

IAT Reading

African American Media Stereotypes

From associatedcontent.com

...African-Americans are also shown unfairly on the news. An example of this is the media coverage of the Los Angeles riot in 1992. The news shows led Americans to believe that it was mainly blacks that were responsible, but reports show this is not accurate. Reports show that only 36% of those arrested were black. 60% of the rioters were whites and Hispanics (The Yale Political Quarterly v21 i1). If you watched the television news reports, you would most likely never know this fact...

...The bias and racism of the coverage of the 1992 riots was not an isolated incident. The Entman-Rojecki Index of Race and Media states that an African-American person's mug shot is four times more likely to be shown on a TV news report than a white defendant's is. A black person is twice as likely to be shown physically restrained on the TV news than a white person is. (Entman-Rojecki Index of Race and Media). A black defendant is two times less likely to have their name shown on the news than a white defendant is (Entman-Rojecki Index of Race and Media, www.raceandmedia.com).

According to the Entman-Rojecki Index of Race and Media, 89% of Black female movie characters are shown using vulgar language, while only 17% of White woman are. Black women are shown as being violent in movies 56% of the time compared to the 11% of white women. These types of proportions are consistent throughout this and other studies. Where do they get them? Are blacks really a more violent race? The statistics say no, they are not (www.raceandmedia.com)...

From *Mass Media and Racism* by Stephan Balkaran (1999)

Mass media have played and will continue to play a crucial role in the way white Americans perceive African-Americans. As a result of the overwhelming media focus on crime, drug use, gang violence, and other forms of anti-social behavior among African-Americans, the media have fostered a distorted and pernicious public perception of African-Americans...

... The media have taken a step further in Hollywood. Here, the portrayal of young African-American males (involved in gangs and other deviant acts of violence) has become a multi-million dollar industry. American society has now accepted these stereotypes which the film media have ascribed to the black community. Films such as *Boyz in the Hood* and *Menace II Society* have become multi-million dollar success stories with criminal portrayals of young blacks. This portrayal, over time, has fostered false beliefs in white America regarding the way we perceive and view blacks.

From newsinfo.iu.edu

Article on book *Black Demons: Mass Media's Depiction of the African-American Male Criminal Stereotype*, by Dennis Rome, sociologist and associate professor in the Department of Criminal Justice at Indiana University: "Contemporary media, he says, particularly through extreme gangster rap music, reality crime shows and newscasts, have essentially defined crime and given it a black face, despite statistics that paint a different picture. For examples, he cites statistics that point to higher cocaine use among whites

than blacks, an impression one does not get while watching the evening news or the reality show COPS, he says.”

From http://www.huffingtonpost.com/darron-t-smith-phd/black-media_b_2844990.html

Regardless of whether they believe in them or not, most people in U.S. society are well aware of the many visceral stereotypes and images surrounding black males. These negative representations of black males are readily visible and conveyed to the public through the news, film, music videos, reality television and other programming and forms of media. The typical roles are all too often the black sidekick of a white protagonist, for example, the token black person, the comedic relief, the athlete, the over-sexed ladies' man, the absentee father or, most damaging, the violent black man as drug-dealing criminal and gangster thug.

From <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/news/2013/03/05/55599/the-medias-stereotypical-portrayals-of-race/>

As a former newspaper journalist, I'm disheartened to say that what you now see in the media isn't always an objective reality. Even when an article or broadcast reports the truth, the accompanying pictures and images can sometimes impress upon readers or viewers another set of facts that may be at odds with the story.

Harvard University professor Henry Louis “Skip” Gates, for example, delights in detailing how he used the gross distortion of media imagery of black men in sports to win a bar bet with the folks at the Veterans of Foreign Wars, or VFW, post in his hometown of Piedmont, West Virginia.

[In an essay written for *Sports Illustrated*](#), Gates, an authority on African American literature and culture, told his drinking buddies that there were approximately 35 million black people living in the United States. He then wagered \$5 to anyone who could tell him how many African Americans make a living playing professional sports in the United States.

The group of sports-loving men smiled, knowing they had a sucker in their midst. Everyone at the VFW post knew that blacks dominate some of the most popular sports in America. All they had to do was turn on their televisions, right?

Gates, a great raconteur, tells the story:

“Ten million!” yelled one intrepid soul, too far into his cups.

“No way ... more like 500,000,” said another.

“You mean all professional sports,” someone interjected, “including golf and tennis, but not counting the brothers from Puerto Rico?” Everyone laughed.

“Fifty thousand, minimum,” was another guess.

At the end of the day, nobody won the money—all of the men grossly exaggerated their numbers. As Gates reported in *Sports Illustrated*, the facts about black athletes in America at the time his article was published were stunningly low:

- There were 1,200 black professional athletes in all U.S. sports.
- There were 12 times more black lawyers than black athletes.

- There were 20 times more black dentists than black athletes.
 - There were 15 times more black doctors than black athletes.
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Does the IAT predict judgments and behavior?

Argument against the validity of the IAT: “It’s interesting to ponder how people implicitly make decisions, but ultimately we live in a world where explicit thoughts and actions are the bottom line.”

Studies Showing that IAT scores predict discriminatory behavior

- People who took the IAT were given the option to work with a white or black partner, those with the strongest preference scores against African-Americans tended to choose a white partner.
- People with lowest bias scores against homosexuals were more likely to interact with a stranger holding a book with an obviously homosexual theme.
- When people were told that a person was a homosexual, those with stronger preference scores against gays were less likely to make eye contact and showed other signs of unfriendliness.
- German study – people with high preference scores against Turks were more likely to find a Turkish suspect guilty when asked to make a judgment about criminality in an ambiguous situation.
- People given the details of a crime in which a Milwaukee woman had been assaulted, suffered a concussion, and required stitches. Some people were told the perpetrator had been proven to be David Edmonds from Canada. Others were told the guilty perpetrator was Juan Luis Martinez from Mexico. People were asked what length of sentence was appropriate for the crime. Those with strong preference scores against Hispanics tended to state a longer sentence for the Mexican.

An implicit attitude, “doesn’t control our behavior in a be-all and end-all kind of way, but it flavors our behavior in a pretty consistent way.”

How to Improve IAT Scores

From <http://americansforamericanvalues.org>

How we can improve our preference scores and negate the effects of preference scores against African-Americans and other groups

- **Increasing the Diversity of Local Environments.** Dasgupta’s research shows that increasing diversity and contacts between various kinds of people helps lower implicit bias. This method has been shown to be successful both through increasing actual inter-personal contacts among whites and people of color in socially valued roles, and altering the media’s depiction of people of color. Dasgupta states that: “Explicit decisions on the part of media executives to give more air time to racial and ethnic minorities in news media, advertisements, TV

shows and films is likely to go a long way toward increasing the visibility of these groups and creating unconscious associations linking such groups with positive images.”

- **Increasing Conscious Motivation and Control over Prejudiced Responses.** While she acknowledges that implicit prejudice is “not easily derailed” by conscious thoughts, research shows that people have the capacity to “make themselves mindful about their thoughts and actions” and to monitor and correct their behavior to reduce prejudiced behavior. For example, according to one study, “people who are vigilant and who train themselves to suppress negative stereotypes when they pop into mind can, over time, erase implicit bias from their thoughts”.

In *On The Malleability of Automatic Attitudes*, Dasgupta and IAT creator Anthony Greenwald decided to test whether “negative attitudes can be temporarily modified” by “frequent exposure to admirable members of stigmatized groups... and disliked members of valued groups”. To test this, they did two separate experiments. They found that priming subjects with positive images of famous blacks and negative images of famous whites improved their IAT scores significantly, even after a 24 hour gap. Their paper has an obvious implication—that negative depictions in the media play a role in shaping unconscious biases towards African Americans.

In experiment one, they divided test subjects up into three groups. The first group completed what they thought was a “general knowledge” test, except the knowledge being tested was about admired African Americans (e.g. Denzel Washington) and disliked whites (e.g. Jeffrey Dahmer). The second group had the two reversed and were tested on disliked African Americans (e.g. Mike Tyson) and admired whites (e.g. Tom Hanks), the third group took a general knowledge test on flowers.

All three groups were then given race preference IATs and two different explicit questionnaires detailing their feelings towards blacks and whites. Twenty-four hours later, they repeated the IATs and explicit measures again so that Dasgupta and Greenwald could test the staying power of the images. What they found was that the images had little-to-no affect on *explicit* measures of bias. No matter what, explicit measures showed a slight preference for whites over blacks. For IAT scores, however, the subjects in the positive-African-American experimental condition were much better able to pair Black + Pleasant and White + Unpleasant words. Twenty four hours later, the effect remained.

As for the pro-white group, their reaction times were not significantly different than the non-racial control group. In fact, the scores were roughly the same. Dasgupta and Greenwald speculate that this is because “perhaps pro-White exemplars had been chronically accessible to perceivers even in the control condition; thus additional exposure to the same type of images produced no further increase in automatic White preference”.