



BROADCASTING BLACKNESS: HOW RACE OF OWNERSHIP AFFECTS BET PROGRAMMING

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RESEARCH QUESTION

- How does the racial identity of the ownership of BET affect the channels portrayal of blackness in its airing of films?



THESIS

- The research study analyzed the films aired on BET to better understand how the ownership can influence the ways that African Americans are portrayed on the network. The study revealed that there is a relationship between the race of the owner and the ways that blackness is displayed in the films and, in turn, on the stations; however, the profit-motive of the media as an agent of socialization is a vital interest in the production and consumption of black images.



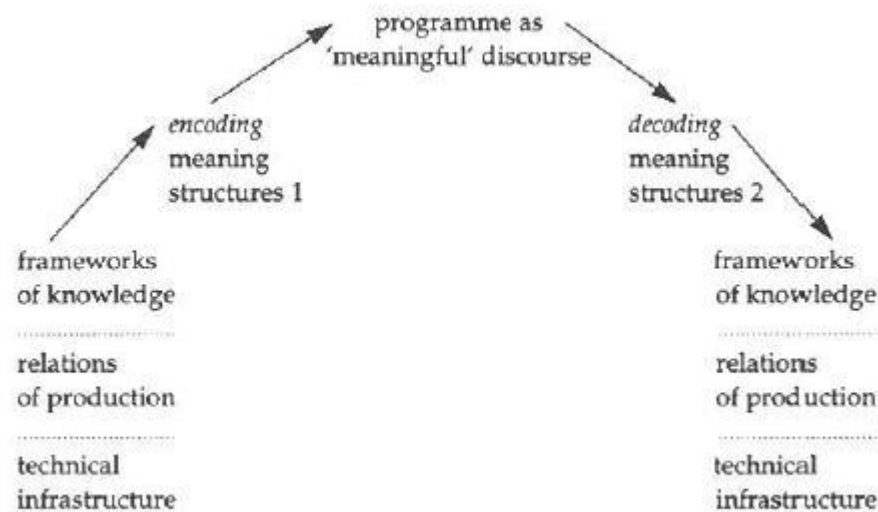
LITERATURE REVIEW

- History of African Americans in Film
 - Bogle (2001)
- Black Produced Films and Contemporary Renditions of Images
 - Allen (1998)
 - Benschoff (2009)
 - Collins (2005)
 - Gillespie (2007)
- Attitudes and Audience
 - Fisher (2009)



THEORY

- Stuart Hall's Encoding and Decoding Model



METHODOLOGY

- Content Analysis
 - Manifest and Latent coding
- Sample:
 - Movies aired on BET
 - *TV Guide Magazine*
 - January 1, 1999-January 1, 2000 [Robert Johnson]
 - January 1, 2011-January 1, 2012 [Viacom]
 - Top 5 from each period



FINDINGS

Table 1: Comparison of Race of Writers, Producers, Directors, and Cast by year, 1999 and 2011			
	Black Owned-1999	White Owned-2011	Total
Writer(s) Race			
Black	0	7 (100%)	7 (100%)
White	6 (85.71%)	1 (14.29%)	7 (100%)
Unknown	1 (33.33%)	2 (66.67%)	3 (100%)
Producer(s)			
Black	0	10 (100%)	10 (100%)
White	6 (66.67%)	3 (33.33%)	9 (100%)
Unknown	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	2 (100%)
Director(s)			
Black	2 (28.57%)	5 (71.43%)	7 (100%)
White	3 (100%)	0	3 (100%)
Unknown	0	0	0 (100%)
Cast Race			
All Black	0	3 (100%)	3 (100%)
Mostly Black	2 (50%)	2 (50%)	4 (100%)
Mostly White	3 (100%)	0	3 (100%)
All White	0	0	0 (100%)



Table 4: Compariosn of frequency of Stereotypical Black Characters by year, 1999 and 2011

	Socioeconomic class								TOTAL
	1999				2011				
	<i>L</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>U</i>	
Traditional Figures									
Buck	1		1						2
Mammy	2								2
Uncle Tom			1				1		2
Tragic Mulatto									0
Contemporary Figures									
Criminal/Gansta	2		1		3	2		1	9
Black Lady			3				1		4
Bitch						3			3
Athlete	1						1		2
Bad Black Mother	1					1			2
Player					1		1		2
Black Buddy/Sidekick			1						1
Educated Black Bitch							1		1
Sissy/Gay Snap Queen									0
Total	7	0	7	0	4	6	5	1	30

DISCUSSION

- Theory used to conceptualize the findings on two levels
 - Filmmakers → Films → Intended Viewers/Owners of BET
 - Cable Media Conglomerates → BET → Images
- Transmission of dominant meaning requires substratum to reach desired audience
 - Images are intentional and strategic
 - Change in ownership or audience leads to change in image



DISCUSSION- CONTINUED

- Authentication and erasure of images
- 1999: Black owned, more white made films, whitened casts, and less stereotypical images
 - Fewer films to choose from
 - Less threatening/ more appealing to conglomerates
- 2011: White owned, more black made films, more black casts, and more stereotypical images
 - Limitations of black filmmakers
 - Reaching out to broader and whiter audience
- Limitations



CONCLUSION

- Who is producing images is important
 - Exploitation, context, and power
- Should recognize profit driven structure media is produced in
 - Limitations
 - Revenue over positive imagery
- Future Studies on programming structure and ownership



THANK YOU

○ **Questions?**

