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# **The Dangers of Mass Media and Pop Culture in Relation to HIV Vulnerability: A Case Study of Young African, Caribbean and Black Canadian (ACB) men in Windsor, Ontario**

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# Background

## Introduction

- ❑ In Ontario, ACB people make up about 5% of the population but nearly 25% of new HIV cases (Haddad et al., 2017). Heterosexual contact is the major mode of transmission.
- ❑ The higher infection rates among heterosexual Black men is attributed to being reckless, oversexed, cultural norms, and masculinity norms.
- ❑ This paper focuses on the role of mass media and pop culture on young ACB men's sexuality and vulnerability to HIV in Windsor, Ontario.
- ❑ We engaged self-identified heterosexual (ACB) men, aged 16 years and above and who resided in Windsor, Ontario from March 2016 to March 2018 through the weSpeak research project.

## Methodology

- ❑ We conducted 3 focus group discussions with 31 self-identified ACB men (2 with 20 youth aged 16-24 years and 1 with 11 adults aged 40 years and above).
- ❑ Majority of these participants were African 20 (64.5%) 8 Caribbean (25.8%), and 3 Black Canadian (9.7%).
- ❑ We use cultivation theory to explain how young people may become victims of what they consume (Robillard, 2012).
- ❑ Mass media and pop culture is linked with holding specific and distinct perception about reality. Young people may reflect their lives based on what they see and may feel obliged to perform what is displayed as a version of their reality.

# Results

## **Results suggests that:**

- ❑ The negative portrayal of ACB men in the media and pop culture define and shape how participants conduct themselves and by either internalizing or resisting what they see.
- ❑ Mass media and pop culture have contributed to unhealthy sexualities and irresponsible sexual behaviours among young people. Participants shared their concerns of how media and pop culture influence their attitudes and what is expected of them.
- ❑ There are concerns about how young people's sexual attitudes, beliefs and behaviours are influenced by sexual contents exposed to them through television and other social media platforms. This was particularly a concern among older participants.
- ❑ Participants see the need of the media and pop-culture to change the way they operate to show positive things about Black men and also create awareness about HIV.

# What did participants say...

## ❑ **On negative portrayal of ACB men:**

“...when there is no pressure or judgement you can think freely and act freely your morals and values you can develop them into your own, everything that we are saying right now or some of the things we are saying, that’s the media, they kind of perpetuate for us, and we are heavily listening to the music, watching the shows, so some of that get internalized whether we know it or not ... a lot of constrains, a lot of things that kind of keep us tied into the games that we are playing right now which is being more promiscuous, being more angry, instead of attacking life, we are attacking the stereotypes...” (Fabio, 21 years old, African).

## ❑ **On media and pop-culture influence & expectations:**

“The society works against us, the rappers it’s what they sing, it’s what they expect now...” (Jamie, 24 years old, Black Canadian )

“We are so influenced by what is going on in America, Music, TV whatever so even with our own culture we tend to get lost in their culture cause their culture is the cool thing. So we’re losing it right now...”(Franco, 51 years, Caribbean)

## ❑ **On sexual contents and influence on young people:**

“when we grew up there were filters on television shows and we really didn’t have internet at the time...and the cultural upbringing has kept a lot of the sanity in us. But in our kids, they have been so much exposed to this later day stuff that is even difficult for parents to control it...” (Addy, 54 years old, African).

## ❑ **On changes to media and pop-culture:**

“Make good music about this [HIV] that can trend, start singing about HIV/AIDS and not having all those songs that give you HIV/AIDS [laughs]” (Ozi, 23 years old, African)

“Like for our generation the media and how it portrays us, if anything has to change has to be the next generation, we have to be the ones to set the tone, because for us like everything is already open, the way that we are seen is already out there, the stigma is already out there...” (Cain, 20 years old, Caribbean)

# Conclusion

- ❑ Pop culture and mass media have failed to teach young people the risks and responsibilities associated with what they portray and the importance of having positive role models whom they can learn from.
- ❑ The portrayal or expectation associated with ACB men affect their lives at various levels socially, economically and politically.
- ❑ There is a need for more sexually responsible media and pop culture contents. Also, a need of teaching young people to be critical consumers of what they see through the media and pop-culture

## References:

- Haddad, N., Li, J.S., Totten, S., & McGuire, M. (2017). HIV in Canada—surveillance report, 2017. *Can Commun Dis Rep*, 44(12), 324-332.
- Robillard, A. (2012). Music Videos and Sexual Risk in African American Adolescent Girls. *American Journal of Health Education*, 43 (2)93-103.

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### Conflict of Interest Declaration

We have no conflict of interest