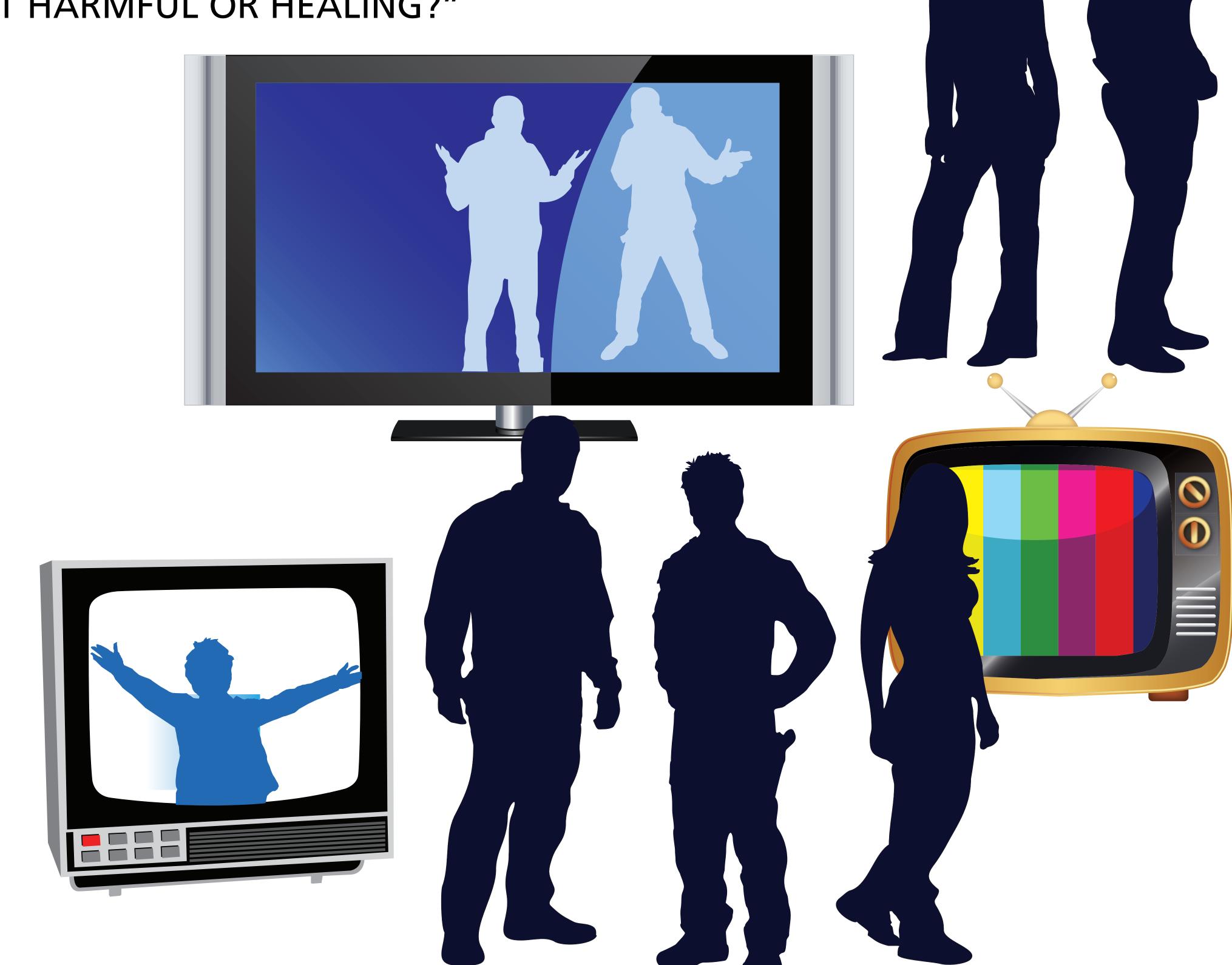# *"And We'll Never Be Royals"*

AN EXAMINATION OF TV CONSUMPTION BY MULTICULTURAL MILLENNIALS REGARDING THEIR SELF-IDENTITY: IS IT HARMFUL OR HEALING?"

"But everybody's
like Cristal, Maybach,
diamonds on your
timepiece.
Jet planes, islands,
tigers on a gold leash."

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PURPOSE

The song, *Royals*, by Lourde, creatively expresses the types of lavish and exaggerated depictions Multicultural Millennials (i.e., Latino, Asian and Black/African American) view in the media every day. Yet, in actuality, that lifestyle is not their reality. At the same time, in our 24/7 news cycle, the NFL's Baltimore Ravens Ray Rice domestic violence scandal, Kim Kardashian's public displays of her "bottom" and the shooting of unarmed Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri bombard our media airwaves every day. Yet, these images are their reality.

Furthermore, the evolution of one's self-concept and self-identity continues way after adolescence and into adulthood. As many Multicultural Millennials continue to work to find secure employment and remain in the comforts of their parents' homes, they are still struggling to find stability within and in society. Based on the identify research by Erikson (1968) which defines the four statuses of identity as – Diffusion, Foreclosure, Moratorium and Achieved, research by Cramer (2004) finds that individuals who have experienced crisis or conflict as they work to establish their values, goals and opinions are in a state of Identity Diffusion. We believe this identity crisis embodies today's Multicultural Millennials, who want to be accepted and treated as equal in society.

With the 80 million Millennials (ages 18-33) in the U.S. continuing to be an enigma to marketers and policy makers, it was recently reported by *The New York Times* that their current and future market power is undeniable (Tanenhaus 2014). Coupling these dynamics with the value shifts of the monumental social and cultural changes brought about by the expansion and convergence of media, results in this sector of the population uniquely identifying self, community, and the world through a different lens (Thomas 2013). Moreover, in regards to Multicultural Millennials, intersectionality theory is active where an understanding of self demands comprehension of how one identifies themselves in conjunction with societal systems and structures (Thomas 2013; Collins 2000), including the consumption of stereotypes in the media. Hence, with such exaggerated depictions of Multicultural Millennials in the media and the news, how is the rest of society viewing them?

Do others outside of this population view their lives as disposable or valuable? In a world where Multicultural Millennials are continuously exposed to media, from Facebook to Netflix, on numerous portable devices, is this consumption combined with the stereotypical depictions and perceptions of others harming or healing to the self-identity of this powerful audience?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

"On television, Mindy Kaling, Aziz Ansari, and Dannu Pudi currently star on primetime network sitcoms. (And these shows keep their characters alive!)…When you talk about stereotypes, more broadly speaking, my view is that as a society, we should get away from the notion that if you have a certain skin color, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, you should think a certain way."
– Federal Communications Commission Commissioner, Ajit Pai, April 2014

In today's marketplace, TV consumption of stereotypical images of people of color continues to be an important topic and it is obvious that the FCC is aware of this impactful issue from the above-mentioned quote.

As Ward (2005, p. 495) notes, "U.S. media stereotypes developed during slavery (for African Americans) such as that of the mammy, the jezebel, and the wild and hypersexual buck have their latter-day incarnations in the domineering matriarch, the 'welfare queen' and the violent and sexually promiscuous black man." For Asian Americans, the two most significant and persistent stereotypes are of the "model minority" and the "perpetual foreigner" (Lee et. al 2009). Additionally, Latinos have historically been confined to a narrow set of stereotypic, often- times negative, characterizations, from the Latin Lover to the Comic/Buffoon (Ramirez 1990). Overall, the general populous largely denounces discrimination or prejudice, however, stereotypes are viewed with some levity, except from the communities being typecast (Morse 2009).

"As Annalise, Ms. Davis, 49, is sexual and even sexy, in a slightly menacing way, but the actress doesn't look at all like the typical star of a network drama. Ms. Rhimes chose a performer who is older, darker-skinned and less classically beautiful..."
-*The New York Times*, September 21, 2014

The extant literature has articulated the need for some type of intervention to improve how the media portrays people of color. Russell et al. (2013) revealed that television plays a significant function in the dissemination of culture and diversity to consumers. Specifically, the researchers uncovered that viewers of color are often shackled to the "logic and language of business imperative that networks prefer" (Russell et al, 2013, p. 126) and they often build their real-life narratives of culture and diversity based on what they consume on TV. Stereotypical portrayals of multicultural consumers whether negative or positive, are harmful as they depersonalize and dehumanize multicultural (Chambers 2009; Shah 2003)

From a behavioral perspective, the Millennial generation is one that is multifaceted, introspective and empathetic as well as possesses an open-mind and heart connection to others (Tanenhaus 2014). It is believed that the stereotypes that continue to exist in the media and the news may lead to the production of maladaptive behavior within Multicultural Millennials, from low self esteem to physical violence. This is due to self-referent processing and self-discrepancy theories. For the former, this cognitive process allows one to absorb incoming information in a manner where they can also see themselves in the situation (Debevec and Romeo 1992). Self-referent processing also enhances elaboration in a highly organized manner, as well as effects persuasion and recall.

Self-discrepancy theory can work in concert with self-referent processing because it suggests comparisons among actual self image and desired self ideals and standards that often times deflates one's self esteem and influences negative behavior (Sobol and Darke 2014).

Therefore, we hypothesize:

H1: Multicultural Millennials will have a stronger relationship to TV programs than White Millennials.

H2: Female Multicultural Millennials will have a stronger relationship to TV programs than Male Multicultural Millennials.

METHODOLOGY

Horowitz Associates, a research company known for multicultural marketing and research, agreed to allow us to use their data from their 2013 *State of the Cable and Digital Media: Multicultural Study*. This robust dataset is comprised of 2,086 respondents. As this is a multicultural study, Asian Americans, Black/African-Americans and Latinos were oversampled for their study. After data screening, the final sample size of Multicultural Millennials (ages 18-34) was 1,306.

DATA ANALYSIS

A one-way ANOVA was performed and H1 was supported in that Multicultural Millennials have a stronger relationship to TV compared to their White counterparts: $F(3, 554) = 3.70$, $p =0.12$. Games-Howell post-hoc demonstrates the daily mean of television viewership for **Blacks (M = 4.10, SD = 0.14)** is higher than Hispanics **(M = 3.60, SD = 0.12)**, **Asian (M = 3.61, SD = .223)** and **White (M = 3.40, SD = 0.18)**.

Bivariate correlations demonstrate that Black Millennials tend to watch more television with more people in the home $r(150) = .18$, $p < .05$. Specifically, regarding the genre of programs being watched by Black Millennials, **talk shows** were viewed the most ($r(151) = .18$, $p<.05$). For Hispanic Millennials, **live sports events** $r(228)$ .14, $p<.05$, **comedy/sitcoms** $r(228) = .19$, $p <.05$, **talk shows** $r(226) = .18$, $p <.05$, **reality television** $r(228) = .18$, $p<.05$, **dramas** $r(229) = .15$, $p <.05$, **original series on premium channels** $r(229) = .22$, $p<.05$, **music programming** $r(229) = .20$, $p<.05$, **programming in English** that targets Latinos $r(226) = .15$, $p <.05$ and travel shows $r(228) = .17$, $p <.05$. For Asian Millennials, **comedies** had a negative relationship on television viewed ($r(65) = -.332$, $p <.05$). There is also no relationship between television genres and television consumed among White Millennials.

Although H2 was not supported in this dataset, we did see significance regarding genres. Specifically, **males had a stronger relationship to music programming and original series from premium channels**, like Showtime or HBO, compared to females.

The **reality show genre saw a slightly stronger relationship among females** than males.

DISCUSSION

Prior research, from a qualitative perspective, has clearly articulated the strong relationship viewers of color have to the media and the stereotypical images they consume. In this initial research, from a quantitative perspective, Multicultural Millennials have a deep relationship with TV and specific genres they are consuming.

These results are noteworthy because they clearly signify a strong susceptibility of Multicultural Millennials to viewing stereotypical images of themselves on TV. Future research in this area will delve into showing actual behavior change from being exposed to stereotypical images in the media. With the FCC starting to once again re-examine the role of violence and profane images in the media, we believe the FCC should influence broadcasters and news programmers to diversify images so there is a better balance of programmatic offerings for Multicultural Millennials. As our society continues to become more interconnected and racially diverse, it is apparent that a new model for television programming and distribution is needed to impact Multicultural Millennials in a meaningful way.