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Research Abstract

The stereotypes surrounding African Americans have greatly impacted pop culture and the media. These distorted views are often perpetuated in movies, television, music and advertisements. Understanding and identifying negative thought processes within the African American community is the key to expanding our knowledge of the African American experience. Has the portrayal of African Americans in the media changed overtime? The purpose of this research project is to understand the misleading images of African Americans in media and its impact on the African American community. Based on Punyanhunt-Carter (2008), we expected to find that the portrayal of African Americans in the media has changed overtime. The current study used a qualitative methodology (i.e., content analysis, case conceptualization and focus group). A content analysis was conducted by viewing the roles and images attached to African Americans in television, movies, music, and advertisements from the 50's to present day. The case conceptualization provided further insight into each decade's own version of the portrayals. Further, in a focus group format, eight participants responded to questions about whether the portrayal of African Americans have changed overtime and if so, had these changes affected the African American community. Focus group data was analyzed using a comparison technique and content analysis data was coded and interpreted. The data was triangulated to determine the results. The results showed that participants shared the same views as those in the content analysis data. Participants agreed that there was *very little* distinction between the portrayals of African Americans in media from previous decades to present day.