Black Women in Contemporary Media: Representations, Effects, and Social Commentary

by

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Dedication

To my late grandfather, Rev. Veno Van Cox, and my Cox and Scott family. Thank you for being so supportive of me.

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Abstract

Research examining Black women's portrayals on television have often found that Black women are portrayed stereotypically, as Jezebels, Sapphires, and Strong Black Women (Collins, 2000). However, very few studies have examined the *current* portrayals of Black women on television. I aimed to examine how Black women are portrayed on scripted TV programs today and to investigate how those portrayals contribute to Black youths' perceptions of Black women. I conducted three studies to examine these issues.

The first study was a content analysis of 12 scripted TV programs that feature Black women as lead or secondary characters (e.g., *Scandal, Insecure, Being Mary Jane*). With this study, I aimed to get a wholistic view of the Black women portrayed on scripted programs by examining portrayals of Black mothering, Black women's friendships, and Black women's stress in addition to the traditional categories used for coding Black women (e.g., skin tone, occupation). Results showed that Black women were often dark skinned, thin, mothers, unmarried, in white collar jobs, bossy, and sexualized.

The second study was a survey of approximately 600 Black adolescents that assessed whether their regular consumption of the 12 programs from Study 1 related to their beliefs about Black women (i.e., Black women as Jezebels, Sapphires, and Strong Black Women). Additionally, I compared the beliefs of those who watched more of the 12 programs to those who watched more programs without central Black women characters. Furthermore, I investigated the impact of exposure to programs with high and low levels of certain characterizations of Black women (i.e., Black women as Jezebels, Sapphires, and Strong Black Women) on adolescents'

beliefs about Black women. Results showed that watching more of the 12 programs was not predictive of endorsement of stereotypical beliefs about Black women. Watching more programs without Black women as lead characters was also not predictive of endorsement of stereotypical beliefs about Black women. However, watching programs without prominent Black women leads was predictive of endorsing Eurocentric beauty ideals. Furthermore, frequent exposure to programs with High Jezebel content was predictive of endorsement of the Jezebel stereotype for boys.

In my third study, I assessed whether adolescents used social media while watching TV programs to discuss Black women characters. A Social TV scale was created to assess how frequently participants commented on various aspects of a TV character (e.g., clothes, behaviors, relationships) via social media. Here, I was interested in learning whether Social TV had an effect on adolescents' beliefs about Black women. Results showed that Social TV did have an effect for Black boys but not for Black girls, in that boys who made more social media commentary about characters on TV programs were more likely to endorse the ideas of Black women being Jezebels and Sapphires. However, girls who made more social media commentary about characters were more likely to endorse Eurocentric beauty ideals.

Together, these findings highlight that while portrayals of Black women may be less stereotypical today, Black adolescents, particularly Black boys, are still susceptible to stereotypical thoughts about Black women via the media. Suggestions for future research are provided.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Media have become increasingly accessible to adolescents and young adults, especially television and social media. Furthermore, African Americans consume more television than members of all other ethnic groups, which makes them a group of particular interest (Nielsen, 2018). Unfortunately, we know little about the content of the television programs that African Americans view and even less about the content on social media platforms that African Americans use. What we do know is that Black Americans prefer to watch Black-oriented television programs and are also critical consumers of media (Ward, Day, & Thomas, 2010). Over the past decade, Black-oriented scripted TV programs have become more prevalent (Nielsen, 2019), and Black women are often at the forefront of them (e.g., *Being Mary Jane*, *How to Get Away with Murder*, *Insecure*). Given the prominence of Black female characters on television, an appropriate next step would be to document the nature of these new portrayals. Are historical stereotypical portrayals still present (e.g., Jezebel, Mammy, Sapphire) or have the representations diversified? Because these portrayals can potentially shape viewers' beliefs about Black women, understanding their nature is an important foundation for the field.

With this dissertation, I investigate the nature of portrayals of Black women on scripted TV programs and examine whether regular exposure to these portrayals contributes to adolescents' and young adults' perceptions of Black women. My analyses address three central questions: How are Black women portrayed on scripted television programs? Does exposure to these portrayals contribute to Black adolescents' perceptions of Black women? Does exposure to

social media content regarding Black women on scripted TV alter perceptions of Black women? Regarding perceptions of Black women, I explore thoughts about motherhood, stereotypes, respectability, and femininity.

Theoretically, my work is informed by cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1998) and Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 1989). Cultivation theory assumes that those who consume media more often will be more likely than those who consume media less frequently to accept the ideals presented in media. Black Feminist Thought emphasizes independent and contextual thinking about Black women and their experiences despite the insulting, one-dimensional rhetoric about Black women that majority populations push (Collins, 1989). I apply this theory to argue that Black people, as a group, are more aware of the realities of Black women and therefore may reject the media's stereotypes about Black women.

Many studies on Black media consumption have focused on the presence and potential implication of a narrow and stereotypical portrayal of Black women; however, I choose to highlight the potential variability in Black female characters and the critical thinking of Black adolescents and young adults regarding Black women. With these three dissertation studies, I investigate whether the current portrayals of Black women on scripted TV are as stereotypical as they once were. Moreover, if Black women *are* portrayed stereotypically, I argue that Black youth may have the skills to critically analyze these portrayals and, perhaps, reject them. Furthermore, interacting with positive commentary on social media about Black women on scripted TV, whether the portrayals are stereotypical or otherwise, could result in holding more positive views of Black women. Accordingly, I aim to analyze how Black women are portrayed

on television, discern whether consistent exposure to television content affects adolescents' perceptions of Black women, and assess the effects of social media in conjunction with television viewing.

Theoretical Rationale

Cultivation Theory. Using findings from content analyses, cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1998) argues that media content consistently portrays a specific world view. Furthermore, cultivation theory proposes that frequent consumers of media will be more likely than those who consume media less frequently to accept and embrace the dominant themes presented in the media. That is, watching scripted TV programs consistently is likely to lead viewers to gradually adopt the themes and messages being portrayed on those programs. Results from large scale surveys support these associations. In the following paragraphs, I provide an overview of both classic and current cultivation findings about gender.

In terms of gender role portrayals, scholars first established that television content is dominated by stereotypical portrayals of masculinity and femininity (for review, see Witt, 2000). Since the 1980's, cultivation scholars have demonstrated that regular TV viewing is associated with holding more traditional gender role attitudes (for review, see Scharrer, 2013). In a meta-analysis of 31 studies examining consistent TV viewing and traditional gender role attitudes, the statistical connection between television exposure and gender-related outcomes was found to be $r = .24$ for experimental studies and $r = .12$ for correlational surveys, suggesting a positive association (Oppliger, 2007).

There have also been many recent studies using cultivation theory to test associations between TV viewing and viewers' gender ideals, and these studies provide us with more data to build on (Giaccardi, Ward, Seabrook, Manago, & Lippman, 2016; Scharrer & Blackburn, 2018a;

Scharrer & Blackburn, 2018b). For example, Scharrer and Blackburn's (2018a) survey on emerging adults' overall television exposure in relation to their beliefs about masculinity found that high consumption of particular genres of television was related to traditional beliefs about masculinity for men only. Scharrer and Blackburn (2018b) conducted another study in which they examined adults' overall and reality TV viewing in relation to their beliefs about gendered aggression. The authors found that more reality TV viewing was associated with greater approval of female-perpetrated verbal aggression, which they deemed unsurprising given the high prevalence of women arguing on reality TV. Furthermore, in a study assessing undergraduate men's media diets in relation to their beliefs about masculinity, it was found that reality TV viewing was a significant predictor of traditional beliefs about the male role (Giaccardi et al., 2016). These findings support cultivation theory in that they were conducted under the premise that TV programs feature traditional gender roles. The findings also highlight how TV viewing affects one's thoughts about gender particularly when one's own gender is being considered.

Studies using cultivation theory to assess the effects of social media are scarce; however, the few that exist indicate that social media, like television, consist of widely held messages, which means that frequent social media users should be more likely to hold beliefs and behave in a way that coincides with those messages. Because one prominent message on social media is the importance of looking fit and attractive, scholars have tested whether regular consumption is linked to users' body image beliefs. Findings across several studies indicate such a link (Saiphoo & Vahedi, 2019). For example, Saunders and Eaton (2018) studied young women's social media use in relation to their body surveillance, body dissatisfaction, and eating habits, and found that users of *Facebook, Instagram,* and *Snapchat* demonstrated more disordered eating and body surveillance. Cultivation theory was also the basis of Williams and Fedorowicz's (2019) study on

Facebook and *Twitter* users' perceptions of the police. Their results revealed that followers of the police department, who interact frequently with the posts of the police department, were more likely to report satisfaction with the police. This result was even more pronounced for White social media users. Overall, these studies suggest that cultivation theory can be applied to social media as well as television.

Black Feminist Thought. Black feminist thought (BFT) is both oppositional thought and methodology (Collins, 2016; Patterson, Kinloch, Burkhard, Randall, & Howard, 2016). It is oppositional when considering controlling images of Black women. Black feminist thought posits that Black women are controlled by Mammy, Matriarch, Jezebel, and Black Lady stereotypes, among others. Furthermore, BFT states that Black women are Othered in American society, that they are seen as the opposite of White, which is deemed by society as superior (Collins, 2000). Controlling images also include messages about standards of beauty (i.e., skin color, facial features, and hair texture), deeming White standards of beauty as the only standard. Fortunately, BFT also posits that Black women resist these controlling images.

Forms of resistance include both oppositional thought and methodology (i.e., actions to promote oppositional thought). Specifically, Black women have to define their realities on their own terms and "become self-defined and self-determining within intersecting oppressions" (p. 291; Collins, 2000). Because Black women are currently prominent as both lead and secondary characters on scripted television, I argue that Black women are given a chance to define themselves on scripted television, thus resisting controlling images. Collins (2000) discusses how films and documentaries that have broadcasted Black women coming to know themselves were important forms of resistance. Many times, the directors of these films were also Black women. However, Collins (2016) has recently acknowledged that Black women are now being

openly accepted and welcomed in spaces where they have been historically excluded and by folks who have historically excluded them. In this case, Black women are more prominent on TV, and this is not only true for programs directed by Black women. This broadening representation may indicate that other communities are beginning to resist stereotypical, controlling images of Black women, as well.

Black feminist thought is a guiding theory for my work not only because it centers Black women, but also because I believe Black feminist thought is present among Black youth, male and female. As stated previously, this new era and political climate have awakened many to the plights of Black women (e.g., Patton & Ward, 2016). So, although quite possible, it would be unusual for Black youth to be against the empowerment of Black women. In studies on critical racial consciousness, it has been found that Black youth often participate in identity-based social movements (Mathews et al., 2019). Furthermore, Black youth have been documented to exhibit critical media literacy, using platforms like Twitter and Youtube to combat negative narratives about Black people (Baker-Bell, Stanbrough, & Everett, 2017). Collins (2000) also talks about how Black mothers socialize their daughters "for survival," giving them the tools needed to resist stereotypes about Black women and create their own realities. I want to extend this notion and add that, today, many Black mothers are also socializing their sons about the difficulties facing Black women. Thus, Black youth, at large, may have tools to resist cultural stereotypes about Black women.

The Current Studies

The following three studies use multiple methods to examine one overarching question: How are Black women portrayed and discussed in media and how do these portrayals contribute to Black youth's thoughts about Black women? Study 1 examines the portrayals of Black women

on twelve scripted television programs using the quantitative content analysis method. Study 2 utilizes survey methods to assess Black adolescents' exposure to the twelve programs coded during the content analysis and aims to explore the correlations between viewership of those programs and beliefs about Black girls and women. Additionally, I seek to inquire about Black adolescents' social media use while watching TV (referred to hereafter as Social TV). Study 3 utilizes survey methods and expands on Study 2 by testing whether Social TV engagement affects Black adolescents' perceptions of Black women.

Chapter 2

Study 1: A Wholistic View of Black Women on Scripted TV: A Content Analysis

Norms and expectations for femininity and feminine behavior are socially constructed within each culture. For women in North America, expectations for femininity include being warm, expressive, nurturant, appearance-oriented, and relationship-oriented (Carpenter, 2002; Mahalik et al., 2005; Tolman & Porche, 2000). In sexual relationships, women are expected to be passive, partner-pleasers, faithful, and sexually attractive, yet sexually modest (Carpenter, 2002; Mahalik et al., 2005). When these norms are not upheld, women risk being ridiculed and stigmatized. Indeed, gender nonconforming women are more likely to face discrimination, victimization, and harassment (Leskinen, Rabelo, & Cortina, 2015; Miller & Grollman, 2015).

Although these aforementioned expectations are conveyed by many sources, including schools, family members, friends, and religious institutions (Chen, 1999), television has emerged as a prominent source of gender socialization for U.S. girls and women (Witt, 2000). From situation-comedies (sit-coms) and dramas to music videos, television provides abundant examples of how women look, act, relate, succeed, and fail. These portrayals are not uniform and have been noted to vary based on the race and age of the characters (e.g., Mastro & Stern, 2003), the genre of programming (e.g., Mastro & Greenberg, 2000), and the time period (e.g., Signorielli & Bacue, 1999). For Black women, specifically, their history of television portrayals has been one of under- and mis-representation. Historically, Black women were not frequently featured as lead characters on TV (e.g., Mastro & Stern, 2003; Seggar, Hafen, & Hannonen-

Gladden, 1981), and when they were, their portrayals typically emphasized their appearance (e.g., Conrad, Dixon, & Zhang, 2009; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000) and their status as workers or family members (e.g., Nama, 2003; Riles, Varava, Pilny, & Tewksbury, 2018; Signorielli, 2009). To what extent are Black women portrayed meeting the many expectations of femininity?

Because of the limited nature of the existing analyses, we do not have detailed information about the breadth of these portrayals. Accordingly, with this study, we sought to provide a broader analysis of the portrayals of Black women on scripted television by considering a range of attributes, and by assessing portrayals at a behavioral level. This work is driven by three main research questions: Which behaviors are most and least prevalent among Black women on scripted television programs? What demographic attributes (i.e., occupation, marital status, maternal status, skin tone, body size) characterize Black women leads? Do the behaviors or attributes of these women differ based on these demographic attributes?

Femininity Norms for Black Women

What are the gender role norms and expectations for Black women, and do they differ, in any way, from the expectations listed above? Although U.S. women of all ethnic groups need to negotiate the dominant culture's norms of femininity (i.e., hegemonic femininity), socio-historical forces within the United States have created additional demands for Black women. During the Antebellum period, enslaved Black women were treated much like men, encountering similar labor expectations and violent punishments. Post-slavery, it was often necessary for Black women to work to help provide for their families, sometimes as the sole caretaker (Collins, 2000). These circumstances required Black women to assume both the hard labor expectations of masculinity *and* the nurturing expectations of femininity. Partly as a result of these circumstances, the gender ideal that has emerged for Black women encompasses feminine traits

associated with nurturing as well as masculine traits associated with providing, such as strength and independence (Littlefield, 2003). Indeed, the feminine ideal that has emerged is the Strong Black Woman (SBW), which expects Black women to be resilient, emotionally strong, and self-sufficient, and also nurturing and self-sacrificing (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Romero, 2000; Woods-Giscombe, 2010).

Empirical data indicate that Black women have incorporated both sets of gender traits (i.e., nurturance and strength) into their identity as women (e.g., Settles, Pratt-Hyatt, & Buchanan, 2008). First, studies examining gender role orientation via scales such as the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (Bem, 1981) have indicated that the gender identities of Black women and men are often heavily androgynous (Littlefield, 2003), and more so than those of European Americans. For example, Harris (1996) surveyed the gender ideals of 932 White and 808 Black middle-class adults using a modified version of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1981). Overall, both Black men and women reported more androgynous gender identities than White men and women. Additionally, Black women regarded masculine traits as more self-descriptive than feminine traits, and regarded masculine traits as more self-descriptive than White women did.

Second, qualitative and survey data assessing Black women's conceptions of femininity support these patterns. For example, in focus groups with 44 Black women, Abrams, Javier, Maxwell, Belgrave, and Nguyen (2016) found that participants' gender role beliefs included four themes: (a) providing selfless care for others, (b) wearing many hats (the expectation to handle everything), (c) constantly displaying strength, and (d) encountering stereotypes of inferiority. The expectation to have strength was the most salient theme, including resilient strength, independent strength, and cornerstone strength (i.e., serving as the glue in the family). Similarly,

in interviews with 50 Black youth aged 16-21, Kerrigan, Andrinopoulos, Johnson, Parham, Thomas, and Ellen (2007) found that participants' definitions of femininity centered on three roles: (a) being economically independent, (b) being emotionally strong, and (c) being a caretaker. Cole and Zucker (2007) surveyed a national sample of Black and White women on beliefs about feminine appearance, feminine attributes (e.g., gentleness), and traditional gender ideology. Both Black and White women rated feminine appearance as very important. Although Black women identified themselves as feminists more often than White women, Black women also offered more support than White women about the importance of feminine clothes and an attractive home. Moreover, the importance of wearing feminine clothing was a positive predictor of feminism for Black women, but unrelated for White women. Together, these findings indicate that for Black women, femininity and womanhood combine components of hegemonic femininity, such as nurturance and the importance of appearance, with attributes associated with hegemonic masculinity, such as strength and financial independence.

Aside from the SBW ideal, Black women must also negotiate negative and stereotypical cultural images of their group, including the images of the Jezebel and Sapphire (Jerald, Ward, Moss, Thomas, & Fletcher, 2017; Townsend, Neilands, Thomas, & Jackson, 2010). The Jezebel is characterized as an attractive, flirtatious, hypersexual, and manipulative Black woman (West, 1995). Like many stereotypes about Black women, the Jezebel stereotype was created for a purpose: to justify the rape of Black women by their owners during slavery (West, 1995). The Jezebel's physical characteristics were akin to European features in that she was fair skinned, had straight hair, and had thin lips and nose. The Sapphire is a Black woman who emasculates Black men, and is angry, loud, controlling, aggressive, and bossy (West, 1995). She is essentially what is described today as the "angry Black woman" and originated from the personality of

Sapphire, Kingfish's wife, on the *Amos and Andy* radio show in the 1940's and 1950's (West, 1995). Although both the Sapphire and Jezebel stereotypes of Black women were constructed decades ago, it is believed that contemporary versions remain in mainstream media and popular culture (Fasula, Carry, & Miller, 2014; Stephens & Phillips, 2003).

Quantitative Content Analyses of Portrayals of Black Women on Television

Efforts to document the nature of media portrayals of Black women typically take one of two forms: quantitative content analyses or critical thematic analyses. Quantitative content analyses typically sample a broad range of programming, representing commonly viewed programs. Researchers may sample one particular genre of TV, or they may sample all primetime TV. After identifying a sample of programs, researchers code for the frequency with which a selection of actions or attributes appear. Additionally, researchers will code for demographic information (e.g., marital status, occupation) to be able to compare across groups. Previous content analyses of Black women have mostly focused on the percentage of Black women characters present in television as compared to their numbers in the United States population (e.g., Parrott & Parrott, 2015; Seggar et al., 1981; Signorielli, 2009). Less attention has been paid to the actual content of these portrayals. When the portrayals of Black women were assessed, it was often only in terms of music videos (e.g., Conrad et al., 2009) or commercials (e.g., Mastro & Stern, 2003) rather than television programs. Nonetheless, within the small body of work on Black women's portrayals on television, a few patterns emerge.

First, the existing analyses tell a story about prevalence. Many studies assessed the percentage of characters with speaking parts across gender and race (Harwood & Anderson, 2002; Seggar et al., 1981; Signorielli, 2009; Signorielli & Bacue, 1999; Tamborini, Mastro, Chory-Assad, & Huang, 2000). For example, analyses indicated that between 1971 and 1980,

Black women were shown on television relatively rarely (5.2% to 6.2% of the time; Seggar et al., 1981). Additionally, during that time period, Black women in major roles decreased significantly (from 9.6% to 2.4%; Seggar et al., 1981). Since then, Black women have become increasingly more prominent on television, comprising 14% of characters on prime-time television between 2000 and 2008 (Signorielli, 2009). Additionally, a recent industry report found that racial/ethnic minorities made up 11.4% of the lead roles in broadcast scripted programs during the 2014-2015 season, and 15.8% of the lead roles in cable scripted programs (Hunt et al., 2017). However, in an analysis of MTV's reality TV programs, only 10% of Black women were in central roles compared to 49% of Black men (Park, Flynn, Stana, Morin, & Yun, 2015).

Second, existing quantitative analyses have documented how Black women looked or were expected to look. Across several content analyses of race and gender on television, it was found that Black characters, including Black women, were often overweight (Mastro & Figueroa-Caballero, 2018), sexualized (Conrad et al., 2009; Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2015), and provocatively dressed (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000). For example, Mastro and Greenberg (2000) analyzed 64 prime time TV programs during the Fall of 1996, examining physical and appearance characteristics of ethnic minority and majority characters. They found that Blacks were more provocative and less professional in their dress than Whites and Latinx individuals. Similarly, Tukachinsky and colleagues (2015) analyzed the 345 most viewed television programs between 1987 and 2008 for portrayals of race and ethnicity and found that Black characters were significantly more sexualized than Latinx and Asian American characters. Additionally, they found that Black women were significantly more sexually objectified than Black men. More recently, Mastro and Figueroa-Caballero (2018) examined depictions of body

type on 89 scripted and reality TV programs during the Fall of 2013 and found that 93% of Black characters were portrayed as overweight or obese.

Third, existing analyses have given a sense of Black women's roles inside and outside the home. In their analysis of 64 prime-time programs, Mastro and Greenberg (2000) found that Black characters usually had conversations about business (17% of topics), personal relationships (17%), and social/leisure issues (17%). They also found that Black characters were portrayed as the least aggressive, yet least respected and laziest among Black, White, and Latinx characters. In Nama's (2003) content analysis of Black characters on 33 TV dramas, she found that programs about law enforcement constituted 56% of the programs with reoccurring Black characters. However, although these Black characters were portrayed in high-status positions, such as police officers and paramedics, they were often not speaking and were shown in the background. Signorielli (2009) analyzed prime time TV programs between 1997 and 2006 for the occupational status of racial and gender minorities. She found that among programs with mostly racial minority casts, 60% of Black women were shown as household or service workers. Additionally, Black women were less likely to be cast as professionals compared to White women and other women of color. Riles and colleagues (2018) analyzed the interpersonal interactions across 124 prime time programs and found that Black characters' interactions were most often work-related. However, when Black characters were interacting with other Black characters, their interactions were most often family related. Together, these results suggest that Black women are either shown in the home dealing with familial relationships, or working in high-status occupations, but seldom as the leading character.

Qualitative and Critical Analyses of Portrayals of Black Women on Television

A second approach toward documenting the nature of media portrayals of Black women is the qualitative study or critical analysis. Here, scholars critique and analyze one or two media products, such as a film or a television program, providing insights about select themes and their likely meaning. Overall, analyses of this type have indicated that portrayals of Black women are still quite stereotypical. For example, in her 2015 book, *Real Sister: Stereotypes, Respectability, and Black Women in Reality TV,* Ward argued that the Black women in programs such as *Real Housewives of Atlanta* and *Love and Hip-Hop* were portrayed as modern-day minstrels because of their "over-the-top" behavior. In her opinion, Black women in the past carried a "public and cultural responsibility" (p. 20) that Black women in the media today seem to disregard. Similarly, scholars have argued that modern day Jezebels are seen in music videos and reality television programs but are referred to today as "freaks" or "thots" (meaning, "that hoe over there"; Coleman, Butler, Long, & Fisher, 2016; Lundy, 2018). These critiques of the sexual appearance and behavior of Black women on television have extended to scripted television programs. In her analysis of stereotypes presented in *Scandal*, Baldwin (2015) referred to the leading character Olivia Pope as a modern-day Jezebel for being the mistress of two men. Together, these disparate findings suggest that Black women on scripted TV may be painted using a narrow brush, with heavy attention to highly emotional and sexualized portrayals.

Understudied Elements Concerning Televised Portrayals of Black Women

Although the studies cited above outline some important and provocative patterns, there are still several aspects concerning the portrayal of Black women on TV that are unknown. First, to what extent do these characters conform to the larger, cultural gender role norms and expectations for their gender? Each study to date has typically focused on one small piece of

gender role norms, such as appearance or family role. Assessment is needed across a broader swath of femininity norms, such as expectations of nurturance and emotionality. Second, within specific domains, such as feminine appearance, expansions are needed of the attributes and genres examined in order to produce a fuller picture. For example, although results from content analyses of music videos (Conrad et al., 2009) and magazines (Keenan, 1996) indicated that Black women of lighter complexions were over-represented, we do not know if these patterns apply to Black women on TV programs. Third, although evidence indicated that Black characters' interactions with each other were often family centered (Riles et al., 2018), we do not know the extent of Black women's familial relationships (e.g., as mothers or wives). We also know little about Black women's sexual relationships, outside of indications that Black women are often sexualized (Tukachinsky et al., 2015). Fourth, there has been little quantitative analysis of Black women's on-screen friendships, even though many programs center on these relationships (e.g., *Living Single*, *Girlfriends*). Indeed, being communal, affiliative, and supportive are core components of hegemonic femininity (Mahalik et al., 2005). Are Black women shown engaging in these actions with their friends?

Finally, confronting the oppression of racism and sexism are prominent components of the lives of Black women in the U.S; however, it is unknown if and how Black female characters are shown negotiating these realities on television. For example, Black women may face sexism-related stressors in situations where there is relationship conflict or dissatisfaction (e.g., the partner is possessive and jealous; Watts-Jones, 1990) or when they are left by their partners to raise the children alone. Furthermore, racism related stressors could appear in the form of inadequate resources (e.g., unable to afford one's own place), work-related issues (e.g., working at an unfulfilling job), prejudiced coworkers, personal health (e.g., not having enough time for

self-care), or a disappointment or loss (e.g., death of child due to inadequate health care; Watts-Jones, 1990). Reactions to these stressors may be reflected as externalizing behaviors, such as aggression (e.g., yelling, swearing; Tielbeek et al., 2016), or as internalizing behaviors, such as depression or substance abuse (e.g., Jerald, Cole, Ward, & Avery, 2017). Are there any indications of these behaviors in media portrayals? In one analysis of verbal aggression on 42 reality TV programs, Glascock and Preston-Schreck (2018) showed that Black women were more likely than men to be involved in verbal aggression as both the victim (66%) and aggressor (74%). Across race/ethnicity (Latinx, White, Black, Asian American, Native American), Black women were the most likely to be victims of verbal aggression (78%). It is possible that these findings indicate both the discrimination Black female characters receive (as victims), and their stress-related responses (as aggressors). Further study is needed of a broader range of internalizing and externalizing stress responses.

The Current Study

Television is an important socialization tool for learning about gender roles (Witt, 2000). Given that television is consumed 6 to 7 hours per day among Black audiences (Nielsen Total Audience Report, 2018), there is great potential for it to offer examples and expectations of women and of Black women. Existing analyses of Black women have tended to focus on the general prevalence of Black women or on specific attributes such as body size or employment status. With this study, we sought to obtain a more wholistic view of the Black women portrayed on scripted programs. To this end, we examined portrayals of Black mothering, Black women's friendships, and Black women's stress in addition to the traditional categories studied concerning femininity (e.g., domestic activity, sexualization) and Black women (e.g., skin tone, occupation). Because of the exploratory nature of the study, we did not provide hypotheses, but instead posed

and examined four sets of research questions. One, which behaviors are most and least prevalent among Black women on scripted television programs? Two, to what extent are Black women portrayed as married and as mothers and do these statuses affect their behaviors? Three, to what extent are Black women shown employed, and in professional versus blue-collar occupations and do these statuses affect their behaviors? And four, are Black women shown with a diversity of body types and skin tones and are there differences in their behaviors based on appearance?

Method

Program Selection

The 12 programs selected for coding were based on two sources: The most viewed programs by Black households as published by the Nielsen Total Audience Report (2016) and a Google search of programs featuring Black women leads. Scripted programs from eight networks (ABC, Fox, FX, NBC, HBO, Starz, OWN, and BET) and one streaming service (Netflix) were used in our sample. We coded 4 episodes of each half-hour program (*Atlanta, Insecure, and Blackish*), and 3 episodes of each hour-long program (*Greenleaf, Power, Empire, Scandal, How to Get Away with Murder, Being Mary Jane, Orange is the New Black, This Is Us, and Queen Sugar*). This approach provided us with 33 hours of scripted television content.

Coding Procedures

The targets for this study were the lead and supporting Black female characters. Of the twelve television programs in the sample, nine had two Black women characters who were selected for coding. When there were multiple Black women in a program (e.g., *Orange is the New Black*), the central characters to focus on were chosen based on whether they were present in all seasons of the program *and* had their own story lines. Using these criteria, we coded twenty-one Black female characters (see Table 2.1).

Each character was coded by one of two trained coders. Both coders were Black women. Individual coders were instructed to begin their coding sessions by first re-reading the coding instructions and descriptions. Each coder then recorded demographic information for the character on their coding sheet, including title of program, season and episode of program, episode start time, name(s) of character(s) to be coded for, marital status, maternal status, occupation, skin tone, and body size. We coded consecutive episodes in the middle of the most current season when possible. It was sometimes the case that the Black women characters did not appear in consecutive episodes; in that case, we coded the next episode where they were present. Coders watched the full episode, coding for the appearance of 33 individual behaviors during each 1-minute interval. The resulting unit of analysis is the proportion of minutes each group of behaviors appeared when that character is present. The behavior groups are described below. Furthermore, demographic information is discussed in terms of proportion of episodes instead of proportion of characters. This was done to account for changes in a character's demographics (i.e., marital status, occupation, and hair type) across the episodes coded.

Coder Training

Development of codes and a reliable coding system took place over several months. Initially, a list of seven possible coding categories was created. After this list had been edited (i.e., shortened), we began to operationalize the behaviors that would fall under each category. This process resulted in three pages of behaviors that became our pilot coding sheet. Coders were trained using earlier seasons of the proposed scripted programs. To begin training, both coders watched one episode of a program together and coded the episode independently using the pilot coding sheet. Coders then reviewed and discussed their codes, noting codes that did and did not align. After this discussion, coders then coded the consecutive episode by themselves, and then

reviewed and compared codes. This process took place several times until the coders reached reliability. Over the course of the meetings, several items were removed from the pilot coding sheet, which helped improve agreement. When a final set of coding categories was established, the process of watching programs together and then separately continued but this time interrater reliabilities were computed.

Coding Categories

We were interested in obtaining a well-rounded view of the Black women portrayed on scripted programs. As such, we coded for the following categories: maternal status, marital status, occupation, skin tone, body size, domestic activity, sexualization, primping, occupation related actions, sexual orientation/sexuality, friendship behaviors, emotionality, and stress behaviors. A majority of these categories were chosen based on the demographic categories from previous content analyses of women and on theoretical analyses of womanhood that highlight emotionality, relationships, domesticity, and physical appearance (Levant, Richmond, Cook, House, & Aupont, 2007; Mahalik et al., 2005; Parent & Moradi, 2010; Watts-Jones, 1990).

Minutes present. We assessed how often the protagonists of interest were present by indicating which minutes she appeared on screen during the duration of the program. This figure served as the denominator in calculating our proportion scores.

Maternal status. We assessed maternal status with a single item: Is the character a mother? This item was answered with “yes” or “no.”

Occupation. We first assessed characters’ occupation with a single item: What is the character’s occupation? This item was answered with job titles that the coders saw fit according to the characters’ description of their job, the characters’ portrayal at work, and/or Google searches. For example, if a character was shown defending someone in court, the character was

coded as a lawyer. In some cases, the character did not have a job, and this was coded as N/A. Each character's occupation was then categorized as falling into one of seven groups, which we later collapsed into four categories for ease of analysis: Professional/White collar, Service/ Clergy, Criminal, and Other/Not working. "Other" jobs included student, activist, and writer.

Marital status. We assessed marital status with a single item: Is the character married? This item was answered with "yes" or "no."

Skin tone. Skin tone was assessed using number swatches from Rihanna's Fenty Beauty makeup line. The 12 swatches were grouped into four categories: Light, Tan, Medium, and Dark, which were coded as 1-4 respectively. Three swatches were used to represent each category. We grouped the 12 swatches into these four categories in order to make analyses simpler.

Body size. Body size was assessed using a body image rating scale created by Ettarh, Van de Vijver, Oti, and Kyobutungi (2013). The original scale ranges from 1-18 with pictures of a body size corresponding to each number; larger numbers represent larger bodies. We extracted numbers 3, 7, 11, and 15 which we labeled: Small, Medium, Full-figured, and Large, respectively. These specific body size numbers were extracted because they were clearly differentiated and would provide for simpler categorical analyses.

Hair type. Hair type was assessed with a single item: What is the character's hair type? This item was answered with hair types that the coders saw fit: natural and weave/straightened. For example, if a character was shown with curly hair, locs, or braids, the character was coded as having natural hair. In some cases, the character's hairstyle was natural in one episode and straightened in the next, so hair type was coded per episode.

Giving orders or commands. We assessed giving orders or commands using one behavioral item that read "giving orders or commands." If the behavior was present during the 1-

minute interval, it was marked with either a “1” or “2” depending on if the character partaking in the activity was character one or two. Originally, this behavioral item was categorized under Domestic Activity because it was meant to be in reference to children and family. However, during coding, we noticed that orders and commands were being given to characters outside of the family, and we wanted to code those interactions, as well.

Domestic activity. We assessed domestic activity using the following five behavioral items: “making or bringing a meal,” “interacting with kids,” “doing laundry or cleaning,” “hugs and/or kisses child,” and “calls child sweetheart, baby, etc.” If the behavior was present during the 1-minute interval, it was marked with either a “1” or “2” depending on if the character partaking in the activity was character one or two. These behaviors were chosen based on themes detected in the items of the Domestic and Involvement with Children subscales of the Conformity to Femininity Norms Inventory (CFNI; Parent & Moradi, 2010).

Sexualization. Sexualization was assessed using the following five behavioral items: “shown nude or half nude,” “stripping/dancing sexually,” “legs exposed,” “stomach exposed,” and “reference to protagonist’s appearance or features by self or others.” If the behavior was present during the 1-minute interval, it was marked with either a “1” or “2” depending on if the character partaking in the activity was character one or two. These behaviors were chosen based on themes appearing in the items of the Purity and Stereotypic Images and Activities subscales of the Femininity Ideology Scale (FIS; Levant, Richmond, Cook, House, & Aupont, 2007).

Primping. Primping was assessed using three behavioral items: “applying makeup,” “referencing others’ appearance,” and “shown in the mirror.” If the behavior was present during the 1-minute interval, it was marked with either a “1” or “2” depending on if the character partaking in the activity was character one or two. These behaviors were chosen as a result of

operationalizing the items of the Investment in Appearance subscale of the CFNI (Parent & Moradi, 2010).

Occupation related actions. We measured occupation related actions using two items: “referencing her job” and “shown at work.” If the behavior was present during the 1-minute interval, it was marked with either a “1” or “2” depending on if the character partaking in the activity was character one or two.

Sexual orientation/sexuality. We assessed sexual orientation and sexuality using four behavioral items: “kissing,” “having sex with a woman,” “having sex with a man,” and “mentions or alludes to sex.” If the behavior was present during the 1-minute interval, it was marked with either a “1” or “2” depending on if the character partaking in the activity was character one or two. These behaviors were chosen based on themes present in the Sexual Fidelity subscale of the CFNI (Parent & Moradi, 2010).

Friendship behaviors. Friendship behaviors were measured using three behavioral items: “offering money, food, goods, or advice to friend,” “laughing with friend,” and “arguing with friend.” If the behavior was present during the 1-minute interval, it was marked with either a “1” or “2” depending on if the character partaking in the activity was character one or two. These behaviors were chosen as an effort to reflect the items of the Nice in Relationships subscale of the CFNI (Parent & Moradi, 2010).

Emotionality. Emotionality was measured using three items. Items included “yelling,” “crying,” and “abruptly leaving somewhere.” If the behavior was present during the 1-minute interval, it was marked with either a “1” or “2” depending on if the character partaking in the activity was character one or two. The three behaviors that represent Emotionality behaviors were loosely based on the African American Women’s Stress Scale (Watts-Jones, 1990).

Stress behaviors. Stress behaviors were assessed using seven items. Items included "shown drinking," "being ignored," "references stress of being a Black or biracial woman," "references to being or feeling lonely," "references job stress," "reference to feeling like a failure," and "references not wanting to appear weak." If the behavior was present during the 1-minute interval, it was marked with either a "1" or "2" depending on if the character partaking in the activity was character one or two. The seven behaviors that represent Emotionality and Stress behaviors were loosely based on the African American Women's Stress Scale (Watts-Jones, 1990).

Computing Interrater Reliability

The content analysis did not begin until interrater agreement across the coders was at or above 70%. We chose four programs to check for interrater reliability during the coding process, two half-hour programs and two hour-long programs. Inter-rater agreement at this stage produced a Cohen's kappa of .79, which was close to our goal of .80. This value was deemed satisfactory (McHugh, 2012). For the final dataset, one coder coded thirteen programs, and the other coder coded 26 programs.

Results

Descriptive and Preliminary Analyses

Zero-order correlations between all demographic and behavior variables are provided in Table 2.2. Several significant correlations emerged. Among the many behavioral correlations, Giving Orders was associated with skin tone, body size, and Emotionality; Domestic Activity was associated with marital status, maternal status, and skin tone; and Sexualization was associated with body size, Sexuality, Friendship Behaviors, and Emotionality. Surprisingly, Primping and Stress behaviors had no significant correlates.

Our first research question asked which behaviors were most and least prevalent among Black women on scripted television programs. To investigate this question, we ran descriptive analyses on the nine behavioral coding categories. Results are presented in the first column of Table 2.3. Results showed that the most prevalent behavior categories were Giving Orders or Commands, which occurred during 13% of the minutes that the Black women coded were present, Occupation Related Actions (11% of the time), and Emotionality (6% of the time). The least prevalent behavior categories were Primping at 2% and Stress Behaviors at 1%.

Black Women's Family Roles

The second research question centered on the marital and maternal status of Black women. Of the sixty-eight portrayals of Black women across the thirty-nine episodes, married women comprised twenty-five or 37% of the portrayals, while single women comprised forty-three or 63% of the portrayals. Those whose maternal status was coded as being a mother accounted for forty-two or 62% of the portrayals, while those who were not mothers accounted for twenty-six or 38% of the portrayals. In order to assess whether there were behavioral differences based on marital and maternal status, we ran one-way ANOVAs with marital and maternal status as the grouping variables and the nine behavioral categories as our outcome variables. Because the data represented mean proportion of minutes (a continuous variable), and not presence or counts, we believed that ANOVAs were the appropriate choice for these and subsequent analyses. We set our criterion p at .01 to reduce the likelihood of Type I error. Assumptions of normality were met for each variable under study.

Results are provided in Table 2.3. It is important to note that in five episodes, only one of the two coded Black women was present. As a result, the sample size for these analyses was 63. Regarding marital and maternal status, those who were portrayed as married or as mothers were

more likely to be shown doing Domestic Activities (p = .000 and .001, respectively; η^2 = .16 and .23). In all other categories, maternal and marital statuses were not associated with the prevalence of any of the behaviors.

Black Women's Work Roles

Our third research question focused on the employment status of Black women on scripted programs. It is important to note that in five episodes, only one of the two coded Black women was present. As a result, the sample size for these analyses was 63. Those whose jobs were coded as professional/white collar accounted for thirty-five or 52% of the portrayals; those with service/clergy jobs accounted for twelve or 18% of the portrayals; those coded as criminals accounted for six or 9% of the portrayals; and those whose jobs were categorized as "other" or were not working accounted for fifteen or 22% of the portrayals. In order to assess whether there were behavioral differences based on occupation, we ran one-way ANOVAs with occupational category as the grouping variable and the nine categories coded as the outcome variables.

As indicated in Table 2.4, the only behavior that differed across occupations was the presence of occupation-related references (η^2 = .25). Post-hoc Bonferroni analyses revealed that women in Professional/White Collar jobs were significantly more likely to be shown in occupation-related ways than those holding Service/ Clergy positions (p = .01), than those who were Criminals (p = .03), and than those who were in the Not Working category (p = .03).

Black Women's Appearance

Our fourth research question addressed Black women's physical features, specifically their body size and skin tone. Those whose skin tone was coded as tan accounted for twenty or 29% of the portrayals; those of a medium skin tone accounted for nineteen or 28% of the portrayals; and those of a dark skin tone accounted for twenty-nine or 43% of the portrayals.

None of the women were coded as being of a light skin tone. Those whose body size was coded as small accounted for forty-two or 62% of the portrayals; twenty or 29% of the portrayals featured women who were coded as medium sized; and six or 9% of portrayals featured full-figured women. None of the women were coded as having a large body size. Lastly, those whose hair was coded as natural accounted for thirty-four or 54% of the portrayals, while twenty-nine or 46% of the portrayals featured women who were coded as having straightened hair or straight weave.

We ran one-way ANOVAs with skin tone, body size, and hair type as the grouping variables and the nine behavioral categories as the outcome variables. Results are provided in Tables 2.5 and 2.6. In five episodes, only one of the two coded Black women was present. As a result, the sample size for these analyses was 63. In terms of skin tone, there were no significant differences in women's engagement in the nine behavior categories. However, differences in the prevalence of domestic activity approached significance (p = .02; η^2 = .12). Concerning body size, ANOVAs indicated no significant differences in women's behavior across the nine categories. However, differences in the prevalence of occupation-related actions approached significance (p = .019; η^2 = .12), as did differences in the prevalence of emotionality (p = .021; η^2 = .12). It appears that women featured in occupation-related ways were more likely to have a smaller body size; indeed, the occupation and body size codes were significantly correlated, as indicated in Table 2.2. Women who were featured as emotional were more likely to have a medium-build. Concerning hair type, ANOVAs indicated that the only behavior that differed across hair type was the presence of occupation-related references (η^2 = .16). Post-hoc Bonferroni analyses revealed that women with straightened hair were significantly more likely to be shown in occupation-related ways than those with natural hair (p = .001).

Discussion

The purpose of this exploratory content analysis was to examine current portrayals of Black women on scripted television programs using a broad selection of attributes that coincide with traditional hegemonic femininity and with characteristics specific to Black women. Existing research has focused on the prevalence, appearance, and overall roles of Black women on television, reporting that Black women's visibility on television is currently on par with their numbers in the population (Parrot & Parrot, 2015; Signorielli, 2009). This work has also indicated that Black female characters are often sexualized, provocatively dressed, and portrayed in lower-status jobs. Although critical thematic analyses have addressed the *nature* of the characters and their potential meaning, expressing concern about the perpetuation of stereotypes, this *nature* has yet to be studied via a quantitative, systematic content analysis of behaviors and attributes (Lundy, 2018; Ward, 2015). We attempted to do that here. Our results are promising in that they show broader representations in some areas. However, some results coincide with earlier content analyses that highlighted stereotypical portrayals of Black women. We delineate below several take-home messages.

What Story Do the Attributes Coded Tell About Black Women?

Coding every minute that lead and supporting Black women characters are on screen, we found that the two most prominent behaviors are giving orders/commands and engaging in occupation-related actions or statements. Together, these attributes paint a picture of Black women as authoritative, in charge, and in command. In addition, many of the times that the women were coded as giving orders or commands, they were often work-related orders/ commands, which suggests that these women are in high-status positions. Because previous content analyses had indicated that Black women on scripted television are *not* shown in high-

status occupations, our findings suggest that the range of occupations depicted has expanded. This emphasis on work may be an accurate depiction of Black women today, as only 2% of this demographic group is unemployed (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005, 2010, 2015; American Community Survey, 2005, 2010, 2015; One-Year Public Use Microdata Sample, 2005, 2010, 2015; generated by Nielsen EthniFacts, 2017). Furthermore, 64% of Black women have indicated that their goal is to advance to the top of their profession (Nielsen EthniFacts, 2017).

At the same time, these images of Black women could reflect some of the dominant cultural stereotypes or controlling images of Black women, such as the bossy, sassy Black woman or Sapphire (West, 1995). Alternatively, frequent references to and interactions around issues related to work could be a display of the SBW ideal, which has been shown to be related to stress, if embodied. The third most common action was emotionality, showing Black women as crying, yelling, or abruptly leaving/storming off, which occurred in 6% of the minutes. These behaviors fit traditional stereotypes of women as overly emotional, and potentially show Black women as human and vulnerable. However, if much of this category is comprised of yelling and storming off, it could also reflect portrayals of the Sapphire. This is the interpretation that was often taken by Ward (2015) and others, in their analyses of Black women on reality television. This characterization may or may not apply here, as well.

Information about media characterizations of Black women also emerges from what is minimally portrayed. There was minimal depiction of Black women engaged in domestic activity (3.0% of minutes), primping (1.6% of minutes), and addressing stress (1.2%). What does it mean that Black women are not seen doing these things? Not being domestic and not primping can be seen as a progressive gender message: Black women are more than appearance-focused homemakers. However, not showing Black women address stress may add to the invisibility of

prominent stressors (e.g., sexism and racism) that Black women face. This lack of attention to stress may also add to the SBW burden. Under the SBW ideal, Black women are expected to carry the heaviness of supporting the family and fighting oppression but are not allowed to be affected by this pressure (Romero, 2000; Woods-Giscombe, 2010). Unfortunately, "having to maintain a facade of strength [can] be detrimental for Black women's physical and mental health" (Nelson, Cardemil, & Adeoye, 2016; p. 560).

What Story Do the Role and Appearance Codes Tell About Black Women?

In terms of marital and maternal status, our results showed that most Black women were portrayed as single and mothers. Considering that only 25% of Black women ages 15 and older are married, this is an accurate depiction. Furthermore, 44% of Black households are led by single mothers, and 90% of Black households include mothers (Nielsen EthniFacts, 2017). At the same time, women who were portrayed as mothers and as married were more likely to be doing domestic activities, which falls under the feminine stereotype that women, especially mothers and wives, should be caretakers and homemakers. However, there were no differences in behavior for these groups regarding sexuality, occupation-related actions, and friendship, which can be interpreted as a form of inclusivity. If the results were to show that mothers or wives were less sexual, less work-oriented, and less interactive with friends, then that would feed more into the stereotype that wives' and mothers' lives are *only* supposed to include domesticity. It is encouraging to see that wives and mothers are treated as sexual, work-oriented, and interactive with friends as are single women and women without children.

Regarding occupation, most Black women (52%) were portrayed in professional or white-collar jobs; the second and third most portrayed occupations were other/not working and service/clergy jobs, respectively. Although this distribution is inspiring, it is, unfortunately,

inaccurate. Today, only approximately 12% of Black women are in the top earnings quartile, while approximately 34% of Black women are in the bottom earnings quartile (DuMonthier, Childers, & Milli, 2017). Additionally, approximately 28% of employed Black women work in service occupations. The heavy presence of professional Black women on TV is rather encouraging, but these images are not reflective of reality. Because of this discordance, Black women viewers may be doing upward social comparisons when engaging with these programs, which could be harmful to their mental health (Yang & Oliver, 2010). Conversely, seeing multiple representations of Black women in high-status positions could be inspiring to Black women viewers. How might these portrayals be read by non-Black audiences? It is possible that these images could be interpreted as supporting or representative of a "post-racial America" in which racism is no longer an issue. Drawing this conclusion could lead viewers to then be less supportive of legislation designed to remedy current workplace inequalities. It is likely that the portrayals of Black women as high ranking in their fields can be interpreted in several ways, depending on the identity of the viewer.

Concerning appearance, we found that most Black women were portrayed as dark skinned, thin, and having natural hair. Again, these results can be interpreted as both encouraging and/or idealistic. Previous content analyses found that Black women in media were often of lighter complexions and having straight hair (e.g., Conrad et al., 2009); consequently, our finding that the majority of Black women on these programs were darker skinned with natural hair is refreshing because it exemplifies acceptance of Afrocentric features on screen. It is also common for women on television to be portrayed as thin, but this view is less true for Black women. Instead, they are often portrayed as obese (Mastro & Figueroa-Caballero, 2018). Our findings

therefore align more closely with existing data on the nature of televised women's bodies, in general, rather than televised Black women's bodies.

Comparing these patterns to real-world data again illustrates a notable discord. Currently, almost 75% of Black women ages 18 and older are overweight or obese (DuMonthier et al., 2017). What might it mean that Black female characters on television do not match this weight distribution? It is likely that the teams producing these programs are most comfortable with bodies that fit the beauty standard of the dominant culture, even though this body may not match the reality of Black women. Yet erasure of Black women's appearance reality can also be read as a form of weightism or weight stigma. As further evidence of the stigmatization of larger women, we found that those who were full figured were often shown giving orders and commands (although this difference was not significant) but were less often shown in work-related actions. This particular portrayal is problematic because it suggests that large Black women are bossy, which may make them less desirable. This characterization aligns with the Mammy stereotype, who is characterized as a large Black woman who is asexual, nurturing, submissive, and a caretaker of children, but also berates others in protection of her loved ones (West, 1995).

Although our results indicate some diversity in television's portrayals of Black women, it remains unclear how these characterizations are perceived by Black viewers. Existing analyses indicate Black viewers' detection of and concerns about stereotypic portrayals. For example, in qualitative studies involving Black adolescents, students have expressed awareness of negative media portrayals of Black women as angry, loud, and hypersexualized (Adams-Bass, Bentley-Edwards, & Stevenson, 2014; Muhammad & McArthur, 2015). However, other findings have indicated that Black viewers did not necessarily internalize these negative perceptions of their

group and could see the complexity in Black characters. For example, Sanders and Ramasubramanian (2012) examined Black adults' evaluations of a multi-ethnic set of 18 TV characters. They found that participants particularly admired the Black characters, even when they perceived them to have some negative qualities. It has been argued that Black viewers may employ a cultural lens that permits them to identify with media content that boosts their collective self-esteem and resist content that does not (Davis & Gandy, 1999). Further study is needed of how the Black women analyzed here are perceived by Black and non-Black viewers.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although this content analysis adds needed information concerning portrayals of Black women on scripted television programs, there were several limitations that future studies may want to address. One of the main limitations was that we were not able to reach 80% agreement between the coders; our kappa was .79. According to McHugh (2012), a kappa of .80-.90 is considered strong, and a kappa of .60-.79 is considered moderate. Furthermore, we could not code for every single behavior in a television program; instead we limited ourselves to a few behaviors per category. However, we did aim to examine behavior categories that would most likely be relevant to these particular programs based on previous literature and on dominant constructions of femininity. In effort to reduce the coding burden, we eliminated from our coding sheet behaviors such as "laughing with coworkers," "ignoring coworkers," and "mentions 'gay,' 'lesbian,' 'bisexual,' 'trans,' or 'queer'". Including these behaviors and others could have added more richness to the data. We also noticed that Black women on these TV programs were often shown interacting with adult family members (e.g., parents, siblings), which we did not capture. Moreover, we chose to code only twelve scripted television programs. Including other scripted programs featuring Black women such as *Luke Cage* or *American Horror Story* may have

provided new or different findings because of the change in genre (i.e., action, horror). Additionally, some of the programs we coded are only featured on premium cable channels, which may portray Black women in more multidimensional ways considering the greater creative freedom of premium cable channels. Finally, we did not code enough television comedies to do a comparative analysis of comedies and dramas. Perhaps there are differences in Black women's portrayals based on genre.

Knowing what we do about the current portrayals of Black women, future research should examine the effects of these portrayals on Black youth, given that they watch more television than youth of other races (Common Sense Media, 2017). Because these portrayals can be interpreted in several ways, it would be useful for researchers to continue to investigate how Black youth perceive these television images (e.g., as positive or stereotypical representations). Such work could build on existing analyses that focused on viewer perceptions of Black women across several visual media (e.g., Adams-Bass et al., 2014; Muhammad & McArthur, 2015). It would also be valuable to test how different groups of women (categorized by age, work status, appearance) perceive these images. Which images, if any, does each group see as authentic? Is there consensus across groups in what is believed to be authentic portrayals? Future research should also examine whether the types of portrayals shown have differential effects on men's and women's notions of femininity. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to determine if perceived realism shapes the nature and level of influence.

Conclusion

The results of this content analysis can be interpreted in many ways. Black women were often shown in authoritative roles that may be read as powerful and strong or may be perceived as bossy. They are shown in roles that fit cultural patterns, such as working women and single

mothers, but they are also frequently depicted in high-status occupations, which does not align with demographic patterns. Black women were also rarely shown dealing with stress, which could actually add to the stress of embodying the SBW ideal. Overall, viewer and perception analyses are needed to determine if these depictions are aspirational (i.e., you, too, can have it all) or stress-inducing (i.e., you, too, *should* do it all).

Table 2.1. TV Programs and Characters Coded

Character Name	Program	Marital Status	Maternal Status	Occupation
Annalise Keating	*HTGAWM* (ABC)	Married	Mother	Lawyer/Professor
Michaela Pratt	*HTGAWM* (ABC)	Not Married	Not a Mother	Law student/intern
Cookie Lyon	*Empire* (Fox)	Married	Mother	Cofounder of Empire Records
Anika Calhoun	*Empire* (Fox)	Married	Mother	Head of A&R
Olivia Pope	*Scandal* (ABC)	Not Married	Not a Mother	Crisis Manager in D.C.
Tasha St. Patrick	*Power* (Starz)	Married	Mother	Housewife
Lakeisha Grant	*Power* (Starz)	Not Married	Mother	Hairstylist
Rainbow Johnson	*Blackish* (ABC)	Married	Mother	Doctor
Ruby Johnson	*Blackish* (ABC)	Not Married	Mother	N/A
Mary Jane Paul	*Being Mary Jane* (BET)	Not Married	Not a Mother	Newscaster
Niecy Patterson	*Being Mary Jane* (BET)	Not Married	Mother	Aspiring Hairdresser
"Taystee" Jefferson	*Orange is the New Black* (Netflix)	Not Married	Not a Mother	Inmate
Suzanne Warren	*Orange is the New Black* (Netflix)	Not Married	Not a Mother	Inmate
Vanessa Keefer	*Atlanta* (FX)	Not Married	Mother	Teacher/unemployed
Issa Dee	*Insecure* (HBO)	Not Married	Not a Mother	Nonprofit Org Staff
Molly Carter	*Insecure* (HBO)	Not Married	Not a Mother	Attorney
Grace Greenleaf	*Greenleaf* (OWN)	Not Married	Mother	Pastor
Lady Mae Greenleaf	*Greenleaf* (OWN)	Married	Mother	First Lady of Church
Beth Pearson	*This is Us* (NBC)	Married	Mother	Entrepreneur/Housewife
Charley Bordelon-West	*Queen Sugar* (OWN)	Married	Mother	Entrepreneur
Nova Bordelon	*Queen Sugar* (OWN)	Not Married	Not a Mother	Activist/Writer

Note. HTGAWM = *How to Get Away with Murder*

Table 2.2. Inter-correlations between Demographic and Behavioral Variables

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.
1. Marital status	1	**.60****	**-.34****	**-.27***	-.08	.08	.01	**.40****	.05	-.13	.15	-.10	**-.32***	.05	-.18
2. Maternal status	-	1	-.09	**-.60****	.15	-.05	-.02	**.47****	.02	.02	-.10	-.18	-.10	-.04	.04
3. Occupation	-	-	1	**.30***	.18	-.21	-.08	.01	-.19	.06	**-.38****	-.17	-.12	.06	.08
4. Skin tone	-	-	-	1	.18	.17	**.28***	**-.27***	-.18	.05	-.06	.06	-.09	.06	.04
5. Body size	-	-	-	-	1	-.14	**.28***	-.04	**-.27***	.03	**-.35****	-.23	-.03	.23	-.13
6. Hair Type	-	-	-	-	-	1	.14	-.17	.07	-.19	**.40****	.12	-.00	-.06	-.08
7. Giving orders	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	.10	-.11	.22	.07	-.09	-.16	**.43****	.06
8. Domestic activity	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-.10	.08	-.12	-.05	-.21	.16	.10
9. Sexualization	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	.01	-.12	**.55****	**.33****	**-.27***	-.03
10. Primping	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-.12	-.02	.20	-.03	.17
11. Occupation related	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-.07	-.22	.00	-.04
12. Sexuality	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	**.37****	-.06	.12
13. Friendship behaviors	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-.19	.24
14. Emotionality	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-.05
15. Stress behaviors	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

Note. *<.05; **p<.01. Significant correlations are bolded.

Table 2.3. Summary of ANOVAs: Mean Proportions, F-Values, and Effect Sizes of On-Screen Minutes Featuring Specific Behaviors by Family Status

	Overall Sample (N=63)	Mothers (*N* = 38) M (SD)	Not a Mother (*N* = 25) M (SD)	F Value (η^2)	Married (*N* = 25) M (SD)	Not Married (*N* = 38) M (SD)	F Value (η^2)
Giving orders	.13	.13 (.12)	.13 (.09)	0.034 (.00)	.13 (.13)	.13 (.10)	0.00 (.00)
Domestic Activity	**.03**	**.05 (.06)**	**.00 (.00)**	**17.71*** (.23)**	**.06 (.06)**	**.01 (.03)**	**11.66*** (.16)**
Sexualization	.04	.04 (.09)	.04 (.05)	0.02 (.00)	.04 (.10)	.03 (.05)	0.17 (.00)
Primping	.02	.02 (.05)	.02 (.02)	0.01 (.00)	.01 (.03)	.02 (.04)	0.97 (.01)
Occupation	.11	.09 (.13)	.12 (.13)	0.65 (.01)	.13 (.15)	.09 (.12)	1.33 (.02)
Sexuality	.03	.02 (.04)	.04 (.05)	2.14 (.04)	.02 (.04)	.03 (.05)	0.57 (.01)
Friendship	.04	.04 (.05)	.05 (.04)	0.60 (.01)	.02 (.04)	.05 (.05)	6.81+ (.10)
Emotionality	.06	.06 (.06)	.07 (.06)	0.09 (.00)	.07 (.06)	.06 (.06)	0.14 (.00)
Overall stress	.01	.01 (.02)	.01 (.01)	0.09 (.00)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.02)	2.12 (.06)

Note. *N* = 63. +p < .05; **p < .01; ***p ≤ .001. Significant differences are bolded.

Table 2.4. Summary of ANOVAs: Mean Proportions, F-Values, and Effect Sizes of On-Screen Minutes Featuring Specific Behaviors by Occupation

	Professional/ White Collar (*N* = 35) M (SD)	Service/Clergy (*N* = 9) M (SD)	Criminal (*N* = 5) M (SD)	Other/Not Working (*N* = 14) M (SD)	F Value (η^2)
Giving orders	.14 (.11)	.10 (.10)	.19 (.10)	.10 (.11)	1.06 (.05)
Domestic Activity	.03 (.06)	.03 (.03)	.00 (.00)	.04 (.05)	0.70 (.03)
Sexualization	.06 (.09)	.00 (.01)	.00 (.01)	.03 (.05)	1.75 (.08)
Primping	.02 (.02)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.02)	.02 (.07)	0.50 (.02)
Occupation	**.16 (.14)**	**.02 (.04)**	**.00 (.00)**	**.06 (.10)**	**6.64*** (.25)**
Sexuality	.04 (.05)	.01 (.04)	.01 (.01)	.02 (.02)	1.35 (.06)
Friendship	.05 (.05)	.03 (.05)	.04 (.03)	.03 (.04)	0.67 (.03)
Emotionality	.06 (.06)	.04 (.04)	.11 (.09)	.06 (.06)	1.25 (.06)
Overall stress	.012 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.02 (.02)	1.26 (.06)

Note. *N* = 63. $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p \leq .001$. Significant differences are bolded.

Table 2.5. Summary of ANOVAs: Mean Proportions, F-Values, and Effect Sizes of On-Screen Minutes Featuring Specific Behaviors based on Skin Tone and Body Size

	Tan (*N* = 19) M (SD)	Medium (*N* = 18) M (SD)	Dark (*N* = 26) M (SD)	F Value (η^2)	Small (*N* = 42) M (SD)	Medium (*N* = 17) M (SD)	Full Figured (*N* = 4) M (SD)	F Value (η^2)
Giving orders	.08 (.08)	.15 (.12)	.15 (.11)	3.10 (.09)	.11 (.09)	.16 (.13)	.21 (.11)	2.49 (.08)
Domestic Activity	.04 (.06)	.05 (.06)	.01 (.03)	4.11+ (.12)	.03 (.05)	.04 (.06)	.00 (.00)	1.00 (.03)
Sexualization	.07 (.12)	.02 (.03)	.03 (.05)	2.16 (.07)	.05 (.09)	.01 (.02)	.00 (.01)	2.73 (.08)
Primping	.01 (.01)	.03 (.06)	.01 (.02)	3.02 (.09)	.02 (.02)	.02 (.06)	.01 (.02)	0.13 (.00)
Occupation	.09 (.12)	.17 (.16)	.08 (.10)	2.80 (.08)	.14 (.14)	.05 (.09)	.00 (.00)	4.25+ (.12)
Sexuality	.03 (.05)	.02 (.02)	.04 (.05)	1.24 (.04)	.03 (.04)	.02 (.04)	.00 (.00)	1.65 (.06)
Friendship	.05 (.06)	.03 (.03)	.04 (.04)	0.59 (.02)	.04 (.05)	.04 (.04)	.03 (.04)	0.08 (.00)
Emotionality	.05 (.06)	.08 (.06)	.06 (.06)	0.82 (.03)	.05 (.05)	.10 (.08)	.06 (.07)	4.11+ (.12)
Overall stress	.01 (.02)	.01 (.02)	.01 (.02)	0.26 (.00)	.01 (.02)	.01 (.02)	.00 (.01)	0.68 (.00)

Note. *N* = 63. +p < .05; **p < .01; ***p $\leq$ .001. Significant differences are bolded.

Table 2.6. Summary of ANOVAs: Mean Proportions, F-Values, and Effect Sizes of On-Screen Minutes Featuring Specific Behaviors based on Hair Type

	Natural (*N* = 34) M (SD)	Weave/Straight (*N* = 29) M (SD)	F Value (η^2)
Giving orders	.12 (.09)	.14 (.12)	1.14 (.02)
Domestic Activity	.04 (.06)	.02 (.04)	1.81 (.03)
Sexualization	.03 (.05)	.04 (.09)	0.26 (.00)
Primping	.02 (.05)	.01 (.01)	2.20 (.04)
Occupation	**.06 (.09)**	**.16 (.15)**	**11.41** (.16)**
Sexuality	.02 (.04)	.03 (.04)	0.83 (.01)
Friendship	.04 (.04)	.04 (.05)	0.00 (.00)
Emotionality	.07 (.07)	.06 (.05)	0.38 (.00)
Overall stress	.01 (.02)	.01 (.01)	0.24 (.00)

Note. *N* = 63. **p < .01; ***p ≤ .001. Significant differences are bolded.

Chapter 3

Study 2: The Effect of Black Women on TV: Black Adolescents' Endorsement of the Jezebel, Sapphire, Strong Black Woman, and Eurocentric Beauty Ideals

Adolescence is a time period during which attitudes about race and gender are being formed and personal identities are being consolidated. For many adolescents, these attitudes are partially shaped by the media (Rodenhizer & Edwards, 2019; Rousseau, Rodgers, & Eggermont, 2019). Cultivation theory argues that consistent exposure to the media's dominant themes is associated with adopting comparable ideologies about the real world (e.g., ideas about race and gender; Gerbner, 1998). Does Black adolescents' exposure to themes about Black women predict acceptance of those ideologies? To answer that question, I examine Black adolescents' scripted TV consumption at both a macro and micro level. At the macro level, I assess whether watching programs that do or do not feature prominent Black women characters predicts beliefs about Black women. At the micro level, I assess whether watching programs featuring prominent Black women characters differently predicts beliefs about Black women based on the content in the program. I hope to determine whether the contributions of TV programs featuring Black women differ depending on how the Black women on those programs are portrayed.

Black Adolescents' Media Use

Findings consistently indicate that Black adolescents consume media at higher rates than their racial counterparts, both television and social media (Common Sense Media, 2017; Ward et al., 2010). More nuanced analyses suggest that Black and White youth consume mainstream

television programs at the same rates, but that Black youth watch more Black-oriented programming than White youth (Ward et al., 2010). Moreover, Black youth begin to watch less mainstream television as they get older, preferring media with more racial representation (Ellithorpe & Bleakley, 2016). This change may be due to Black adolescents' beginning to identify with their race more strongly as they develop a more solid ethnic/racial identity in adolescence (Plummer, 1995).

Indeed, it has been found that racial identification may play a big part in adolescents' media diets. Brown and Pardun (2004) conducted a study in which they sought to examine how similar *all* adolescents' TV diets were. What they found was that there is no "common youth culture." Black teens showed a preference for programs with Black casts, and White teens showed a preference for programs with White casts. Furthermore, contributions of this media content to Black youth's beliefs may differ by the nature of the casts. Here, some findings suggest that exposure to Black-oriented TV may have positive consequences for Black youth. For example, surveying 156 Black high school students, Ward (2004) found that adolescents who indicated identifying strongly with Black characters also indicated higher self-esteem. When Black adolescents identified strongly with White characters, however, their self-esteem was lower. Based on the existing literature, I believe that regular exposure to more prominent Black women characters on TV may be beneficial for Black adolescents, while exposure to fewer prominent Black women characters may be harmful.

Gender Stereotypes in Adolescent Media

One prominent feature of the mainstream media to which Black adolescents and all U.S. adolescents are exposed is the prevalence of traditional gender stereotypes (Gerding & Signorielli, 2014; Kim et al., 2007; Stern & Mastro, 2004). Media portrayals of girls and women

often highlight traditionally feminine traits and behaviors (i.e., concerned with appearance, household, and relationships; Carpenter, 2002; Mahalik et al., 2005; Tolman & Porche, 2000), whereas portrayals of boys and men often center on traditionally masculine traits and behaviors (i.e., concerned with toughness, money, and sexual relationships; Donaldson, 1993). For example, Gerding and Signorielli (2014) examined gender role portrayals in tween TV programs and found that in both "teen scene" (girl-oriented) and "action-adventure" (boy-oriented) TV programs, girls were more attractive than boys, more concerned with their appearance, and received more comments about their appearance. Similarly, Kim and colleagues' (2007) content analysis of 25 primetime programs viewed frequently by adolescents revealed that female characters willingly objectified themselves and were judged by their sexual engagement. However, there is also evidence that that these gender portrayals have diversified, somewhat, in recent decades. For example, Stern and Mastro (2004) conducted a content analysis examining the role of age in gendered portrayals of 2,315 characters in commercials. Coding for appearance, behavior, and occupational role, they found that teen and young adult female characters were sometimes portrayed contrary to traditional stereotypes (e.g., working as professionals, being outdoors). Overall, the previous literature suggests that adolescents are often exposed to gender stereotyped media, and it is therefore possible that these gendered portrayals may contribute to how Black adolescents view women.

For Black women, there are also specific stereotypes that the media attribute to them. These stereotypes include the Jezebel, the Sapphire, and the Strong Black Woman (Collins, 2000). The Jezebel is characterized as an attractive, flirtatious, hypersexual, and manipulative Black woman (West, 1995). The Jezebel stereotype was created to justify the rape of Black women by their owners during slavery. Physically, the Jezebel is fair skinned, has straight hair,

and thin lips and nose, akin to European features. The image of the Jezebel has most commonly been talked about in terms of music videos, but some argue that this stereotype persists in scripted TV, as well, showing up in characters like Olivia Pope from *Scandal* (Baldwin, 2015).

The Sapphire is a Black woman who emasculates Black men, and is angry, loud, controlling, aggressive, and bossy (West, 1995). She is essentially what is described today as the "angry Black woman," and originated from the personality of Sapphire, Kingfish's wife, on the *Amos and Andy* radio show in the 1940s and 1950s. The image of the Sapphire has often been discussed in conversations about reality TV programming (Boylorn, 2008). However, behaviors akin to the Sapphire stereotype (i.e., yelling) were found to be among the most common behaviors performed by Black women in a recent analysis of *scripted* TV programs (Cox & Ward, 2019).

The Strong Black Woman ideal emphasizes that Black women are resilient, emotionally strong, and self-sufficient while also being nurturing and self-sacrificing (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Romero, 2000; Woods- Giscombé, 2010). The Strong Black Woman ideal came about post-slavery, as it was often necessary for Black women to be the sole caretaker, working to help provide for their families (Collins, 2000). According to Cox and Ward's (2019) content analysis, the SBW might be one of the most common images of Black women on scripted TV, as the top two behaviors performed by Black women were giving orders and making occupation-related comments, which can be interpreted as showing strength and self-sufficiency. Together, these findings suggest that these historical stereotypes may still be present in some form in modern TV.

At the same time, although these stereotypes may seem to persist, there is also evidence that the overall depictions of Black women on scripted programs have become richer and more

diverse (Cox & Ward, 2019; Mafe, 2018). Currently, Black women on scripted programs range from lawyers to doctors to hairstylists to teachers to unemployed. As indicated in Study 1, they are shown having different marital and maternal statuses, and even different physical features. Furthermore, the behaviors of these women rarely differed based on these demographic characteristics, suggesting that Black women are not being type casted into roles.

Women's Appearance in Mainstream Media

Culture norms not only prescribe how women should behave, but they also define how women should look. Feminine beauty is generally comprised of a thin body size, fair skin, small features, and long hair (Robinson-Moore, 2008). Uncoincidentally, these features align with Eurocentric beauty ideals that are prominent in today's media, even among Black media. For example, in their content analysis of rap music videos, Conrad, Dixon, and Zhang (2009) found that the Black women featured in these videos were most often light-skinned, had small facial features, and straightened hair. However, recent content analyses have found more diverse depictions of Black women. Black women in Cox and Ward's (2019) content analysis (Study 1) were various shades of brown and were most often dark-skinned. Black women in this content analysis also varied in hair texture, having both natural hairstyles and straight hairstyles. Black women's body sizes, however, were most often thin, which is contrary to findings in previous content analyses that have found that Black women are often depicted as overweight or obese (Mastro & Figueroa-Caballero, 2018), but also conforms to Eurocentric standards of beauty. Perhaps programs featuring Black women are simultaneously trying to resist Eurocentric beauty ideals (e.g., via diverse skin tones) while also remaining palatable for mainstream TV.

However, it is likely that programs that feature Black women in minor or secondary roles only may be less likely to confront the wide acceptance of Eurocentric beauty ideals, as

characters on these programs generally fit the criteria for Eurocentric beauty. In a recent content analysis of 89 primetime TV programs, it was found that women, in general, were significantly more attractive and thinner than men (Sink & Mastro, 2017). Attractiveness was defined by mainstream U.S. standards of beauty, which are synonymous with Eurocentric beauty ideals. Furthermore, Mastro and Figueroa-Caballero's (2018) content analysis of body types in primetime television showed that women have become increasingly thin. Women who were thin were also more likely to be rated as more attractive. Neither of these content analyses took hair texture into consideration, suggesting that coding for hair texture was not of importance, which seems logical when so heavily influenced by Eurocentric beauty ideals. Overall, through both the findings and the lack of regard to certain characteristics, this literature suggests that Eurocentric beauty ideals are commonplace and persistent in recent primetime mainstream TV programs.

Contributions to Gender Beliefs among Black Viewers

Is there any evidence that regular exposure to this TV content is associated with Black adolescents' gender beliefs? According to cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1998), consistent exposure to the media's dominant themes is associated with adopting similar ideologies about the real world. Therefore, if Black adolescents are often exposed to these messages about women, and Black women, specifically, they will be more likely to accept these messages and apply them to their worldview. Several studies have examined the connections between Black youth's media use and their gender beliefs and have ultimately found support for this theory. Ward and colleagues (2005) examined Black high school students' music video viewing in relation to their endorsement of traditional gender roles and sexual relationships. It was found that those who watched more music videos were likely to report more traditional gender role attitudes. Furthermore, students exposed to gender stereotyped music videos in an experimental

condition expressed more traditional views about sexual relationships and gender roles than students who viewed less stereotypical videos.

In a study on Black women's (undergraduate and graduate students) music video viewing and other media consumption, it was found that greater media consumption was associated with greater support of traditional gender and sexual roles (Ward, Jerald, Avery, & Cole, 2020). This study went even further to find that endorsing traditional gender and sexual roles predicted lower levels of sexual assertiveness, greater sexual inhibition, and more frequent use of sexual dishonesty. Furthermore, in a study examining Black college students' consumption of music videos and other media, including television, it was found that consumption of music videos was one of the strongest predictors of students' endorsement of traditional gender ideals and of objectifying notions towards women (Jerald, Ward, Moss, Thomas, & Fletcher, 2017). However, watching more hours of TV did not predict endorsement of gender stereotypes directed towards Black women (i.e., Jezebel, Sapphire, and SBW) for this sample of Black college students. Taken together, this literature suggests that music and music video consumption are significant predictors of Black youth's holding more traditional gender ideals, which, in turn, are linked to poor mental and physical health, particularly for Black girls and women. However, support that television consumption predicts endorsement of stereotypical beliefs about Black women is more minimal.

Exposure to media content may also contribute to Black youth's beliefs about women's appearance. Surveying Black girls aged 13-17, Gordon (2008) found that heavier exposure to media portraying Black women as sexual objects predicted attributing greater importance to appearance for themselves and for girls in general. However, the scale used to assess appearance beliefs assessed women's appearance in general and not Black women's appearance. Stephens

and Few's (2007) qualitative study of fifteen 11-13-year-olds' (7 boys and 8 girls) attitudes about women in Hip Hop highlighted that Black preadolescents tend to identify with music artists who are lighter skinned and have long straight hair. Boys preferred girls with those physical features, and girls knew that boys would prefer those physical features. However, unlike boys, girls also tended to appreciate music artists who had "natural" beauty (i.e., natural hair and confidence). Furthermore, all girls expressed satisfaction with their appearance.

Overall, these studies provide a good foundation concerning possible contributions of stereotypical gender portrayals to Black adolescents' gender beliefs. Nevertheless, many of these studies are also outdated, focused on music videos, movies, commercials, and reality television (i.e., not scripted television), focused on media in general (i.e., not Black media), focused on general gender stereotypes, and focused on negative and/or risk-related outcomes (e.g., drug use, sexual engagement). These limitations leave room to investigate newer, scripted, Black programming, with a focus on broader characterizations of Black women.

Black Adolescents' Perceptions of Stereotypes and Media Portrayals

It should also be acknowledged that exposure to media content does not guarantee that viewers will accept, embrace, and endorse the themes presented. Black youth are often noted as critical consumers of media, as being able to identify when their racial group is being stereotyped (Adams-Bass, Bentley-Edwards, & Stevenson, 2014; Davis & Gandy, 1999). Indeed, theorists have argued that African Americans are able to identify images that boost and decrease their collective self-esteem, and furthermore, they are able to resist images that decrease their collective self-esteem (Davis & Gandy, 1999). In a qualitative study of 63 Black youth (ages 14 to 21), it was found that youth often observed sexualized Black women (i.e., Jezebels), Black women as caretakers (i.e., Mammies), strong Black women (i.e., SBWs), and angry Black

women (i.e., Sapphires) in media featuring Black women (Adams-Bass et al., 2014). These findings suggest that Black youth are aware of the stereotypes about Black women; however, does that awareness translate to their beliefs about Black women?

Recent literature suggests that youth's beliefs about Black women may *not* be heavily driven by Black-oriented media. A study on Black women's (18-25 years old) Black-oriented reality TV (BORT) consumption in relation to their endorsement of the Jezebel, Sapphire, and SBW stereotypes found that Black women who were high consumers of BORT were *not* more likely to endorse the Jezebel, Sapphire, and SBW stereotypes (Coleman, Reynolds, & Torbati, 2019). This finding suggests that there is no guarantee of a significant negative impact of watching Black-oriented programs for Black women. However, in a study assessing Black adolescents' endorsement of the SBW stereotype in relation to their Black-oriented TV viewing, it was found that viewing more Black-oriented TV was associated with stronger endorsement of the SBW stereotype, an ideal that can have both positive and negative effects if endorsed (Anyiwo, Ward, Fletcher, & Rowley, 2018; West, Donovan, & Daniel, 2016). Taken together, this literature suggests that Black adolescents and young adults are often aware of stereotypes facing Black women and may be able to consume high amounts of Black-oriented TV without endorsing stereotypes that have purely negative implications. Perhaps they may be able to watch without endorsing stereotypes because of recent TV programs' offering of versatile depictions of Black women (Study 1; Cox & Ward, 2019).

The Current Study

Much of the existing literature on Black adolescents' media use has focused on how much they consume media or its contributions to their gender role ideals, in general. However, very little research has been done examining whether regular viewing of TV programs is

associated with Black adolescents' beliefs about women of their own race. Specifically, previous research has not examined whether consumption of television programs with Black female leads is associated with Black adolescents' beliefs about Black women and girls. The present study addresses these limitations by investigating associations between regular consumption of twelve programs featuring Black women as primary or secondary characters and Black adolescents' endorsement of the Jezebel and Sapphire stereotypes, SBW schema, and beliefs about Black girls' appearance.

Overall, I sought to answer the question: Is heavier exposure to TV programs featuring or not featuring Black women associated with Black adolescents' holding certain perceptions of Black women? I hypothesized that (1) More frequent exposure to programs featuring prominent Black women characters would be associated with a weaker belief in the Jezebel, Sapphire, and SBW stereotypes and Eurocentric beauty standards; conversely more frequent exposure to programs that *do not* feature prominent Black women characters would be associated with a stronger belief in the Jezebel, Sapphire, and SBW stereotypes and Eurocentric beauty standards; (2) More frequent exposure to programs featuring fewer examples of Jezebel-like behavior would be associated with a weaker belief in Black girls as Jezebels; (3) More frequent exposure to programs featuring fewer examples of Sapphire-like behavior would be associated with a weaker belief in Black girls as Sapphires; (4) More frequent exposure to programs featuring few examples of SBW-like behavior would be associated with a weaker belief in the SBW ideal; and (5) More frequent exposure to programs featuring more examples of Black women with natural hair would be associated with a stronger rejection of Eurocentric beauty standards.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Using a survey delivered by Qualtrics, Black adolescents (N = 590, 51% female) from various states within the U.S. participated in this study. Participants ranged in age from 13-18 years (*M* = 15.3 years). As a measure of SES, we obtained information about participants' parents' education; the response options for education ranged from 1 (completed elementary school) to 8 (completed advanced degree). On average, parents had completed some college but did not receive a degree ($M_{mother} = 5.24$; $M_{father} = 5.02$). The survey took approximately thirty minutes to complete, and each participant was compensated with digital currency and coupons.

Measures

Jezebel stereotype. A scale was created to measure the extent to which participants endorse the Jezebel stereotype of Black women. To create the measure, we started with the 7-item revised Stereotypic Roles of Black Women Scale (Townsend, Thomas, Neilands, & Jackson, 2010), which reflects the Jezebel (4 items) and Sapphire (3 items) stereotypes. We then drew on theoretical and empirical research concerning this stereotype (e.g., Brown Givens & Monahan, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Stephens & Philips, 2003) to create one additional item. These efforts produced a 5-item scale representing the Jezebel stereotype. The items were preceded by the prompt: "There are lots of beliefs about what Black girls are like. Think about the things you have heard and about what you believe. To what extent do YOU think. . ." Items include: "Black girls always want to have sex," "Black girls use their body and looks to get what they want," "Black girls will steal your boyfriend," "Black girls are gold-diggers," and "Black girls are more promiscuous (fast) than other girls." Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statements on a 4-point scale (1 = not at all; 4 = a lot). Items were averaged to create a scale score ($\alpha = .89$), with higher scores indicating greater acceptance of the

Jezebel stereotype. These 5 items were mixed in with other statements about Black girls to mask the purpose of the assessment.

Sapphire Stereotype. As mentioned, the 7-item revised Stereotypic Roles of Black Women Scale (Townsend, et al., 2010) was used to create the Sapphire stereotype measure. Three of the original items were already addressing the Sapphire stereotype. We then divided one original item into two items and drew on theoretical and empirical research concerning this stereotype (e.g., Brown Givens & Monahan, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Stephens & Philips, 2003) to create one additional item. These efforts produced a 5-item scale reflecting the Sapphire stereotype. The items were preceded by the prompt: "There are lots of beliefs about what Black girls are like. Think about the things you have heard and about what you believe. To what extent do YOU think. . ." Items include: "Black girls are loud," "Black girls always want their way," "Black girls like to start drama," "Black girls have a problematic attitude," and "Black girls are always mad and ready to fight." Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statements on a 4-point scale (1 = not at all; 4 = a lot). Items were averaged to create a scale score ($\alpha = .89$), with higher scores indicating greater acceptance of the Sapphire stereotype. These 5 items were mixed in with other statements about Black girls to mask the purpose of the assessment.

SBW schema. In order to assess adolescents' endorsement of the SBW schema, an adaptation of Thomas's (2006) Strong Black Woman Scale was used. The scale consisted of 9 items assessing the extent to which participants endorse the SBW schema. Participants were given the prompt: "Think about the adult Black women that you know. To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements." Sample items include: "Black women should put the survival of their family and community above their own needs," "Sacrificing for others is a

positive quality that Black women should display," and "Struggling against all odds in order to achieve is just part of a Black woman's life." Participants rated their agreement with the items on a 4-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 4 = Strongly Agree). Items were averaged to create a scale score ($\alpha = .79$), with higher scores indicating stronger belief in the prominence of the SBW schema. This scale has been used in Anyiwo, Ward, Fletcher, and Rowley's (2018) study on Black adolescents' TV use, where all nine items loaded on one factor, with factor loadings ranging from .47 to .71. This scale was also used on a sample of Black undergraduate women and men ($\alpha = .73$; Jerald et al., 2017).

Eurocentric beauty ideals. Plybon, Pegg, and Reed's (2003) 12-item Image Acceptance Measure was used to gauge adolescents' thoughts about Black girls' appearance. These items were only administered to the adolescent girls in the sample. Participants were presented with twelve statements about Eurocentric versus Afrocentric appearance preferences and were instructed to indicate their level of agreement with each statement. Sample statements include: "It is important to have 'good' hair," "I think guys prefer girls who have lighter skin," and "If I could change how my face features are, I would." Response options ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Items were averaged to create a scale score ($\alpha = .87$), with higher scores indicating greater support of Eurocentric beauty ideals.

TV viewing. To assess television viewing, participants were given a list of 48 recent television programs and were asked to indicate how much they watch each program. Programs were divided into categories based on those with prominent Black female characters (PBF) and those without prominent Black female characters (NPBF). PBF programs were the 12 scripted programs analyzed in the Cox and Ward (2019) content analysis of Black women on TV. NPBF programs were scripted programs with no Black women in the top 10 characters, as presented on

IMDB. As a result, there were 12 PBF programs and 18 NPBF programs. The remaining 18 programs were not used in my analyses as they were either reality programs and/or included a Black woman in the top 10 characters. Examples of PBF programs included *Atlanta*, *Blackish*, and *Insecure*. Examples of NPBF programs included *Modern Family*, *Big Bang Theory*, and *Riverdale.* Participants were asked to indicate how much they watched each program. Response options ranged from *0 (Never) to 3 (A lot)*. PBF programs were averaged to create an overall score (α = .88), and NPBF programs were averaged to create an overall score (α = .91). Higher scores indicate more exposure to PBF or NPBF television programs.

Weekly TV viewing. We asked participants to indicate the number of hours they watch television on an average weekday, Saturday, and Sunday. Response options ranged from 0 to 12 or more hours. A weekly sum of television hours was computed by multiplying the reported weekday usage by five and then adding in the Saturday and Sunday usage.

Jezebel TV. Drawing on findings from the Cox and Ward (2019) content analysis (Study 1), I used data about the portrayal of Black women in the 12 PBF programs to help categorize each program by presence of stereotype. In order to categorize TV program by presence of stereotype, I compared the means of the most prevalent behaviors by program. The most prevalent behaviors across all 12 programs were “shown at work” (15% of the time), “giving orders/commands” (11%), “yelling” (10%), and “legs exposed” (8%). The behavior “legs exposed” was used to categorize Jezebel portrayals. Programs with a mean of 15 minutes or more of leg exposure were categorized as Jezebel TV. For example, *Atlanta* was placed in the Jezebel group because it had a mean of 30 minutes of the main Black female character’s legs being exposed across the four episodes coded. Four of the twelve programs were categorized as Jezebel TV. Based on median split analyses, programs with a mean of less than 15 minutes of leg

exposure were categorized as Low Jezebel TV. Eight of the twelve programs were categorized as Low Jezebel TV. All programs in both groups are listed in Table 3.1.

Sapphire TV. The behavior "yelling" was used to signify Sapphire portrayals. Based on median split analyses, programs with a mean of 11 minutes or more of yelling were categorized as Sapphire TV. Six of the twelve programs were categorized as Sapphire TV. Programs with a mean of less than 11 minutes of yelling were categorized as Low Sapphire TV. Six of the twelve programs were categorized as Low Sapphire TV.

SBW TV. The behavior "shown at work" was used to signify SBW portrayals. Based on median split analyses, programs with a mean of 21 minutes or more of Black women characters being shown at work were categorized as SBW TV. Five of the twelve programs were categorized as SBW TV. Programs with a mean of less than 21 minutes of Black women characters being shown at work were categorized as Low SBW TV. Seven of the twelve programs were categorized as Low SBW TV.

Afrocentric beauty TV. In order to categorize TV program by presence of Eurocentric beauty ideals, I compared the means of "hair type" by program. Hair type was coded per episode, using "1" to signify natural or curly hair and "2" to signify straight weave or straightened hair. Programs with a mean of less than 2 were categorized as Afrocentric Beauty TV. Seven of the twelve programs were categorized as Afrocentric Beauty TV. Programs with a mean of 2 were categorized as Low Afrocentric Beauty TV. Five of the twelve programs were categorized as Low Afrocentric Beauty TV.

Failing attention checks. We included two items in the survey that instructed participants to select a specified answer. If they passed both attention checks, their score was 0. If they failed one attention check, their score was 1. If they failed both attention checks, their

score was 2. Findings indicate that 356 participants passed both, 104 participants failed one, and 96 failed both. 34 participants skipped these two items. I chose to keep the data from those who failed both attention checks because attentiveness ebbs and flows throughout a study. Indeed, according to Hauser, Ellsworth, and Gonzalez (2018), “[attention checks] can only measure attention at the moment of administration, so attentiveness during the crucial task may be different from attentiveness during an [attention check] that occurs later,” (p. 7). I did, however, control for participants’ attention scores in my analyses.

Results

Descriptives and Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics for the key independent and dependent variables are found in Table 3.2. Among this sample, PBF TV (M = 1.98) was viewed more frequently than NPBF TV (*M* = 1.88; $p = .000$; $t = -5.191$). However, among PBF programs, adolescents were more likely to watch programs with more instances of stereotyping (*M* of Jezebel TV = 2.03; *M* of Sapphire TV = 2.15; *M* of SBW TV = 2.01) than fewer instances of stereotyping (*M* of Low Jezebel TV = 1.96; *M* of Low Sapphire TV = 1.80; *M* of SBW TV = 1.96; *p* = .000, .001, and .016 respectively; *t* = 3.284, 15.789, and 2.426 respectively). In terms of physical features, watching TV programs where Black women had more Afrocentric features was low for this group with a mean of 1.89, while watching TV programs where Black women had less Afrocentric features had a mean of 2.11 ($p = .000$; $t = -8.229$). In terms of their actual beliefs, participants varied in their endorsement of stereotypes of Black women as Sapphires, Jezebels, and SBW (*M* = 2.38, 2.11, and 2.72 respectively). Here, participants offered stronger endorsement of the Sapphire stereotype than the Jezebel stereotype ($p = .000$; $t = -10.249$); stronger endorsement of the SBW ideal than the Jezebel stereotype ($p = .009$; $t = -13.344$); and stronger endorsement of the SBW

ideal than the Sapphire stereotype ($p = .009$; $t = -7.616$). However, the adolescent girls erred on the side of accepting Eurocentric beauty ideals with a mean of 2.78 on a 1-5 scale.

For my first set of preliminary analyses, I sought to identify potential demographic covariates of the central variables. To investigate this issue, I first ran zero-order correlations between age, parents' education, hours per week watching TV, and our predictor and outcome variables (see Table 3.3). All three demographic variables were correlated with our TV variables. Age and hours per week watching TV were positively correlated with every TV variable, and parents' education was negatively correlated with four TV variables.

Next, I ran an independent samples T-test to test for gender differences in mean responses to the 10 TV variables and three stereotype variables (see Table 3.4). Several significant gender differences emerged. Girls watched more episodes than did boys of programs with portrayals of Black women as SBW and more programs that did not feature Black women with Afrocentric features. Because of this gender difference, and marginal differences in Jezebel TV and Sapphire TV, remaining analyses were first done for the overall sample and then split by gender to examine whether there were differences in the two groups. Finally, I examined inter-correlations among all the predictor and outcome variables. There were several significant correlations (see Table 3.5).

Testing the Main Research Questions

To examine the extent to which each TV variable contributed to beliefs about Black women/girls, I ran a series of simultaneous regression analyses that included age, parents' education, hours per week watching TV, and attention check validity as control variables. Our first hypothesis was that greater exposure to programming that featured prominent Black female characters would be associated with a weaker belief in the Jezebel, Sapphire, and SBW

stereotypes. In order to examine this question, I ran a series of linear regressions that examined the extent to which watching PBF and NPBF TV predicted belief in these stereotypes (see Table 3.6). Watching PBF TV did not predict weaker or stronger support of the Jezebel, Sapphire, or SBW stereotypes. Watching NPBF TV also did not predict weaker or stronger support of the Jezebel, Sapphire, or SBW stereotypes. Furthermore, watching PBF TV did not predict weaker or stronger belief in Eurocentric beauty ideals, but watching more NPBF TV *did* predict stronger belief in Eurocentric beauty ideals.

My second hypothesis was that heavier viewing of programs with few portrayals of Black women being sexualized would be associated with a weaker belief in Black girls as Jezebels. In order to examine this, we ran a linear regression that examined the extent to which watching more Jezebel TV versus Low Jezebel TV predicted belief in the Jezebel stereotype (see Table 3.7). Although Jezebel TV and Low Jezebel TV were correlated, I ran them in the same regression because the correlation was not higher than .8 (Mason & Perreault Jr., 1991). Overall, watching more Jezebel TV significantly predicted belief in the Jezebel stereotype; however, watching more Low Jezebel TV did not predict belief in the Jezebel stereotype. When I looked at boys and girls separately, I saw that there are no effects of Jezebel and Low Jezebel TV for girls. For boys, however, watching more Jezebel TV was predictive of stronger belief in the Jezebel stereotype while watching more Low Jezebel TV was predictive of weaker belief in the Jezebel stereotype.

My third hypothesis was that heavier viewing of programs with few portrayals of Black women as Sapphires (i.e., shown yelling) would be associated with a weaker belief in the Sapphire stereotype. In order to examine this, I ran a linear regression that examined the extent to which watching more Low Sapphire TV versus Sapphire TV predicted belief in the Sapphire

stereotype (see Table 3.8). Although Sapphire TV and Low Sapphire TV were correlated, I ran them in the same regression because the correlation was not higher than .8 (Mason & Perreault Jr., 1991). Overall, watching more Sapphire TV predicted weaker belief in the Sapphire stereotype. This significant association held true for boys but not girls. Furthermore, for boys, watching more Low Sapphire TV was predictive of stronger belief in the Sapphire stereotype.

My fourth hypothesis was that heavier viewing of programs with few portrayals of Black women as SBWs (i.e., shown at work) would be associated with a weaker belief in the SBW ideal. In order to examine this question, I ran a linear regression that examined the extent to which watching Low SBW TV versus SBW TV predicted endorsement of the SBW ideal (see Table 3.9). Although SBW TV and Low SBW TV were correlated, I ran them in the same regression because the correlation was not higher than .8 (Mason & Perreault Jr., 1991). Overall, neither kind of TV predicted belief in the SBW. This outcome held true for both boys and girls.

Lastly, I hypothesized that among Black girls, heavier viewing of programs with Afrocentric Beauty ideals (i.e., featuring natural hairstyles) would be associated with a stronger rejection of European beauty ideals. In order to examine this question, I ran a linear regression that examined the extent to which watching Low Afrocentric Beauty TV and Afrocentric Beauty TV predicted acceptance of European beauty ideals (see Table 3.10). Although Afrocentric Beauty TV and Low Afrocentric Beauty TV were correlated, I ran them in the same regression because the correlation was not higher than .8 (Mason & Perreault Jr., 1991). Contrary to my expectations, watching more Afrocentric Beauty TV predicted stronger acceptance of European beauty ideals, and watching more Low Afrocentric Beauty TV did not predict acceptance of European beauty ideals.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine whether Black adolescents' exposure to programs with and without prominent Black women is associated with their endorsement of three stereotypes about Black women: Jezebel, Sapphire, and SBW. Previous literature has found that Black youth begin to prefer media with more racial representation as they get older, which is why I was interested in programs featuring prominent Black women characters (Ellithorpe & Bleakley, 2016). Furthermore, Black youths' media use has been related to traditional gender ideals, meaning that seeing certain portrayals of Black female characters could contribute to their beliefs about Black women (Ward, Hansbrough, & Walker, 2005). However, Black youth also notice stereotypes about themselves in media (Adams-Bass, Bentley-Edwards, & Stevenson, 2014). Based on this previous literature, I hypothesized that watching more programs featuring prominent Black women characters, who have now become more three-dimensional, would predict weaker endorsement of stereotypes about Black women, while watching more programs *without* prominent Black women characters would predict stronger endorsement of societal stereotypes about Black women. Within programs featuring Black women, I hypothesized that watching programs where Black women were portrayed in alignment with stereotypes would be predictive of stronger endorsement of stereotypes about Black women. My results partially supported my hypotheses. Below, I discuss possible interpretations of these results and the insights they offer for the current literature.

Black Adolescents' Engagement with PBF and NPBF TV

As the literature has shown, the Black teens in this sample were watching more episodes of PBF TV (M = 1.98) than they were NPBF TV (M = 1.88), supporting the findings that indicate increased attention to media that include representations of one's identity group among Black

adolescents. Furthermore, I also found that heavier viewing of NPBF TV predicts a stronger endorsement of Eurocentric beauty ideals, suggesting that these programs may present more images of thin, fair skinned, and long-haired women than PBF TV programs. This particular image of women is unsurprising considering the previous content analysis work on primetime TV (Sink & Mastro, 2017).

Overall, however, the results regarding PBF TV were not what I expected. Watching more episodes of PBF TV did not predict endorsement of stereotypes one way or the other. Perhaps the Black women featured prominently on these programs do not neatly convey specific stereotypes about Black women. Perhaps these women are given the range to portray multiple facets of not only Black womanhood, but Blackness and womanhood broadly (Cox & Ward, 2019). In this case, any negative or stereotypical attributes of these women may be counter-balanced by broader and more diverse characterizations, thereby negating any one outcome or assumption. It is also possible that these programs *do* promote and/or negate stereotypes, but because there are prominent Black women on the screen, Black adolescent viewers do not associate the content with stereotypes. In this case, just the presence of a prominent Black woman on the screen may signal to Black teens that the content is not stereotypical. Recent work on Black populations' TV consumption in relation to their endorsement of Black women stereotypes has produced null results, as well, suggesting that TV consumption may not be associated with stereotype endorsement for many Black populations (Jerald et al., 2017).

Black Adolescents' Engagement with the Jezebel, Sapphire, and SBW Stereotypes

Regarding the Jezebel stereotype, watching more Jezebel TV was indeed predictive of stronger endorsement of this stereotype. However, when broken down by gender, it was found that boys were driving this association, as watching more Jezebel TV for girls did not predict

endorsement of the Jezebel stereotype. Furthermore, watching more Low Jezebel TV predicted weaker endorsement of the Jezebel stereotype for boys only. Regarding the Sapphire stereotype, I found that watching more Sapphire TV was predictive of *weaker* endorsement of the Sapphire stereotype. Again, when examined by gender, boys were driving this relation. I also found that, for boys, watching more Low Sapphire TV was predictive of *stronger* endorsement of the Sapphire stereotype, another surprising result. However, some of the programs coded as Low Sapphire TV (i.e., *Power* and *Atlanta*) primarily focus on Black men's narratives. It is possible that although Black women are not "acting like" Sapphires on these programs (or in these episodes), the Black men on the programs are talking about Black women as if they are Sapphires. Black boys may pick up on these messages and therefore endorse them themselves. Low Sapphire TV did not predict Sapphire endorsement for girls. Lastly, neither SBW TV nor Low SBW TV predicted SBW endorsement for boys or girls. Overall, when examining each gender separately, the results were often driven by the boys in the sample. This pattern could suggest that Black boys are more susceptible to stereotyped presentations of Black women as they do not share the same gender identity as these women and may not have the internal desire or motivation to refute these stereotypes.

Black Girls' Beauty Ideals

For Black girls, contrary to my hypothesis, watching more Afrocentric Beauty TV was predictive of *stronger* endorsement of Eurocentric Beauty Ideals, while watching more Low Afrocentric Beauty TV was not predictive of endorsement at all. This is an interesting result considering that Afrocentric Beauty TV was measured using hair type, and acceptance of natural hair is often coupled with rejection of Eurocentric beauty standards (Patton, 2006). However, it is likely that these programs featuring Black women with natural hair do not embrace other

aspects of Afrocentric beauty (e.g., darker skin tones, fuller facial features), or perhaps they place those with natural hair in positions that are worse off than those with straight hair (e.g., trouble with relationships, struggling in the workplace), incidentally supporting Eurocentric beauty standards. Further content analysis work is needed to determine the nuanced ways in which certain attributes linked with Eurocentric and Afrocentric beauty ideals are also associated with positive and negative character outcomes on television.

Overall, girls reported watching more of these types of programs than boys, watching SBW TV and Low Afrocentric Beauty TV significantly more than boys. Girls' exposure to more media in general could also be the reason behind acceptance of Eurocentric Beauty Ideals, considering the widespread messages of Eurocentric beauty in media (Conrad et al., 2009; Sink & Mastro, 2017). Furthermore, adolescence may not be the time when Black girls are comfortable enough with themselves to reject Eurocentric beauty ideals, considering adolescence is a tumultuous time for girls regarding their appearance (Mueller, Pearson, Muller, Frank, & Turner, 2010). It has also been found that, while in college, Black women express resistance to Eurocentric beauty ideals (Sekayi, 2003). Perhaps this means that as Black girls get older, they may learn to reject Eurocentric beauty ideals.

Black Feminist Thought and Cultivation Theory

I used both Black Feminist Thought and cultivation theory to guide this work, as Black Feminist Thought addresses beliefs about Black women and cultivation theory addresses messages in the media. My findings support both theories in different ways. Given that the Black girls in this sample watched more TV than boys yet did not endorse any of the stereotypes about Black women might suggest that Black girls are exhibiting some form of resistance regarding beliefs about Black women. This resistance aligns with Black Feminist Thought which states that

Black girls and women resist stereotypes about themselves and construct their own realities and beliefs about Black women.

Cultivation theory seems to be supported by results regarding the Jezebel stereotype. Black boys who watched more Jezebel TV were more likely to endorse the Jezebel stereotype, and those who watched more Low Jezebel TV were more likely to reject the Jezebel stereotype. This pattern aligns with cultivation theory, as the theory suggests that those who consume more media are more likely to accept the worldview presented in media. Furthermore, it is important to note that many of the different categories of TV programs were highly correlated with each other. This is likely due to the fact that the same programs were used for each category. For example, *Empire* was both a Jezebel TV program and a Sapphire TV program, which may explain the high correlations. However, it is also possible that the different categories of TV are highly correlated because, as cultivation theory states, there are dominant messages presented in the media. So, although a program may be categorized as Jezebel TV, it is possible that the program paints a stereotypical picture of Black women overall, thus being correlated with Sapphire and SBW TV.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although this study adds new information to the literature on Black adolescents' stereotype endorsement in relation to their media use, it is not without its limitations. One of the limitations is that only 12 programs were presented and categorized as PBF TV, while 18 programs were categorized as NPBF TV. There are several programs with Black women as lead or secondary characters, and the results could have been stronger had I included more of these programs. Furthermore, I used only one behavior/feature to categorize Jezebel, Sapphire, SBW,

and Afrocentric Beauty TV. Because these stereotypes and ideals are complex, using one item to define them may be an oversimplification.

Based on the results of this study, future research should examine whether *young adults'* engagement with PBF TV is also unrelated to their endorsement of stereotypes about Black women. It would be interesting to see if there is a developmental difference where watching more PBF TV as you get older is predictive of weaker or stronger endorsement of these stereotypes. Considering the gender differences in the results, it would be insightful to examine whether the results remain the same when stereotypes about Black men are being assessed. Do Black girls continue to be unaffected by stereotypical media portrayals of Black men or is this indifference to the media reserved for stereotypes about Black women? How do Black boys grapple with these images? Lastly, among this sample the means of TV watching (scored 1-4) were lower than the means of stereotype endorsement (scored 1-4), meaning that Black adolescents are getting stereotyped messages about Black women from somewhere that may not be TV. It would be beneficial to analyze Black adolescents' use of other media platforms (i.e., social media) and determine how this usage relates to their endorsement of stereotypes about Black women.

Conclusion

The results of this study highlight both the importance of having Black women represented as main characters and the nuances in contributions of TV programs featuring Black women characters. Black adolescents were able to watch both PBF TV and NPBF TV and not associate those portrayals with stereotypes about Black women; however, Black girls who watch more NPBF TV are faced with the prominence of Eurocentric beauty ideals. Jezebel and Sapphire TV may be the only subsets of PBF TV that affect Black adolescents' beliefs about

stereotypes, particularly Black boys, as watching more is predictive of stronger endorsement of the Jezebel stereotype and weaker endorsement of the Sapphire stereotype. Overall, these results suggest that Black women are needed in media, as their presence counteracts endorsement of Eurocentric beauty ideals. Furthermore, conclusions about the impact of how Black women are portrayed (i.e., as Sapphires, SBWs) are not direct or simplistic, as these results show that presence of these stereotypes can actually be predictive of rejecting said stereotype or not predictive of endorsement at all. Instead, we should perhaps focus on having more representation on TV so that adolescents are not left with limited ideas of what a Black woman can be. Finally, it is critical that we teach both media literacy and unity to our Black girls and boys, as there may be detrimental effects of the media on the unity of Black girls and boys, considering Black boys' endorsement of these stereotypes.

Table 3.1. NPBF and PBF TV Programs

NPBF TV Programs	PBF TV Programs	Categories for PBF TV Programs
Arrow	*Atlanta*	Jezebel, Low Sapphire, Low SBW, Afrocentric Beauty
Big Bang Theory	*Being Mary Jane*	Jezebel, Low Sapphire, SBW, Low Afrocentric Beauty
Elementary	*Blackish*	Low Jezebel, Sapphire, Low SBW, Afrocentric Beauty
Fresh off the Boat	*Empire*	Jezebel, Sapphire, SBW, Low Afrocentric Beauty
Game of Thrones	*Greenleaf*	Low Jezebel, Sapphire, Low SBW, Afrocentric Beauty
Gotham	*How to Get Away with Murder*	Low Jezebel, Sapphire, SBW, Low Afrocentric Beauty
Jane the Virgin	*Insecure*	Jezebel, Low Sapphire, Low SBW, Afrocentric Beauty
Modern Family	*Orange is the New Black*	Low Jezebel, Sapphire, Low SBW, Afrocentric Beauty
NCIS	*Power*	Low Jezebel, Low Sapphire, Low SBW, Low Afrocentric Beauty
Pretty Little Liars	*Queen Sugar*	Low Jezebel, Low Sapphire, Low SBW, Afrocentric Beauty
Prison Break	*Scandal*	Low Jezebel, Sapphire, SBW, Low Afrocentric Beauty
Riverdale	*This Is Us*	Low Jezebel, Low Sapphire, SBW, Afrocentric Beauty
Stranger Things		
Supernatural		
Superstore		
Teen Wolf		
Will & Grace		
Young Sheldon		

Table 3.2. Descriptives of Media Variables, Stereotype Endorsement, and Eurocentric Beauty Ideals

Variables	Sample Mean	Range	Std. Dev.
Prominent Black Female TV	1.98	1-4	.74
No Prominent Black Female TV	1.88	1-4	.71
Sapphire TV	2.15	1-4	.79
Low Sapphire TV	1.80	1-4	.77
Jezebel TV	2.03	1-4	.81
Low Jezebel TV	1.96	1-4	.76
SBW TV	2.01	1-4	.81
Low SBW TV	1.96	1-4	.77
Afrocentric Beauty TV	1.89	1-4	.75
Low Afrocentric Beauty TV	2.11	1-4	.86
Jezebel Stereotype	2.11	1-4	.86
Sapphire Stereotype	2.38	1-4	.84
SBW Ideal	2.72	1-4	.53
Eurocentric Beauty Ideals	2.78	1-5	.81

Table 3.3. Demographic Correlates of Independent and Dependent Variables

Variables	Age	Parent Education	Weekly TV
Prominent Black Female TV	**.16****	**-.10***	**.15****
No Prominent Black Female TV	**.11***	-.08	**.18****
Jezebel TV	**.13****	**-.10***	**.14****
Low Jezebel TV	**.16****	-.08	**.14****
Sapphire TV	**.14****	-.07	**.13***
Low Sapphire TV	**.15****	**-.09***	**.15****
SBW TV	**.13****	-.08	**.16****
Low SBW TV	**.16****	-.08	**.13***
Afrocentric Beauty TV	**.13****	-.06	**.15****
Low Afrocentric Beauty TV	**.16****	**-.10***	**.13***
Jezebel Stereotype	.09	-.10	.08
Sapphire Stereotype	**.10***	-.05	.05
SBW Ideal	-.08	.05	-.01
Eurocentric Beauty Ideals	.08	.10	-.00

Note. *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Table 3.4. Independent Samples T-Test of Media Variables and Stereotypes by Gender

Variables	M_{Girls}	M_{Boys}	t
Prominent Black Female TV	2.03	1.92	1.69
No Prominent Black Female TV	1.87	1.87	.07
Jezebel TV	2.09	1.95	1.89+
Low Jezebel TV	2.00	1.90	1.41
Sapphire TV	2.21	2.08	1.84+
Low Sapphire TV	1.83	1.75	1.18
SBW TV	2.12	1.88	**3.37****
Low SBW TV	1.96	1.95	.17
Afrocentric Beauty TV	1.92	1.85	1.02
Low Afrocentric Beauty TV	2.18	2.02	**2.14***
Jezebel Stereotype	2.06	2.17	-1.32
Sapphire Stereotype	2.37	2.39	-.20
SBW Ideal	2.73	2.71	.50

Note. +$p \leq .07$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

Table 3.5. Inter-correlations between Media and Stereotype Variables

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.
1. PBF TV	1	**.86****	**.95****	**.95****	**.91****	**.98****	**.92****	**.96****	**.95****	**.92****	**.13****	.05	.00	**.15***
2. NPBF TV	-	1	**.78****	**.86****	**.78****	**.84****	**.79****	**.83****	**.86****	**.73****	**.20****	**.12***	-.05	**.26****
3. Sapphire TV	-	-	1	**.80****	**.82****	**.95****	**.90****	**.89****	**.87****	**.90****	.07	.01	.02	.12
4. Low Sapphire TV	-	-	-	1	**.90****	**.90****	**.85****	**.93****	**.92****	**.84****	**.16****	.07	-.00	**.17***
5. Jezebel TV	-	-	-	-	1	**.79****	**.85****	**.86****	**.84****	**.85****	**.17****	.08	.05	**.14***
6. Low Jezebel TV	-	-	-	-	-	1	**.89****	**.94****	**.93****	**.89****	**.10***	.02	-.02	**.14***
7. SBW TV	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	**.77****	**.79****	**.95****	**.10***	.01	.03	.08
8. Low SBW TV	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	**.97****	**.80****	**.14****	.07	-.01	**.19****
9. Afrocentric Beauty TV	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	**.73****	**.13****	.06	-.03	**.21****
10. Low Afrocentric Beauty TV	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	**.10***	.03	.05	.05
11. Jezebel Stereotype	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	**.81****	**.13****	**.29****
12. Sapphire Stereotype	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	**.13****	**.33****
13. SBW Ideal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	.05
14. Eurocentric Beauty Ideals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

Note. *p<.05; **p<.01. PBF = Prominent Black Female; NPBF = No Prominent Black Female.

Table 3.6. Regressions Predicting Endorsement of the Jezebel, Sapphire, and SBW Stereotypes and Eurocentric Beauty Ideals

	Jezebel	Sapphire	SBW	Euro Beauty
Age	.09	.11+	-.05	-.02
Parents' Education	-.06	-.02	.04	.09
Weekly TV	.05	.02	-.01	-.04
Failed Attention Checks	**.25****	**.16***	-.03	.09
PBF TV	-.07	-.14	.13	-.08
NPBF TV	.12	.16	-.12	**.34****
Adjusted R2	.091	.037	-.008	.072
Equation F	.951	1.614	1.050	**4.878****

Note. +p≤.07; *p≤.05; **p≤.01. Standardized coefficients (betas) reported.

Table 3.7. Regression Predicting Endorsement of the Jezebel Stereotype

	Jezebel	Jezebel (Girls)	Jezebel (Boys)
Age	.10	**.19***	.01
Parents' Education	-.05	-.09	-.01
Weekly TV	.06	.12	.02
Failed Attention Checks	**.26****	**.21***	**.24****
Jezebel TV	**.19***	.08	**.31***
Low Jezebel TV	-.15	.00	**-.27***
Adjusted R2	.097	.128	.073
Equation F	2.136	.461	2.953+

Note. +p≤.07; *p≤.05; **p≤.01. Standardized coefficients (betas) reported.

Table 3.8. Regression Predicting Endorsement of the Sapphire Stereotype

	Sapphire	Sapphire (Girls)	Sapphire (Boys)
Age	.10	.14	.09
Parents' Education	-.01	-.04	.01
Weekly TV	.03	.10	-.03
Failed Attention Checks	**.16***	.15	.16
Sapphire TV	**-.19***	-.01	**-.31***
Low Sapphire TV	.16	-.04	**.29***
Adjusted R2	.033	.015	.037
Equation F	1.874	.123	**2.969***

Note. *p≤.05. Standardized coefficients (betas) reported.

Table 3.9. Regression Predicting Endorsement of the SBW Stereotype

	SBW	SBW (Girls)	SBW (Boys)
Age	-.04	.01	-.06
Parents' Education	.04	.01	.06
Weekly TV	-.03	-.10	.06
Failed Attention Checks	-.03	**-.20***	.08
SBW TV	.07	.10	.09
Low SBW TV	-.01	.07	-.08
Adjusted R2	-.013	.011	-.020
Equation F	.433	1.460	.217

Note. *$p \leq .05$. Standardized coefficients (betas) reported.

Table 3.10. Regression Predicting Endorsement of Eurocentric Beauty Ideals

	Eurocentric Beauty Ideals
Age	-.04
Parents' Education	.10
Weekly TV	-.02
Failed Attention Checks	.10
Afrocentric Beauty TV	**.34***
Low Afrocentric Beauty TV	-.16
Adjusted R2	.059
Equation F	**4.179***

Note. *p≤.05. Standardized coefficients (betas) reported.

Chapter 4

Study 3: Contributions of Social TV Participation to Black Adolescents' Perceptions of Black Women

Although using social media has become a daily habit for many adolescents and adults, it is not without its consequences. Studies have shown that social media use can be related to diminished well-being, including increased symptoms of depression, lower self-esteem, and body image concerns (Howard, Heron, MacIntyre, Myers, & Everhart, 2017; Stanton, Jerald, Ward, & Avery, 2017). Many of these outcomes suggest that heavy social media use may be detrimental for individual's thoughts about themselves. However, fewer studies have assessed how social media use predicts one's thoughts about others. In this case, I am interested in whether adolescents' social media use is associated with their thoughts about Black women. Specifically, I want to know whether using social media to discuss Black women TV characters is associated with Black adolescents' endorsement of stereotypes about Black women. As Harris and Coleman (2018) argue, understanding how Black people are being represented in the media is equally as important as knowing how Black people are responding to these representations. In this study, I use survey methodology to gather information about the extent to which Black adolescents respond to TV characters via social media (i.e., Social TV). I then use this information to understand whether their responses predict their beliefs about Black women.

Social Media Use and Motivations

Over the past decade, social media use has become increasingly popular for all age groups, but especially for teens (Twenge, Martin, & Spitzberg, 2018). According to Common

Sense Media (2017), the general adolescent population spends approximately two hours a day using social media, compared to three hours a day for Black adolescents. The most noted platforms that people use tend to be Facebook and Twitter (Marinelli & Ando, 2014; Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009). Social media, in general, are ideal platforms for adolescents to develop their identity and compare themselves to peers. Teens can post about the music that interests them, the extracurricular activities they do, and even the TV programs they watch (Anderson & Jiang, 2018; Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010). Furthermore, social media encourage users to post pictures of themselves, breeding a context where comparison is almost natural (Brown & Tiggemann, 2016). Considering that Black youth and young adults are the most prevalent consumers of social media, it is worthwhile to examine how they use social media and how or if their social media use is linked in any way to their beliefs about specific groups.

There are several significant motivations for using social media, as they stand as a way for adolescents to establish themselves amongst their peers. Between the years of 2008 and 2016, social media use became a daily activity for the majority of adolescents, who spent more time on this activity than watching television and movies (Twenge, Martin, & Spitzberg, 2018). Part of the reason for this increase in social media engagement is that teens can use social media to achieve multiple ends, including socializing, keeping up their self-image, and entertainment. In a study on 1,715 18 – 29-year-olds, it was found that those who participated in Facebook groups did so to socialize, be entertained, seek self-status, and seek information (Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009). Allen, Ryan, Gray, McInerney, and Waters (2014) also point out that, among the literature on adolescents' social media use, it has most often been found that adolescents use social media to foster a sense of belonging, connect with peers when they feel lonely, and

develop their identities. Together, these findings suggest that adolescents may value social media for its social aspects.

This motivation may be especially meaningful for Black social media users, who may often feel isolated in our White-male-dominated society. Indeed, there have been studies that indicate that Black social media users use social networking sites as a means for creating community (Ellington, 2015). This goal may be especially relevant among Black girls and women who are neither White nor male. In a qualitative study of 17 Black college aged women's social media use, Ellington (2015) highlighted how social networking sites were used to foster a sense of community and support, particularly for those with natural hair. It was found that Black women are seeking out online spaces to feel validated in their choice to reject European standards of beauty. Furthermore, Black women have been shown to use hashtags, such as #BlackGirlMagic, to support and uplift other Black women on social media and also to reject dominant societal narratives about Black women (Stewart, 2019).

An additional purpose behind social media use for Black populations has been social justice, with social media posts being used as a tool for social change. Via hashtags such as #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, and #OscarsSoWhite, Twitter, specifically, has been acknowledged as an effective tool for challenging power (Bernabo, 2019). Other sites have been shown to play a similar role. For example, a study on Afro-Brazilian YouTubers indicated that these women used their followings to address social justice issues and challenge stereotypes (Mitchell-Walthour, 2018). Similarly, social media have been used by Black people to document their travel experiences as both an updated form of The Green Book and as a counternarrative to those who say Black people do not travel (Dillette, Benjamin, & Carpenter, 2018). Among adolescents, specifically, it was found that Black youth were more likely to engage politically

online than White youth and were more likely to show interest in the news (Harp, Bachmann, Rosas-Moreno, & Loke, 2010). This finding corresponds well with data showing that many Black online spaces are often used to discuss the news (e.g., via Twitter and Facebook; Shearer & Grieco, 2019). This previous research suggests that Black people are often using social media to do more than socialize and be entertained; they are also using it to resist false information about themselves and to make injustices against them known.

An additional motive for social media use among Black media consumers is to comment on media and popular culture. Broadly, Twitter is a place where users can voice their opinions about pop culture, the government, and other miscellaneous topics and be heard (Harris & Coleman, 2018; McNutt, 2018; Patterson, 2018). Black Twitter is a subsample of Twitter users who identify as Black and participate in commentary and/or jokes about or pertaining to the Black community. This commentary often occurs while users are watching programs featuring Black people, and this phenomenon of social media users posting about the TV programs they are watching is called Social TV (Cohen, 2017; Marinelli & Ando, 2014; Pagani & Mirabello, 2011). According to Nielsen (2018), there are approximately 19 million Black people on Twitter and approximately 9.3 million users considered a part of Black Twitter. Therefore, Black Twitter may be a prominent force for pointing out stereotypes, misconceptions, and ideals in popular media. Via "Black Twitter," users are able to resist unbecoming images of their group. Indeed, the users of Black Twitter are especially aware of this power and often use their voices to stand up for their beliefs (Harris & Coleman, 2018). It is possible, then, that Black adolescents are aware of and participating in commentary on Black characters via Black Twitter, doing so to resist negative messages about those of their racial group.

Messages about Beauty on Traditional Media and Social Media

If Black youth are using social media to comment on the portrayals of Black women on TV, what types of things could they potentially be noticing and addressing? One salient issue may be the presence or absence of Black women, in general. Traditionally, there have been few roles for Black women in media. Between 1971 and 1980, Black women were shown on television between 5.2% and 6.2% of the time, which is quite rarely (Seggar et al., 1981). Additionally, during that time period, Black women in major roles decreased significantly (from 9.6% to 2.4%; Seggar et al., 1981). Since then, however, Black women have become increasingly more prominent in media, making up 14% of characters on prime-time television between 2000 and 2008 (Signorielli, 2009a). However, one critique is that they are often restricted to certain genres and certain domains, such as reality programs, situation comedies, and music videos. Viewers of certain action dramas, news programming, or soap operas might seldom encounter Black women in leading roles.

A second issue that Black youth could notice and address is the appearance of Black women and the extent to which they conform to Eurocentric beauty ideals. Eurocentric beauty ideals dictate that women should be thin and fair skinned, with small features and long hair, preferably blond (Robinson-Moore, 2008). Evidence indicates that this ideal is prominently featured in mainstream TV programming, with content analyses finding that women are often thinner and more attractive than their male counterparts (Mastro & Figueroa-Caballero, 2018; Sink & Mastro, 2017). To what extent does this ideal reflect portrayals of Black women in the media? It has been found that Black women featured in rap music videos were most often light skinned, had small facial features, and straightened hair (Conrad, Dixon, & Zhang, 2009). Furthermore, in a content analysis of local newscasters in America, it was found that majority of

women newscasters were of a lighter skin tone and had straight hair; this was true even of Black women (Bock, Chacon, Jung, Sturm, & Figueroa, 2018). However, recent content analyses have found more diverse depictions of Black women (Study 1). The narrow, Eurocentric standard may be expanding, with recent content analyses showing that Black women on scripted programs are often dark skinned (43% of women; Cox & Ward, 2019). Furthermore, Black women were recorded wearing natural hairstyles in more episodes than straightened hairstyles. However, 62% of these women were considered thin. These findings paint a picture of a mostly Afrocentric presentation of beauty on current scripted programming.

However, the context of the current *social* media landscape is different in that there are blatant Eurocentric values being promoted. On social media sites, these ideals are heavily emphasized, with tools embedded that can be used to enhance or accentuate users' beauty (e.g., photo filters, photo editors). These tools usually allow for users to depict themselves as thinner and/or having fairer and smoother skin (McLean, Paxton, Wertheim, & Masters, 2015). In Motseki and Oyedemi's (2017) study of Black women celebrities' social media profiles in South Africa, it was found that these celebrities were packaging Black beauty as skin bleaching, slim bodies, and long hair weaves. Furthermore, Mondé (2018) conducted a content analysis of Tumblr posts with the hashtag #BlackDontCrack and found that more often than not, the posts were featuring Black celebrity women, commenting on their beauty and agelessness. However, as Mondé (2018) points out, this commentary can be harmful for Black women who are not "ageless" or traditionally considered beautiful.

This information becomes concerning when we realize that girls' social media use is growing at larger rates than boys' social media use (Twenge et al., 2018), suggesting that girls may have more exposure to these narrow messages. However, Black girls' high consumption of

social media should not be taken as blind acceptance of the beauty ideals being presented, as this group often grapples with the messages presented to them. In Stephens and Few's (2007) qualitative study of the effects of images of Black women in Hip-Hop on 15 Black adolescents' attitudes, it was found that the girls appreciated "natural" beauty (e.g., shaved head, locs, no weave) but were not sure about the "natural" look for themselves. The boys, on the other hand, did not appreciate "natural" beauty. These findings could suggest that Black girls are aware of what is traditionally considered attractive *and* know that traditionally attractive features are not the only attractive features and are dealing with how to toe the line of uplifting Black beauty while sustaining traditional attractiveness.

Messages about Gendered Racial Stereotypes on Traditional Media and Social Media

A third issue Black youth could address as they consume and comment on TV content is the attributes or characteristics of the Black women appearing. Do the characters conform to common stereotypes about Black women or are they instead portrayed in more three-dimensional ways? I focus, specifically, on three stereotypes or controlling images of Black women noted in popular culture: the Jezebel, the Sapphire, and the Strong Black Woman (Collins, 2000). The Jezebel is characterized as an attractive, flirtatious, hypersexual, and manipulative Black woman (West, 1995). The Jezebel stereotype was created to justify the rape of Black women by their owners during slavery. Some have argued that the image of the Jezebel is still present on TV today, with characters like Olivia Pope from *Scandal* being an example (Baldwin, 2015). Research examining Black youths' engagement with this image has most often been in terms of music artists, not characters on TV, but the results have shown that stronger identification with the "Jezebel" is associated with stronger emphasis on appearance for Black girls (Gordon, 2008).

However, this does not tell us whether frequent engagement with the Jezebel stereotype will lead adolescents to believe that Black women, in general, are Jezebels.

The Sapphire is a Black woman who emasculates Black men, and is angry, loud, controlling, aggressive, and bossy (West, 1995). She is essentially what is described today as the “angry Black woman.” The Sapphire originated from the personality of Sapphire, Kingfish’s wife, on the *Amos and Andy* radio show in the 1940s and 1950s. The Sapphire stereotype might also still be present on scripted programming today, as Cox and Ward (2019) found that one of the most common behaviors done by Black women in scripted programs was yelling, a behavior that the Sapphire is known for. It is unclear whether Black youth discuss this portrayal via social media, making it more important to know how Black youth consume and grapple with these images.

The Strong Black Woman ideal emphasizes that Black women are resilient, emotionally strong, and self-sufficient while also being nurturing and self-sacrificing (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Romero, 2000; Woods- Giscombé, 2010). This ideal became prominent post-slavery as Black women often had to be the sole providers for their families (Collins, 2000). According to Cox and Ward’s (2019) content analysis, the top two behaviors done by Black women on scripted TV were giving orders and making occupation-related comments, which might suggest that the SBW might be one of the most common images of Black women on TV today, as those behaviors can be interpreted as showing strength and self-sufficiency. However, it has been found that identifying with the Strong Black Woman ideal is associated with negative health outcomes for Black women (Stanton et al., 2017). Furthermore, Black-oriented blog use does not moderate the negative effects of SBW endorsement (Stanton et al., 2017). Therefore, it is

important that we know how Black youth engage with these messages, especially via social media where displays of the SBW can be so abundant.

Social TV

As noted earlier, Social TV refers to the practice of using social media to comment on TV programs. It is actually a complex set of experiences that involves analysis of TV content, exposure to other's social media comments of this content, and active response to the TV content and social media comments via one's own posts. Social TV gives social media users the feeling of shared experience while watching programs on TV together. Indeed, among national and international samples, viewers report engaging in Social TV for social companionship and infotainment reasons (Auverset, Billings, & Conlin, 2016; Lin, Chen, Sung, 2018; Marinelli & Ando, 2014; Pagani & Mirabello, 2011). Auverset and colleagues (2016) related the use of Social TV to fear of missing out (FoMO), which implies that users not only want to feel a sense of inclusion with their fellow Social TV engagers, but they also want to feel like they are "in the know" about particular programs. However, wanting to be up to date on every conversation about particular programs may make avid Social TV users more susceptible to the ideas and beliefs of their peers, which may or may not be beneficial for developing one's own beliefs.

Feature one: Viewing others' comments. One aspect of Social TV for Black viewers may involve reading others' comments about Black women on TV. Youth may be reading their peers' critiques of characters' appearance and behavior. Might this exposure make cultural norms even more salient or might this experience make subcultural norms more salient? The mechanism involved could be akin to that proposed by cultivation theory, which describes the impact of repeated exposure to consistent messages and norms. Cultivation theory states that those who consume media more frequently are more likely to accept the worldview presented in

media (Gerbner, 1998). Few studies have used cultivation theory to explain the effects of social media use; however, those that exist indicate that social media consists of widely held messages, meaning that frequent social media users are likely to have similar beliefs to those presented on social media. For example, in Saunders and Eaton's (2018) study on young women's social media use in relation to their body surveillance, body dissatisfaction, and eating habits, it was found that users of *Facebook, Instagram,* and *Snapchat* demonstrated more disordered eating and body surveillance. These links are unsurprising given that many users on those platforms are paid influencers who are models promoting certain "lifestyles" and, ultimately, Eurocentric beauty standards (Chae, 2018; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2015).

Drawing on Cultivation Theory, it might be argued that those who engage more frequently in Social TV behaviors may be more susceptible to being shaped by the social critiques they encounter. Previous research on Social TV users has found that viewers are indeed prone to believe what their co-viewing peers believe (Cohen, 2017; Viswanathan, Malthouse, Maslowska, Hoornaert, & Van der Poel, 2018; Winter, Kramer, Benninghoff, Gallus, 2018). For example, Winter and colleagues (2018) conducted a study of 117 European adults in which they were asked to watch a talent show (e.g., *America's Got Talent*) while simultaneously engaging in a Social TV environment. Participants were to either watch a clip where the performer was displaying antisocial behavior or a clip where the performer gave a conventional performance. Regarding the Social TV environment, researchers set up a site where participants were either to receive positive, negative, or neutral/unrelated comments about the show. While reading these comments, participants were also encouraged to give their own commentary on the program. The results showed that publicly (i.e., the participants' Social TV comments), participants' beliefs about parts of the program were in line with comments by perceived coviewers if the comments

were positive. Privately (i.e., the participants' responses on survey measures), participants' beliefs about parts of the program were in line with comments by perceived coviewers, whether the comments were positive or negative. Additionally, Viswanathan and colleagues (2018) analyzed Twitter and consumer data (TV watching) and found that negative sentiments about a program by TV viewers are more impactful on Social TV users than positive sentiments. Here, negative sentiments from tweets posted by viewers increased live viewing and engagement on Twitter, while positive sentiments did not. Could it be that Social TV users are promoting negative beliefs?

Feature two: Active commenting. A second feature of Social TV involves making your own comments about what is being shown on TV. In many ways, making social TV commentaries could be akin to active mediation, which is talking to people while watching TV and commenting on the content. Studies about parental active mediation initially hypothesized that parents' comments on TV content would bring negatives to light and make youth less likely to accept the stereotypes presented. However, findings have not always born this out. In a study on the effects of parental mediation on adolescents' body satisfaction, it was found that parents who made any sort of comment regarding a character's body type, whether positive or negative, was predictive of negative emotions for the adolescent which, in turn, led to lower body satisfaction (Nathanson & Botta, 2003). Furthermore, in a study assessing how mediation affects both Black and White children in terms of accepting nontraditional gender roles, it was found that mediation only affected the beliefs of White children, leading them to accept nontraditional gender roles more (Nathanson, 2010). However, the mediators in this experiment were either White or Asian women which may suggest that mediation is only effective when done by same-

race individuals. Perhaps Black adolescents are more receptive to the mediation of their same-race peers or family members.

Patricia Hill Collins (2000) refers to a type of parental mediation among Black mothers and their daughters. Collins (2000) states that Black mothers socialize their daughters "for survival," giving them the tools needed to resist stereotypes about Black women and create their own realities. This lesson for survival is a part of the teachings of Black Feminist Thought. Black Feminist Thought centers Black women and states that Black women resist controlling images of themselves using oppositional thought and actions that promote oppositional thought (Collins, 2000). Because of the possible passing down of values from mother to daughter, it is my belief that Black Feminist Thought is also present among Black adolescent girls.

Black Feminist Thought seems to be especially evident when considering Black Twitter users and their Social TV commentaries. It has been documented that when participating in Social TV, Black Twitter users have made negative comments about the particular programs that they were watching because they believed Black characters were being depicted in a disrespectful manner (Arcy & Johnson, 2018; Harris & Coleman, 2018). For example, Arcy and Johnson's (2018) work examined how Black Twitter users responded in outrage to the declining narrative and killing of Abbie Mills, a Black woman, on *Sleepy Hollow.* Bernabo (2019) also found that Twitter was used to discuss episodes of TV programs where the Black Lives Matter movement was addressed, mentioning that these conversations were centered on thematic appropriateness, timing, producers' qualifications, institutional critiques, and the purpose of entertainment television. So, when considering this population in particular, I think it is beneficial to think about how Black people create meaning of their own depictions on TV while engaging in Social TV, thus employing Black Feminist Thought. How are Black Social TV users

engaging with representations of Blackness? Unfortunately, the literature regarding Social TV is very limited, especially concerning Social TV among African Americans.

The Current Study

Building on existing experimental race and media content work that has focused on news media (e.g., Gilliam, Valentino, & Beckmann, 2002; Ramasubramanian, 2011; Saleem, Prot, Anderson, & Lemieux, 2017), I would like to focus on whether engaging in Social TV is linked with adolescents' perceptions of Black women. Previous research has indicated that social media tends to uphold traditional gender roles, so those who use social media may also be upholding stereotypes about Black women (Bailey, Steeves, Burkell, & Regan, 2013). However, this specific population of Social TV users has a history in the U.S. of resisting negative imagery and creating their own narrative (Harwood & Roy, 2005). Specifically, Black women have been taught to reject stereotypical images of themselves (Collins, 2000). Based on this notion, I hypothesize that, for Black girls, using social media more often to make comments about TV characters will be predictive of weaker endorsement of a) the Jezebel stereotype b) the Sapphire stereotype, and c) the SBW ideal. However, Eurocentric beauty standards seem to permeate Black media (Conrad et al., 2009; Motseki & Oyedemi, 2017). Because of this, I hypothesize that using social media more often to make comments about TV characters will be predictive of stronger endorsement of Eurocentric beauty ideals.

Given the findings of Study 2, for Black boys, I hypothesize that using social media more often to make comments about TV characters will be predictive of stronger endorsement of a) the Jezebel stereotype, b) the Sapphire stereotype, and c) the SBW ideal. Although I believe that, today, many Black parents are also socializing their sons about the difficulties facing Black women, I do not think Black adolescent boys are developmentally in a place where they are able

to reconstruct the culture's narrative around Black women, as a majority view themselves as only *exceptions* to stereotypes about Black men (Rogers & Way, 2016).

Method

Participants and Procedure

Using a survey delivered by Qualtrics, Black adolescents (N = 590, 51% female) from various states within the U.S. participated in this study. Participants ranged in age from 13-18 years (M = 15.3 years). As a measure of SES, we obtained information about participants' parents' education; the response options for education ranged from 1 (completed elementary school) to 8 (completed advanced degree). On average, parents had completed some college but did not receive a degree (M_{mother} = 5.24; M_{father} = 5.02). The survey took approximately thirty minutes to complete and each participant was compensated with digital currency and coupons.

Measures

Jezebel stereotype. A scale was created to measure the extent to which participants endorse the Jezebel stereotype of Black women. To create the measure, we started with the 7-item revised Stereotypic Roles of Black Women Scale (Townsend, Thomas, Neilands, & Jackson, 2010), which reflects the Jezebel (4 items) and Sapphire (3 items) stereotypes. We then drew on theoretical and empirical research concerning this stereotype (e.g., Brown Givens & Monahan, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Stephens & Philips, 2003) to create one additional item. These efforts produced a 5-item scale representing the Jezebel stereotype. The items were preceded by the prompt: "There are lots of beliefs about what Black girls are like. Think about the things you have heard and about what you believe. To what extent do YOU think. . ." Items include: "Black girls always want to have sex," "Black girls use their body and looks to get what they want," "Black girls will steal your boyfriend," "Black girls are gold-diggers," and "Black

girls are more promiscuous (fast) than other girls." Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statements on a 4-point scale (1 = not at all; 4 = a lot). Items were averaged to create a scale score, and the scale was reliable (α = .89). Higher scores indicate greater acceptance of the Jezebel stereotype. These 5 items were mixed in with other statements about Black girls to mask the purpose of the assessment.

Sapphire stereotype. As mentioned, the 7-item revised Stereotypic Roles of Black Women Scale (Townsend, et al., 2010) was used to create the Sapphire stereotype measure. Three of the original items were already addressing the Sapphire stereotype. We then divided one original item into two items and drew on theoretical and empirical research concerning this stereotype (e.g., Brown Givens & Monahan, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Stephens & Philips, 2003) to create one additional item. These efforts produced a 5-item scale reflecting the Sapphire stereotype. The items were preceded by the prompt: "There are lots of beliefs about what Black girls are like. Think about the things you have heard and about what you believe. To what extent do YOU think. . ." Items include: "Black girls are loud," "Black girls always want their way," "Black girls like to start drama," "Black girls have a problematic attitude," and "Black girls are always mad and ready to fight." Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statements on a 4-point scale (1 = not at all; 4 = a lot). Items were averaged to create a scale score, and the scale was reliable (α = .89). Higher scores indicate greater acceptance of the Sapphire stereotype. These 5 items were mixed in with other statements about Black girls to mask the purpose of the assessment.

SBW schema. In order to assess adolescents' endorsement of the SBW schema, an adaptation of Thomas's (2006) Strong Black Woman Scale was used. The scale consisted of 9 items assessing the extent to which participants endorse the SBW schema. Participants were

given the prompt: “Think about the adult Black women that you know. To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements.” Sample items include: “Black women should put the survival of their family and community above their own needs,” “Sacrificing for others is a positive quality that Black women should display,” and “Struggling against all odds in order to achieve is just part of a Black woman’s life.” Participants rated their agreement with the items on a 4-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 4 = Strongly Agree). Items were averaged to create a scale score, and the scale was reliable ($\alpha = .79$). Higher scores indicate stronger belief in the prominence of the SBW schema. This scale was used in Anyiwo, Ward, Fletcher, and Rowley’s (2018) study on Black adolescents’ TV use, where all nine items loaded on one factor with loadings ranging from .47 to .71. This scale was also used on a sample of Black undergraduate women and men ($a = .73$; Jerald, Ward, Moss, Thomas, & Fletcher, 2017).

Eurocentric beauty ideals. Plybon, Pegg, and Reed’s (2003) 12-item Image Acceptance Measure was used to gauge adolescents’ thoughts about Black girls’ appearance. These items were only administered to the adolescent girls in the sample. Participants were presented with twelve statements about Eurocentric versus Afrocentric appearance preferences and were instructed to indicate their level of agreement with each statement. Sample statements include: “It is important to have ‘good’ hair,” “I think guys prefer girls who have lighter skin,” and “If I could change how my face features are, I would.” Response options ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Items were averaged to create a scale score, and the scale was reliable ($\alpha = .87$). Higher scores indicate greater support of Eurocentric beauty ideals.

Weekly TV viewing. We asked participants to indicate the number of hours they watch television on an average weekday, Saturday, and Sunday. Response options ranged from 0 to 12

or more hours. A weekly sum of television hours was computed by multiplying the reported weekday usage by five and then adding in the Saturday and Sunday usage.

Social media use. We assessed frequency (0 = *never*; 5 = *several times a day*) of consuming five social media. The social media sites listed were *Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, Twitter,* and *Snapchat*; a sum of participants' use across these five social media platforms was created (α = .73).

Social TV. For this study, I developed a set of items to assess Social TV participation. We asked participants 9 questions about how often (1 = *never*; 4 = *a lot*) they use social media to talk about: a TV character's appearance, friendships, family, job, romantic relationship, behavior/dialogue, and sexual choices. These items were chosen because they loosely correlate to the stereotypes that I was addressing. For example, asking about appearance loosely relates to Eurocentric beauty ideals, and sexual choices relates to the Jezebel stereotype. A composite mean score of participants' social TV engagement was created (α = .96; see Table 4.1 for information about individual items).

Failing attention checks. We included two items in the survey that instructed participants to select a specified answer. If they passed both attention checks, their score was 0. If they failed one attention check, their score was 1. If they failed both attention checks, their score was 2. I chose to keep the data from those who failed both attention checks because attentiveness ebbs and flows throughout a study. As Hauser, Ellsworth, and Gonzalez (2018) state, "[attention checks] can only measure attention at the moment of administration, so attentiveness during the crucial task may be different from attentiveness during an [attention check] that occurs later," (p. 7). I did, however, use this score as a control variable.

Results

Descriptives and Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics for the demographic, media, stereotype endorsement, and Eurocentric beauty ideal variables are found in Table 4.2. Participants reported watching TV for approximately 28 hours per week ($M_{\text{Girls}} = 29$; $M_{\text{Boys}} = 27$). On average, this sample reported using social media somewhere between "a few times a month" and "a few times a week" ($\text{M}_{\text{Girls}} = 16.01$; $\text{M}_{\text{Boys}} = 15.53$). The means also suggest that our participants generally endorse stereotypes about Black women "a little," but endorse the SBW ideal a little more ($M_{\text{Girls}} = 2.73$; $M_{\text{Boys}} = 2.71$). Girls generally both endorsed and rejected Eurocentric beauty ideals ($M = 2.78$). Lastly, the means suggest that these participants typically do not engage in Social TV, doing so rarely ($\text{M}_{\text{Girls}} = 2.34$; $\text{M}_{\text{Boys}} = 2.23$).

We ran an independent samples T-test to test for gender differences in mean responses to our variables of interest. The means and statistics are presented in the final columns of Tables 4.1 and 4.2. There were significant gender differences regarding Social TV participation; girls reported participating in this behavior more than boys. Specifically, girls reported commenting on a character's romantic and familial relationships more than boys. Because of this gender difference and the gendered breakdown of my hypotheses, subsequent analyses were run separately for each gender. As indicated in Table 4.2, girls and boys did not differ on any other study variables.

My overall aim was to examine whether Social TV participation was associated with adolescents' perceptions of Black women. To first determine any potential covariates, I ran zero-order correlations between age, parents' education (averaging across maternal and paternal education), hours per week watching TV, frequency of social media use, failing attention checks,

and our predictor (Social TV) and outcome variables (Jezebel stereotype, Sapphire stereotype, SBW ideal, and Eurocentric beauty ideals; see Tables 4.3 and 4.4). Age, frequency of social media use, and failed attention checks were correlated with our predictor and outcome variables for girls. Being older was associated with stronger support of the Jezebel stereotype. Heavier social media use was related to more Social TV participation. Failing one or more attention checks was positively correlated with all variables of interest except for SBW ideal, meaning that those who failed attention checks were more likely to indicate endorsement of stereotypical beliefs about Black women and participation in Social TV. Accordingly, these three variables served as covariates in analyses testing the main hypotheses for girls. For boys, both frequency of social media use and failing one or more attention checks were positively correlated with Social TV participation and endorsement of the Jezebel and Sapphire stereotypes. Here, using social media more often and failing more attention checks was related to more Social TV participation and stronger endorsement of the Jezebel and Sapphire stereotypes. Accordingly, these two variables served as covariates in analyses testing the main hypotheses for boys. Finally, we examined inter-correlations among the predictor and outcome variables. Social TV participation was correlated with beliefs about Black women for boys only (see Tables 4.5 and 4.6). For girls, Social TV participation was correlated with Eurocentric beauty ideals.

Testing the Main Research Question

To examine the extent to which Social TV participation contributed to beliefs about Black women/girls among Black girls, I ran a series of simultaneous regression analyses that included age, frequency of social media use, and attention check validity as control variables (see Table 4.7). I hypothesized that using social media more often to make comments about TV characters would be predictive of weaker endorsement of a) the Jezebel stereotype, b) the

Sapphire stereotype, and c) the SBW ideal, but stronger endorsement of Eurocentric beauty ideals. Social TV did not predict weaker endorsement of the Jezebel, Sapphire, and SBW stereotypes. However, Social TV participation did predict stronger endorsement of Eurocentric beauty ideals.

For boys, I hypothesized that using social media more often to make comments about TV characters would be predictive of *stronger* endorsement of a) the Jezebel stereotype, b) the Sapphire stereotype, and c) the SBW ideal. I ran a series of simultaneous regression analyses that included frequency of social media use and attention check validity as control variables (see Table 4.8). Social TV participation was indeed predictive of stronger endorsement of the Jezebel and Sapphire stereotypes. However, Social TV participation did not predict stronger endorsement of the SBW ideal. For both boys and girls, failing more attention checks predicted stronger endorsement of the Jezebel stereotype.

Discussion

The purpose of this analysis of Social TV engagement was to examine if Black adolescents' participation would be associated with their beliefs about Black women. Given that 1) the commentary on social media about women and Black women in particular is often negative, and 2) Black media consumers have a history of refuting negative imagery and messages about their identity, it was hypothesized that, for girls, using social media to discuss TV characters would be predictive of weaker endorsement of stereotypical beliefs about Black women, but stronger endorsement of Eurocentric beauty ideals. For boys, I hypothesized that Social TV participation would be predictive of stronger endorsement of stereotypical beliefs about Black women. My results partially supported my hypotheses. It is important to contextualize these results noting that, on average, people are passive in their engagement with

Social TV (Pagani & Mirabello, 2011). We outline, below, what these results may mean and why these specific patterns may have emerged.

Black Adolescents' Social TV Engagement

When asking Black adolescents how they engage with Social TV commentary, we found several noteworthy results. First, it should be pointed out that, on average, Black girls and boys talked the *least* about a character's sexual choices or behaviors. This outcome is quite intriguing given that Black teens and Black media figures are often sexualized (Andrinopoulos, Kerrigan, & Ellen, 2006; Bleakley et al., 2017). Black adolescents' lack of attention to sex illustrates that, like other adolescents, they still possess innocence and may not yet be focused on sexual experiences.

Second, we also see that Black girls are producing Social TV commentary more than Black boys. Specifically, girls commented more on characters' relationships, whether they be romantic or familial. Given the gender socialization of girls and boys, this is unsurprising (Wallace, 2007). Girls are socialized to care about and maintain relationships, while boys are not (Wallace, 2007). Interestingly, Black boys did not report producing Social TV commentary more than Black girls in any of the categories. Our society presents messages about masculinity that suggest to young boys that they should express themselves as little as possible in order to be seen as masculine, so it is possible that boys' less responsive media style reflects masculinity norms that suggest emotional restraint (Wallace, 2007; Wilkins, 2012). Further study is needed of the reason behind these gender differences.

Gendered Effects of Social TV

There were prominent gender differences in the effects of Social TV commentary on beliefs about Black women. For Black girls, Social TV engagement did not predict endorsement

of stereotypes about Black women. In Williams and Moody's (2019) analysis of Black girls' social media use, they found that Black girls curate their social media in a way that prevents or offsets misogynistic messages. Perhaps Black girls have curated their social media feeds in such a way that destructive messages about Black women are seldom seen, therefore giving these girls the ability to participate in Social TV without having to defend Black women's portrayals, thus making these stereotypes irrelevant in the moment. However, Black women do seem to be engaging in Social TV to defend portrayals of themselves. In a study on Black women's engagement with TV via Twitter, it was found that "Black users rewrote and recentered the narrative […], privileging *their* experiences over the representation of them on television" (Maragh, 2016; p. 360). Maragh (2016) also argues that this recentering of the narrative is laborious, and therefore, Black women are being exploited for doing the labor that TV producers should be doing. It is possible that Black girls are observing Black women redirect the conversations about Black women on TV via their social media feeds but are not yet using social media to do so themselves, thus their own Social TV participation does not affect their endorsement of these stereotypes.

It is also possible that Black girls are encountering both negative and positive content in their Social TV interactions. Perhaps they see negative comments about Black women on TV and, in turn, make positive comments about those women. However, this exposure to both negative comments of others and positive comments of one's own may balance each other out, which results in no change in attitude. It is also possible that the comments that Black girls make about these characters have no valence. Thus, their neutral approach to Social TV engagement does not map onto their attitudes about stereotypes pertaining to Black women.

However, Social TV engagement for Black girls *did* predict endorsement of Eurocentric beauty ideals. So, although some social media use may expose Black girls to counternarratives about Black women, as Maragh (2016) and others argue, social media may still negatively impact Black girls' appearance ideals. Considering the emphasis on appearance on social media and adolescent girls' desire to be attractive (Iwanicka et al., 2018), this is expected. Endorsement of Eurocentric beauty ideals suggests that one believes darker skin tones and kinkier hair are less attractive than fairer skin tones and looser hair. As noted earlier, colorism has been evident in popular media, especially in music videos (Conrad et al., 2009), which may make the culture's skin tone preferences very salient for Black girls. Previous research has found that Black men prefer to date fairer skinned women and do not prefer natural hair on Black women (Ellington, 2015). It has also been found that both Black boys and girls value Eurocentric features (i.e., fairer skin and straighter hair; Stephens & Few, 2007). If this is the message that Black girls are getting about society's preferences, then it is possible that Black girls may be engaging in Social TV to either praise those that appeal to these preferences or chastise those that do not. Ellington's (2015) study on Black women's engagement with natural hair social media sites centered a population of Black women who do not endorse Eurocentric hair beliefs but seek support via social media. Among these women, most did not actively post comments on the natural hair pages and classified themselves as observers. This finding might suggest that Black girls who *are* actively engaging in Social TV commentary may be posting negative comments about natural hair, as those who feel positively about it report taking a more passive route of engagement.

Conversely, Black boys' participation in Social TV was predictive of endorsement of both the Jezebel and Sapphire stereotypes. This finding might suggest that Black boys' social

media feeds are filled with more messages of misogynoir and less messages counteracting it, therefore encouraging Black boys to participate in this kind of dialogue. It is also possible that Black boys are not compelled to refute stereotypical images of Black women because they are not Black women themselves. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) states that "social group memberships constitute crucial elements of the self and that they combine with societal intergroup dynamics to influence thoughts and actions" (p. 189; Harwood & Roy, 2005). Furthermore, Harwood and Roy (2005) go on to state that people prefer to engage with media that features members of their own racial and gender groups. Essentially, this means that Black boys are probably more concerned with images and conversations about Black men than Black women.

Black Feminist Thought and Cultivation Theory

I used both Black Feminist Thought and cultivation theory to guide this work. Black Feminist Thought addresses beliefs about Black women and cultivation theory addresses messages in the media. My findings supported both theories. The Black girls in this sample participated in Social TV more than boys yet did not endorse any of the stereotypes about Black women. This pattern might suggest that Black girls are exhibiting some form of resistance regarding beliefs about Black women. This resistance aligns with Black Feminist Thought, which states that Black girls and women resist stereotypes about themselves and construct their own realities and beliefs about Black women. Cultivation theory seems to be supported by results regarding the boys in the sample. Black boys who participated in Social TV more often were more likely to endorse the Jezebel and Sapphire stereotypes. This outcome aligns with cultivation theory as this theory suggests that those who consume more media are more likely to accept the worldview presented in media. Previous research has found that TV programs present

stereotypical messages about Black women and that social media users are often more critical of girls and women (Bailey, Steeves, Burkell, & Regan, 2013; Baldwin, 2015), so this may explain why boys who participate in Social TV more often are more likely to endorse these stereotypes about Black women and girls.

Limitations and Future Directions

The analyses done for the current study add important information to the literature about Black adolescents' social media use and their navigation of gendered and racialized messages, but it is not without its limitations. One of our main limitations is that we do not know whether the characters that adolescents reported talking about were Black women. However, there is a strong likelihood that many of the characters were Black, considering that Black teens tend to prefer media that is racially representative (Brown & Pardun, 2004; Ellithorpe & Bleakley, 2016). Moreover, in study 2, participants reported heavier viewing of the programs that featured prominent Black women characters (e.g., *Empire*) than programs that did not (e.g., *Big Bang Theory*). A second limitation is that we only assessed Social TV engagement via nine items/topics. It is possible that Black adolescents are engaging in Social TV to discuss topics that are outside of our scope of topics. However, we chose to include these items specifically because they loosely align with the stereotypes and ideals of interest. Third, we do not know the valence of the comments being shared by these adolescents. I asked whether comments were made regarding specific attributes, but I did not ask whether those comments were generally critiques, favorable, or even neutral. The effects of Social TV participation on stereotype endorsement may differ based on the sentiments associated with the comments being made.

Given the results of this study, future research should examine the contributions of others' Social TV commentary on Black adolescents' commentary. Many studies have

highlighted that peers' comments are influential on one's own commentary (Winter, Kramer, Benninghoff, Gallus, 2018). Ideally, an experiment would be done to distinguish the effects of stereotypical and counter-stereotypical comments from peers. It would also be worthwhile to investigate whether Social TV engagement differs based on which TV program is being watched. For example, do Black adolescents talk more about appearance when watching *Insecure* and more about jobs when watching *How to Get Away with Murder*? Of these two programs, which do they watch more and how does this choice relate to their beliefs about Black women? Furthermore, given the prominent gender differences in results, future research should consider examining the overall social media feeds of Black boys and Black girls. Do the messages that these two groups are getting differ? How so? Lastly, it could be helpful to do a profile analysis on Black adolescent social media users. Are active users of social media different from passive users in their beliefs about Black women? Are active boys different from active girls in their beliefs?

Conclusion

The results of this study give us new insight into the Social TV phenomenon. Black adolescents, a group who uses media more than their peers, are using social media to engage with TV, and this engagement does indeed predict beliefs about Black women. However, Black girls and Black boys differ in how Social TV links with their beliefs: for Black girls, social TV predicts stronger endorsement of Eurocentric beauty ideals, and for Black boys it predicts stronger endorsement of the Jezebel and Sapphire stereotypes. Overall, these results suggest that Social TV engagement could potentially be harmful for Black adolescents as it is related to disparaging beliefs about Black women, with whom these adolescents share a racial identity. To help Black adolescents' racial and gender identities to develop healthily, it is encouraged that

when future researchers reach out to this population that they include media literacy courses discussing both TV and social media messages.

Table 4.1. Item Analysis of Social TV Scale

Item	*M*	*SD*	M_{Girls}	M_{Boys}	*t*
How attractive or unattractive the characters or actors are?	2.35	1.09	2.37	2.33	.29
A character's clothes?	2.34	1.06	2.39	2.29	1.01
A character's sexual choices or behavior?	2.10	1.05	2.11	2.07	.43
A mother's parenting choices?	2.15	1.11	2.21	2.10	.96
How realistic the behaviors or dialogue is?	2.32	1.12	2.33	2.32	.08
A character's romantic relationship(s)?	2.33	1.10	2.47	2.18	**2.58****
A character's relationship with their family?	2.27	1.12	2.40	2.15	**2.14***
A character's friendships?	2.38	1.12	2.43	2.33	.84
A character's job?	2.24	1.10	2.26	2.22	.38

Note. *p<.05; **p≤.01

Table 4.2. Descriptives of Demographics, Media Variables, Stereotype Endorsement, and Eurocentric Beauty Ideals

Item	*M*	*SD*	M_{Girls}	M_{Boys}	*t*
Age	15.29	1.46	15.21	15.37	-1.34
Parent Education	5.14	1.44	5.16	5.14	.18
Weekly TV	28.22	20.69	29.24	27.00	1.12
Social Media Use	15.77	5.83	16.01	15.53	.88
Jezebel Stereotype	2.11	.86	2.06	2.17	-1.32
Sapphire Stereotype	2.38	.84	2.37	2.39	-.20
SBW Ideal	2.72	.53	2.73	2.71	.50
Eurocentric Beauty Ideals	2.78	.81	2.78	--	--
Social TV	2.28	.92	2.34	2.23	1.13

Table 4.3. Demographic Correlates of Independent and Dependent Variables for Girls

Variables	Age	Parent Education	Weekly TV	SM Use	Attention Checks
Social TV	.03	.01	.15	**.30****	**.30****
Jezebel Stereotype	**.17***	-.11	.13	.06	**.23****
Sapphire Stereotype	.12	-.07	.11	-.02	**.14***
SBW Ideal	-.04	-.01	-.11	.01	-.13
Eurocentric Beauty Ideals	.08	.10	-.00	.11	**.17***

Note. *p<.05; **p<.01. SM = social media.

Table 4.4. Demographic Correlates of Independent and Dependent Variables for Boys

Variables	Age	Parent Education	Weekly TV	SM Use	Attention Checks
Social TV	.07	-.09	.04	**.29****	**.31****
Jezebel Stereotype	-.02	-.07	.03	**.18***	**.28****
Sapphire Stereotype	.07	-.03	-.02	**.15***	**.20****
SBW Ideal	-.11	.10	.09	.08	.04

Note. *p<.05; **p<.01. SM = social media.

Table 4.5. Inter-correlations between all Variables for Girls

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Social TV	1	.14	.08	.00	**.42****
2. Jezebel Stereotype	-	1	**.81****	.11	**.29****
3. Sapphire Stereotype	-	-	1	**.15***	**.33****
4. SBW Stereotype	-	-	-	1	.05
5. Eurocentric Beauty Ideals	-	-	-	-	1

Note. *p<.05; **p<.01.

Table 4.6. Inter-correlations between all Variables for Boys

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Social TV	1	**.34****	**.31****	.03
2. Jezebel Stereotype	-	1	**.82****	**.15***
3. Sapphire Stereotype	-	-	1	.10
4. SBW Stereotype	-	-	-	1

Note. *p<.05; **p<.01.

Table 4.7. Regressions Predicting Endorsement of the Jezebel, Sapphire, and SBW Stereotypes and Eurocentric Beauty Ideals for Girls

	Jezebel	Sapphire	SBW	Euro Beauty
Age	.13	.12	-.00	.05
Social Media Use	-.02	-.09	-.00	-.04
Attention Checks	**.17***	.07	-.04	.11
Social TV	.07	.05	.03	**.42*****
Adjusted R2	.038	.006	-.020	.181
Equation F	.886	.498	.103	**33.816*****

Note. *p≤.05; **p≤.01; ***p≤.001. Standardized coefficients (betas) reported.

Table 4.8. Regressions Predicting Endorsement of the Jezebel, Sapphire, and SBW Stereotypes for Boys

	Jezebel	Sapphire	SBW
Social Media Use	.10	.09	.06
Attention Checks	**.23****	.14	-.02
Social TV	**.25****	**.25****	-.02
Adjusted R2	.164	.111	-.012
Equation F	**12.120****	**11.520****	.034

Note. **$p \leq .01$. Standardized coefficients (betas) reported.

Chapter 5

General Discussion

My dissertation had three aims: 1) to examine how Black women are being portrayed on current scripted TV programs, 2) to examine whether Black adolescents' levels of exposure to these portrayals of Black women on scripted TV predicted their endorsement of the Jezebel, Sapphire, and SBW stereotypes, and Eurocentric beauty ideals, and 3) to examine associations between Black adolescents' Social TV engagement and their endorsement of the Jezebel, Sapphire, and SBW stereotypes, and support of Eurocentric beauty ideals. In Study 1, I found that Black women were portrayed in various ways that both aligned with stereotypes about Black women and also diverged from those stereotypes. Specifically, Black women were often mothers, single, dark-skinned, thin, and in high-status occupations. The behaviors that they enacted the most were giving orders and commands, engaging in occupation-related actions or statements, and showing emotion (e.g., crying, yelling). In Study 2, I found that Black adolescents who watch more episodes of programs with Black women as lead or secondary characters were *not* more or less likely to endorse the Jezebel, Sapphire, and SBW stereotypes. Watching more episodes of programs without the presence of Black women also did not predict endorsement of the Jezebel, Sapphire, and SBW stereotypes. However, Black girls who watched more episodes of programs without Black women leads were more likely to endorse Eurocentric beauty ideals. Watching more episodes of programs *with* Black women characters did not predict endorsement of Eurocentric beauty ideals. Furthermore, in some cases, watching more episodes of programs where stereotyped behavior was more common predicted endorsement of that

stereotype. This association occurred only concerning Jezebel TV and the Jezebel stereotype, and it only held true for boys. In Study 3, I found that Social TV participation differently affected boys and girls. Boys who more often participated in Social TV were more likely to endorse the Jezebel and Sapphire stereotypes. Girls who participated in Social TV more were more likely to endorse Eurocentric beauty ideals. These findings have several theoretical and real-world implications.

Examining the Significance of the Jezebel, Sapphire, and SBW Stereotypes across the Three Studies

In Study 1, I found that the Jezebel stereotype was not often present in current TV programs, as behaviors pertaining to Sexualization and Sexuality only occurred in approximately 7% of episodes combined. However, Study 2 highlights that watching more episodes of Jezebel TV, defined here as scripted programs in which the Jezebel stereotype (i.e., legs exposed) was more prevalent, predicted stronger endorsement of the Jezebel stereotype among Black boys. Furthermore, Study 3 adds to this finding by showing that Black boys who participated in Social TV more often were even more likely to endorse the Jezebel stereotype than Black boys who infrequently comment on TV content while watching. The results of studies 2 and 3 suggest that the content analysis done in Study 1 may have accurately captured what the portrayal of the modern-day Jezebel is on scripted TV. Studies 2 and 3's findings also suggest that Black boys may be easier persuaded by media representations and comments about Black women being Jezebels than Black girls. This pattern conforms to expectations of Social Identity Theory, which argues that one's social group, in combination with societal intergroup relationships, shapes one's thoughts and actions about one's own social groups (Harwood & Roy, 2005). As theorized,

Black boys may be less likely to do the work of critical thinking when the group being stereotyped is not their own (Social Identity Theory; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Study 1 also highlights that the Sapphire stereotype was one of the more prevalent stereotypes on current TV programs, with Giving Orders and Emotionality behaviors occurring in approximately 19% of the minutes that Black women were on screen. However, Study 2 shows that watching more Sapphire TV was actually predictive of weaker endorsement of the Sapphire stereotype, while watching more Low Sapphire TV was predictive of stronger endorsement of the Sapphire stereotype. This association was found only for boys. In Study 3, boys who participated more often in Social TV were also more likely to endorse the Sapphire stereotype than were boys who engaged less frequently in Social TV behaviors. What might this pattern of results suggest? Although Study 1's results suggest that the Sapphire depiction may still be quite prevalent on current TV programs, Study 2's results suggest that the Sapphire stereotype may encompass more than what was captured in Study 1, as boys who watched more Sapphire TV were *less* likely to endorse the Sapphire stereotype. Perhaps other characters on these programs talk about Black women in ways that suggest they are not Sapphires. Study 3's results suggest that regardless of if the program is considered Sapphire TV or Low Sapphire TV, engaging in Social TV more often is predictive of endorsing the Sapphire stereotype for Black boys. It is possible that social media is a context where negative commentary thrives (Viswanathan et al., 2018). This may be especially true when the group being evaluated is an outgroup (i.e., Black women for Black boys).

Lastly, Study 1 shows that the SBW ideal is also quite prevalent on current TV programs, with 52% of the women having white collar/professional jobs, 63% being single, and Occupation-related behaviors occurring in approximately 11% of minutes. Although the

prevalence of this stereotype seems high, Study 2 shows that watching more SBW TV does not predict endorsement of the SBW stereotype for boys or girls. Furthermore, Study 3 finds that engaging in Social TV more often does not predict endorsement of the SBW stereotype. Overall, these results suggest that although the image of the SBW may still be prevalent on TV programs today, Black adolescents may not be interpreting these images as such. This is surprising considering previous studies have found that Black adolescents who reported watching more Black-oriented TV were more likely to endorse the SBW stereotype (Anyiwo et al., 2018). It is possible that the portrayal of the SBW is so prevalent in media and in their own lives (e.g., in 2019, 46% of Black children under the age of 18 were living with a single mother; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019) that SBW portrayals on TV and social media are not particularly salient or noteworthy.

Examining Eurocentric Beauty Ideals across the Three Studies

In Study 1, I found that Eurocentric beauty ideals were present in some ways and absent in others. Small/thin women accounted for 62% of the Black women on these programs, a Eurocentric standard, yet dark-skinned women accounted for 43% of the women. In Study 2, I found that Black girls who watched more Prominent Black Female (PBF) TV were not more or less likely to endorse Eurocentric beauty ideals; however, those who watched more No Prominent Black Female (NPBF) TV were more likely to endorse Eurocentric beauty ideals. These results were complicated when examining Afrocentric beauty TV, as watching more Afrocentric beauty TV was predictive of stronger endorsement of Eurocentric beauty ideals. Furthermore, Study 3 highlighted that more Social TV engagement was predictive of stronger endorsement of Eurocentric beauty ideals. Study 2's results suggest that, overall, PBF TV does less harm than NPBF TV in terms of endorsing Eurocentric beauty ideals. However, watching

more episodes of programs where Afrocentric features are more prominent appears to bring more attention to Eurocentric beauty standards for Black girls, which, in turn, results in girls endorsing Eurocentric beauty ideals more. It may also be the case that the Afrocentric feature used to define these programs, hair, is not an accurate measure of Afrocentric beauty, as many of the women with natural hairstyles were also fairer skinned (e.g., Rainbow from *Blackish*). Furthermore, Study 3 suggests that Social TV users may be commenting on the physical features of these women, which may align with Eurocentric beauty ideals.

Implications for Theory and Future Research Methods

Because of the historical origins of stereotypical portrayals of Black women (Collins, 2000; West, 1995), most of the research on Black women's portrayals tends to focus on a select set of stereotypes. However, the portrayals of Black women are evolving and have been evolving for decades (Cox & Ward, 2019; Mafe, 2018). Part of this evolution may be due to the higher number of Black women on TV (17% of women on TV between 2015 and 2016; Lauzen, 2016), which may give Black women more opportunities to portray roles that are outside of the stereotypical box. It is time that scholars start to acknowledge the efforts of those who are working to make portrayals of Black women more diverse and complex. My dissertation highlights the variety of representation and the value of analyzing current content, taking into account both stereotypical behaviors, features, and attributes and also behaviors, features, and attributes that are *not* considered stereotypical, but are human (e.g., friendship, stress). I hope my findings encourage researchers studying the portrayals of Black women (and men) in media to examine broader aspects of these characters. What are we missing when we only examine stereotypical behaviors? How does it affect us mentally when we only think about stereotypical portrayals? I understand the historical origins of scholars' concerns about demeaning portrayals

of Black women in the media, and there are still TV programs with those limited narratives; however, I think it is important that we acknowledge growth. My findings demonstrate that stereotypical behaviors were done less than 30% of the time, and that is only *if* you consider Giving Orders, having Legs Exposed, or being Shown at Work stereotypical.

These findings also demonstrate that examining endorsement of the Jezebel, Sapphire, and SBW stereotypes in Black adolescent populations may be more meaningful if done by gender. There were stark differences in endorsement in that Black girls were not more likely to endorse these stereotypes as a result of their TV watching or Social TV participation. However, Black boys who watched certain kinds of programs more often and participated in Social TV more often were more likely to both endorse and reject these stereotypes. This work extends cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1998) by highlighting that consistent exposure to certain kinds of media may not affect one's endorsement of the ideals conveyed in said media unless one is of an outside group. In other words, because Black boys are not Black women and, therefore, do not experience what it is like to be a Black woman, it may be easier for them to accept what is consistently presented to them in the media as typical Black woman behavior. Furthermore, per studies 2 and 3's null results, this work adds a developmental perspective to Black Feminist Thought as we see that Black adolescent girls are not yet rejecting these stereotypes about themselves but also are not endorsing the stereotypes either. Future research should examine the trajectory of Black girls' thoughts about Black girls and Black women. Overall, if Black Feminist Thought and cultivation theory are to be used together again, I think it would be important to apply Black Feminist Thought to hypotheses regarding Black girls or women, while cultivation theory should be applied to hypotheses regarding those who are not Black girls or women. Cultivation theory seems to explain the effects of media exposure when identity is not

considered. However, in this case, Black girls' and women's identities are of central focus, so it is imperative that a theory centering Black girls' and women's points of view (i.e., Black Feminist Thought) is used, as well.

Implications for Black Girls and Boys

These findings may have important implications for Black girls' and boys' relationships with themselves and one another. For example, Black girls' endorsement of Eurocentric beauty ideals may be detrimental to their body image and self-esteem. It has already previously been found that the darker a Black woman's skin tone is, the more likely it is for her to have low self-esteem (Thompson & Keith, 2001). Furthermore, recent studies have shown that Black women with darker skin tones felt invalidated by their family and peers as children because of their skin color (Awad et al., 2015). These findings are possibly due to endorsement of Eurocentric beauty ideals within the self, but because of the larger society. Furthermore, among Black 12-13 year olds, it was found that darker skin tones were viewed as the least desirable because they are less physically attractive (Porter, 1991). Again, this finding is most likely due to the acceptance of the Eurocentric beauty ideals that are being forced upon Black girls. If Black girls continue to watch media where Black women are not present, which will inevitably happen given the fluctuation of parity of Black women on TV, they may be influenced by the beauty ideals being presented and begin to believe that they must look like the women that they see on TV. Furthermore, they may think that Black women are not worthy enough to be on TV, thus their self-esteem may be affected. Additionally, this lower self-esteem and body-esteem could be further impacted when they participate in Social TV, as social media platforms emphasize the importance of appearance (Fardouly, Pinkus, & Vartanian, 2017).

Conversely, Black boys' endorsement of the Jezebel and Sapphire stereotypes may affect their interactions and relationships with Black girls. Black boys may assume that all Black girls are Jezebels and/or Sapphires and treat them as such, therefore never having a successful relationship with them or creating a relationship that is lacking in respect, compassion, and understanding. This lack of support in a relationship can lead to serious issues such as intimate partner violence, which approximately 40% of Black women will experience in their lifetimes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). Furthermore, Squires, Kohn-Wood, Chavous, and Carter (2006) found that Black boys tended to attribute violence towards Black women to the actions of the women (e.g., being "nasty" and dressing inappropriately) and not to the actions of the men. This is a serious concern and could add to the potential self-esteem issues that Black girls may already face due to their endorsement of Eurocentric beauty ideals.

Future Directions for the Field

My dissertation findings propose several important future directions. First, researchers should continue to do a series of studies in which the content of the media of interest is analyzed before studies assessing the impacts of said media are done. In many studies, the impacts of media are studied without examining what the *current* content is (e.g., Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2017). As a result, researchers may get null results because they are testing the impact of something that may not be there. If we are to properly assess the effects of media on people's beliefs, we need to know the content of media first. That is, we need to analyze the content ourselves, and resist relying on content analyses that may have been done decades ago or that assessed populations, attributes, or behaviors that are not of interest.

Second, research should assess broader portrayals of and beliefs about Black women, starting with other ideals that may be applicable (e.g., femininity, political consciousness). It is

possible that Black women are portrayed in similar ways to women broadly (Cox & Ward, 2019). Furthermore, people who watch more PBF programs may be more likely to endorse *other* beliefs about Black women that are not tied to the traditional stereotypes attributed to Black women (Cheers, 2017). What if TV programs and social media are sparking new ideas about Black women? For example, Issa Rae has produced content that shows that Black women can also be "awkward" and "insecure" (Clark, 2019; Wanzo, 2016). Perhaps these new narratives contribute to what youth think about Black girls and women today.

Third, I think it would be beneficial for researchers to do a comparative analysis, looking to see if women of other races are ever portrayed as "Jezebels," "Sapphires," or "strong women." It is possible that other groups of women are portrayed similarly to Black women, but there has not been any research assessing the extent of these characterizations. This analysis would both confirm/disprove that these stereotypes are only attributed to Black women and produce data that could be used to confront media executives. Furthermore, researchers should assess White adolescents' viewing amounts of both PBF and NPBF programs and test whether their perceptions of Black women change for the better or worse depending on the type of programs they view most often. Such analyses could offer significant insights for the future of our racial relations. Is racism continuing to persist or are youth becoming more conscious of the stereotypes facing Black women?

Fourth, future research should assess the valence of Black adolescents' Social TV comments. My dissertation was not able to assess *how* Black adolescents were talking about TV characters, only whether they were making comments pertaining to certain aspects of a character. Are boys and girls feeling differently about certain aspects of characters? Are they sharing the same sentiments, but internalizing the information in a different way? This work could

potentially give us insight into how these two groups are processing the same images and messages.

Conclusion: Transcending Stereotypes, Rejecting Eurocentric Beauty Ideals, and Uniting Black Youth

Across the three studies, my dissertation examines how Black women are portrayed on contemporary scripted TV programs, whether those portrayals align with the Jezebel, Sapphire, and SBW stereotypes, and how being consistently exposed to portrayals of Black women is associated with Black adolescents' endorsement of the Jezebel, Sapphire, and SBW stereotypes. In literature about media representations, Black women are typically described in terms of stereotypes (Collins, 2000; Gammage, 2015; Griffin, 2014; West, 1995). My research shows that current Black female characters on scripted programs may be transcending these stereotypes, but the core of the stereotypes may still be present. What would it look like for TV programs to cast Black women for parts that are not tied to race or gender? How would we assess if this were the case? Researchers centering Black women in media should consider these questions and try to think outside of the box when doing content analyses.

Furthermore, my research shows that Black girls are more likely to endorse Eurocentric beauty ideals the more they watch programming without Black women leads and participate in Social TV. We need to consider developing intervention programs that target Black girls and boys, teaching media literacy and also emphasizing the breadth and complexity of beauty. Lastly, we need to make sure that Black boys are aware of the oppressive images of Black women and girls in media and vice versa. Unity between these two groups is paramount if Black women are ever to receive the respect they so rightly deserve.

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