

Black Masculinity, Media Stereotyping And Its Influence on Policing in the United States: A Functionalist Perspective

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Abstract : In America, misrepresentations of black males have been perpetuated throughout the history of popular culture. Because of these narratives, varying communities have developed biases and stereotypes about what black male masculinity represents and more importantly, how they respond to them. The researcher explored the perspectives of police officers in the following states, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina. Because of the nature of police and community relations, and national attention to high profile cases, having officers provide context into how black males are viewed from their lens, was critical while expanding on the theoretical explanations to describe attitudes towards police confrontations. As one of the objectives was to identify specific themes relevant to why police officers may view African American males differently, hence, responding more aggressively, this proved to be the most beneficial method of initial analysis to identify themes. The following nodes (appearance, acting suspicious/ troublesome behavior, upbringing about black males, excessive force) were identified to analyze the transcripts to discern associations. The data was analyzed through NVivo 11, and several themes resulted to elaborate on the data received. In analyzing the data, four themes were identified: appearance, acting suspicious/ troublesome behavior, upbringing about black males, and excessive force. The data conveyed that continuous stereotypes about African American men will ultimately result in excessive use of force or pervasive shootings, albeit the men are armed or unarmed. African American males are consistently targeted because of their racial makeup and appearance over any other probable circumstances. As long as racial bias and stereotypical practices continue in policing, African American males will endlessly be unjustly targeted and at times, the victims of violent encounters with police officers in the United States.

Keywords : African American males, police perceptions, masculinity, popular culture

Conference Title : ICSWESD 2022 : International Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development

Conference Location : Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Conference Dates : November 14-15, 2022