

This study investigated some key theoretical propositions derived from a synthesis of two related areas of research: the construction of social reality and cultivation analysis. A total of eight hypotheses were generated from the following propositions: (1) three broad construct categories (objective, symbolic, and subjective) constitute, to a major degree, the construction of social reality; (2) indicators of subjective reality can be placed usefully on a close-remote continuum based on their distance from the everyday life experiences of the individual; and (3) the accumulation of television exposure has a dominant influence on the shaping of beliefs and interpretations of the world, the direction of influence being contingent on the "bias" of the specific content consumed. A national sample of black adults, 18 and over, was used to test the hypotheses. Path analysis provided some support for the hypotheses.

THE MEDIA AND SOCIAL REALITY EFFECTS

Self and System Orientations of Blacks

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Communication scholars have been interested in issues related to the role of mass communication and the media in providing people, either deliberately or accidentally, with interpretations of reality. Although several researchers endorse the view of minimal media impact, a number of scholars have pointed out that much of the recent theorizing places the media in a more powerful position, primarily due to broadened hypotheses about media

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effects and to several methodological advances (Chaffee, 1980; Noelle-Neumann, 1983). McQuail (1972) has argued that the individual and collective consciousness is shaped, to a substantial degree, by the media.

Several theories or theory fragments have been formulated in the area of attributed meaning and interpretation of reality fostered by the media (Lowery and DeFleur, 1983). Two influential research areas are cultivation analysis and an expanded version of the process of the construction of social reality. Although they differ in the media generally investigated and in their scope, they share several similarities. Both are concerned in various ways with the role of the media in shaping people's interpretation of the world around them, and they commonly employ the concept of "social reality" to describe this phenomenon. In most instances, social reality "effects" are viewed in terms of the shaping of beliefs or belief systems (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; McLeod and Chaffee, 1972).

CULTIVATION ANALYSIS

Cultivation analysis, although focusing on one medium (television) with a predominant emphasis on the topic of violence, argues that television has a major influence on people's beliefs and, more specifically, social reality beliefs. Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1980), proponents of this type of analysis, have asserted that the environment of symbols sustains the most distinctive aspects of human existence. People, they say, learn, share, and act upon meanings derived from their environment. They have examined these relationships with respect to television. The concern with this one medium is based on their notion that television is the main source of repetitive and ritualized symbol systems cultivating the common consciousness of a large and heterogeneous mass public (Gerbner and Gross, 1976).

Hawkins and Pingree (1981a) state that those characteristics of television content hypothesized to be important are present only implicitly and only cumulatively across the sum total of all television messages. They report that evidence from experiments, longitudinal analyses, and numerous indirect analyses all support

the interpretation that television contributes to social reality beliefs. That is, the “bias” of television is reflected in how the individual constructs his or her beliefs about the world. In a review of the literature in this area, Hawkins and Pingree (1981b) noted that the most common social reality effects hypotheses include prevalence of violence, family structures, interpersonal distrust, traditional sex roles, family values, and concern about racial problems.

Although the methods used to study various cultivation hypotheses have come under attack (e.g., Hirsch, 1980; Hughes, 1980), the underlying theoretical propositions of the cultivation framework still seem to be intact and worthy of further examination. To this end, a number of suggestions have been provided for further research on cultivation analysis (Hawkins and Pingree, 1981b).

CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL REALITY

Adoni and associates (1984; Adoni and Mane, 1984) expand the conceptualization of the construction of social reality, which theretofore was only a number of rather loose and disjointed conceptualizations. They draw a distinction among three types of reality: objective, symbolic, and subjective social reality. Objective social reality is that reality that is experienced as the objective world existing outside the individual and confronting him or her as facts. This reality is learned ostensibly by means of “common sense,” as reality par excellence, and does not need any further verification. Symbolic social reality is defined as any form of symbolic expression of objective reality, such as art, literature, or media content. Subjective social reality consists of a fusing into individual consciousness of the objective world and its symbolic representations. In other words, both the objective and symbolic realities serve as an input for the construction of the individual’s own subjective reality.

Adoni, Cohen, and Mane (1984) point to the importance of classifying subjective reality and the other two realities along a close-remote dimension. To them, social reality may be perceived along a continuum based on the distance of its elements from the individual’s everyday life experiences. The close zone of relevance

consists of those social elements and actors with whom the individual has frequent encounters. Alternatively, the remote zones of relevance involve more general and abstract social elements that are not accessible to direct experience. The authors maintain that the degree of media influence on an individual's subjective reality is contingent on direct experience with the various social phenomena and dependence on the media as sources of information about these phenomena. In sum, these authors conceived of the construction of social reality as reflected in two dimensions: type of reality (objective, symbolic, subjective) and distance of social elements from direct experience (close-remote).

In the study reported here, the close-remote designation is used only for the subjective social reality construct category. The objective social reality construct pertains to those factors that place an individual in a position to have certain experiences and that influence the range of experiences the individual is likely to have. In regard to cultivation analysis, the following propositions are examined: (1) that the accumulation of television exposure has an influence on the shaping of beliefs and interpretations of the world; and (2) the direction of the influence is contingent on the "biases" incorporated in that content. The second proposition is extended to refer not only to television but also to print media. This synthesis extends the construction of social reality theorizing in several ways. First, the social reality effects are broadened to include not only perceptions of social reality (as is typically the case) but also self and system orientations. Also, a specific type of content appearing on television and in print is hypothesized to be related to social reality effects.

This study's theoretical propositions include concepts defined in such a way as to make direct tests impossible. These propositions are used, however, as theoretical tools for predictive and explanatory purposes. For testability, it is necessary to formulate a specific auxiliary model. This model links specific operations with the theoretical concepts. Also, it states several assumptions concerning some of the variables not considered. The model presented is specific to the research design, to the population examined and to the measuring instruments employed. (For an elaboration on the utility of this strategy, see Blalock, 1968, 1982).

The sample is composed of black adults, a group that is presumed to have a distinct and problematic relationship with the media. The media, especially television, hold a prominent place in the lives of blacks, and media content tends to cast blacks in an unfavorable light. As a result the media are presumed to have dramatic effects on blacks (e.g., Comstock, 1980; Hayakawa, 1968; Shosteck, 1969). This study tests whether media content has cumulative effects on blacks, and whether the direction of those effects is contingent on the "biases" of the content.

Pierce (1980) maintained that television provides "trace contaminants" that to the black viewer may be debilitating or disabling. Using a medical analogy, trace contaminants were defined as elements that abound in microscopic quantity and ordinarily are without demonstrable influence on the organism. When such an element is continued in the environment over a period of time there is a serious cumulative reaction. Pierce maintained that despite more sensitivity to negative racial stereotypes and the increased number of blacks on television, a "good role" (such as a black being an executive) should not be confused by how the black is presented in the role. The role may demonstrably suggest status and dignity, but, on subtle levels, operate as a social trace contaminant for a black viewer.

Numerous content analyses have been conducted to document the frequency and the nature of presentation of blacks on television (e.g., Hinton, Seggar, Northcott, and Fontes, 1974; Berry, 1982; Seggar and Wheeler, 1973). Going beyond the mere frequency of appearance of blacks on television, Banks (1977), Donagher, Poulos, Liebert, and Davidson (1975), Reid (1979), and Weigel, Loomis, and Soja (1980) examined character portrayals. They found that, although blacks were featured more often in major roles, the roles still conveyed stereotypical messages. Racial stereotypes were often the basis for black character portrayals.

Comparatively few scholars have devoted much attention to the black print media, particularly the black press (Poindexter and Stroman, 1980). Most theorizing suggests that the black press has a salutary effect on blacks (Myrdal, 1972), although a few studies have been more selective in making this assessment (e.g., Frazier, 1965). Only a few content analyses have been performed

on the black print media, and most of these have examined "mainstream" magazines, specifically *Ebony*. Click (1975) analyzed all issues of *Ebony* published in 1967 and 1974 to determine the changes that had taken place in its editorial content. He found that although less space was devoted to black social issues or content that could be considered useful to blacks in 1974, this type of content filled the majority of the magazine's nonadvertising space for both years. Similarly, Hirsch (1968) analyzed the editorial content of *Ebony* from 1945 through 1966. He found that until the civil rights movement of the 1960s, the editorial content was devoid of references to militancy, but during the 1960s *Ebony* became more militant in tone.

Poindexter and Stroman (1980) content analyzed four black newspapers, two weeklies and two dailies. They used the black newspaper's coverage of *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* "reverse discrimination" suit as an empirical indicator of the functions of black newspapers. Most of articles were event-oriented; less emphasis was placed on detailed coverage of the underlying dynamics of the issues. The authors concluded that these newspapers appear to be taking on the role of chronicler, rather than interpreter, of issues and events affecting the black community. Further, they raised the question of whether black newspapers are reducing their usefulness to the black community. Many editors of black newspapers find these issues to be of major concern, and they have not yet reached a uniform position (LaBrie and Zima, 1971). In summary, for both black-oriented television and the black press, the impressionistic research and the content analyses point to a link between the content explored and the social reality effects examined.

Figure 1 presents a schematic model of the process whereby various social reality effects are determined by exposure to black-oriented television, to black print media, and by social structural variables (i.e., income, age, education, and parental training).

It is assumed in this model that location in the social structure reflects interpretation of objective reality and influences attitudes and behaviors. It is also assumed that the symbolic expression of objective reality influences the subjective reality of the individual. Media expressions of symbolic reality are closely related to the social reality effects they are assumed to influence. That is, black

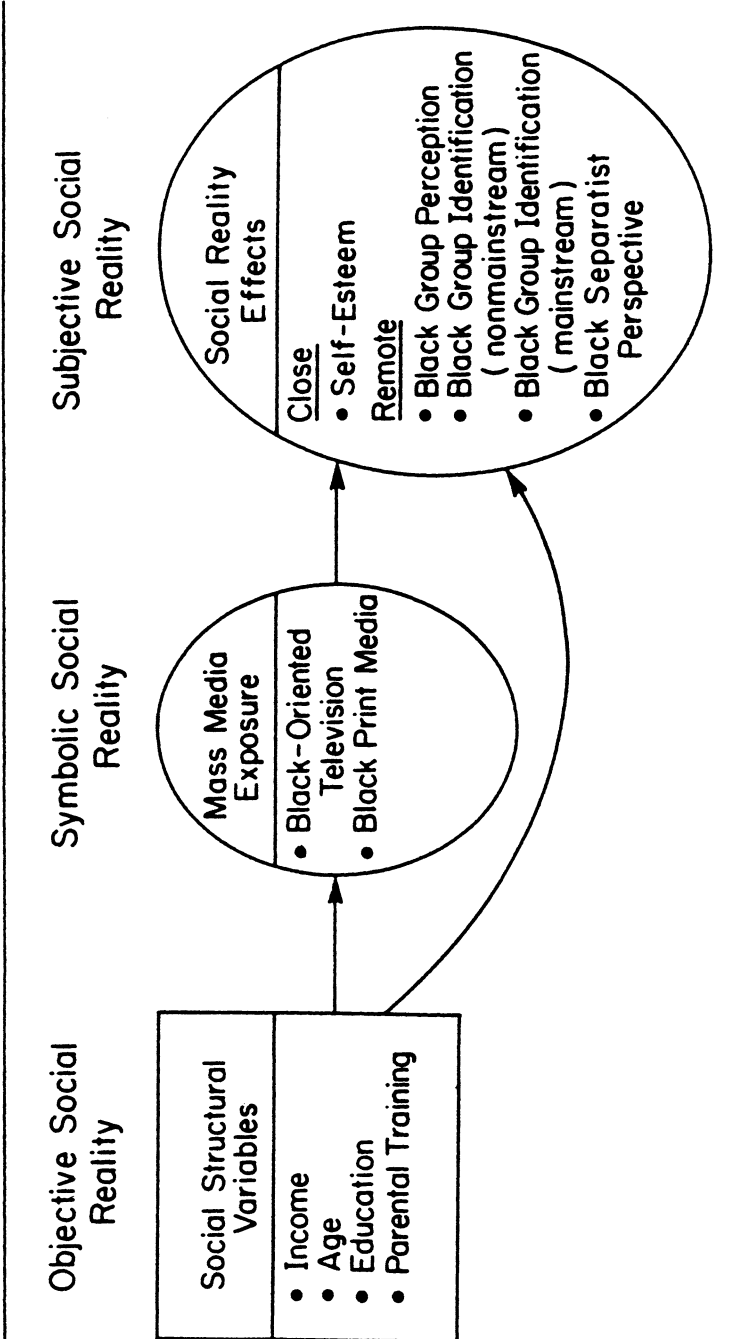


Figure 1 : Schematic Representation of Conceptual Relationships

and black-oriented media fare is assumed to have an impact on blacks' conceptions of self and the group to which they belong.

THEORETICAL DEFINITIONS

The social reality effects (or indicators of subjective social reality) are composed of several related concepts; four are race-related and pertain to the group and one self-esteem is nonrace-related and personal. These effects are also classified on the close-remote dimension. Self-esteem is "close" because it is pertinent to the "here and now"; black group perception, black group identification (mainstream and nonmainstream), and black separatist perspective are "remote," related more to the social structure.

Black group perception, which is similar to the measures typically used to represent social reality effects, is defined as perception of the positive orientation toward being a member of that group. Black separatist perspective is defined as the individual's endorsement of the position that blacks should devote most of their energies toward the betterment of the group as distinct from the larger society. And although these two activities are not always in conflict, this perspective suggests that if conflict arises, the individual's loyalties should be with blacks as a group. Black group identification is related to the the above concepts insofar as it focuses on the individual's attachment to blacks as a group. This attachment is more affective and more specific. This concept refers to the closeness an individual feels toward certain elements within the black community. It can be analyzed on two dimensions, black group identification mainstream and black group identification nonmainstream. Black group identification mainstream relates to an individual's closeness to those blacks who, to the larger society, are generally perceived as successful and who hold relatively prestigious positions in American society. Black group identification nonmainstream relates to the individual's closeness to those blacks who are in nontraditional or relatively nonprestigious positions in American society.

Self-esteem, a nonracial social reality effect, is to a large degree a social product determined by the attitudes and behaviors of others toward the individual. It is defined as the esteem for one's

individuality regardless of racial group, for instance, how one feels about the self in a comprehensive sense (Porter and Washington, 1979).

Symbolic social reality is represented by two indicators of media exposure, each of which relates to a specific type of media fare. Black-oriented television exposure is defined as the amount of attention given to content presented on television that depicts the life of black Americans or problems relevant to blacks. Black print media exposure refers to the amount of attention given to print media that are owned and produced by blacks and tailored to be consumed by blacks.

Objective social reality is represented by two major theoretical components: location in the social structure (i.e., education, income, and age) and parental training. Location in the social structure is a reflection of the kinds of experiences one may have or the types of activities in which one is likely to be engaged. Parental training is more specific, involving the kind of messages received from parents pertaining to being black in America.

A total of eight hypotheses were formulated. The rationale for each is presented below. Although the first four hypotheses have not received a great deal of research attention, the extant research has provided fairly consistent support. Given the methodological shortcomings of the past research, including small sample sizes (Allen and Bielby, 1979a, 1979b), the question remains whether the same relationships would obtain using a large national sample, which provides more stable estimates.

Hypothesis (1) Those with lower education, those of older age, and those of lower income, watch black-oriented television more often.

Hypothesis (2) Those of higher education, higher income, and older age, attend to the black print media more often.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 are based on the social categories approach (DeFleur, 1970), which assumes that one's location in the social structure influences one's behavior. Although the categories hypothesis does not specify in what direction or which attitudes or behaviors are predicted by the social structural variables, there is a wealth of empirical data on the relationship of general

television exposure to structural variables. With respect to black-oriented television, the research is relatively sparse, but it has generally supported the relationships presented in the first hypothesis (Allen and Bielby, 1979a; Poindexter and Stroman, 1981). In one of the few studies on Hypothesis 2, Allen and Bielby (1979b) found that age had a positive relationship to exposure to black entertainment periodicals. Males and higher status persons read black establishment media more often. Moreover, greater exposure to nonestablishment black print media was related to more success, older ages, and, most important, higher education.

The measure used to represent the black print media did not distinguish between the content of the various black print media; it referred only to black print media in general. But the empirical literature suggests that similar social structural variables are related to each of the different types of black print media content (Allen and Bielby, 1979b).

- Hypothesis (3) Those with higher education, those of a younger age, and those who received parental training explicitly related to race, tend to have greater self-esteem.
- Hypothesis (4) Those with lower education, those of younger age, and those who received parental training explicitly related to race have a stronger black group orientation. (This includes black group perception, mainstream and nonmainstream black group identification, and black separatist perspective).

The relationship of the social structural and background variables to black identity, one type of black group orientation, has received some empirical support (e.g., Allen, 1980; Allen and Bielby, 1979a; 1979b). Although black identity has been operationalized in various ways, the specified relationships remain rather stable and consistent. On the other hand, because of the divergence in theoretical and operational definitions of various racial consciousness or group identification concepts (e.g., militancy, self-image), findings are difficult to compare. Most studies point to education, age, and income as predictors (Schuman and Hatchett, 1974), but the direction of these relationships has been specific to the racial consciousness or group identification concept under investigation. The studies that best approximate

the outcome variables employed in this study have shown the relationships stated in Hypothesis 4 (see Marx, 1969; Schuman and Hatchett, 1974).

Some empirical literature suggests that age and education have an effect on self-esteem. Particularly high levels of self-esteem have been reported among the young and those of higher educational level (Porter and Washington, 1979).

Both of these hypotheses predict a relationship of family environment with social reality effects. Many studies have suggested this general relationship, but few have specified particular effects and empirically tested them (Comer, 1982).

Within the context of the sample under investigation (blacks) and given the social reality effects investigated (self and black group orientations), the family environment is assumed to be an important variable. Black's position in the United States is such that the major institutions and interracial contact reflect and suggest an unfavorable image of blacks. The strength generated in a supportive family environment may moderate these external forces. Not only might it provide the individual with coping strategies, it could act as the basis for creative self-development and for stronger group attachment (Allen, 1978).

Hypothesis (5) The greater the exposure to black-oriented television, the less the self-esteem.

Hypothesis (6) The greater the exposure to black-oriented television, the less the black group orientations (black group perception, mainstream and nonmainstream black group identification, black separatist perspective).

These two hypotheses are extensions of cultivation analysis. As mentioned earlier, cultivation theorists argue that heavy viewers of television content are more likely to incorporate "television biases" into their own construction of reality or into the shaping of their beliefs. This is an extension in the sense that specific content, rather than general media exposure, is being examined, and the social reality effects variables are different from those usually examined in cultivation analysis. In this study, social reality pertains to self and system orientations, whereas in cultiva-

tion analysis it usually pertains to assumptions made about what society is like.

Because the content analyses of television programs (black-oriented content included) have suggested that the images of blacks are less than favorable, those who are exposed heavily to such content should have a less favorable view of themselves and the group to which they belong.

- Hypothesis (7) The greater the exposure to the black print media, the greater the self-esteem.
- Hypothesis (8) The greater the exposure to black print media, the greater black group orientations (black group perception, mainstream/nonmainstream black group identification, black separatist perspective).

Although there are few black-produced television programs, the black press has a long and influential history. It came into existence as a response to black needs and concerns overlooked in the majority press and continues to function in this advocacy role today. Differences exist among black publications in ideological position, topics explored and so forth, but they all respond more comprehensively to black concerns and present a wider range of black experiences than does the majority press.

The black press has been considered to depict a more realistic and more accurate representation of blacks than the majority press. It is assumed that these images accumulate and influence blacks to have a more positive image of themselves and a sense of group identity. These hypotheses are different from the cultivation hypothesis, where television has been thought to have rather dramatic effects. The press is assumed to have a much smaller effect on the construction of social reality, because people attend to it selectively. Television viewing behavior, on the other hand, is assumed to be primarily nonselective.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This survey was conducted by the Program for Research on Black Americans (PRBA) at the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan during 1979 and 1980. The sample was

drawn according to a multistage area probability procedure designed so that every black household had an equal probability of being selected for the study. The sample was based on the 1970 census distribution of the black population; 76 primary areas were selected, stratified by racial composition (number of black households) and region. Then smaller geographical areas (sample places and clusters) were randomly chosen from these strata. Household sampling and interviewing were conducted in these smaller geographical areas, usually representing city blocks or groups of blocks.

Within each selected black household, one person was chosen randomly to be interviewed from those who were eligible for the study. Eligibility was restricted to persons age 18 and older, self-identified as black Americans and U.S. citizens.

The final sample consisted of 2,107 completed interviews; response rate was 67%. This national cross-section sample was fairly representative of the black population as reported in the 1980 census.¹ The cross-section survey served as the "parent" study for the Three Generation Family Study. When the respondents in the cross-section survey had living family members from at least two other generations, interviews were attempted with one randomly selected representative from each of those two generations. Also, the cross-section respondent was reinterviewed with a form of the three generation instrument. Of the 2,107 respondents in the cross-section study, 1,122, or roughly 52%, were eligible for the Three Generational Study. Reinterviews were obtained from 865 of these respondents, for a 77% response rate for the reinterviews with the original respondents. This subsample survey contained the variables of interest.

MEASURES

The three general constructs in this study were operationalized as follows.

Social Structural and Background Variables. Education was the number of years of schooling completed. Age was as of last birthday. Personal income was coded on a four-point scale.

*Parental Training.*² To a series of open-ended questions, the respondent indicated the most important things he or she was told about being black and getting along with whites. The responses were subsequently separated into two categories: statements that contained explicit racial content and those that did not. This variable was dummy coded for the analysis.

Mass Media Exposure. Frequency of watching black-oriented television was indicated on a five-point scale, for "black programs on television."³ Black press exposure was indicated on a five-point scale for the frequency of reading black newspapers, magazines, and other black literature.

*Social Reality Effects.*⁴ Black group perception was based on ten items, each asking on a five-point scale the degree of agreement with statements concerning the positive attributes of blacks as a group. Self-esteem was measured by six five-point scales, asking if the person held a favorable view of himself or herself over a wide range of situations. Black group identification/mainstream was measured by seven four-point items regarding how close he or she feels toward blacks who hold a more traditional or acceptable status in American society. Black group identification/mainstream consisted of three four-point scales on how close he or she feels toward blacks who hold a problematic or contentious position within American society. Black separatist perspective was a six-item index of four-point scales on agreement with statements that maintain that blacks should dissociate themselves from whites, and that blacks should associate themselves with black political and cultural causes.

RESULTS

Intercorrelations among the indicators are presented in Table I. The correlations among the background/social structural variables are generally in accord with the findings obtained in other large-scale studies of black Americans. The two media exposure measures show a moderate correlation ($r = .32$). Of particular importance to subsequent analyses is the relationship among the

TABLE 1
Zero-Order Correlations for Social Reality Model

VARIABLES	X ₁	X ₂	X ₃	X ₄	X ₅	X ₆	X ₇	X ₈	X ₉	X ₁₀	X ₁₁
Income	--										
X ₁											
Age		--									
X ₂											
Education			--								
X ₃											
Parental Training				--							
X ₄											
Black Print Media Exposure					--						
X ₅											
Black-Oriented TV Exposure						--					
X ₆											
Self-esteem							--				
X ₇											
Black Group Perspective								--			
X ₈											
Black Group Identification (Non-mainstream)									--		
X ₉											
Black Group Identification (Mainstream)										--	
X ₁₀											
Black Separatist Perspective											--
X ₁₁											
Mean	1.87	41.46	10.94	.54	3.42	4.00	21.25	24.21	6.31	23.29	14.95
(S. D.)	(.96)	(17.24)	(3.34)	(.50)	(1.20)	(1.07)	(2.51)	(4.70)	(2.29)	(3.75)	(3.16)

various indicators of social reality effects. The variable of self-esteem was compared, which was placed on the "close" dimension, with other indicators of social reality effects that were more "remote"; the results are varied. Self-esteem has a positive relationship with black group perspective, black group identification/mainstream and black separatist perspective, but these correlations are small (.13, .22, .05, respectively). The correlation between self-esteem and black group identification/nonmainstream is negative.

Turning to the social reality effects, black group perspective shows a negative correlation with all the other variables. These other variables were positively correlated among themselves. Given that the correlation between black group identification/mainstream and black group identification/nonmainstream is only .13, the outcome variables seem to be tapping substantially different social phenomena.

Regression coefficients were estimated, following from left to right in Figure 1, as follows: (1) Each of the two exposure variables was regressed on the four background/social structural variables. (2) Each social reality effect was first regressed on the background/social structural variables and then on both the background/social structural and media exposure variables. In the first step, the regression assessed the total effects of background social structural variables on social reality effects; that is, direct influences plus those operating indirectly through media exposure. In the second step, the regression yielded direct influences on social reality effects for both groups of variables.

Table 2 summarizes the main results. The first two columns show the effects of background/social structural variables on exposure to black print media and black-oriented television. Only education has a statistically significant relationship with black print media; it accounts for 7% of the variance. Those with more education are more likely to attend to black print media, but age, education, and parent training make no difference. Three variables account for 4% of the variance in black-oriented television exposure. Those of less education, those of younger age, and those who reported receiving parental training explicitly related to race are more likely to watch black-oriented television. With these variables controlled, income is not a significant factor.

TABLE 2
Standardized Coefficients of Model of Social Reality Effects

	Dependent Variables ^a													
	Black Print Media Exposure		Black-oriented TV Exposure		Self-esteem		Black Group Perception		Black Group Identification (nonmainstream)		Black Group Identification (mainstream)		Black Separatist Perspective	
	T	D	T	D	T	D	T	D	T	D	T	D	T	D
Income	.00		-.04		.15*	.15*	.05	.04	-.13*	-.12*	.01	.03	.01	.00
Age	-.01		-.10*		.18*	.17*	.03	.03	-.22*	-.21*	.20*	.22*	.03	.04
Education	.26*		-.10*		.09	.05	.23*	.25*	.01	.01	-.21*	-.22*	-.22*	-.20*
Parent Training	.04		.15*		.00	.00	-.10*	-.09*	-.07	-.10*	.04	.02	.06	.04
Black Print Media Exposure					.12*			.10*		.05		.03		-.02
Black-oriented TV Exposure					-.09*			-.09*		.15*		.14*		.10*
R ²	.07		.04		.05	.07	.10	.11	.07	.09	.13	.16	.06	.07

a. For each dependent variable the left-most column presents total effects (T), the other column presents direct effects (D).

*Statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Moving to social reality, for self-esteem both income and age have positive effects. The exposure measures have direct effects on self-esteem but in opposite directions. Those who spend more time with the black print media exhibit greater self-esteem; those who spend more time with black-oriented television have lower self-esteem. Together, all these measures account for 7% of the variance. Little of the effect of income or age is mediated by exposure.

The remainder of the social reality effects to be analyzed are race related and group oriented. For black group perception, education has a positive effect, and parent training has a negative one. Those with more education have a higher black group perception, as do those who reported receiving no parental training explicitly related to race. Both exposure measures affect black group perception but, again, in opposing directions. Those who watch more black-oriented television are less likely to have a positive black group perception, but consumers of black print media have stronger black group perceptions. These two exposure measures mediate almost none of the effect of education and parental training, and neither income nor age has any effect; 11% of the variance in black group perception was explained by these variables.

Four variables account for 9% of the variance in black group identification/nonmainstream. Those with less income, those of younger age and those who report no parental training related to race exhibit more black group identification/nonmainstream. Those who spent more time watching black-oriented television are more likely to have a strong nonmainstream black group identification. Black-oriented television exposure mediated little of the effect of income and age. Neither education nor black print media made a difference on this orientation.

Of all the social reality effects, most success was achieved in explaining black group identification/mainstream. The background/social structural variables alone account for 13% of the variance. Being older and having less education, each independently contributes to greater identification; 16% of the variance is explained when media exposure measures are added, due to the effect of black-oriented television exposure. Practically

all of the effect of age and education is independent of black-oriented television exposure. Income, parent training, and black print media add nothing further to the equation.

Finally, there is a tendency for those with less education and those who watch more black-oriented television to have a black separatist perspective. Almost none of the effect of education is mediated by the black-oriented television exposure variable, nor are any other variables significant predictors of black separatism.

Summary. Although only a modest amount of variance was explained overall, the media exposure measures did account for some sizable increases in explained variance, beyond the background/social structural variables. There was a statistically significant incremental increase in three of the five dependent variables, self-esteem, black group identification/mainstream and nonmainstream. In the case of self-esteem, the amount of variance explained increased by 40% when the exposure variables were included; the increase was 10% for black group perception, 29% for black group identification/nonmainstream, 23% for black group identification/mainstream, and 17% for black separatist perspective.

The background/social structural variables had consistent, although nonuniform, effects on both media exposure and social reality effects. Also, media exposure affected each of the social reality effects in some ways. Black print media exposure had a significant positive effect on two of the social reality effects, one nonracial and one racial. Black-oriented television exposure affected every social reality effect. It had a positive effect on three of the four group-oriented social reality indicators, but negative effects on black group perspective and on self-esteem. These media exposure measures mediated at most a very modest amount of the effects of background/social structural variables.

Hypotheses 1 and 2, which pertained to the relationship of age, education, and income to the media exposure measures, received some support, but there were notable discrepancies. For example, income did not have a significant effect on black-oriented television exposure. Age was related to this television exposure

measure, but opposite to the predicted direction. Neither age nor income had statistically significant effects on black print media exposure.

Hypothesis 3, regarding the relationship of education, age, and parental training to self-esteem, also received partial support, with parental training having no effect at all. Hypothesis 4, which assumed a relationship between the background/social structural variables and black group orientations, also received partial support. This hypothesis actually incorporated four sub-hypotheses; that is, the relationship of the background/social structural variables on black group perception, black group identification/mainstream and nonmainstream, and black separatist perspective. The major discrepancy involved the direction of the predictor variables for black group perception.

The fifth hypothesis, which predicted that black-oriented television would be inversely related to greater self-esteem, received support. Hypothesis 6, however, received only partial support. Black-oriented television had a negative effect on black group perception as predicted. Contrary to our hypothesis, this media exposure measure had a positive relationship to the three other black group orientations—group identification/mainstream, nonmainstream, and black separatist perspective. That is, those who watched more black-oriented television were more likely to express greater black group identification and a black separatist perspective.

Although Hypothesis 7—the assumed positive relationship between black print media exposure and self-esteem—received support, Hypothesis 8—the assumed positive relationship between black print media exposure and black group orientations—received support only in the case of black group perception.

CONCLUSIONS

This study embodies a theoretical synthesis of two broad areas of research that presume that the media have a powerful influence on the shaping of an individual's conception of reality. This theoretical synthesis may be distinguished in several ways from other individual perspectives that refer to the dominant role of the

media. First, it provides a fairly comprehensive picture of factors leading to social reality effects. Aside from assuming that the media (mass or otherwise), as a source of symbolic reality, have an impact on the construction of social reality, it points to the importance of objective reality, more broadly conceived, as an influence. The concept of social reality effects is itself expanded to include not only perceptions about what society is like, but also attitudes toward self and the group to which one belongs.

Second, this synthesis highlights the distinction between the theoretical language and the operational language and a distinction between the measured and unmeasured variables. This was done by specifying different types of realities (objective, symbolic, and subjective) and by presenting the theoretical linkages from these theoretically defined variables and their empirical indicators. Thus, it was possible to observe the extent to which the theoretical concepts had meaning beyond their empirical indicators. Third, the theoretical propositions derived from the synthesis were incorporated into an *explicit* auxiliary model that allows them to be tested.

The auxiliary model focuses on the extent to which blacks' perceptions and attitudes are influenced by black-oriented television, black print media, and various measures of background/social structural factors. The two research areas upon which this synthesis was based have examined almost entirely the majority population. Employing a black sample permits an assessment of the generalizability of each of these areas. Our broader range of variables, reflecting our theoretical constructs, permits an assessment of the scope of our theoretical synthesis.

The results yielded support, in varying degrees, for our propositions. First, the indicators of symbolic reality had differential effects on the indicators of social reality in the close zone of relevance. Specifically, black-oriented television exposure had a negative influence on self-esteem—a "close" variable—but a positive relationship with the remaining, more remote, variables. Further, black print media exposure evidenced a statistically significant positive relationship to self-esteem, but it was significantly related to only one of the other four social reality effects. Thus, the findings suggested that separating social reality effects in terms of zones of relevance may be useful.

The social reality effect that best approximated the ones typically used in cultivation analysis (black group perception) was inversely related to black-oriented television exposure as predicted. Also, the accumulation of television (amount of exposure to black-oriented television) had effects on all of the social reality variables as compared to the black print media, which had an effect on two of the five social reality effects. Hence, at least with respect to the indicators of subjective reality used here, television may be said to be a more powerful predictor of social reality effects.

Third, although admittedly limited, the various indicators of objective reality did have a substantial influence on social reality effects. Its effects were, to a large degree, direct as opposed to being mediated by the media measures. Incorporation of this construct category, although the specific indicators used may vary depending on the social reality effect under examination, is important in obtaining an understanding of the construction of social reality.

Contrary to our prediction, black-oriented television exposure was related positively to three of the four black group orientations. Because black-oriented television is predominantly of the situation comedy variety, and because numerous content analyses have pointed to the unfavorable images presented of blacks in this content type, it was assumed that this would have a negative impact on the individual's view of the group. It may be that blacks are aware of the negative images presented of them as a group and as a consequence develop stronger ties with the group to which they belong. This is given more substance when one considers the social reality effects investigated. For example, greater exposure to black-oriented television may lead blacks to have a stronger identification with blacks (mainstream and nonmainstream), and to have a stronger desire to separate from whites as a group (black separatist perspective).

As an alternative explanation, it may be that blacks are more attentive and more heavily influenced by *black public affairs* content that appears on television, and this in turn influences their group orientations. It would have been useful to have also had a measure of black-oriented television that assessed exposure to black public affairs type content.

Another surprising finding was the relationship, or lack thereof, of black print exposure with most of the black group orientations. Although it was predicted that these relationships would yield a positive relationship on all the social reality effects, this was the case for only two of the five social reality effects. Part of this enigmatic finding may have been due to wide variety of content subsumed under the heading of black print media exposure, such as newspapers, magazines, and books. Because these different media cut across a very broad ideological spectrum and cater to different elements in the black community, it is very difficult to assume with any degree of certainty what type of content is involved in overall exposure to "black print media." Valuable information would be provided by a measure that tapped which print medium and which type of content within that medium the individual reads.

It would have been desirable to have multiple measures of black-oriented television that tap the amount of attention and amount of time given to the various program types. Similarly, for each print medium, and for various ideological content categories of each medium, the amount of attention and amount of time given to these sources might have been assessed.

Given the unreliability of the one-item measures used to represent the exposure concepts, their relationship with the social reality effects suggests that more adequate measures might reveal much stronger effects. This may also account for the small impact of exposure measures in mediating the effects of the background/social structural variables. The social reality effects that we have explored are gradual and cumulative social phenomena that involve multiple causes and a wide range of diverse influences, each of which may be small. Viewed in these items, it should not be surprising that a relatively small amount of the variance was explained.

There are several issues that need to be addressed in future research. For one, it would be useful to explicate the different dimensions that constitute what have been called social reality effects. Because some of the perspectives that have dealt with the power of the media have given more prominence to the print media and others to the electronic media, the difference between the two media may be due to the type of social reality effect

examined. Also, it would be worthwhile to examine simultaneously the interdependence of the reality types.

Substantively, future research might explore not only the relationships of black-oriented television and black print media on black group orientations, but also these relationships when other content in the majority media are included as additional sources of symbolic reality. This research endeavor is of considerable importance when it is noted that the majority media and nonblack-oriented content are the primary sources of information for most blacks.

NOTES

1. There is a disparity between the proportion of men and women in the sample and a slight tendency to underrepresent younger people of both sexes and overrepresent older women. Analyses revealed no sex differences between respondents and nonrespondents. The sex differences may be due to the disproportionate representation of female-headed black households in the United States. There was a slight tendency to overrepresent low-income groups and for a slightly higher proportion of individuals to come from the South than their distribution in the population would indicate. These differences from the expected census distribution were relatively slight, particularly in comparison with other large studies of the black population.

2. The parental training variables constitute reports of perceptions of such training. A few caveats are in order: It seems likely that those reports should be related to respondents' age, for both motivational and historical reasons. Older respondents may forget what their parents told them, and what parents actually said may have changed during recent decades.

3. The exact wording of this item was: "How often do you watch black television programs?" This is somewhat ambiguous. It may be interpreted to include programs in which blacks are the main characters but written from a white perspective, primarily entertainment shows (black situation comedies), or programs that focus on topics relevant to blacks as a group and written from a black perspective, such as black public affairs programs. Because the most frequent programs on television that depict black life are situation comedies or other entertainment-oriented fare, the majority of the respondents might interpret the question in the first sense. The formulation of four of the hypotheses was guided by this assumption.

4. The five scales representing the social reality constructs were coded to reflect a greater amount of the attribute. They were composed of the following items:

Self-esteem

- (1) I am a useful person to have around.
- (2) I feel that I am a person of worth.
- (3) I feel that my life is not very useful.
- (4) I feel I can't do anything right.

- (5) I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
- (6) As a person I do a good job these days.

Black group perception

Extent of agreement with the statements:

- (1) Most black people are ashamed of themselves.
- (2) Most black people are lazy.
- (3) Most black people neglect their families.
- (4) Most black people are lying or trifling.
- (5) Most black people are hard working.
- (6) Most black people do for others.
- (7) Most black people give up easily.
- (8) Most black people are weak.
- (9) Most black people are proud of themselves.
- (10) Most black people are selfish.

Black group identification/nonmainstream

Degree of closeness felt toward:

- (1) Black people who rioted in the cities.
- (2) Black Americans who take African names.
- (3) Black people who have made it by getting around the law.

Black group identification/mainstream

Degree of closeness felt toward:

- (1) Religious, church-going black people.
- (2) Middle-class black people.
- (3) Working-class black people.
- (4) Older black people.
- (5) Black elected officials.
- (6) Black doctors, lawyers, and other professional people.
- (7) Younger black people.

Black separatist perspective

Extent of agreement with the statements:

- (1) Black children should study an African language.
- (2) Blacks should always vote for black candidates when they run.
- (3) Black women should not date white men.
- (4) Black people should shop in black-owned stores whenever possible.
- (5) Black men should not date white women.
- (6) Black parents should give their children African names.

Reliability estimates Cronbach's alpha of the social reality effects were: .67 for self-esteem, .71 for black group perception, .81 for black group identification/mainstream, .63 for black group identification/nonmainstream, and .72 for black separatist perspective.

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