

Behind The Mask: The Progression of Masculinity in African American Male Characters in Film.



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Introduction



- “Misrepresentations of Africans and African Americans serve ideologies..... This type of misrepresentation, and its reliance on masculinity, is one of the most prevalent representations of black men to this day” - Susan Booker Morris

Introduction: Goals



- Using the stereotypes of Donald Bogle, I'll look at the past depictions of masculinity in African American men and examine the progression of African American male characters.
- Studying Stuart Hall's theory of Representation shows that images created of certain groups creates ideologies about that group in reality.

Representation



- Person creates “System of Representation” based off understanding of object, event, or people.
- Hall believed that representation can be defined as “the production of meaning through language.” Representation is split up
- Into two processes, also known as two systems of representations.
 1. There are many different objects, people, and events that we connect with mental representation that are carried into our minds.
 2. Language is the second process as it is used to communicate these ideas we have with the rest of the world. Language helps us understand the way people understand the world around them.

Representation Continued



- According to Hall, stereotyping:
- Reduces, naturalizes, and fixes differences
- Fixes boundaries and excludes everything which does not belong
- Tends to occur where there are gross inequalities of power.



Donald Bogle's Stereotypes



- Uncle Tom
- Usually role of a servant or a slave who is insulted and belittled by their master or mistress
- they never turn against their white slave masters and show endless loyalty.



Donald Bogle's Stereotypes



- Implications on Masculinity (Uncle Tom):
- Very childlike and docile to white audiences. This eliminates them as a threat to those with White supremacist views.
- Placing them in the role of loyal servant implied that slavery was and always will be okay in society.

Donald Bogle's Stereotypes



- Black Buck/Brute
- The exact opposite of the Uncle Tom, Black Bucks were seen as extremely violent and menaces to society. There are villainous and quite deviant with this uncontrollable desire to sexually assault white women.



Donald Bogle's Stereotypes



- Implications on Masculinity (Black Brute/Buck):
- Animalistic and savages
- Threat to the stability of society, which justified any violence done against Black men.
- Black Rapist Myth

Black Masculinity: Today



- Flight



Findings



- Black Masculinity influenced by hegemonic patriarchal masculinity
- Following Aspects allowed character to preserve manhood and identity as human being
 - Education/Occupation
 - Interactions and relations with Women
 - Response to situations of conflict/competition
 - Hiding Emotions

Conclusion



- Examining past stereotypes showed that historical and social constructs influenced the depiction of African American men in the United States.
- In recent years, the development of African American characters in film is more dynamic
- Black men are able to preserve their manhood and identity in a society with ideals that marginalize men of color