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Blog Post 3: The Role of Media Use and Portrayals in African Americans' Psychosocial Development; Hip-Hop Music and Culture: A site of Resiliency of the Streets of Young Black America



With technology constantly advancing, the media continues to play a vital role in the society that we live in. Depending on the content, the portrayal of African Americans can be either negative or positive. African American households have been reported to consume almost twice as much television as whites. With this issue being so critical what does this tell us about the influence that the media has on our community and more importantly our youth?

On television, films, videogames and magazines blacks are often portrayed negatively or stereotyped. Research papers argue that media portrayals legitimize existing racial and ethnic hierarchies in society. Grand Theft Auto for example depicts a black gang member who successfully gets revenge on a rival gang member for killing his mother. This violent videogame creates racial scripts in the minds of consumers that can ultimately affect their attitudes and behaviors (Entman and Rojecki, 2000).

Another question that has been commonly asked is whether or not the media is fair when choosing individuals to stereotype and use as influential figures. The media typically under and misrepresents African Americans. Television that was analyzed from the 1970s reported that blacks were commonly portrayed as lazy, jobless, poor and unintelligent. Unfortunately, the blacks who were employed held low income jobs and were less likely to be viewed as professional.

According to Banduras (1977) social learning (cognitive) theory it is predicted that learning can take place through observation and that behavior modeled on TV can be learned and imitated. Today, there are several mainstream reality shows like *Love and Hip Hop*, *Real Housewives of Atlanta* and *Married to Medicine* that depict blacks as loud, ghetto, aggressive and filled drama. Research by Greenberg and Atkin (1982) revealed that 50 percent of African Americans watch television to learn how different people behave, talk, dress and look. With these shows being so heavily advertised through the media it is likely for young girls to be exposed to these shows and begin to mimic these characters.

The cultivation theory states that television viewing has a long term effect that is gradual. It is expected that over time, repeated exposure to the media's consistent images will gradually lead to viewers accepting those portrayals as representations of reality.



The recent debut of Black Panther has signaled as a revolutionary moment in the black community. Never before has there been a black superhero film in the sci-fi world. This particular black representation in pop culture is a positive influence for minority youth. It will enable African American boys and girls to see characters who resemble themselves starring in such dominant roles.

It is essential for the next generation to be exposed to positive role models and depictions of blacks in society because it has been proven that negative portrayals impact psychological development, mental health and behavior.