of 13 million per episode according to Bloomberg Businessweek and it is currently on its eighth season. This reality TV show has grown into a rating juggernaut for the American cable network, The Learning Channel (TLC) owned by Discovery, (Du Plessis, 2020). With the success of the show, it has led to multiple spin-offs including; *90 Day Fiancé: Happily Ever After*, *90 Day Fiance: What Now?*, *90 Day Fiance: Before the 90 Days*, *90 Day Fiance Reunion Special*, *90 Day Fiance: The Other Way*. All the spin-offs all focus in some way or another on how these interracial couples can plan and decide on how to be together in the United States, (Rocque, 2020) and other spin-offs such as *90 Day Fiance: Pillow Talk*, where former participating couples watch from the comfort of their now established union and homes and give commentary on current seasons and finally *The Family Chantel* which is built around one of the couples who gained more attention from a previous season of the reality television series.

The idea of reality TV is to create exciting and unconventional television which is unfiltered and most relatable to the audience. A *New York Times* article on *90 Day Fiance* by Alexis Soloski talks about how the aim of the producers of the reality TV show is to give their audience something to be occupied with, no matter if it is the reality or not, (Soloski, 2019), according to programme producers, the appeal of the show lies in the way it fuses cultural difference and romance. According to Soloski, fans express their sentiments on social media with posts which suggest the foreign partner as scammers and gold diggers, (Soloski, 2019). The question is what people are exposed to while watching and what they learn about other races, ethnicities and cultures since the foreigners in this reality show are mostly depicted as coming from a poor background and seeking the opportunity to elevate their status with the power of the US passport. This depiction in may provide viewers with an unclear idea about what the world is about and some people might draw their conclusions about what for example a particular ethnicity is associated with by watching one episode which may or may not be the reality.

### **1.3 Research Aims and Questions**

This research aims to explore how the portrayal of ethnic groups are portrayed in reality television show *90 Day Fiance* and how this impacts the viewers of the show. This research was carried out by doing a content analysis in the form of a thematic analysis on the first season of the spin-off of the show; *90 Day Fiance: The other way*. A second content analysis was carried out on social media networking site *Twitter* to measure the impact of the show on its viewers which is backed up by a focus group made up of men and women of various ages and backgrounds.

RQ1: How are ethnic stereotypes portrayed and reinforced in the reality television show, 90 Day Fiancé?

RQ2: What impact does it have on the viewers of this reality show?

### **1.4 Expected Results**

The methodology used in this research will provide a detailed analysis of each aspect of the study. A criterion for selecting the spin-off version of the reality television show is that the cast is diverse. In conclusion of this research, it would provide a variety of opinion with regards to the topic of at hand.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Overview

There exists a broad scope of publications which dig into how the media present certain ethnic groups in our society. The point of this chapter is to exemplify the findings of specific significance within the area of the portrayal of various ethnicities and stereotypes by the media and how it impacts the audience with a study on how the impact is exemplified on social media as this research includes content analysis on the audience and how they use social media app, *twitter* to discuss the TV series. This chapter will be in the following structure; firstly, it will look at the history and evolution of reality television which is broken down into a timeline; it will then discuss the audience of reality TV and what drives their interest and also point out the stereotypical representation of ethnicity in reality-TV with notable examples and scholarly articles to support, a discussion on the authenticity of reality-TV and the reality – TV audience and social media will also be introduced, in order to document how real reality television is presented by the media and the reasons for the potential misrepresentation. Finally, to conclude the literature review, I will report on the literature gap and how my paper contrasts from past studies.

### 2.2 History and Evolution of Reality television

Even though the term reality television may have only gained popularity in recent years with a diverse category, the history of reality television goes as far back as one might expect. In general, reality TV is characterized by the presentation of participants either in an artificial environment or a real environment, participating either consciously or unconsciously in an event" (Ikoro et al., 2015). According to Clissold (2004), the Cold War era (1945-1991) set the scene of a reality show. Right from the time Americans were influenced by government propaganda to serve as surveillance by using hidden cameras and microphones in strategic places to curb communist threats by reporting any activity considered as "un-American" (Clissold, 2004, p. 35) this was the beginning of reality television shows based on ordinary real-life stories. The first-ever televised reality television series was *Candid Camera*, created in 1948 by Allen Funt, which was the TV version of his popular radio show *Candid Microphone* (Richmond,

2008). The reality TV show was the appearance and scheduled programming of Funt's manipulative situations to provoke unaware participants to capture their natural reactions and their reactions when the set-up was revealed, by pointing them to a hidden camera to expose the set-up of the situation and using the show's famous catchphrase, "*Smile! You are on Candid Camera,*" (Austin, 2010), whether it was a car split in half while moving or a conveyer belt that delivered cakes at an impossibly fast rate, the reactions of ordinary average citizens were genuine, and that was what the reality in reality television represented.

The 1950s to 1960s came about the game show type of reality programs with shows like *Twenty-One* and *To Tell the Truth*, the concept of reconstructing ordinary people into stars went on air. In the early periods of the 1970s, the first of its kind camera, lights, action, family reality TV first premiered in the Santa Barbara home of Bill and Pat Loud and their five children. TV network, *PBS* brought about the emergence of programs with hidden surveillance cameras with the show *An American Family*, which was considered a social experiment in surveillance (Kompere, 2004). The *PBS* 12-hour long documentary series which involved a crew of cameramen documenting every piece of the family for seven months first broadcasted in 1973 and attracted an audience of 10 million viewers as they watched in fascination the unfolding real life of the *Loud* family and their five children (PBS website, 2002). According to the producers of the show and the network; *PBS* (2002), the show was considered the first reality television series and was ranked among the 50 greatest shows by the *TV Guide* magazine. This show paved the way for other reality TV social experiment genre, as it was a roaring success because it brought real drama and family problems by dismantling the idea of a "perfect" American family. The increasingly clear presence of the representation of ordinary people in situations which are deemed 'unscripted' is the brand of reality television, and according to the authors of the book – *Reality TV* Biressi and Nunn (2005), believe it is arguably an explanation of its success with audiences. The element of crime as a genre was introduced into the category of reality TV series in the late 1980s (Jermyn, 2004). Shows like *Crime Watch* (1984), *America's Most Wanted* (1988) and *Cops* (1989) drew on the audiences' inquisitiveness about crime with real victims, witnesses and criminals. The producers played on the theme of suspense while getting viewers fixed to their TV sets. The shows, for example, *Cops* followed the exploits of real officers with over 700 episodes (Richmond, 2008).

The idea of televising strangers living together for a stipulated amount of time over a stretched period was integrated into reality television programming in the mid-1990s. In 2000, reality TV evolved into different types of plots. Ouellette and Murray (2004) distinguished the formats surrounded by reality shows. The first was the adventure game show genre (i.e., *Survivor*, *Amazing Race*, *Fear Factor*) where contestants participate against each other and do things out of their comfort zone to emerge as the overall winner. The second type comprises of dating programs, such as Warner Brother's *Blind Date* and NBC's *Joe Millionaire*, Fox's *Who Wants to Marry a Multi-Millionaire* and ITV's *Love Island* where contestants contest for a relationship with the main character. The third is composed of makeover or lifestyle programs such as *The Biggest Loser*, NBC's *The Swan* and Lifetime's *A Wedding Story*, where an opportunity is given to participants to modify their appearance and their lifestyle substantially. Docu-soap realities birthed to a particular degree viewer's captivation with watching the lives of people on television and the interest in reality television with shows such as MTV's *The Real World*, *Big Brother*, *The Osbournes*, and *Keeping up with The Kardashians*. Other formats include talent contests such as CBS's *American Idol* and *So you think you can dance*, also reality shows where professionals are documented in their industry while doing their jobs like TLC's *Pawn Stars*, Discovery's *Miami Ink* and *Deadliest Catch*.

### **2.3 The audience of Reality-TV**

In an attempt to define the format of social experiment reality television genre, two characteristics are constant: the participants serve as characters, and the content is 'real' and unscripted. "Audiences are active because they select media content that they believe will provide the gratifications that they are seeking, therefore, viewing motives predict activity" (Levy & Windahl, 1984; Perse, 1990; Rubin & Perse, 1987). Additionally, for some of these TV shows, the fan base participation is a crucial medium to the shared experience of the program. The activity of the audience signifies what people consider when they approach media usage and how interactive they are with the content (Rubin, 1993). This participation is an integral part of media research because audience activity determines satisfaction derived from media use, as well as effects from the media (Kim & Rubin, 1997; Perse, 1990; Rubin & Perse, 1987). Reality TV, as mentioned in Chapter 1, according to Reiss and Wilts (2004) is appealing to every audience

regardless of educational status, on account of this, it pulls in high advertising earnings and profit due to its diverse and spread out category to appeal to everyone.

There is a reality show for every area which affects human beings; for example, there is a reality show for homemakers, chefs, teenagers, pregnant teenagers, dancers, athletes and more. "When you question why it is we watch the shows we do it is not for the social commentary—if there is any—it is the drama that keeps us engaged" (Frisby, 2013). "The format, in most cases, is dictated by several factors which include theme, subject and genre. It costs less to make an episode of a reality television show in comparison to a scripted show or movie and therefore it is a happy medium. Barton (2007) points out that it costs approximately \$1,000,000 per hour to make a reality TV show with a 24-hour production crew of 200 people and two-dozen cameras compared to an average cost of \$1,625,000 per hour to shoot a scripted TV show. According to Barton (2007), in her research, she states that reality television programming offers the networks new programming that does not require downtime for the cast (because the contestants change each season) and does not require time for writers to create contents or work on storylines. This means reality TV show creators would create anything worth watching regardless of how it affects or depicts stereotypes because the more controversy it creates, the more audience views, ratings and profit. Barton (2007) points out that the repetitive theme of reality TV shows is the emphasis they base on showcasing the worst aspects of people. This goes to show the extent reality TV creators would reach by altering reality and exaggerating stereotypes. It is generally realized that unscripted TV is not totally "unscripted" and is shaped by producers and editors (Strauss 2018). This implies that reality TV show creators are not the best group of people to shape the viewer's mind or educate viewers based on reality.

Unlike other genres of television programming, reality TV gives viewers a sense of participation to share an experience with other viewers, for instance, game show reality shows like *American Idol* which create a platform for viewers to vote their favourite participants and therefore creating a system which gives the viewer power to determine the fate of the participants. The nature of such programs encourages viewers to watch regularly and become involved with characters or participants (Hall, 2006; Nabi et al., 2003; Nabi, Stitt, Halford, & Finnerty, 2006). As a result of that, viewers and audiences are more potential to be mentally and emotionally invested in what they watch and identify with the participants. In a study, Nabi et al. (2003) found that the

difference between casual viewers and regular viewers is that regular viewers of reality shows are more likely to learn from these programs compare themselves to the participants and for the entertainment. Reality programs also create an avenue for audiences to interact using the internet utilizing social media platforms. This interaction, in turn, might influence the satisfaction viewers to receive from these reality television programs (Tincknell & Raghuram, 2002).

#### **2.4 Stereotypical representation of ethnicity in reality-TV**

"Empirical evidence shows that the mass media's stereotypical depictions of social groups influence our thinking, feelings and behaviours"(Gilmour, 2015). Media is a reliable tool, and how it is used plays a significant role in how people view the world. Over the years ethnicities have been stereotypically represented as acting a certain way, dressing a certain way or working specific jobs. The stereotypical depiction of ethnic groups is discussed in a study by Monk-Turner et al. (2010) where a content analysis was carried on prime time television shows, and the result showed the appearance, conversational style and personal attributes among ethnic groups. "They found that Latinos wore more accessories and jewellery than whites, and they were the best groomed. Alternatively, African Americans were least well-groomed and were more provocative in a dress than white characters" (Monk-Turner et al., 2010).

The media has been scrutinized for their portrayal of ethnicities, and there have been studies that analyze the truth to which the manner ethnicities are portrayed to have been correct in terms of accuracy. It goes without saying that to every exaggeration, there is an atom of truth, and although the fact does not stretch as far as a generalization of a whole ethnic group, it is still valid. Punyanunt-Carter (2008) carried out research that focused on the portrayal of African Americans portrayed in stereotypical occupational roles which are harmful, low achieving and positive. Based on questionnaire responses administered to a group of students, the results showed that "the findings indicated that viewers perceived the occupational roles and negative personality characteristics that African Americans portray on television as real or true to life", (Punyanunt-Carter, 2008, p. 241-57). In general, Punyanunt-Carter (2008) suggests that the depiction of African Americans in television shows may have a stronghold on the viewers and their opinions about African Americans in general.

An example is reality TV dating shows, ABC's *The Bachelor* and VH1's *Flavour of Love*. However, these two shows have similar objectives, the content and casting are different, "Both shows display the contestants in a way that furthers racial stereotypes" (Frisby, 2004). Frisby (2004) further discusses how a scene from *The Bachelor* depicted a female Caucasian based contestants acting silly while intoxicated which presumably may be considered as a characteristic of a Caucasian American woman and on *Flavour of Love*, the female African American based contestants exaggerating their manner of speaking or acting in an overdramatized behaviour which thereby perpetuates the black, "ghetto" stereotype (Frisby, 2004). By watching these shows, the audience would believe that most Caucasian men are rich, handsome and have ripped abs or African American women are loud and obnoxious as depicted on these two shows *The Bachelor* and *The Flavour of Love*.

## **2.5 The authenticity of Reality-TV**

One important determiner to consider when watching reality TV shows is the "authenticity" when it comes to viewing these cast members that outwardly become characters on television. Boylorn (2008) remarked a game plan that occurs on the reality show *Flavor of Love*. This American dating reality show stars *Flavor Flav*, an African-American music artist who on the reality show is a bachelor searching for love out of a group of romantic interests. Throughout the show, *Flavor Flav* gives each contestant a new name in the form of a nickname which he does at the beginning of the season, in order to rebrand them as a new character while also casually robbing them of their own identities and, as a consequence, distorting the reality of reality TV (Boylorn, 2008, p. 420-421).

Ideas of authenticity and credibility are at the core of continuous discussions concerning Reality TV. Literary work has frequently talked about legitimacy in Reality TV by inspecting the degree to which portrayal of specific societies can be supposed to be real and a representation of the real world (Escofferey, 2006). However, Hill (2014) has contended that as opposed to making cases to outright validness, Reality TV welcomes crowds to investigate the liquid idea of authenticity, execution and personality. Jones (2003) has additionally contended that crowds are in certainty mindful that Reality TV is a long way from real yet purposely ignore this fact to enjoy something of an "indulgence." Similarly, Allen and Mendick (2013, p.466) suggest that as opposed to looking for a total feeling of authenticity, crowds in certainty get happiness from attempting to

separate the genuine from the fake in Reality TV appears and that this "uncertainty gives space to delight." This may clarify the extensive notoriety of shows, for example, *The Hills*, *Keeping up with the Kardashians* and numerous others which are charged as Reality TV regardless of the general knowledge that scenes are scripted and essential occasions deliberately arranged (Woodward, 2018).

In any case, others have contended that the guarantee of authenticity in Reality TV is the critical intrigue for crowds. Papacharissi and Mendelson (2007, p.33) research have indicated that for crowds, the more reasonable unscripted television writing programs was seen to be, the more interested and fond watchers became of the program and the other way around. In a reasonably increasingly conceptual sense, Fetveit (1999, p. 798) has contended that Reality TV offers a representative association with authenticity for its crowds and also a ground-breaking desire for a feeling of contact with the genuine is engraved in a significant part of the unscripted television film.

Further, Hill (2002, p. 324) has guaranteed that a continuous fascination for crowds of Reality TV is the possibility to catch a "glimpse of authenticity" among participants, for example, the use of filming methods like "diary sessions" and "confession booths" in these shows like *Big Brother*, *Love Island* and *Survivor*. Reality TV shows with a diverse ethnicity represented on screen often repeat itself and appear to be emulative, for example, the loud and sassy African American lady who will challenge almost any individual who crosses her way. Research by Squires (2008) investigates the validity of ethnicity representation in reality TV and raises the question of what inspires it. Undoubtedly, one individual does not represent all types of other individuals. Squires (2008, p.437) points out that when we just observe a similar one to two generalizations on screen, it appears that producers and directors have the vaguest idea on how to outline characters like African American women except as angry and sassy, and therefore sends the wrong message to the audience on the real identity of being African American and a lady (Squires, 2008, p. 437). With the steady redundancy of similar characters being utilized to portray an ethnicity, it makes Squires (2008, p.437) wonder whether specific characteristics and attributes related with being African American give reason to anybody outside of those behaviours and qualities to be seen as inauthentic. As indicated by Michelle Crouch of *Reader's Digest*, makers change scenes for their show to exhibit clashes between various cast individuals.

Also, cast individuals' practices are depicted unexpectedly, permitting the crowd to pick who is decent and kind and who is most certainly not (Morgan-White, 2016).

## **2.6 Impact of Reality-TV on Audience**

Unscripted TV is a compelling marvel, and scientists have asserted that society is so hooked on these shows, for example, *Keeping Up With the Kardashians*, *The Real World*, even *American Idol*, since it is engaging, relatable, and interactive with its viewers. Reality TV shows that document lives of ordinary people were designed to entertain rather than inform. Still, the more people watch these shows, the more they unknowingly adopt what they view to be the real world, and this adversely affects the audience and their mindset as these shows are presented to be "unfiltered" and "unscripted". According to Barton (2007), she states that the past development research has indicated that substantial consumers of TV will have an alternate or changed impression of society when contrasted with the individuals who consume small doses of television programming. Although reality television shows that feature regular ordinary people are solely to entertain than educate the audience, they in away define what society thinks are real-life situations. According to Morgan-White (2016), it is hard to decide if unscripted TV affects individuals in the public eye because not all reality shows are bad. What can be gained from these observational investigations is that individuals have various perceptions of what is genuine and what is not real and lean towards scripted reality shows for the truth.

## **2.7 Reality – TV Audience and Social Media**

The implementation of the internet as an instrument for audience engagement has attracted millions of viewers around the world (Andrejevic, 2004). Social media and reality TV have some things in common, to begin with; they both have changed the dynamics of entertainment and created a new perspective as to how people view the world. Social media has aided in pushing reality TV into a new age. Viewers can simply post and comment to their followers on what they are watching compared to the days before social media platforms like *Twitter* or *Facebook* when people had to wait to meet up with friends or colleagues to discuss an episode of their favourite reality show.

Reality TV shows place reliance on social media to propel content consumption and ratings. Social media is the centrepiece of the marketing strategy for most reality TV dramas, and

internet-based content can be found on a range of social networking platforms (Deller, 2020). According to Professors in the Department of Humanities at the University of Spain, Quintas-Froufe and Gonzalez-Neira, "the combination of social networks, second screens and TV has given rise to a new relationship between viewers and their televisions, and the traditional roles in the communication paradigm have been altered irrevocably"(2014, p.83). The undisputable capacity of social media rests in the information it provides, for example, Facebook has a considerably large amount of users who are actively generating posts every minute of the day and sharing thoughts and ideas. According to Deller (2020) to fully experience reality shows like *Love Island* or *RuPaul's Drag Race*, it means not just watching the show and its spin-offs, purchasing merchandise or reading and watching interviews with the stars, but also interacting with the shows on social networking platforms like *YouTube*, *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*, *Snapchat*, and their official apps.

An example is the reality competition TV show *The X-Factor*, which according to McKinsley (2013) the season premiere accumulated 1.4 million comments, with 13.374 comments per minute" (McKinsley, 2013, p.4). The research article *Love Island, Social Media, and Sousveillance: New Pathways of Challenging Realism in Reality TV* by Xavier L'Hoiry (2019) researches the way social media has created an online community for fans of ITV's British dating reality series, *Love Island*. In his article, he discusses how audiences watch *Love Island* on television and go on to discuss it on social media platforms, participate in polls, games, quizzes and purchase merchandise. These complementary services promote an immensely great form of multi-platform participation, maximizing audience participation, and therefore creating, an avenue for monetization (Gilliland, 2018). The social media platform *Twitter* mainly seems to have stood out as a crowd favourite for viewers discussion and analysis. According to Hallam (2018), the week approaching the finale of the show's fourth season in July 2018, *Twitter* had a total of over 81% of *Love Island* tweets. Social media has empowered the *Love Island* audience to create "invisible electronic networks," as described by Rath (1985) which is displayed in the way audiences of the show have converged online and used social media as a medium to create and promote a dynamic fan base. In a recent search for the term "*90 Day Fiancé: The Other Way*" in the *Twitter* search engine revealed many tweets with people's perception of ethnic stereotypes. One tweet said, "Nicole of #90DayFianceTheOtherWay is such an American stereotype—a fat, disrespectful, junk food-eating, horny dumb dumb" (Shuler, 2017) while

another tweet from another account said, "When walking into that filthy apartment, Leida learned that not all Americans have money. Thank you, Eric, for helping to finally rid us of that stereotype #90DayFianceTheOtherWay" (Queen, 2018).

Content like this clearly shows that people would instead use the ethnicity of a person to generalize and as an excuse for the person's behaviour or status rather than judge the individual based on the person's personality and worth. This generalization can be an effect of what the audience is exposed to on television. Social media is not curated or edited unless content goes against the platform's guidelines, but the editing comes from the individual and how the person is willing to present themselves (Deller,2020). *Big Brother* contestant, Lewis Flanagan made a statement saying, "You do not know me. You saw 45 minutes that are edited for the benefit of the show. That is not me" Lewis Flanagan (Deller, 2020). His statement came after he was evicted off the show by contestants for a statement taken out of context. The possibility of participants acting without the altering powers of the producers of the TV show process can give an impression of 'reality', uncovering what the cameras did not. Regardless, the opposite can likewise contend, that is, members' perspectives are profoundly emotional, and the camera goes about as an increasingly 'objective' observer to occasions without the channel of individual inclination.

## **2.8 Research Gap**

From the literature presented, it has explained the origin of reality television, its audience and appeal to the audience. The articles and books reviewed show have also shown the cause and effect of reality TV shows, the impact it has on the viewer's perception of people and society and the lackadaisical effort producers put into these shows in terms of representation of ethnicities to get more views and ratings. However, the literature reviewed lacks to provide what producers of these shows can do to curb this problem which would also be identified in this research.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3.1 Overview

In order to investigate the stereotypical representation of ethnic groups in reality television series *90 Day Fiance* and how it affects the viewers, this study involved both qualitative and quantitative research methods. According to Creswell, he states that the mixed-methods technique and approach uses strategies of inquiry that include data collection simultaneously or sequentially to understand research problems best. The compilation of data also includes the processing of both numerical and text records, so that the final database represents all qualitative and quantitative information (Creswell, 2003, pg.20).

This study aimed to understand how ethnic groups were portrayed on the reality TV show and examine the impact it has on its' viewers. In doing so, the study combined a content analysis and focus group methods of research.

The content analysis involved analyzing one season of the reality TV show *90 Day Fiance*, specifically and exclusively one season of *90 Day Fiance: The Other Way*, which is one of the spin-offs of the show that require the couples to leave America to the foreign partner's home country. At the time of this research, the show had only two seasons, a total of 27 episodes and a total of 1078 minutes of airtime. Looking at the first season of the spin-off allows exploring how foreign countries are presented in a realistic setting since the spin-off requires the show to be filmed in the other country. Exploration of the first season exposes most viewers to another setting different from the original idea of the show which is primarily involved the non-American partners going to America. Appendix A and B provide a guide to the episodes of season one.

A second content analysis was carried out on social media posts, specifically social networking site, *Twitter*, in order to examine the impact of the reality show on the viewers. Using content analyzing software MAXQDA to identify codes and analyze tweets to determine tweet patterns.

The second research method was a focus group to examine the thoughts and opinions of members of the society about the show and the impacts it may have on viewers. The focus group consisted of viewers of the show with a mixture of ages, backgrounds, gender from a variety of

locations. There were initially meant to be ten participants in the focus group, but on the day only five participants were available which was still an ideal size for a qualitative study and everybody was able answer the questions without having to without being rushed or overwhelmed.

### **3.2 Definition of the research problem**

The media very often in scripted and unscripted programmes tend to promote and reinforce stereotypes in television programs. There are a plethora of television programs that have depicted certain ethnic groups in stereotypical ways. In light of this, I decided to investigate this subject with a focus on the spin-off of *90 day fiancé*, *90 day fiancé: The Other Way*. Therefore the research problem is defined by the research questions:

RQ1: How are ethnic stereotypes reinforced in the reality TV show?

RQ2: How does this impact the audience?

Specifically, I wanted to investigate if the different ethnic groups on the show are subject to misinterpretation by this reality television show and if they are presented in a way which creates a negative image. By the method of content analysis, I was able to conduct a thorough study of the content in each episode of the show and if indeed it represents these different ethnic groups fairly and accurately.

### **3.3 Significance of using a mixed-method approach**

The research method was comprised mainly of quantitative methods; however, it did include qualitative aspects, in the content analysis. Using both methods was of benefit to the study as it described the cause and effect as well as described more aspects of the results than if only one method were used.

Focus groups emphasize on a distinctly categorized subject, and endeavours are made to accumulate data and conclusions from group members (Mansell et al., 2004, p. 79-88). The purpose of using a focus group is that it makes a unique contribution to the study as it comprises of the opinions of respondents who watch the reality show.

### 3.4 Content Analysis

The best method in analyzing media content in a more comprehensive way which is less inclined to "subjective selectiveness" and "idiosyncrasies" is a systematic method and content analysis is one such method for the systematic analysis of communications content (Hansen *et al.*, 1998, pg.91). Content Analysis has been used as a research method in studies that investigated the portrayal of race and gender since the 1960s (Martinez-Shepherd, 2006, pg.26) whereby results from these analyses have since been used to support change in the policies and regulations of programming. Amongst the earliest definitions of content analysis, is that of Bernard Berelson, he referred to content analysis as, "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (Berelson, 1952, p. 18). The process of analyzing content is utilized in numerous fields, including the media, and explicitly when managing media sources. This is because it focuses on the substantial information strategies by utilizing computers and evacuating direct human contributed research, from being utilized primarily for keeping inventories of the contents of American papers and for editorial investigations (Holsti, 1969, p. 21) content analysis developed in the middle part of this century to turn out to be a part of more significant and hypothetically a lot more extravagant tasks of social and political analysis. The strategy was coordinated into bigger exploration endeavours including the analysis of media content, yet additionally different strategies for inquiry (assessments, experiments, member perception, subjective and ethnographic crowd examination) and sorts of information. On the topic of measurement, we may correspondingly ask if the over-portrayal of specific occupations, such as social behaviour, ethnic groups, and more is an instance of media deception, and disposition. Or then again could the exceptionally specific accentuations of media pictures of the truth be viewed as an 'accurate' symbolic reflection (and dissemination) of prevailing social qualities? (Gerbner,1972). A content analysis was chosen for this research because it offers a qualitative opportunity to "describe and analyze the content of written, spoken or pictorial communication..." (Reinard, 2007, p.302). According to Reinard, content analysis is an excellent method for investigative research on ethnic and gender stereotyping because it can offer a broad and concise summary of "broad themes, reoccurring phrases, semantics or concepts" (Reinard, 2007, p. 302). An advantage of this research method is that it can aid in finding a pattern or trend within a large body of content as it is exceedingly

resourceful; however, it is incapable of surmising the cause and effect conclusions and also requires a lot of time and energy in gathering and analyzing data.

### **3.4.1 Thematic Analysis**

A Thematic Analysis was used to identify ethnic portrayal within the TV series. Thematic Analysis is a kind of qualitative analysis that analyzes classifications and presents themes and patterns that are data linked. It explains the data in great detail and discusses different subjects through interpretations (Boyatzis, 1988). Thematic Analysis is considered ideally suitable for any research that aims to discover using clarifications as it provides an efficient element to content analysis. This method of data analysis allows the researcher to associate a frequency analysis of a theme with content in its entirety. This will offer accuracy and complexity, which will enhance the entire research intent. Qualitative research includes a broad understanding and collection of data and aspects. According to Namey et al. (2008), "Thematic Analysis moves beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focuses on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas. Codes developed for ideas or themes are then applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis, which may include comparing the relative frequencies of themes or topics within a data set, looking for code co-occurrence, or graphically displaying code relationships." (p.138)

### **3.4.2 Selection of the media and sample**

I selected this to document the representation of different ethnic groups on the reality TV show *90 Day Fiance* by conducting a content analysis on the first season of the spin-off show *90 Day Fiance: The other way*. This spin-off show records the journey of the American partners travelling "the other way" to meet and live with their partners in a foreign country. The purpose of using this spin-off as a sample was because it most commonly watched and was among the more popular spin-offs which were produced to be more diverse in terms of ethnic groups and being filmed outside America. The first season of this spin-off was made up of 6 couples, making a total of 12 main cast members with six individuals from the United States of America and the other six individuals from the following countries of the world, South Africa, Ecuador, South Korea, India, Qatar and Brazil. Appendix A and B provide a guide to the episodes of season one as well as a casting guide respectively.

### 3.4.3 Coding Rationale

Thematic analysis was used in conducting the analysis and was in two phases. Firstly a template was created in the form of codes or questions, to organize the indexing of material (Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Seidel & Kelle, 1995). These codes were systematized into broad categories: (a). How are the Americans on the show portrayed? (b). How are the non-Americans on the show portrayed? (d). How is America as a country presented? (e). How are the foreign countries on the show presented? (e). Show production

In the second phase, relevant material was indexed into codes, the episodes of season one of *90 Day Fiance: The other way* were observed and detailed information was documented that was relevant to each code; this included every aspect of the episode in terms of visuals, conversations, music, editing and statements

*Table 1. Definitions of Coding Categories*

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>DEFINITION</b>
<b>Portrayal of Americans</b>	
Racial fetishism	A form of sexual desire in which gratification is linked to a person or culture that belongs to a specific ethnic group
Savior complex	Seeing the need to rescue or “save” people
Ignorant & Vulnerable	Uneducated, ill-mannered, Exploitable
<b>Portrayal of Non-Americans</b>	
Dependent	Influenced by and reliant on
Insincere	Not genuine
<b>Portrayal of America</b>	
Developed	Not primitive or not a third world
Land of opportunity	Where people have a chance to succeed and achieve things
<b>The portrayal of foreign countries on the show</b>	
Underdeveloped	Third world or primitive

Unsafe	Not safe; dangerous
<b>Show production</b>	
Subtitles	Textual versions of the dialogue displayed at the bottom of a screen
Music	Any pleasing or interesting sound played within the reality show
Cutaway Background	Cutaway: A cut to a shot or person speaking to the camera in reaction to a scene. Cutaway Background: The background photo or video of the cutaway scene.

Ethnic stereotyping was coded by cast member and episode (refer to appendices A and B for details). Episodes were viewed and observed for the key scenes regarding ethnic stereotypes.

### 3.5 Content analysis and social media

Content analysis is extensively utilized methodology "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (and other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorff, 2004, p.18). Research that engaged the use of content analysis as a research method is that of Lyles, Lopez, Pasick and Sarkar (2013) to identify and highlight fundamental discussion classifications in cervical and breast cancer screening dialogue on social networking site *Twitter*. The maximum length for a *tweet* is 280 characters ([www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)). Sullivan et al. (2013) also conducted a concussion-related discussion using content analysis on *Twitter* in order to discern how twitter posts also commonly referred to as *tweets*, are used to relay information about concussions. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), content analysis utilizes content analysis using key concepts or variables from available research to inform the codebook. The purpose of conducting this content analysis was to examine the conversation of viewers and examine the attitude and impact of the portrayal of ethnic groups on the reality TV show and how the audience perceives it. According to Eysenbach (2008), social networking site *Twitter* promotes the spread of information via the internet. It plays an essential role in circulating observations of the viewers of this reality show, in conducting this content analysis; *tweets* were collected using the *Twitter* search engine. This included the following search criteria

(a.) Written in English

(b.) Contained the "90DayFiance:TheOtherWay" & "90DayFiance" hashtag

(c.) Posted in June 2020

A total of 5,692 tweets out of 7,203 tweets that met the search criteria were captured and imported into MAXQDA, a qualitative software program for data organization. Original *tweets* rather than *retweets* (tweets that were reiterated by another user) were analyzed in order to denote conversations that represented original opinions, attitudes and sentiments of the user. Videos, images, external links were not analyzed for this study. Tweets were first grouped according to 90 Day Fiance: The Other Way-related and non-90 Day Fiance: The Other Way-related. 90 Day Fiance: The Other Way-related tweets were defined as a tweet that referenced one of the ethnic groups, as stated in chapter one portrayed on the show. Examples of such tweets are given below:

- So South Africa doesn't know how to give good haircuts? Ronald looks like has toupee. [#90dayfiancetheotherway](#)
- Ronald is what's wrong with South Africa, dudes been on a mission to portray us badly since day one he went to the real estate agent while he was unemployed looking for a place to rent with God knows what to pay for it nxm [#90dayfiancetheotherway](#)
- "Oh dear god, I'm ready to fly to Mexico to hug Armando's family. I'm glad this is one of the happy stories for gay men in non-progressive countries. [#90dayfiancetheotherway](#)"
- When I hear "Ethiopia," I think of pirates. I wonder how they doing? I miss the stories on the news about my pirate friends. [#90dayfiancetheotherway](#)
- [#90dayfiancetheotherway](#) So Brittany was sort of an escort for 45 to 85-year-old men. Dating a conservative Muslim from Jordan is never going to work. <https://t.co/XAK5DPdTQx>
- I can't put my finger on it, but I don't entirely trust Yazan, these Arabs can't be trusted [#90dayfiancetheotherway](#)
- For India, that's a pretty deluxe apartment. Bathrooms typically have no separation from the shower and the rest of the bathroom. Western toilet!!! Wow. Relationships on this show are all insane. It seems scripted to me. [#90dayfiancetheotherway](#)

- The Americans on 90 day fiancé are always complaining. Their partner doesn't work, won't get a job, not taking family life seriously. These foreigners don't marry to come to America to work. They are primitive & are seeking better life #90dayfiancetheotherway
- #90dayfiancetheotherway Brittney and Devon's mother are an embarrassment to all Americans. I could not believe their arrogance. Embarrassing!!!

Non-90 Day Fiance: The Other Way-related tweet was narrowed down to tweets that did not explicitly or directly mention or suggest the portrayal of ethnic groups. Non-90 Day Fiance: The Other Way-related tweets are as follows:

- You know you have a prob when you watch #90DaysFianceBeforeThe90Days & watch #90DayFiancePillowTalk ppl talk abt the show you just watched. Top it w watching #b90strikesback & watch the same ppl talk abt the ppl who just talked abt them. Then chase it w #90dayfiancetheotherway <https://t.co/mePAJWodqu>
- The new cryer...I do love Kenneth, though. Hope it works out. #90dayfiance #90dayfiancememes #90dayfiancetheotherway <https://t.co/qxUby3yOJc>
- This poor cat's going to need its own emotional support animal #90dayfiancetheotherway <https://t.co/KWuZbFaYB5>
- Yaaaaaaaaaay it's #90dayfiancetheotherway tonight on @tlc\_uk <https://t.co/jYTjCeqFvG>
- This house warming ceremony for jenny is cool and interesting. #90dayfiance #90dayfiancetheotherway
- Biniyam has a kind brother and sister in law for letting him live with them. It's terrible that his parents died when he was young. #90DayFiance #90DayFianceTheOtherWay <https://t.co/lbC5JITFQm>
- I'm surprised Ariela has her hair and makeup done for such a long flight. #90DayFiance #90DayFianceTheOtherWay <https://t.co/Zs6ol306ip>
- Just turned on #90dayfiancetheotherway , sitting here relaxing
- Melyza and Tim knew each other in college, so that makes some sense. The long-distance dating is probably hard though. #90DayFiance #90DayFianceTheOtherWay <https://t.co/DhXcd3sLkg>

After tweets were identified as *90 day fiancé: the other way* related and *non-90 day fiancé: the other way* related, the tweets were then logged in MAXQDA software and manually coded and through this, themes were discovered.

### **3.6 Focus Group**

Focus groups are specifically helpful when there are power contrasts between the members and leaders or experts, when the ordinary utilization of language and culture of specific gatherings is of interest, and when one needs to investigate the level of agreement on a given point or topic (Morgan & Kreuger 1993). Focus groups were first introduced to Social Sciences in the 1940s (Liamputtong, 2011, p.9; Cyr, 2015, p.232) which was after that developed from research methods designed by Paul Lazarsfeld, Robert Merton, and other colleagues "to argue audience responses to propaganda and radio broadcasts during World War Two" (Kidd and Parshall, 2000, p.295). As a method of research, it was disregarded until the 1980s when several social scientists published research on the method of focus groups (Morgan, 1996, pp. 129-130). There are several definitions of a focus group, but there is no universally agreed-upon definition of a focus group as so many components are involved. Powell et al. (1996; 499) defines focus groups as a group of people carefully selected and assembled by researchers to reason and comment from general knowledge and personal experience on a topic that is the subject of the research. "A research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher" is how Morgan L. Freeman (1996, p. 130), sociology professor defines focus group although there have been exceptions to it. A concise and simplified description by Agar and MacDonald (Agar and MacDonald, 1995, p. 80; Kidd and Parshall, 2000, p. 294) describe it as a line between a meeting and a conversation.

#### **3.6.1 Types of Group Research**

Focus groups are similar to other group research methods, and an example is nominal groups which use multiple participants as well but do not involve interactive discussions. Taylor termed the term nominal grouping, Berry and Block (1958) which was used about a process whereby entities "act alone with the outcomes of their efforts later combined and seen as though the individuals had served together in a collective" (Green, 1975, p. 63). Further group researches involve 'natural occurring' group discussions that are not led by an interview, "the dissimilarity

here is not whether the group existed before the research, but whether the researcher's interests directed the discussion" (Morgan, 1996, p. 130). Also, Frey and Fontana (1991), the creators of typology casting focus groups as one of many forms of group interviews. According to the above standards, group interviews are not technically focus groups if they are not held in a formal setting, the use of nondirective interviewing or the use of the unstructured format of asking questions. Focus group is considered a trustworthy and dependable means of accumulating data; however focus groups are regularly combined with other methods, as opposed to being a free-standing method. Focus group research method has been analyzed from several angles, thereby resulting in pros and cons. This method of research is inexpensive, and participants are likely to respond with honest responses, although participants might build on each other's responses by sponging on their answers. This situation could be useful for the moderator and interviewer to observe, according to Skeggs et al., all knowledge is created in the interest of another, so that all information is generated from positions of power (Skeggs, 1995, p. 50; Jowett and O'Toole, 2006, p.458). It also gives the researcher liberty to look beyond the facts and numbers that may have been obtained through survey research method (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1998, p. 505). However, a negative aspect of this methodology is that it also has its limitations whereby it heavily relies on a form of assisted discussion to produce results (Krueger, 1994). Also working with others can be untrustworthy, participants may or may not show up and may take a while to get comfortable and open up, there is the issue of strangers being uncomfortable and nervous which is common in such situation which could potentially affect attentiveness and personalities.

### **3.6.2 The Role of the Researcher**

Research professionals, Agar and MacDonald (1995) establish that the presence of the moderator and researcher disrupted the fluidity of the conversation and made the experience of the meeting less natural. This was in comparison to individual physical interviews, whereby the participants, regardless of the pressure felt by the moderator, expressed themselves freely (Morgan, 1996, p. 140). However Jowett and O'Toole in a conflicting point claim that "the power of the researcher is challenged, simply under the numbers involved in the research encounter" (Jowett and O'Toole, 2006, p. 455), the presence of the researcher as an authority figure or heading the conversation can shift the dynamics of the conversation and dense the atmosphere.

### 3.6.3 Preparing the Focus Group

The aim of this particular study was to analyze the thoughts and opinions of the participants concerning the portrayal of ethnic groups on the reality television show *90 Day Fiance*. The study sample included five unrelated participants who are fans of the reality show, which was a necessary factor in understanding the questions. The participants' ages range from 22 to 41 years old and from a variety of backgrounds, including women and men from different locations. Initially, I had contacted ten participants and ended up with five and fortunately, a considerable number and ideal size to gather information and respond to questions without feeling pressured or uncomfortable. The participants were contacted through a social network site; *Reddit* under a group committed to the reality show *90 Day Fiance*. Each participant was provided with an information sheet and consent sheet before the meeting to read, sign and return. These forms have been attached to the appendix section, listed as appendix C and appendix D, respectively.

The focus group discussion which was organized via a *Zoom Video Conferencing Platform*, a reliable, convenient and accessible platform for video and audio conferencing was convenient to use due to the social distancing put in place due to the Covid-19 pandemic, video call meeting lasted for 55 minutes and was recorded using the software which provides an option to record video call sessions, with the consent of all members of the focus group. The focus group was led by myself, the researcher who reminded the participants about their voluntary participation and option to withdraw at will at any time. An 8-minute compilation video of episodes of the reality TV show was played for all participants using the share screen option on zoom software before the questioning began to loosen the atmosphere and also jog the memories of the participants. There was a moderator who orchestrated the questioning while the researcher served as an observer in order not to be seen as an authority figure as this could have intimidated the discussion.

### 3.6.4 Focus Group Conclusion

There was the worry of the topic of ethnicity being a sensitive topic for a focus group, but that did not hinder the discussion in any way. The conversation or discussion was laid back and very revealing. Each participant contributed and answered each question extensively while being

respectful of each other. The transcription of the focus group discussion has been attached to the appendix as appendix E.

### **3.6.5 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations for focus groups are similar to most other methods of social research (Homan, 1991). According to an article on ethical issues titled 'Ethical Considerations in Qualitative Study' by Arifin (2018), this article recommends that in the process of interviewing participants for research that requires participants from different cultural backgrounds, it requires more than basic understanding but also flexibility in the interview process. In selecting and including participants, researchers must ensure that full information of the research is communicated to the participants about what to expect and not to pressure participants into speaking as it is essential to be respectful as their input is voluntary and beneficial to the researcher. Permission was gotten to record the discussion and was guaranteed to be stored on a laptop protected with a password. Each participant was provided with an information sheet containing details and also a consent form ensuring their anonymity and confidentiality about the outcome of the focus group. Participation in the study was not compulsory, and they may withdraw whenever they chose to.

### **3.6.6 Challenges**

Every method of research has its challenges as plans may not go accordingly, and everything may not develop as it was intended or planned. The challenges encountered regarding the focus group study was mainly concerning participants; the focus group was rescheduled twice due to uniform availability of each member, there was the issue of participants showing up a couple of minutes into the discussion and not showing up at all, the internet interfered in the beginning as there was a little lagging, but that did not go on for too long.

## **Chapter 4: Results and Analysis**

### **4.1 Overview**

Chapter four will present and discuss the results of the methodology carried out in this research. The results from the content analysis whereby 22 episodes of the first season of the reality TV show spin-off *90 Day Fiance: The other way* are presented in both qualitative and quantitative form.

### **4.2 Thematic Content Analysis Basic Findings**

The themes noted in the reality TV show *90 day fiancé: the other way* were categorized and concisely broken down as seen in chapter 3 table 1. The themes were analyzed thematically, which entailed discussing each theme in a specific running head in order to conclude how ethnic stereotypes are reinforced on the TV show. The results were expected and unexpected, for example, it was found as expected that the foreign participants were portrayed as deceitful and wanted to take advantage of the generosity of the American partners, however, they were not interested in going back to America for a “better life” as was portrayed to appear in the reality TV show.

#### **4.2.1 Portrayal of Americans on the show**

The depiction and characteristics of the American partners on the reality TV show were quite similar to each other in terms of a stereotypical uniform theme which was apparent in season one. Three sub-themes were identified; (a) racial fetishism & desperation, (b) savior complex, (c) ignorant & vulnerable.

#### *Racial Fetishism & Desperation*

The premise of the show is centred on love and immigration, and the noticeable trend is that the American partners seem to fall for foreign partners who are from developing/third world countries although this may be sincere love, the TV show tends to make it a priority and an

obstacle in their journey for love and happiness. The couples who share such circumstances have been intentionally selected for the show which in a way creates the idea of racial fetishism. In the first episode of season one, Corey Rathgeber from Mill A. Washington mentioned that he loves travelling and on one of his trips, he ended up in Ecuador where he met his partner, Evelin Villegas. He stated that

“I met Evelin, in a very “beachy” tourist town....one day I see this girl, she is super pretty, and she comes walking up to me, and I think this only happens in the movies right”.

Using that as an example, the common theme of how they meet each other is mostly related to them going on vacation or meeting on international dating network sites, knowing each other for a short period and then deciding to spend their lives together knowing little or nothing about each other’s past but loving the idea of an exotic relationship.

Another instance is the relationship of Tiffany Franco from Frederick Maryland and Ronald Smith from South Africa. Tiffany when talking about how she met Ronald, she mentioned that it was on vacation with her friends to South Africa and according to her they had chemistry which led to love and in her exact words she says;

“I don’t know if he grabbed my hand or I put my head on his shoulder but in that exact moment I was like I think I just fell in love with someone from another country”.

Jenny Slatten from Palm Springs, California who met Sumit from New Delhi, India on *Facebook*, mentions on the show while packing for India to meet with Sumit, expresses how she could not wait to go to India to meet with Sumit and wear Indian outfits which she had pre-packed with the idea that that was the only form of clothing allowed.

Another online meeting story is that of Deavan Clegg from Salt Lake City, Utah in her story of how she met Jihoon Lee from Seoul South Korea talks about how she had just gotten out of a two-year relationship with an American man and was tired of American men so she got on the mobile phone international dating app *Tinder* where she got to see what other profiles from other parts of the world looked like and matched with Jihoon, she also mentioned in Episode 5 that;

“I have dated quite a few Asian men in the past, a lot of them have been Korean, [laughs] you know they’re good-looking men”.

Aside the cultural difference, language barrier and culture shock, the couples presented on the show tend to be different to each other in terms of age, appearance and character; they almost have little or nothing in common. For example, Jenny is 60 years of age and was left devastated after her ex-husband of 15 years cheated on her and at first when she met Sumit on *Facebook*; he was posing a 24-year-old who Jenny was very attracted to, and when Sumit revealed his true identity and that he was 30 years old, she did not bother that he lied in the beginning, she still went ahead with the relationship, almost like she was ready to settle for whoever was willing to accept her regardless of the red flags.

### *Savior Complex*

A general statement amongst the American partners is about “abandoning”, or “giving up everything” which implies that they are expecting the worst and sacrificing all they have for the person. In contrast, the other way around whereby the foreign partners are to go to America, the American partners refer to it as giving them a better life in America. Corey Rathgeber mentions; “I am giving up everything I have to Ecuador in the middle of nowhere”, a similar statement by Paul, “I just gave up my entire life in the united states”. The show tends to depict the foreign country as though it were the worst place to live and through the attitudes and conversations of the American partners, they seem to push the narrative that Americans believe America is superior to other countries.

A reoccurring argument or concern around the relationships is mostly related to finances. In Episode 2, Corey Rathgeber mentions explicitly in his cutaway interview that he had invested a total of \$40,000 in Evelin, his fiancé which includes a bar he purchased for them to help with their finances when he moves to Engabao, Ecuador. In his attempt to avoid moving to Ecuador, he tries to convince his fiancé who declines the idea, in a bid to cajole, he mentions that “I was hoping to bring Evelin here to the states so she could see the American life and have the American dream, but completely backfired and wasn’t the case, unfortunately”, a statement like this implies that his fiancé’s living situation in Engabao, Ecuador was the second class in comparison to life in America.

Another instance was of Paul from Louisville, Kentucky and Karine from Amazonas, Brazil. Ahead of Paul's trip to Brazil to meet with his pregnant fiancé, Paul packed many precautions to ward off potential diseases and kept on making references to the water as "poop water" and his safety in Brazil. Karine expressed that statement of crime and security in Brazil was considered hypocritical for someone like Paul who had revealed in Episode 4 that he had a criminal past for arson and breaking a restraining order which he had gotten in the first place for slashing someone's tyres. Paul's comments to some degree made it clear that he looked down on Karine and implied his lifestyle in America is more superior to how she lives back in Amazonas, Brazil. Paul consistently referred to how dangerous Brazil was throughout the season, he bought a bulletproof baby bag and he said "I brought some baby stuff, it's bulletproof, it's got a panel in it so that you can protect yourself [imitates gunshots], it is a dangerous area we live in, made sense...". A difference in lifestyles and resources available does not mean one country is superior to the other; the difference between a third world and first world country is access to resources.

### *Ignorant & Vulnerable*

The most of the televised interactions and cutaway interview sessions of most of the American partners was not knowing or having substantial information about the country they were relocating to or the foreign partners whom they were meant to spend the rest of their lives with. In the first episode, one of the participant's *Corey* exclaimed "I am giving up everything I have to go to Ecuador in the middle of nowhere" as though he had not done any research before the big move which could be unlikely, but the way it is made to look brings the idea of ignorance and not thought out decisions. There is a cringe factor to the fact that these couples do not trust each other but are willing to go all the way to the altar, which is a real-life situation that would be considered as absurd. The American partners decide to leave the comfort of their homes and travel halfway across the world to another country where they know nothing about or have made any plans on how to get a job or fend for themselves. In Episode 2, Jenny is seen with her friends who tell her that she is making the worst decision of her life moving to India, where she the response of being in love. The conversation goes as follows;

Jenny: I am packing up my life and moving to India, we are going to live together, we are getting married this time.

Friend: Wow, Oh my God, you have your daughter, you have your grandchildren, you are leaving your entire life, India is a third-world country and women are second to men and I think you are going to have a problem with that, you have freedom here in the United States, I think you are truly making a big mistake.

Jenny: I have been there before.

Friend 2: But you are going there to live there with a younger man

Jenny: That is okay I am alright with that, I think he loves me.

The American partners are made to appear clueless for instance, in episode 5 during a conversation between Laura, Aladin and Aladdin's boss, where he tells her about the "four wife law" in Islam in Qatar, and she immediately has a shocked expression which means she did not do much research about the religion she was marrying into.

#### 4.2.2 Portrayal of Non-Americans on the show

The depiction of Non-Americans on the show through specific characteristics and conversations brought about the following sub-themes; (a). Dependent (b). Insincere

##### *Dependent*

Out of all the foreign partners on the reality show, only two out of the six of them had jobs and a source of income; the others were dependent on their partners or parents. Evelin from Engabao, Ecuador in Episode 2 had mentioned that she was not going to work and expected her partner Corey to provide for the family. Karine from Amazonas, Brazil was also dependent on Paul and Paul's mother to cater for herself and their baby. Jihoon from Seoul, South Korea was still living with his parents and quit his job right after he met Deavan which in his defence said the pay was not good and even up to the time Deavan his fiancé moved to Seoul, he still had no job, and they had to live with his parents and rely on them. The conversations with their families always

narrow down to not trusting the foreign partners and them only using the American partners as a passage or opportunity to come to the United States or live off them. In episode 3, Laura confesses to her brother that she married Aladin from Qatar, three days after they met her brother expresses that Aladin only wants to be with her to acquire a “green card”.

### *Insincere*

Four out of six foreign partners were depicted as hiding something from their American partners. The first person was Sumit from New Dehli, India who hid the fact that he was married to another person while engaged to marry Jenny from California, the second person was Evelin from Engabao, Ecuador. The latter had made a promise to Corey from Washington to marry him if he decided to relocate to Ecuador but later on revealed she was only interested in what he could provide financially. Ronald from Randfontein, South Africa hid that he had a drinking and gambling addiction from his fiancé Tiffany and even after revealing the secret to her and going to rehab to seek help, the day he was released, he rebelled and had drinks at his bachelor’s party. Jihoon from South Korea later revealed to Deavan that he had a criminal past that included illegal jobs he had taken part of in the past. The friends and family of the American partners expressed their feelings of fear and mistrust for the foreign partners. In conversations between the American partners and their friends and family, the issue of the foreign partners using them for immigration purposes was a general concern, Jenny from California in a conversation with her friends was warned not to relocate to India because there was a chance she was going to be used as access to the “American dream”.

#### 4.2.3. Portrayal of America

America has been portrayed on the show as the best place on the earth and which lead to the sub-themes created under this theme as follows; (a) developed & forward-thinking (b) land of opportunity

*Developed & Forward Thinking*

The juxtaposition of America and the foreign countries on the show which is considered as underdeveloped is clear in the conversations and visuals presented to the viewers. In episodes 1 through episode 20, the American partners refer to how America is different from where they were, implying that America is more developed, open-minded, comfortable and superior. When Tiffany and Ronald are trying to buy a house, she mentions that South Africa is unsafe compared to America, where they leave their doors unlocked. Corey tells Evelin when they go grocery shopping, and he finds out he has to select a live chicken to be slaughtered, in his cutaway interview, he states that “in America, we buy chickens from grocery stores and they are already prepared, you just select it and buy it”. Another instance is with Jenny and Sumit in India, whereas they were in a rickshaw which is one of India’s means of public transportation and she expressed how unsafe it was and mentioned how the public transport in America is more organized and comfortable. In Qatar, when Laura arrives from America to her new home with Aladin, she expresses disgust at the apartment where she compares the kitchen which had a two-burner stovetop to hers back in the United States as “something you get when you go camping, it’s disgusting”.

In the same episode, Laura presents a sex toy to Aladin in an attempt to spice up their sex life and Aladin is furious about it. Laura expresses that in America, many people use it and Aladin refutes by saying they are not in America.



Figure1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

### *Land of opportunity*

In episode 14 Paul from Louisville is upset with Karine from Brazil who is heavily pregnant and wants Paul to stay back in Brazil with her, but Paul is furious because he cannot find a job in Brazil and he tells Karine that they need to go back to America he says, “we need to go back to America so we can get jobs that pay more than the peanuts they pay here”. The same situation with Jenny is episode 17, where she tries to find a job in India, but she expresses the same concern of not earning enough with the types of jobs presented to her in India. Before the American partners decide to make the bold step to relocate to their specific foreign countries to meet their partners, they try to convince the foreign partners to relocate to America in doing so they portray America to be the solution to all their problems. In a cutaway scene with Corey who relocated to Ecuador to live with his fiancé complained about the living situation whereby the house had no window blinds or properly closing doors, and in his cutaway interview, he said: “After seeing how Evelin lives, it makes me wonder, you know, who would not want to come to America for a better life.”

#### 4.2.4. The portrayal of foreign countries on the show

The foreign countries on the show are categorized by the American partners and their friends and family as the third world and underdeveloped, hence the following sub-themes (a) underdeveloped (b) unsafe

#### *Underdeveloped*

Right from episode 1, we are exposed to the underdeveloped nature of most of the foreign countries on the show and most of the time when being discussed; it is supported with cutaway pictures of dirty environs. An example is when Paul’s Mum in episode 17 arrives Brazil to meet her daughter-in-law and her grand-daughter, in a cutaway shot, she explains what the environment looks like; “Paul’s neighbourhood is interesting [laughs], it’s different, the houses are not in the best of shape, there’s cats and dogs running around savaging, I cannot imagine living here, NO”.

In episode 1, in a cutaway interview Corey laments on how the environment in Engabao, Ecuador is, “After two-weeks in this beach paradise, Evelin invites me to go back to her town of

Engabao which is very different [cutaway to a muddy street with pigs walking in the streets] Engabao is covered with pigs (figure 5 & 6 ), it is very scary, it is very third world.”

In episode 17, Ronald and Tiffany are on the way to a government hospital in South Africa, on the car ride to the place, Tiffany mentions that she has heard only negative things about the hospital, Ronald chimes in with support and a statement about how public hospitals in South Africa are known for not taking care of their patients and not hygienic.



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

### *Unsafe*

Most of the American partners have expressed their concern with their safety in going to a third world country. Tiffany from Maryland emphasized on the fact that South Africa was unsafe and dangerous and could not live there without a substantial amount of security. In their bid to find a house in South Africa, in Episode 12, they have a conversation with the Real estate agent which goes as follows;

Real estate agent: So what exactly is it that you are looking for in a property?

Tiffany: I think the number 1 for me is the security, it's my little boy that's what I'm worried about.

REA: What is he used to?

T: We live in Maryland, and it is safe like we leave our doors unlocked.

REA: That is not going to happen in South Africa, Ronald will tell you, it is not a bad country, but security is a big big big thing.

[They arrive at the house for viewing]

REA: I just want to point out that the entire place is electrified which is for your safety

T: [cutaway interview] Everyone has always told me how dangerous South Africa is, if you want to be safe you need to live in a gated compound with electric fences.

Another couple that had the same dispute with regards to the safety of the country is Paul from Louisville and Karine in Brazil had just moved into their new house, and they try to find a job to support him and his pregnant wife. In episode 12, he is shown walking in the streets with a bulletproof vest which he explained is for his safety against bullets.

#### 4.2.5 Show Production

This analysis revealed how the production of the show and how it is presented to the viewers play a huge role in how the viewers interpret what is being depicted. Intentional editing and factors contribute to how the ethnic groups are portrayed; the following sub-themes were identified (a) subtitles (b) music (c) cutaway background

##### *Subtitles*

The use of subtitles is to help viewers understand and to provide clarity of what is being said. However the subtitles on the show are only present when a non-American is speaking English may be due to their foreign accents which could be a reason, although the subtitles are meant to fix any errors or grammatical error or make a statement more understandable in what is being

said, the subtitles still carry the errors which is almost presented as the ridicule of what the foreigner is saying. This creates the idea that the foreigners are uneducated, and because their spoken English is not as fluent as an English speaker, they are not smart. This would not have been a factor if the subtitles were available for all the speakers regardless of their audibility or inaudibility as the reality TV show is shown all around the world and an American accent is also seen as foreign to non-Americans. The images below are key examples of this.



Figure9



Figure 10



Figure 11

### *Music*

The music used when a new scene is revealed in a different state or country or continent is intentionally in connection to the music expected from that country. For example, anytime there is a scene featuring Paul from Louisville Kentucky, the music played has country music undertone, anytime a scene cuts to Jihoon from South Korea, there is Asian traditional music played, the same with Ronald from South Africa, South African music is played. These countries are diverse countries which do not necessarily have to be represented by such music because it only pushes the narrative that everyone from that particular place plays or listen to that sort of music.

### *Cutaway Backgrounds*

The cutaway backgrounds and the establishing shots on the show try to give the audience an idea of where they are and what the place looks like; however, it gives the wrong impression. For example, the cutaway scene of Paul and Karine is unclean water with boats which is meant to

depict Brazil. This ties in with the fact that Paul continually refers to the water in Brazil as “poop water” (figure 12 & 13), another example is the cutaway scene of Ronald & Tiffany in South Africa, the background is huts (figure 14) even though Ronald lives nowhere close to anything like a hut in South Africa and this enforces the idea that Africans live in huts whereas in modern-day South Africa, there are so many modern houses owned by a majority of South Africans in South Africa. These intentional placements are choices contribute and enforce the stereotypes the viewers may already have had before watching.



Figure 12



Figure 13

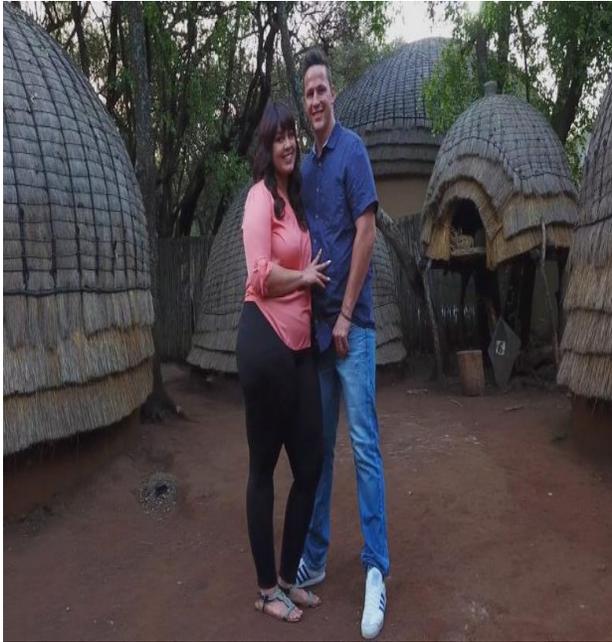


Figure 14

### 4.3 Twitter Content Analysis

The purpose of this research method is to assess *90 day fiancé* related twitter content and provide a more in-depth understanding on the impact the reality TV show has on its viewers that may be used for future studies. Tweets containing *90 day fiancé* keywords were collected from June 1- June 30, 2020 (N= 7,203) however, (n=5,692) were closely related to the search criteria. The research indicated that (n=1870) tweets were assessed for related tweets that align with the reality TV show spin-off *90 day fiancé: the other way*.

The findings of this study resulted in the following 7 themes representing the use of *#90DayFiance: the other way* by Twitter users, their reaction to the reality TV show, and how they interpret the contents of the show. The (n=1870) tweets were placed into the following themes;

Theme	n	Percent
1. Not understanding people's culture	272	14.5
2. Generalization and misrepresentation of	225	12.0

religion		
3. Lack of research by the Americans on the show	291	15.6
4. Deceitful foreigner	158	8.4
5. Poor representation of America by Americans	277	14.8
6. Power dynamic	267	14.2
7. Respect the culture	380	20.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1870</b>	

#### 4.3.1 *Theme 1: Not understanding people's culture*

Two hundred and seventy-two (14.5%) of the 1870 tweets analyzed fell under the theme 1 which showed that most of the viewers understood from the show that the couples on the show have a cultural difference which creates a clash due to lack of understanding of the each other's culture. The following tweets suggested the following;

Brittany is not understanding the ways of the land where she is. She doesnt realize that he can yell at her and speak to her that way because in his culture its OK. #90DayFiance #90dayfiancetheotherway

Yazan overreacted to Brittany bringing alcohol to Jordan bc he knows she drinks so why be THAT angry? I'd understand if she lied or if she already converted but she didn't. However, I ain't gonna lie, I agree with one aspect and that it was disrespectful. #90dayfiancetheotherway

#### 4.3.2 *Theme 2: Generalizing and misrepresentation of religion*

Two hundred and twenty-five (12.0%) of the 1870 tweets analyzed fell under theme 2, which represents the way the viewers interpret the portrayal of religion on the show. Many tweets that were categorized under theme 2 were posted in response to an episode whereas 90 Day Fiancé: the other way whereby Yazan from Jordan explained the premise around Islam and alcohol to his fiancée Brittany from America who was not compliant to it and ended up making Yazan furious to the point he cursed at her. Some examples of tweets categorized under this theme are as follows:

The rules on drinking alcohol in Jordan are stricter than in the U.S. for sure, but you CAN drink alcohol there. They literally have bars and vineyards to produce their own wine. Yazan is just controlling. Run Brit! #90DayFiance #90dayfiancetheotherway

They need to compromise. She needs to know her behavior was disrespectful but so was his. He forgot patience is an important part of Islam's belief. He needs to help her get used to the culture religion & not expect her to change in 1 quick sec #90DayFiance #90DayFiancetheotherway

I spent two weeks in Jordan and Jordanians were so nice. Never had a problem. I always carried a scarf, but was never asked/forced to cover up. They are extremely courteous..as we were too. I have No idea what's going on w/Britney. #90DayFiance

The tweets above visibly expressed that most of the viewers of the show were not affected by the outburst in terms of making a general opinion about the rules of drinking in Jordan. This shows that they did further research. Although there were users who were more enlightened about the country and culture, there were other users who used the scene to reinforce preconceived beliefs of the religion.

Brittany needs to RUN!!!!!! Girl, RUN!!!!!! You don't want another abusive relationship!!! A Muslim man WILL abuse you!! You already witnessed his craziness and you JUST got to his country!!! R U N !!!!!!! #90DayFianceTheOtherWay #90DayFiance

#### 4.3.3 Theme 3: Lack of research by the Americans on the show

Tweets under this theme 3 represent the idea that most of the participants on the show do not do enough research before or once they get involved with their foreign partners. Many tweets categorized under here included many twitter users showed frustration and confusion through their tweets, such as;

What the does Brittany think she is doing?! She needed to do some research before she got on that plane. Respect his culture. #90dayfiancetheotherway

Someone mentioned this before, but petition to have all 90 Day Fiancé cast go through a mandatory training on the country they will be visiting. Stop visiting a country you haven't done any

research about, then get upset when it's not what you expected!  
#90dayfiancetheotherway

If my bf acted how Deavan's mom did my mom would've been so upset. You would think, as an inlaw, you'd research the very first foreign country you're going to. Oh and next time use Google Maps, you can see where places are at. Who knew?!  
#90dayfiancetheotherway

191 (10.0%) of the 1870 tweets came back with similar thoughts about the lack of research which also suggested they were making a bad decision in leaving America to a foreign country not as good as America, for example;

Hot take—Ethiopia's medical system is NOT as good as the US.  
#90DayFiance #90DayFianceTheOtherWay

I still can believe she is going to Ethiopian to have the baby!  
#90DayFiance #90DayFianceTheOtherWay

#### 4.3.4 *Theme 4: Deceitful foreigner*

The common impression about the show among twitter users is that the couples are staged and are only using each other for permanent residency and love, the tweets under this theme contain 58 (3.0%) tweets that believe the couples are in the relationships for ulterior motives and not love. Some sample tweets are;

If ever there was a fake couple on #90dayfiancetheotherway the award goes to Brittany. Fake fake fake

Corey in the background giving his two cents yet his ass is getting robbed in broad daylight by Evelin's ass #90DayFiance  
#90DayFianceTheOtherWay

Does Devean really think Jihoon is ever going to be a provider? He was a scammer and now he won't get a legitimate job. Even his friends are second-hand embarrassed by his irresponsibility.  
#90DayFiance #90dayfiancetheotherway

Another Colombian scamming a white man.. When will they learn!  
#90dayfiancetheotherway

#### 4.3.5 *Theme 5: Poor representation of America by Americans*

A lot of tweets were posted in frustration about the attitude of some of the American participants on the show and their attitudes. The tweets made general statements in connection to certain negative characteristics of the American participants on the show. This theme contained 277 (14.8%) tweets which were as follows;

Deavan's mom is the perfect example of American mediocrity. She lives in a raggedy, dirty house and has the nerve to think she's better than Jihoon's family. #90dayfiancetheotherway

Watching 90 Day Fiancé the Other Way. Devon's mom is a perfect example of someone who gives American's a bad name. #horrid #90dayfiancetheotherway

Stupid American #90DayFiance #90dayfiancetheotherway

Deavan's mom is channeling every ugly American stereotype right now. So embarrassing #90DayFiance #90dayfiancetheotherway

She said "I might be a spoiled American." YA THINK? Even she knows she's that American stereotype #90dayfiancetheotherway

"Very American" is a loud, disrespectful, foul mouthed bitch? Not exactly a ringing endorsement. #90dayfiancetheotherway

I don't think Elicia is a good ambassador for Americans. She's fowl mouthed, loud & completely rude & disrespectful.#90dayfiancetheotherway

The location of the tweets was mainly made from America which suggests that Americans made these tweets in awe of the behavior portrayed on the show.

#### 4.3.6 *Theme 6: Power Dynamic*

Theme 6 contains tweets which suggest that the couples have an uneven relationship because one party seems to have more power over the other which they use to control the relationship in the opinions of the viewers. The tweet below is a perfect example of the thoughts shared in 267 other tweets.

95% of these relationships on #90DayFiancé are for a power dynamic. The American person feels like they have power over the

immigrating person by giving them “access” to America and that disgusts me.

Theme 7: Respect the culture

The cultural disconnect is expected with people from two different parts of the world, the viewers of the show however are appaled by the lack of respect they have for eachother’s ethnic groups and cultures. 20.3 % of 1870 tweets were similar to the following:

Why the F\*CK do these Americans insist on going to these countries and disrespecting their culture then play victim #90dayfiancetheotherway

Well Brittany, it's pretty customary to respect the culture of the country you're visiting. #90DayFiance #90DayFianceTheOtherWay

They were both in the wrong! She disrespected his religion and culture, and lied. His actions in the car was straight up wrong! She didn’t want to talk but he made her and then screamed when she did! #90DayFiance #90DayFiancetheotherway

Stay the fuck home if you are unable to respect other cultures. #90dayfiancetheotherway

#### **4.4 Focus Group**

This research comprised of one focus group made up of five participants. There were 4 females and 1 male with a mean age of 31.5 +/-, ranging from 22 to 41 years old. The group consisted of two American participants, a Nigerian participant, an Irish participant and a British participant. In advance of any questions being asked to the group or before the discussion began, the participants were shown an eight minute video clip compilation of *90 day fiancé; the other way*. The group was asked one question at a time, the next question was asked only after it was established that everyone had the opportunity to share their thoughts. The framework design for

the questions was meant to disclose the opinions of the participants on the topic; 1. What are your general thoughts about this reality show, *90 Day Fiance: The other way*?

2. What are your thoughts on the portrayal of ethnic groups on the reality show?

3. Do you think 90 day fiancé equally presents America in the same light it presents non-American countries?

4. What would you suggest producers can do to educate and entertain the audience without enforcing stereotypes?

5. Do you think the portrayal of ethnic groups on TV in the initial times of reality television has changed in recent times?

#### **4.4.1 General perception of the reality TV show 90 Day Fiance**

The prevailing opinion within the group was that the show is both educating and entertaining; participant one added, “I find it really interesting to see some of the cultures that I did not know anything about... I think it is fascinating to see their versions of their real-life and what is healthy for them versus what is not typical for an American or someone who has never been to that country.” Another participant reiterated something similar, adding that, “I agree entirely in the sense that I have noticed a bit of a trend with some of the couplings whereby the ones that have come in from developed backgrounds tend to fetishize those who come from low-income backgrounds.” She referred to the 8-minute video where she pointed out an instance, “like the guy mentioned in the video when he pointed out she was from Thailand and said he would like Thai food and a Thai massage.” In line with identifying a theme of fetishism, participant three chimed in with the theme of a white savior syndrome which other participants agreed was a highlighted theme in the show. Participant four added that, “the foreigners are portrayed as though from a poor background and are trying to earn more of living and improve their economic to improve their economic situation rather than being in it for love.” One participant agreed by saying that was what made the show interesting alongside the fact that those types of situations were what made the show entertaining as well as seeing how far people would go in the name of love is what keeps the viewers excited for more.

#### **4.4.2 Portrayal of ethnic groups presented on the reality show**

It was evident that the participants who shared the same ethnic group with some of the participants on the reality show felt that there was an accurate and inaccurate portrayal of their ethnic group. The American participants agreed with each other, echoing the issue that “basically they think that all Americans should have money” participant one added giving example with a personal experience; “So my mom is an immigrant, she's from England and my dad is American and my mom had kind of a really comfortable like cozy life In England, and I think she thought it was going to be, you know, riches moving to America, and when they first moved, they were living in Georgia in like a trailer park for like, a couple years until, like, my dad got some savings, but like sometimes what they're leaving behind is actually nicer and comfortable. It's not always the upgrade coming to America, or at least initially until they kind of build it together, you know, and build that life together.” Participant three referred to a part of the video that was played and exclaimed how when she watched that particular episode on television and went on one of her discussion groups, she realized the following, “I'm thinking of one example of the dowry with Annie from Thailand and David from America, I read actually on the *90 day fiancé* page on *Reddit*, a discussion about that with him having to buy a buffalo and having to give like a large cash sum to the parents. Someone, from that country, spoke about people don't really do that anymore and I also read a thread where the person from Thailand was like, people used to do that, but that's really antiquated now, and that is not expected anymore”. Participant four who is Nigerian used the example of the Nigerian and expressed how a part of the video played with the American partner having to present a goat to his family to show respect was still being practised in that part of Nigeria. Participant five brought up an interesting point about the dynamic of the show whereas the American partners are always portrayed as white saviors and the non-Americans as desperate and impoverished and wondered what the situations were before they met and what the conversation was because most of the non-American partners have this idea of going to America, for a better life sponsored by the American partners.

#### **4.4.3 Equal portrayal of America versus the foreign countries on the show**

The portrayal of America and the non-American countries on the show was asked based on the response from the first two questions which suggested that the American partners are portrayed as comfortable, rich or living in a better condition compared to the non-American partners who

are presented as trying to elevate to a more comfortable condition standard of living. Participant 4 expressed that “I think like for me when I hear of the show, or I think for most people when they hear of the show, they have this idea of the person in the US is going over to the other place and they are experiencing a new culture, and this is us seeing a non-western culture, represented in that way to the viewer. So, no, I do not think there is equal representation of culture because I do not think they represent the American culture. After all, they expect us to know the American culture. Yeah, I do not think there is equal leverage there”, participant 1 agreed and pointed out that, “in reality, there is a lot of really poor impoverish, like rundown places in America too”. However the show is a reality TV show, and although parts of it are entertaining and educating, participant five expressed her perspective on the point that it is a “mixed bag”, and as a regular viewer of the show, not everything that is portrayed is meant to be accepted without doing further research. Participant four supported that point and added by saying, “I suppose we have to think that this is at the end of the day for entertainments, so all they want is ratings. So they are going to play out the stereotypes, they are going to you know, try to enforce as much, you know, curiosity from the viewers as possible anyway”. There was a different perspective from participant three who suggested that since the spin-off *90 day fiancé: The other way* is about the American partners going to the foreign country, it is more highlighted, however, participant three added that the most noticeable thing is that although they show more parts of the foreign country, America is portrayed through the perspective of the American participants whereby they appear to the audience that true love does not exist in America, so they have to outsource into poor developing countries.

#### **4.4.4 Future of reality TV shows free from enforced stereotypes**

Although the previous answers of the focus group participants had strong opinions about the producers of the reality show being bias, they echoed the point that the producers of the reality show were doing a regular job in showcasing the ethnic groups which viewers may already have preconceived stereotypical prejudice towards, by showing a mix of the positive and negative. The participants of the focus group referred to a part in the 8-minute video, whereas the American partner was welcomed warmly by the family of his Thai partner with dancing and refreshments. According to participant one, “...that type of stuff I love when the other person gets to experience it and see, so at the end of the day I am not just commenting on the dirty floor,

I am also commenting on the food that I am not used to eating, like commenting on something that like we do not have in America, or we do not have that particular type in America. Participant one added that “getting to exposed to something like that is interesting and fascinating”. Participant two added that the producers could show the viewer’s aspects that they did not already imagine is the case but show people more to it in order to avoid reinforcing stereotypes. There was a general agreement when participant three made a point about how every country has developed and underdeveloped areas and some cultural practices most times may only be practised by a handful of people; participant three suggested that facts be crosschecked to avoid misrepresentation.

#### **4.4.5 Evolution of reality TV**

The final question recognized the gradual progress being made in terms of the reinforcement of stereotypes and reality television. The participants agreed that the reality TV show *90 day fiancé*, is changing the narrative, and although there is still room for improvement, according to the group participants, the show creates inquisitiveness. Participant two explained further by giving an example of how people fondly refer to Africa as a country, but *90 day fiancé* does more by mentioning the particular country and narrowing it down to the state/province. Participant 4 stated however, that the reality TV show still tends to push a narrative with overgeneralization which fosters misrepresentation of certain cultural practices and more.

#### **4.4.6 Focus group concluding thoughts**

Below is a summary of thoughts from the Focus Group.

- The reality TV show franchise and most especially *90 day fiancé: The other way* is educating as most people are excited to learn about cultures and places they have never come across or visited.
- The reality TV show is also entertaining, and the highlighted themes according to the participants that make the show exciting are “white savior” & “fetishism” tendencies of the American partners and the idea of the foreign partners faking the love for an American visa and to rid their American partners of their savings.

- The portrayal of ethnic groups and cultures are wholly misrepresented, and it cuts through how America is portrayed as well as the foreign countries on the show.
- Producers of this reality TV show and other reality TV shows could try by correcting misconceptions people have of a specific ethnic group, culture or country.
- However the reality TV show is changing narratives and dismantling certain stereotypes in comparison to how ethnic groups and cultures were presented on television in the past.

## Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

This study aimed to determine the extent to which ethnic groups were portrayed in the reality television *90 day fiancé* and the impact it had on the viewers of the TV show.

A content analysis of the show was carried out on the spin-off of the show namely *90 day fiancé: the other way* season one, to study the portrayal of ethnic groups on the show. The results from the thematic content analysis indicated certain traits and behaviours of ethnic groups on the show, from the Americans to the foreigners presented on the show. The key findings from the methodology used in highlighting the themes prevalent in the reality TV show demonstrate the portrayal of the ethnic groups broken down into character, the standard of living and intent. This presented that on the show the Americans are made to appear as ignorant, desperate and gullible individuals who would do anything for love while the foreigners are presented as low class, dependent individuals who are trying to take advantage of their American partners. Parts of the production of the show was also analyzed which led to a contrast between how the foreign countries were presented in terms of safety, development and progression compared to how America was portrayed as the opposite and most notably, the land of great things.

The content analysis on the tweets containing *#90dayfiance* and *#90dayfiance:theotherway* that were analyzed did suggest the impact such depiction and misrepresentation has on the viewers of the show. Using the tweets as a reference, the viewers of the show demonstrated the portrayal of ethnic groups on the show as a way to reinforce their preconceived ideas of certain ethnic groups. However, it also demonstrated that majority of the viewers indicated that they knew where to draw the line with the real and scripted parts of the show without making a generalized conclusion.

The focus group refuted the portrayal of certain ethnic groups with first-hand information to back up their statements and also made suggestions on how the producers of the show could do better in terms of portraying a more realistic image

of ethnic groups. They expressed that although the show was educating to a certain level about ethnic groups that they knew nothing about, their main aim for watching was solely for entertainment which means the show to an extent has little or no significant impact on its viewers.

### **5.1 Limitations**

For this study, I was only able to analyse one season of the spin-off show, which does not provide a substantial amount of data as it does not allow for an accurate analysis of the whole show.

Also, this study only analyzed one social networking platform and a month's tweets which was further organized and concisely selected thereby not an accurate representation of the attitudes of all Twitter users.

Finally, a widely selected focus group would have created the opportunity to select participants who represent each ethnic group portrayed on the show to participate in the focus group discussion.

### **5.2 Future Research**

Because of Twitter's sheer scope, future research into this topic will benefit from an enhanced method for the processing and analysis of large quantities of data. It will also make use of keeping tweets in their original state to make an in-depth look into the conversations, watching video posts, and following external sites to get a better understanding of what the Twitter user is about.

Exploring non-Twitter social networking sites, such as Tumblr, Facebook, Instagram, and Reddit may expand future work as well. As more people create social media accounts daily, and researchers can get even more valuable data. Future researchers need to continue to recognize the value of social media, and its effect on society as a whole.

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**Appendices**  
**Appendix A**  
**90 Day Fiance: The other way Season 1 Episode Guide**

<b>Episode</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Original Airdate</b>	<b>Synopsis</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>All in the Name of Love</b>	<b>June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019</b>	<b>Four Americans who have found love abroad brace to leave home permanently; Corey follows his love to Ecuador; Tiffany takes her son to South Africa; Jenny prepares to be with her soul mate in India; Paul is Brazil bound.</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Embargos and Ultimatums</b>	<b>June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019</b>	<b>Evelin gives Corey a life-changing ultimatum; Tiffany comes clean to her family about Ronald's dark past; Paul learns that he can't bring Karine to the United States; Jenny's friends think moving to India is the worst decision of her life.</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>It's Go Time</b>	<b>June 10<sup>th</sup> 2019</b>	<b>Corey breaks the news to his parents that he's moving to Ecuador; Laura is leaving her son behind to move to Qatar; Karine is disappointed in Paul; Sumit faces his parents as Jenny flies to India.</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Big Expectations</b>	<b>June 17<sup>th</sup> 2019</b>	<b>Jenny arrives in India but Sumit may have cold feet; Paul finally arrives in Brazil and surprises Karine; Laura drops a bomb on her brother, revealing some big news; Tiffany is off to South Africa, hoping she's made the right decision for her son.</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>No Looking Back</b>	<b>June 24<sup>th</sup> 2019</b>	<b>Corey begins to second guess his life-changing move to Ecuador; Sumit wants to transform Jenny into a traditional Indian woman; Tiffany and Daniel pick up Ronald from rehab; Jihoon hopes he can get his parents to change their mind about Deavan.</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Another World</b>	<b>July 1<sup>st</sup> 2019</b>	<b>Corey's arrival in Ecuador is not as he expected; Deavan is off to a rocky start with Jihoon's parents; Laura takes drastic measures to improve her sex life with Aladin; Paul receives upsetting news regarding his permanent residency in Brazil.</b>

7	<b>Broken Promises</b>	<b>July 8<sup>th</sup> 2019</b>	<b>Ronald puts Tiffany's trust to the test; Sumit has been keeping a secret from Jenny; facing deportation, Paul seeks legal advice; Laura has second thoughts about leaving her son behind; Deavan fails to impress Jihoon's parents.</b>
8	<b>Chickening Out</b>	<b>July 15<sup>th</sup> 2019</b>	<b>Laura arrives in Qatar and Tiffany confronts Ronald about his bachelor party. Meanwhile, Deavan takes Jihoon's parents out on the town. Corey attempts to win over Evelin's family with magic tricks and Jenny and Sumit receive crushing news.</b>
9	<b>Ripped Apart</b>	<b>July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2019</b>	<b>Tiffany's son Daniel expresses doubts about South Africa; Sumit is summoned home by his parents; Paul and Karine embark on a daunting journey up the Amazon; Jihoon's proposal backfires; Evelin is over Corey's attitude.</b>
10	<b>Rolling the Dice</b>	<b>July 29<sup>th</sup> 2019</b>	<b>Ronald has to confront his demons; Laura's new sex toy offends Aladin; Corey and Evelin have a very different vision for their future; Paul faces Karine's parents with upsetting news; Sumit leaves Jenny to go home to his parents.</b>
11	<b>Blind Trust</b>	<b>August 5<sup>th</sup> 2019</b>	<b>Ron's sobriety distracts Tiffany on her big day; Deavan breaks some unfortunate news to Jihoon; Laura sees another side of Aladin; Paul discovers that Karine is talking to another man; Corey faces his past with Evelin.</b>
12	<b>Baby, Come Back</b>	<b>August 12<sup>th</sup> 2019</b>	<b>Jenny goes out at night without Sumit; Deavan doubts Jihoon is responsible enough to support their family; Tiffany and Ronald go apartment shopping and worry about safety; Karine is concerned that Paul can't financially take care of her and the baby.</b>
13	<b>Breaking Point</b>	<b>August 19<sup>th</sup> 2019</b>	<b>After Sumit returns home to Jenny they get a huge surprise; Karine reaches her breaking point; Corey</b>

			discovers even more about Evelin's past; Deavan questions if Jihoon can support their family; Laura feels homesick in Qatar.
14	The Great Unknown	August 26 <sup>th</sup> 2019	Tiffany and Ronald surprise everyone with big news; Laura pleads with her son to come to her wedding; Deavan leaves for South Korea, but worries Jihoon isn't prepared; Corey asks Evelin to cut off her ex; Karine and her mom leave Paul behind.
15	Walking a Tight Rope	September 2 <sup>nd</sup> 2019	Deavan's arrival in South Korea does not go as she expected; Ronald's gambling addiction causes issues with Tiffany; Paul tries to get back in Karine's good graces; Jenny's daughter confronts Sumit.
16	Fool's Gold	September 9 <sup>th</sup> 2019	Jihoon reveals a huge secret about his past to Deavan; Jenny and Sumit's relationship reaches a boiling point; Paul and Karine become parents; tensions build when Laura's son arrives in Tunisia and meets Aladin.
17	Shattered Dreams	September 16 <sup>th</sup> 2019	Jenny hears shocking news about Sumit, and Laura is torn between Liam and Aladin. Corey returns to Evelin in Ecuador and Paul's mother arrives in Brazil. Tiffany worries about giving birth in South Africa.
18	Torn	September 23, 2019	Sumit reveals his truth, and Deavan discovers more troubling information about Jihoon's past. Corey returns to Ecuador with less than a month on his visa to convince Evelin to wed, and Liam gives Aladin an ultimatum.
19	Falling Apart	September 30 <sup>th</sup> 2019	Jenny and Sumit face each for the first time since she found out he's married. The issues between Laura, her son, and Aladin come to a head. Meanwhile, Paul's mother gives him a wake-up call and Tiffany makes a difficult decision for her family.
20	Never Let Me Go	October 7 <sup>th</sup> 2019	A distraught Jenny no longer feels at home in India; Deavan struggles during her traditional Korean wedding ceremony; Evelin must decide if she

			<b>wants to marry Corey; Tiffany worries about Ronald's recovery when she and Daniel leave.</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>Tell All: Part 1</b>	<b>October 14<sup>th</sup> 2019</b>	<b>The couples reveal details of their most intense moments from the season. Paul arrives without Karine, and Deavan has mixed emotions about opening up.</b>
<b>22</b>	<b>Tell All: Part 2</b>	<b>October 21<sup>st</sup> 2019</b>	<b>Shaun Robinson dives back in with the couples and continues to uncover surprising updates on about their relationships.</b>

**Appendix B: 90 Day Fiance: The other way Season 1 Cast Guide according to photo below**

Name	Country
Jenny Slatten	Palm Springs, California, USA
Sumit	New Dehli, India
Deavan Clegg	Salt Lake City, Utah, USA
Jihoon Lee	Seoul, South Korea
Laura Jallali	USA
Aladin Jallali	Qatar
Tiffany Franco	Frederick, Maryland, USA
Ronald Smith	Randfontein, South Africa
Evelin Villegas	Engabao, Ecuador
Corey Rathgeber	Mill A, Washington, USA
Paul Staehle	Louisville Kentucky, USA
Karine Martins	Amazonas, Brazil



Photo collage by Asa Hawks

## Appendix C: Information Sheet

Title of Research Study:

“Filtered reality: The impact of the stereotypical representation of ethnic groups in reality TV series 90 day fiancé on its viewers”

### INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Dear interviewee,

You are invited to take part in a research study to examine how ethnicity is represented in reality television show, 90 day fiancé. I would like you to be part of my focus group to ask you about your perspective on how ethnicities are being represented in the television show. All participants would watch an episode of the show and have a discussion soon after. This research is part of a Master’s Thesis in Journalism and Media Communications for Griffith College, Dublin.

Before you decide whether to take part in the study it is important that you understand what the research is for and what you will be asked to do. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep. You will also be asked to sign a consent form. You can change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study without giving a reason.

The purpose of the research study is to examine your thoughts about how ethnicity is represented in reality television show, 90 day fiancé.

If you choose to take part, the interview will last approximately 45 minutes and will be arranged at a time to suit you.

Information from the interview will be used to assess the impact of reinforced stereotypical representation of ethnicity in reality television series like 90 day fiancé has on its viewers.

You are free to stop the interview at any time without giving a reason.

The interview will be recorded and transcribed. Each of the five interviewees will be assigned a number and the key to real names and organisations will be kept in a password-protected folder.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information.

Yours sincerely,

Salamatu Tinnat Gwadah

0899488050

[salamatugwadah@gmail.com](mailto:salamatugwadah@gmail.com)

## Appendix D: Focus Group Consent Form

### Researcher: Salamatu Tinnet Gwadah

**Purpose** - You have been invited to participate in a focus group organized by the researcher, Salamatu Tinnet Gwadah a student of Masters of Arts Television and Radio Journalism, Griffith College Dublin under the supervision of Brendan OCaolain. The purpose of this focus group is to examine how ethnic stereotypes are portrayed in reality television show, 90 Day Fiancé as well as the impact it has on the viewer's understanding of the show and how this affects the way viewers absorb the aim of the reality television show and how this affects their social interaction. The information learned in this focus group will be used to understand how shows affect the cognitive reasoning of its viewers.

**Procedure** - As part of this study, you will be placed in a one of three groups with a total of 4 – 6 individuals. A moderator, who will be I (Salamatu Tinnet Gwadah) will ask you several questions while facilitating the discussion. As approved through Griffith College Research Ethics Committee, this focus group will be audio-recorded and a note-taker will be present. However, your responses will remain confidential, and no names will be included in the final report. You can choose whether or not to participate in the focus group, and you may stop at any time during the course of the study. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers to focus group questions. The main primary of this focus group is to hear the many varying viewpoints and would like for everyone to contribute their thoughts. Out of respect, please refrain from interrupting others. However, feel free to be honest even when your responses counter those of other group members.

**Benefit** - This research will be of benefit to me and television show makers, especially reality television show makers. A lot of research up to this point has focused more on viewer's perspective and social media discussions. This research provides an opportunity to hear from fresh minds to get the individual's perspective about the way ethnic representation is perceived from viewing.

**Confidentiality** -Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to respect the privacy of other focus group members by not disclosing any content discussed during the study. Researcher (Salamatu Tinnet Gwadah) will analyze the data, but—as stated above—your responses will remain confidential, and no names will be included in any reports. All information will be anonymised with the key kept in a password protected computer. Personal participant information will not be used for any reason and participants will not be identifiable in any published material.

- Taking part in this research is voluntary and there will be no consequences for withdrawing.
- If you have any questions about this research, please contact:
  - Salamatu Tinnet Gwadah: salamatugwadah@gmail.com
  - Brendan OCaolain: brendanocaolain@griffith.ie
- This project has been approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix E: Transcription of Focus Group**

Researcher: Salamatu Tinnet Gwadah

Date: 4<sup>th</sup> July 2020

No. of participants: 5

<b>Person</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
<b>Salamatu</b>	Hi everyone, and thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I appreciate it. I am going to be conducting this focus group as the moderator. I am going to be recording this meeting, and it is going to be transcribed and attached to my dissertation as an appendix. So if we are already, I am going to play an eight-minute video compilation of the show before I start asking questions.
<b>Salamatu</b>	Okay, so I am going to start with the first question. What are your general thoughts about this reality show, 90 Day Fiance?
<b>Participant 1</b>	I find it really interesting to see some of the cultures that I did not know anything about, and I know that their representations are not always accurate, or they are like an exaggerated version of that culture. However, that is one of the reasons that I like to watch the show myself to just to learn about places. Moreover, that is mainly why I like the spin-off 90 Day Fiance: The other way shows the home countries instead of America. I think it is fascinating to see their versions of their real-life and what is healthy for them versus what is not typical for an American or someone who has never been to that country.
<b>Participant 2</b>	I want to use the video sample you played with the American man and the Asian woman. She seemed like she expects Americans to be productive, and he was doing everything in his power to show to her that he had money even though he had no substantial amount of money. Situations like that are what make me enjoy this show because it is entertaining and you see people act fake to in the name of love.
<b>Participant 3</b>	I think as participant 1 was saying, It is a good show in terms of learning about different cultures and just seeing different perspectives from you know, each side. Furthermore, from that, you can see that there is a sort of expectations that they put on each other, you can see all those expectations and everybody is like, oh, I think I want him to have this or this and that, you know, and they are trying to fuse their cultures whereby it creates a clash, and you can see the differences with stuff like, I am going to say a white saviour syndrome in some of these. It is almost like I think that is what is really highlighted, so yeah, I think I am sort of coming off from what the first participant was saying.
<b>Participant 4</b>	I agree entirely in the sense that I have noticed a bit of a trend with some of the

	couplings whereby the ones that have come in from developed backgrounds tend to fetishize those who come from low-income backgrounds. So they want them because like the guy mentioned in the video when he pointed out she was from Thailand and said he would like Thai food and a Thai massage. The foreigners are portrayed as though from a poor background and are trying to earn more of living and improve their economic to improve their economic situation rather than being in it for love.
<b>Participant 5</b>	I totally agree with all they just said and I feel the same way too.
<b>Salamatu</b>	The second question is; What are your thoughts on the portrayal of ethnic groups on the reality show?
<b>Participant 1</b>	I think it is what it is. The producers of the show are actually trying to educate people on how different people see different people; for example, how Asian people see non-Asian people, black people see non-black people etc. So I think they are trying to educate people.
<b>Participant 2</b>	I think it's a bit of both, like it's accurate and inaccurate. It's like you have 90 days to form a relationship with somebody, I mean, that's hugely unlikely in the normal world really, and, and when you have such a short period of time, all these expectations shall be enforced because you want this and that and that and you, you know, you kind of want the perfect partner in that space of time, you know, and so I feel, I feel like it is irrational in that sense
<b>Participant 3</b>	I agree that it's a little bit of both. I think some of them are accurate and some of them are just like, you know, a character of that question. I'm thinking of one example of the dowry with Annie and David, and I think I read actually on the 90-day group on reddit on a discussion about that with him having to buy a water Buffalo and having to give like a large cash sum to the parents. There was a discussion when someone from that country chimed in and was like, Yeah, actually, no, people don't really do that anymore and like, I read a thread where the person from Thailand was like, yeah, people used to do that but it is antiquated and that's not expected anymore and it had me thinking that the girl, Annie and her parents saw it as a way to extort money from the American man like in a "what can we get out of this guy who doesn't know what's expected and what's not necessary" I don't know if that's the case, but I just found that really interesting that like, not everything that's portrayed is still accurate today, maybe it was in the past, but it's not really the way it is in 2020 or whatever, you know, current year.
<b>Participant 4</b>	Yeah, um, I think I agree with a lot of the things that are being said. I think when it comes to very sort of low income families in developing countries; they tend to have more traditional views. So as so let's take Nigeria, for instance, and let's take the northern parts of Nigeria where I'm from. If you're richer, you tend to be more sort of modernized and a lot of the practices that are very traditional, you don't really practice it anymore and it's a mostly diluted version very more term. But then let's take the case of man who is from Nigeria, which happens to be my country, I think Lisa, the American had to buy a goat for his mom, and that is still very much practiced in that particular culture. And I think if you look at their background, they don't seem to be very

	<p>rich and he's marrying Lisa so that he can go off to the US and make a better life for himself. So I think because not only do you have a difference in ethnicities and culture, you've also got a big kind of economic gap between the two, you can really see the difference in cultures to the point of caricature, and it just seems absolutely hilarious and exaggerated because they're just two completely different people if it was imminent. If it were, say, a rich exposed Nigerian, we wouldn't see all this and I would love to see that change in dynamic. Like, I think that was one of the recent discussions to like how fascinating it would be for an American who is, you know, a lower socio economic status going to a country that you know, even like going to, I don't know, Canada or something where like, you know, but I don't know just like seeing the American not always feel like they're on the high horse and that they're, you know, have the upper hand in the situation but like going to a culture that has, their own established culture and religion and, not always feeling like they're the superior one going, like, I think a participant mentioned the like "White Saviour" kind of attitude. Like I feel like it is, most of what we see on the show is that situation where The American thinks that they're like helping the immigrant. But I'd love to see that swap that dynamic.</p>
<b>Participant 5</b>	<p>Yeah, something I wondered like, obviously some of them were meeting in like a vacation or holiday setting. Like I'm thinking of the two guys that were from the Dominican Republic and the girls like went on a girl's trip, like even if it was Bali or something. So like, I'm wondering, what it like, it'd be interesting to see, their discussions, like when they met like, are the white partners giving these big extravagant promises of like, what life's going to be like, or, you know, is it just something that's not talked about because I feel like a lot of their problems, not even in Latin America but like Africa or wherever, you know, it can be easily discussed and not negotiated but like have an understanding of where what each person is expecting like culturally, economically and what not, but we don't see that unfortunately.</p>
<b>Salamatu</b>	<p>Okay, the third question is; Do you think 90 day fiancé equally presents America in the same light it presents the foreign countries?</p>
<b>Participant 4</b>	<p>I think like for me when I hear of the show, or I think for most people, when they hear of the show, they have this idea of the person in the US is going over to the other place and they're experiencing a new culture and it's like to us, this is us seeing a non-western culture, it's represented in that way to the viewer. So, no, I don't think there's equal representation of culture because I don't think they represent the American culture because they expect us to know the American culture, so to speak. Yeah, I don't think there's equal leverage there.</p>
<b>Participant 1</b>	<p>Yeah in reality like there's a lot of really poor impoverish, like rundown places in America too and yeah, what participant 5 was saying earlier about the kind of life promised, you know, golden road, you know, American dream that a lot of the immigrants are promised and they don't understand exactly what it's going to be like and I'm thinking of one of the last seasons, Annie from the Dominican and I can't remember her husband's name he had the little boy but like, I think he had promised her like, you know, a fancy car and a new iPhone and like, all these new clothes and they came and the reality was that they were</p>

	<p>sleeping in a one bedroom house with his son who had to share their bed because like they didn't have an extra space for him and like that kind of disconnect between what she expected and what the reality was, was really interesting to watch and just like speaking from like a personal perspective, so my mom is an immigrant. She's from England and my dad is American. And my mom had kind of a really comfortable like cozy life in England, and when they first met I think she thought it was going to be, you know, rich moving to America, and when they first moved, they were living in Georgia and like a trailer park for like, a couple years until, like, my dad got a better job and like, got some savings, but like she kind of had that disconnect too, like, you know, sometimes what they're leaving behind is actually nicer and comfortable. It's not always the upgrade coming to America, or at least initially until they kind of build it together, you know, and build that life together.</p>
<b>Participant 5</b>	<p>Like it's kind of a mixed bag, because you see some Americans, who have absolutely no idea what culture they're marrying into, but then you have someone and I know Libby, one of the show's participants gets a lot of shit on the internet but, you know, I feel like she has a really deep understanding of the middle east and culture and I really admire that about her but some of the others I'm like, wow, you know, can you just use Google like, did you do any research so It I feel like they TLC or the production, they kind of gauge like what's going to give us the higher ratings. Like if we play the dumb American card or play the I don't know, whatever.</p>
<b>Participant 4</b>	<p>I suppose we have to think that this is at the end of the day for entertainments, so all they want is ratings. So they're going to play out the stereotypes, they're going to you know, try to enforce as much, you know, curiosity from the viewers as much as possible anyway.</p>
<b>Participant 3</b>	<p>Definitely, I think when I was watching 90 day fiancé, there's one thing that I did notice and that is that the people from America, tend to be the kind of people that how do I fit this nicely, that not many people would come kind of be into. So they're kind of outsourced into these poor developing countries so to say come in for with this with this dream idea of a much better life for them, and that's kind of like their selling point instead of their personality or other sort of redeemable qualities. And I suppose because the show is aimed at people living in developed countries anyway, it can be very easy to just see the culture that really stands out, which is the opposite culture, just because Western values are pretty much a part of our everyday life.</p>
<b>Salamatu</b>	<p>The fourth question is; What would you suggest producers can do to educate and entertain the audience without enforcing stereotypes?</p>
<b>Participant 1</b>	<p>I think Producers of the show should show mix the good and bad and show interesting, like, vibrant, like positive things about all the different cultures like and using the video, again the Asian and American couple Annie and David with the dancing and warm welcome like that type of stuff I love when the other person gets to experience it and see, so at the end of the day I'm not just commenting on the dirty floor, I'm also commenting on the food that I'm not used to eating, like commenting on something that like we don't have in America, or we don't have that particular type in America getting to exposed to</p>

	something like that is really interesting and fascinating.
<b>Participant 4</b>	Exactly like in the video we watched with Annie and David is an example like his face lit up when they arrived at her town and they were giving the performance and the dance for him and getting to witness you know, this act of welcome and like we're excited you're here and like to see the dance and the outfits.
<b>Participant 2</b>	I'm making reference to what participant 1 and 4 said as well, show aspects that people don't already imagine but show more to it so people learn.
<b>Participant 3</b>	I think like the definition of reality like participant 4 said, I think they should also try to show both sides, the good side and bad side. That's like the underdeveloped areas and should show develop areas too. Because these cultures like participant 3 said earlier, some cultures that the rich people don't even practice it's mostly like the people that are not fully exposed that that still practice or take those practices seriously. So I think they should try to show both sides so it wouldn't be like Oh, it is the country, this is the general culture.
<b>Salamatu</b>	The final question is; Do you think the portrayal of ethnic groups on TV in the initial times of reality television has changed in recent times?
<b>Participant 1</b>	I think we have some work to do, I think it's easier for television producers to kind of rely on the old stereotypes or on the old, you know, view of what American should be what a foreigner should be, you know, all of those character that we talked about. But the most interesting things are when they stray from that and when they like, try to show a different viewpoint. So, with 90 day, I think, you know, sometimes they do sometimes they hit the mark of showing something different and, you know, a new viewpoint, but a lot of times I think they still rely on those old stereotypes like what somebody here mentioned with regards to the women in America, you know, like they might know they can't find a partner in America that wants what they have to offer you know maybe they drink too much and they are overweight and they don't have a lot of money and you know they don't have a lot going for them. So like I think 90 days shows a lot of those types of women you know Angela from Georgia, I think Angela's a sweetheart and has like a huge heart and I really like her she kind of was like that stereotype and you know.
<b>Participant 2</b>	I'd like to think that shows like 90 day fiancé will spark inquisitiveness, just because there are still so many people that think that Africa is a country and they're just completely ignorant of the many different cultures that there are there but with 90 day fiancé, they named the state, they said, you know, he's from this part of Korea and even as some of the information that he gave might not be correct. I'd like to think that it would have inspired people because of the shock value, to inspire people to do a bit of study themselves, ask a couple of questions, go and read it and hopefully just improve upon their knowledge. But I think I think we've gone so far in terms of stereotypes. Improving the images of the stereotypes of people in different countries and notably, say the natural hair movement. So say in the 90s, black women were pretty much wearing weaves, but now they've embraced, you know, natural hair and I think Miss Universe has got like really short hair, which I thought was really nice to

	see. So I think things are changing.
<b>Participant 4</b>	There is definitely progress but I think there's a lot of work to do to kind of break away from any stereotype in any overgeneralization of a person.
<b>Salamatu</b>	<p>Okay, that is all of the questions, I have written down some of the key findings, I'll just read them out to conclude the discussion;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The show is educating and entertaining</li> <li>• There is an obvious power imbalance and a fetish &amp; white savior theme to the show</li> <li>• The show is doing a great job of showing viewers what other cultures look like but also some stereotypes are enforced and revisited.</li> </ul> <p>Thank you again to everyone who responded and took part of this focus group. It is greatly appreciated.</p>
	Recording Ends.