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Abstract

While consensus has grown about the prevalence of negative Black media images, measuring the influence of these images and youth rejection or endorsement of these images on Black youth well-being and identity is a new and understudied phenomenon. This study was designed to create a measure of Black media stereotypes for use with adolescents. Focus groups with Black youth ages 14 to 21 were conducted and the data were used to design the Black Media Messages Questionnaire (BMMQ). One hundred thirteen Black youth completed the BMMQ along with measures of racial socialization, racial identity, Black history knowledge, body image, and self-esteem. Confirmatory factor analysis of the BMMQ resulted in three scales with six factors. The factors were entered into correlation and ANOVA analyses. Age, gender, and TV viewing consistently correlated with BMMQ factors. ANOVA results demonstrated that few variables were significant for the positive stereotype BMMQ factors, but endorsement of negative

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Black stereotype media messages resulted in significant age and gender differences. Analyses also revealed expected relationships among BMMQ, racial socialization, racial identity, and Black history knowledge variables.

Keywords

Black adolescents, media stereotypes, racial identity, racial socialization, Black history

Validation of the Black Media Messages Questionnaire (BMMQ)

Characters who embody negative stereotypes about Black people have dominated the U.S. media and entertainment industry throughout history (Allen & Bielby, 1977; Allen & Thornton, 1992; Bogle, 2001a, 2001b; Jackson, 2006). Bogle's (1973, 2001b) *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* is an exhaustive chronicle of Black characters spanning eight decades. Early film and television shows featured White actors in blackface whose character portrayals were exaggerated or distorted representations of Black people as uncivilized, illiterate, and/or unintelligent (Bogle, 1973; Jackson, 2006). While these images of animalism were constructed with little sense of direction, other characterizations depicted Blacks as subservient hired help whose primary desire was to please their White employers. Jackson (2006) notes,

Over the course of 150 years from 1769 to about 1927, minstrelsy would become an institution, revered by Whites for its dehumanizing yet somehow entertaining characterization of Blacks as darkies and Whites as ordinary, normal, and cultured ladies and gentlemen . . . indicative of both their attitudes about Blacks and their own self-perceptions.¹ (p. 21)

Besides the minstrel-inspired "coons" and "mammies," additional stereotypical characterizations became staple images of Black females ("tragic mulatto"; "sapphire"; "jezebel") and males ("Buck"; "Uncle Tom"²; Bogle, 1973, 1980, 2001b; Jackson, 2006). In spite of social advances, there remains within the TV and film industry a practice of presenting negative stereotype images of Black people scripted from early characters³ predicated on the racial inferiority of Blacks (Allen & Thornton, 1992; Bogle, 2001a, 2001b; Gorham, 1999; Jackson, 2006).

While consensus has grown about the prevalence of negative Black media images, measuring the influence of these images and youth rejection or

endorsement of these images on Black youth well-being and identity is a new and understudied phenomenon. The creation of a measure of how youth experience the negative imaging of Black characters is based on the following assumptions: (a) print and television media often present negative stereotypes of Black people and (b) these images inform and influence adolescent perspectives about Black people. The next section provides a framework for researchers to consider when developing media-based research studies with Black adolescents.

Important research questions raised in this study examine the relationships among exposure to and endorsement of media images of Black people, racial identity, and racial socialization for Black adolescents. Secondary research questions explore how racial/ethnic socialization (R/ES) and Black identity are associated with Black history knowledge, self-esteem, and body image. Still, none of these questions can be answered without the development of measures that capture youth perceptions of Black media images.

Media Exposure and Black Youth

While technological advances have expanded media platforms, and communication mechanisms continue to evolve, television viewing remains the most popular medium among media studies of African American youth. These studies provide a framework for how media exposure influences body image ideals (O'Connor, Brooks-Gunn, & Graber, 2000), self-esteem (O'Connor et al., 2000), and sexuality (Arnett, 1995; Escobar-Chaves & Anderson, 2008; Ward, Day, & Epstein, 2006; Ward, Hansbrough, & Walker, 2005; Ward & Harrison, 2005; Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999). Even with the increase in media studies on Black youth, studies that examine the relationship of racial identity to how Black youth interpret and respond to media images of Black people remain scarce.

Theories of Media-Generated R/ES

Cultivation theory

Two theories serve as a framework for this research: Cultivation Theory (Gerbner & Gross, 1976) and Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST; Spencer, 1995). Cultivation theory (Gerbner & Gross, 1976) is premised upon the assumption that television viewing is the primary source of storytelling in American society. This theory suggests that higher rates of TV exposure is associated with internalizing the stories (images) as representative of reality. High-volume viewers exposed to repeated messages are theorized to

adapt a “mean world view”—a view of the world as worse than it actually is, and a resulting mistrust of people around them (Gerbner, 1998; Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Cultivation theory has proven consistently useful for confirming associations between level of TV exposure and real-life perceptions (Gerbner, 1998). Applying cultivation theory to the TV-viewing habits of Black youth, who have the highest number of viewing hours and preference for Black TV shows (Berry, 1998; Watkins, 2005), suggests that youth will accept Black character portrayals and media images as valid models of acceptable and expected behaviors for Black people. Still, cultivation theory does not address the nuances of Black culture, the history of racial oppression, or the ongoing use of racial stereotyping in contemporary Black life, social and economic mobility and stagnation (Adams & Stevenson, 2012).

PVEST

An integrated perspective on how **macro-systemic racial** insults influence Black cultural and individual functioning and identity can be found in the PVEST. PVEST allows for contextual analysis of behavior by assessing vulnerability level, net stress, reactive coping strategies, emergent identities, and life stage outcomes relative to the experiences of African American youth—Protective factors (those which help to shield youth from stressors) and risk contributors (those things which heighten vulnerability and stress reaction), racial attitudes and behaviors can be incorporated into the analysis of the experiences of African American youth (Spencer, 1995, 2006) to assist with determining vulnerability level.² Net stress assessment permits examination of how risks (such as racism) that youth confront are counteracted by available supports (i.e., family structure, neighborhood composition, or friends); the quality and quantity of supports available to youth influence their reactive coping strategies—which may be adaptive or maladaptive. African American youth are frequently tasked with developing healthy, positive emergent identities⁴ as part of adolescence by navigating around conflicting messages received from media, family, friends, and teachers, along with interpreting racialized experiences and developing necessary coping strategies (Spencer, 1995; Spencer, Dupree, Swanson, & Cunningham, 1996). Vulnerability level, net stress, and reactive coping strategies are the PVEST elements used to frame the present study.

The researchers of this study assume that this generation’s frequent exposure to negative Black media images is considered vulnerability level risk, and will correlate with racial socialization, racial identity, body image, and self-esteem processes (scores). Within the context of net stress engagement, R/ES, Black history knowledge, and self-esteem, there exist many supports

and challenges. High scores for these variables represent net stress supports that buffer the influence of negative Black media images. R/ES is theorized as a lens through which an individual appraises self-esteem, racial/ethnic group identity, and coping options (Stevenson, 2013). Despite the explanatory power of macro-systemic racial factors in PVEST and cultivation theories, there is less explanation on the more proximal mechanisms that youth use to accept or reject negative Black media images. R/ES research attempts to address this gap by illuminating the multiple developmental influences on youth racial identity in more proximal, dyadic relational contexts.

As parents and family members are primary socializing agents for youth, they model for youth how to consider, manage, and resolve racial and ethnic dynamics through verbal and nonverbal interactions and communications. This interaction process between family and youth has been called R/ES (Stevenson, 2011). Many Black parents practice R/ES in order to help youth to buffer and transcend negative messages and experiences they may encounter about being Black (Barr & Neville, 2008; Bennett, 2007; Bentley, Adams, & Stevenson, 2009; Berkel et al., 2009; Brown, Linver, Evans, & DeGennaro, 2009; Constantine & Blackmon, 2002; Hughes et al., 2006; Stevenson, 1994, 1995; Stevenson & Arrington, 2009; Thomas & Speight, 1999; Thompson, Anderson, & Bakeman, 2000). However, because of increasing levels of exposure, media, not just family, is also a socializing agent, providing youth with messages about societal norms and modeling expected behaviors (Arnett, 1995; Berry, 2000; Powell, 1982; Stroman, 1991). Given the historical legacy of Black media representations, high levels of media viewing, and the importance of identity development during adolescence, we explore what relationships exist among exposure to Black media stereotypes, racial socialization, and the racial identity of Black adolescents.

Measuring Youth Perceptions of Media-Generated R/ES

A key problem in the literature presented is the lack of measurement research on the psychological effects of Black media messages, beliefs, and frequency of use on adolescents. Currently, there is no standardized measure for identifying Black media message stereotypes. Studies that identify and/or investigate media stereotypes ask for respondents' impressions of media images by employing a strategy of referencing current videos, TV shows, and/or characters (Allen & Bielby, 1979; Allen & Thornton, 1992; Fujioka, 2005; Gordon, 2008; Ward, 2004; Ward et al., 2005). News-media-oriented studies use current event stories or mainstream versus Black media outlets (Vercellotti & Brewer, 2006) to investigate stereotype messages about Black people. Studies

of female stereotype images employ a content analysis strategy framed by common negative portrayals of Black females in the media (Balaji, 2008, 2009; Woodard & Mastin, 2005). In fact, content analysis is a common methodology for analyzing media content. However, this strategy does not ask participants whether they acknowledge and endorse the stereotypes.

Contemporary research has provided some insight into how Black adults respond to Black media images (Albarran & Umphrey, 1993; Allen & Bielby, 1977, 1979; Allen & Clarke, 1980; Allen & Thornton, 1992; Gandy, 2001). These researchers identify Black adults as critical of negative media portrayals of Black people and Black-oriented TV shows. Studies with African American participants ask respondents to judge the meaning and content quality of selected TV shows, videos or movies, and which shows they prefer the most. There are also studies with youth that ask participants how they relate to specific characters and/or whether they prefer mainstream TV shows or Black-oriented TV shows (Gordon, 2008; Ward, 2004; Ward et al., 2006; Ward et al., 2005). These studies include still images, but commonly reference TV shows and characters without determining whether participants are in agreement with the implicit message(s) associated with the characters or TV shows being referenced.

One argument against creating an instrument to analyze media stereotypes is the varied influence of sociohistoric factors on the television plots and characters over time. Perhaps characters and TV shows will lose their relevance over time because the story lines were written to reflect the events, social norms, and contexts during the show's original airing. This critique suggests that plots and characters may not retain their meaning(s) with future generations. However, analyses demonstrate the persistence of negative Black media content in spite of industry advances and the introduction of positive Black media images (Adams-Bass, Bentley-Edwards & Stevenson, in press; Bogle, 2001a, 2001b; Coltrane & Messineo, 2000; Jackson, 2006; Nama, 2003; Watkins, 2005; Woodard & Mastin, 2005). Shows cloak traditional stereotypes in contemporary characters by using modern colloquial language, clothing, gadgets, and in some cases surrounding Black characters with multicultural casts. As such, the media racial socialization of negative Black stereotypes persists across generations as older shows are retained, longstanding stereotypical characters are not modified despite contemporary contexts and frames, and no counter-socialization strategies are presented in contemporary shows to debate the negative portrayals of these stereotypes. Creating a reliable measure that assesses respondents' ability to identify common messages associated with media images will help researchers to study how media socialization operates within the developmental experiences of Black adolescents.

Despite the literature's focus on damaging impact of negative stereotypes on the developmental experiences of Black adolescents, positive Black media images also exist (Allen & Thornton, 1992; Berry, 1998). Unfortunately, the frequency of the appearance of these images in mainstream media is low compared with the appearance of negative stereotype characters (Adams-Bass, Bentely-Edwards & Stevenson, in press; Berry, 1998, 2000; Gorham, 1999; Nama, 2003; Srividya, 2007; Ward, 2004). Both negative and positive stereotype media messages that occur in print and TV media will be examined in this study.

The essential research questions for this study include the following:

Research Question 1: Is it possible to develop a valid and reliable measure of adolescent perceptions of positive and negative Black media images for television and magazines?

Research Question 2: If developed, what relationship would these perceptions of Black media images have to other aspects of youth identity development including R/ES exposure, racial identity maturity, body image, self-esteem, and Black history knowledge scores?

Method

Developing the BMMQ

The BMMQ was created to (a) determine if Black adolescents would be able to identify stereotype messages associated with images of Black people on TV and in print magazines, (b) assess their belief in the media messages identified, and (c) estimate the frequency of exposure to the selected message when watching TV and/or reading magazines.

Use of focus groups to identify Black media images and BMMQ items. The focus group phase of this study centered on answering the following question: What are the dominant messages represented by images of Blacks in the media? (See Adams & Stevenson, 2012). During the first segment of the focus group, youth were shown images projected onto a large screen and were asked to describe the message they believed to be associated with the image. During the second segment, the focus group participants were asked to complete a pilot version of the BMMQ. Twenty-three items of images of famous Black actors, athletes, politicians, and popular culture celebrities were gathered from newsprint and visual media. Each image was followed by four pre-determined messages, and respondents were asked to select one of the four that best described the meaning of the image or choose *other* and

write their own message in the blank space provided. The “other” responses were collated and analyzed. Messages that occurred most frequently were incorporated into the item options for the final version of the BMMQ.

Items 21 to 23 were dropped because of the confusing nature of the images and their lack of popularity. After revision and review of youth responses in the focus group, the final version of the BMMQ was completed and was composed of four subscales (Black Image Meaning [BIMS], Black Media Message Beliefs [BMMB], Black Television Message Exposure [BTME], and Black Magazine Message Exposure [BMME]) with each subscale requiring different response formats.

Black Image Meaning Subscale (BIMS). The first subscale is titled Black Image Meaning and is reflected in the instruction “Select the statement you believe best represents the message presented by this image.” For example, the image for Item 1 is a picture of two women in an open convertible smiling and laughing. Black actress Alfre Woodard is in the front seat driving, while White actress Kathy Bates, is seated in the back leaning over the front seat toward Woodard. Both actresses are wearing hats and sunglasses. The statements for Item 1 are as follows: Black women are happy, Black women are fashionable, Black women are independent, and Black women take care of White people.

The statements for each item reflect both gender and body image themes and views that are either positive or negative as defined by the focus group processes. These Black media statements and images were generated from focus group discourse and content analysis. For each of the 20 items (images), a total percent count was tallied for the four possible statement options to determine the most representative statement for each image. The statements were generally perceived as either positive or negative. Before moving forward, the four statement options of the BIMS were collapsed into two quality response categories—either positive or negative. Once a participant chose one of the statements for each image, two total scores (positive and negative) were calculated. The completion of the remaining subscales was dependent upon how each participant responded to each image of the BIMS.

BMMB subscale. After determining whether each image message in the BIMS was positive or negative, youth completed the second subscale (BMMB subscale) of the BMMQ by indicating how much they agreed with the positivity or negativity of that image message. The BMMB instruction was “How much do you agree with the statement you chose to represent this image?” Respondents were instructed to circle the choice that reflected their agreement. Response options were *strongly agree*, *agree*, *disagree*, and

strongly disagree. Next, participants were asked about frequency of viewing the selected message on TV.

BTME subscale. The third subscale is titled Black Television Message Exposure (BTME) and is reflected in the question “When viewing TV (cable, dish TV, movies, sitcoms, dramas) how often do you see images that present this message?” The response options were never, hardly ever (1-2), lots of times (4-6), and all of the time (7 or more times). This scale was designed to measure the frequency of exposure to Black media messages on TV.

BMME subscale. Finally, for the fourth subscale, participants were asked about frequency of viewing the selected message in magazines. This subscale is titled Black Media Message Magazine and is reflected in the question “When flipping through magazines how often do you see images that present this message?” The response options were never, hardly ever (1-2), lots of times (4-6), and all of the time (7 or more times). This scale was designed to measure the frequency of exposure to the Black media messages in magazines.

Factor Analysis

Following the traditional standards for factor analysis, the BIMS would not be considered factorable because each statement in the BIMS is meant to represent the qualitative meaning of the image, not answer a question. Once a participant completed the entire BMMQ, items were grouped into categories of positive or negative characterizations of Black men and women. The traditional factor analysis strategy is used to group items measuring a common construct that have an identical point of reference, that is, response scale (George & Mallery, 2010). The concepts of negative and positive stereotypes are the constructs that frame the messages associated with the images for each item, but participants gave different answers as to the image representation. As each statement could reflect a different meaning to each participant and yielded no consistent reliability, no traditional factor analytic method could be applied to the first subscale (BIMS).

The remaining three scales were standardized and were eligible for traditional factor analyses. In the BMMB, each participant indicated the degree of agreement with the message they chose in the BIMS and for the BTME and BMME, respondents indicated how frequently they *witnessed* the BIMS message.

Decision criteria for the BIMS. The decision criterion for determining if a stereotype image from the BIMS was positive was that a 70% majority of the

sample had to choose the positive statements to represent the image. Ten items were identified by a majority of the sample as positive, but 3 items did not meet the 70% threshold. These items were excluded from the remaining procedures. The final positive image items included Items 2, 5, 8, 9, 16, 18, and 20. The decision criterion for determining if a stereotype image from the BIMS was negative was that a 60% majority of the respondents had to choose the negative statements to represent the image. Ten items were identified by a majority of the sample as negative, but 1 item did not meet the 60% threshold. The final negative items included 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12, 13, 14, and 15.

Collapsing of the BMMB scale response options. The four-item response scale for each of the BMMB was collapsed into two options: *agree* and *strongly agree* became *agree*, and *strongly disagree* and *disagree* became *disagree*. Cross-tabulation was performed in order to analyze endorsement of the positive or negative image messages. Agreement between belief and selected messages ranged from 55% to 100% for positive items and 23% to 55% for negative items.

The seven positive items had belief percentages of 69% or higher. All of these items were included in the factor analysis procedures. Although 60% or more of the participants selected negative stereotype messages, fewer agreed with the message selected. Even though negative beliefs items were not as high as positive beliefs items, our decision to keep all of the negative items for the factor analysis was supported by the schema recognition and social desirability associations. As individuals repeat their exposure to similar schemas (also referred to as attentional cues), this repetition will influence them to perceive and accept media as representations of real life (Biocca, 1988; Strasburger, 2004; Strasburger, Jordan, & Donnerstein, 2010). Coltrane and Messineo's (2000) study demonstrates how racially stereotyped images of Black people in commercials support "the perpetuation of subtle racial prejudice" against African American people. Further social desirability research provides evidence that although people may claim a neutral or unbiased orientation toward racial/cultural groups, when asked to make associations people tend to associate unfavorable and negative behavior (stereotypes) with Black people (David & Patricia, 2006; Graham & Lowery, 2004; Lowery, Hardin, & Sinclair, 2001).

The original variables for Items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, and 20 with four response options were tested for reliability and used to create factors for the BMMB, BTME, and BMME scales.

Demographic information. This study posed questions about age, mother's and father's educational level, income, and gender to obtain basic descriptive information about the sample. Multilayered racial background information

allowed data to be gathered about respondent's biracial, multiracial, and Black Diasporic (African, Caribbean, Hispanic) backgrounds. Youth were also asked, "Have you had any experiences of racist acts against you?" If a youth answered yes, he or she was asked to indicate all of the places where these experiences occurred from a list of five locations: neighborhood, school, family/home, public places (park, mall, supermarket), or work.

MIBI-t. The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity-teen (MIBI-t) is a measure of the extent to which race is relevant to the self-concept at a particular point in time or in a particular situation (Scottham, Sellers, & Nguyễn, 2008). It consists of four aspects of racial identity: how persons define themselves in terms of race (Centrality), how persons evaluate their racial group (Regard—assessed in terms of both Public and Private Regard), and how they think members of the racial group act (ideology—humanist, oppressed minority, nationalist, and assimilationist). The Centrality and Public and Private Regard scales are the primary aspects used for the analyses in this study.

Youth were instructed to choose the response that represented their agreement on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*really disagree*) to 5 (*really agree*) with statements representative of each scale. For example, "I have a strong sense of belonging to other Black people" is from the Centrality scale; "Most people think that Blacks are as smart as people of other races" is an example from the Public Regard scale; "I am happy that I am Black" is an example from the Private Regard scale. Exploratory zero-order correlations were conducted for each of the factors from the BMMQ scales and the two racial identity scales.

Cultural and Racial Experiences of Socialization (CARES). The CARES survey is a 53-item scale that measures the acquisition of racial socialization messages; it gauges the frequency (exposure), endorsement (internalization), and source of messages (Bentley & Stevenson, 2011). The CARES has six subscales: Alertness to Racism, Bi-Cultural Coping, Racial Legacy Knowledge, Cultural Pride, Internalized Racialism, and Stereotyping. The present study utilizes only the CARES Exposure and Endorsement subscale scores. For the exposure subscale, after each message, participants are asked about the frequency of receiving the message (*not at all*, *sometimes*, or *all of the time*), and the endorsement scale asks to what extent they agree with the message (*strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *agree*, or *strongly agree*).

Black History Knowledge Questionnaire (BHK). The BHK is a 20-item multiple-choice measure that tests youth's Black history knowledge (Adams, 2009). Part 1 of the measure instructs youth to select the best answer for each item.

In part 2, for each question, youth are asked to identify the first place they learned about the topic. The correct answers for part 1 of the measure are tallied to create the BHK score.

Sociocultural Attitudes Toward Appearance Scale-3 (SATAQ-3). Body image was measured using the SATAQ-3, which is a 30-item, four-factor self-report measure of body image (Thompson et al., 2004). Information, Pressures, Internalization General, and Internalization Athlete are the four factors for this scale. The Information subscale assesses the perceived importance of media for obtaining information about “being attractive.” The Information subscale will be referred to as Attraction Ideal. The Pressures subscale assesses feeling pressured by media to strive for cultural ideals of physical appearance. The Internalization General subscale assesses endorsement and acceptance of media messages that present unrealistic ideal images. Internalization General will be referred to as Unrealistic Ideal. The Internalization Athletic scale assesses endorsement and acceptance of an athletic body ideal. It will be referred to as Ideal Athletic Body.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem (RSE) scale was used to measure self-esteem. This is a 10-item self-report measure with a total possible score of 30 (Rosenberg, 1989). Participants were also asked about whether a family member had experiences of racist acts (Stevenson, Cameron, Herrero-Taylor, & Davis, 2002). In the next section, we present a selection of results that align with our interest in learning about relationships among media socialization, racial identity, and racial socialization.

Results

BMMB Scale

Following an item analysis of the seven positive items, only Items 16, 18, and 20 were meaningful, correlated highly with each other, and were kept to create the Positive-BMMB (P-BMMB) factor (three items; $\alpha = .77$, $M = 10.17$, $SD = 1.79$). The nine negative items (3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12, 13, 14, and 15) were used to formulate Factor 2, the Negative-BMMB (N-BMMB). Reliability for these items resulted in an acceptable alpha (nine items; $\alpha = .84$, $M = 21.74$, $SD = 5.55$). Removing items from this group did not result in an increased alpha, so all nine items were kept and represent the N-BMMB factor.

BTME Frequency Scale

Items 2, 5, 8, 9, 16, 18, and 20 were analyzed for creating the Positive Black Television Message Exposure Frequency (P-BTME) factor. The reliability

for P-BTME (seven items; $\alpha = .65$, $M = 22.75$, $SD = 3.75$) is low but acceptable. Items 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12, 13, 14, and 15 were used to formulate Factor 2, the Negative Black Message Television Exposure Frequency (N-BTME) factor. The reliability for these items (nine items; $\alpha = .83$, $M = 32.50$, $SD = 5.79$) is .83 and is considered meritorious.

BMME Frequency Scale

Items 2, 5, 8, 9, 16, 18, and 20 were analyzed for creating the Positive Black Message Magazine Exposure Frequency (P-BMME) factor. The reliability for P-BMME (seven items; $\alpha = .70$, $M = 22.75$, $SD = 3.75$) is moderate. Items 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12, 13, 14, and 15 were used to formulate Factor 2, the Negative Black Message Magazine Exposure Frequency (N-BMME) factor. The reliability for these items (nine items; $\alpha = .81$, $M = 29.99$, $SD = 5.93$) is .81 and is considered meritorious reliability. Removing items from this factor did not increase reliability; these items represent the N-BMME factor.

The hypothesis for these analyses was supported. Youth perceptions of media images of Black people were found to be a meaningful psychosocial construct consisting of reliable factors. To summarize, a higher score on the P-BMME meant youth endorsed more positive Black media messages; a higher score on the N-BMME meant youth endorsed a high number of negative Black media messages. Youth with higher P-BTME identified higher frequency of viewing images that reflected positive Black media messages on TV. In contrast, higher N-BTME scores meant youth reported seeing more negative Black media images when viewing television. A higher frequency for P-BMME meant youth reported seeing high numbers of positive Black media messages in magazines. Higher N-BMME scores meant youth reported viewing more images that portrayed negative messages about Black people in magazines.

Relationships of Demographic Variables to BMMQ Factors

Categorical demographic variables. One-way ANOVA procedures were applied to compare differences in BMMQ scores across demographic variables of age, gender, racist acts, varsity sport participation, extracurricular activity involvement, TV-viewing hours, and magazine reading hours.

BMMB ANOVAs. No significant differences between groups for any of the demographic variables were found for the P-BMME factor. There were significant gender differences for the N-BMME factor, $F(24, 110) = 1.77$, Mean Square Error (MSE) = .35, $p = .03$, $\eta^2 = .33$, with males scoring higher than

females. No significant differences between groups were found for the P-BTME factor for any of the demographic variables. For the N-BTME factor, there were significant gender, $F(25, 112) = 2.12$, $MSE = .40$, $p = .006$, $\eta^2 = .38$, and age, $F(24, 104) = 1.71$, $MSE = .838$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 = .34$, differences. Males reported viewing fewer negative Black images on TV than females, and older youth reported witnessing a higher frequency of negative TV images than younger youth.

BMME ANOVAs. No significant differences for the P-BMME factor were found between groups for any of the demographic variables. For the N-BMME factor, there were significant gender, $F(4.25, 112) = 2.02$, $MSE = .34.19$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .04$; age, $F(17.91, 112) = 2.02$, $MSE = 30.57$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2 = .14$; and racist acts, $F(5.72, 106) = 2.02$, $MSE = 33.29$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .05$, differences. Youth who were female, older, and experienced more acts of racism reported viewing a greater frequency of negative Black media messages in magazines than their counterparts.

Continuous demographic variables. Exploratory zero-order correlations were conducted between all study variables and demographic variables. The demographic variables examined were youth's race, father's race, mother's race, father's education, mother's education, parents' marital status, family income, experience with racist acts, experience of racist acts against a family member, family talks about racism, expected level of educational attainment, helpful life factors, hurtful life factors, TV-viewing hours, magazine reading hours, varsity sport participation, extracurricular activity participation, age, developmental age, and gender.

Of the demographic variables, TV-viewing hours was positively and significantly correlated with the Attraction Ideal ($r = .21$, $p < .03$), Unrealistic Ideal ($r = .20$, $p < .04$), and Pressures ($r = .26$, $p < .01$) subscales of the SATAQ-3. Youth who watched more television were more likely to attribute heightened importance to attraction information from the media, to more readily accept media's portrayal of unrealistic ideal images, and to feel more pressure to meet media images of physical attractiveness. There were no significant correlations between body image scores and magazine reading.

BMMB correlations. The BMMB factors were examined first. The P-BMMB factor was only found to have a significant relationship with age ($r = .21$, $p < .05$). There were three significant inverse correlations for the N-BMMB factor: family income ($r = -.22$, $p < .05$), expected level of education attainment ($r = -.21$, $p < .05$), and extracurricular activity participation ($r = -.29$, $p < .01$).

Youth with higher family income, educational attainment, and more participation in extracurricular activities were less likely to endorse negative stereotype messages.

BTME correlations. There was one significant correlation for P-BTME: age ($r = -.22, p < .05$); older youth report lower frequencies of witnessing positive Black stereotype media messages on TV. N-BTME was significantly correlated with two variables: mother's education ($r = .22, p < .05$) and age ($r = .41, p < .01$). The higher the education level of the student's mother and age of the student, the more students reported frequently witnessing negative Black stereotype television messages.

BMME correlations. Only age ($r = .32, p < .01$) significantly correlated with N-BMME; older youth scored higher in witnessing negative Black media messages in magazines. There were no significant correlations for P-BMME.

Relationship of Black Media Messages to Racial Identity

BMMB correlations. Private Racial Regard was the only racial identity factor found related to P-BMMB ($r = .29, p < .01$). Youth with higher Private Racial Regard scores scored higher in their agreement with the positive messages of Black media images than those with low Private Racial Regard scores. With respect to N-BMMB, youth with high Private Racial Regard scores scored lower in agreement with the negative messages of negative Black media images ($r = -.22, p < .05$) than those low in Private Racial Regard. It was expected that youth with high Private Regard scores would not agree with the negative statement represented in the negative Black media image. While there were no significant correlations for P-BTME, there was a significant inverse relationship between N-BTME and Public Racial Regard ($r = -.21, p < .05$). Youth with high Public Racial Regard scores reported viewing that the negative stereotype images and messages did not frequently appear on television. None of the racial identity variables were significantly correlated with P-BMME or N-BMME scores.

While a significant relationship between Centrality and BMMQ scores was hypothesized, this expectation was not supported. However, an examination of TV-viewing and magazine reading hours showed higher Centrality scores were significantly ($r = -.19, p < .05$) and inversely correlated with watching TV and inversely correlated ($r = -.08, p < .05$) with reading magazines. It appears that youth with higher race centrality scores watch less TV and read fewer magazines than those with lower scores.

Relationship of Black Media Messages to Racial Socialization

To address the hypothesis that youth high in racial socialization will also score high on the factors of the Black media message measure, exploratory zero-order correlations were conducted between the factors of the BMMQ and CARES scales.

BMMB correlations. Surprisingly, there were no significant correlations with any of the CARES factors for N-BMMB, although Racialism appeared to be approaching significance ($r = -.18, p < .06$) for N-BMMB. There were significant correlations with P-BMMB for Protection ($r = .26, p < .01$) and Affirmation ($r = .31, p < .01$). Youth with higher Protection and Affirmation socialization scores were more likely to agree with the positive media messages attached to positive Black media images.

Black media message television frequency (BTME) correlations. Correlations between the BTME factors and the CARES factors were examined. There were no significant correlations for P-BTME. N-BTME was significantly correlated with four socialization factors: Protection ($r = .33, p < .01$), Stereotyping ($r = .34, p < .01$), Racialism ($r = .32, p < .01$), and Competence ($r = .21, p < .05$). Youth with high scores for these factors were more likely to report seeing more negative Black stereotype messages on television.

Black media message magazine frequency (BMME) correlations. One CARES variable, Affirmation ($r = .21, p < .05$), was significantly correlated with P-BMME. Youth who received high levels of affirmation socialization communications from family were more likely to report frequent positive Black media images in magazines. N-BMME was significantly correlated with three factors: Protection ($r = .26, p < .01$), Racialism ($r = .26, p < .01$), and Stereotyping ($r = .22, p < .05$). Youth who reported frequent racial socialization experiences report viewing a greater frequency of negative Black media images in magazines.

Relationship of BMMQ to Black History Knowledge, Self-Esteem, and Body Image

To address the hypotheses that youth high in Black history knowledge will be able to identify negative Black media stereotypes, exploratory zero-order correlations were conducted between the BMMQ factor scores and Black history knowledge scores. There was a statistically significant ($r = .20, p < .04$) correlation of BHK scores with the N-BTME scores. As expected, youth

with higher BHK scores reported seeing a greater frequency of negative Black television images.

There were no statistically significant relationships between self-esteem scores and any of the BMME and BTME factors. The P-BMMB factor was the only factor positively correlated with self-esteem; youth with higher self-esteem scores were more likely to believe positive stereotype messages about Black people. A review of the esteem scores was performed. Esteem scores ranged from 13 to 30, $m = 24.88$. More than one half of the sample had high scores above 22. In order to determine if in fact a relationship between esteem and media messages does exist, self-esteem scores were grouped into three categories: *low esteem* scores ranged from 13 to 18; *average scores* ranged from 19 to 25; and *high scores* ranged from 26 to 30. This esteem variable was used for the remaining models investigating self-esteem.

There were no statistically significant relationships between body image and BMME or BTME. The hypothesis for this analysis was not supported.

Discussion

This study applied the concepts of racial identity and R/ES to the research on exposure to Black media images to assess how Black young people interpret associated messages. Black characters that reflect negative stereotype images of Black people constantly appear on prime-time television shows targeted toward Black audiences. Black youth who watch a lot of media are exposed to a high volume of images that often project negative stereotype messages about Black people.

The concern that Black American youth may accept negative stereotype TV images of Black people as valid, resulting in a negative impact on identity and self-esteem, was a driving force behind this research study. Previous research with adults and youth has examined the relationship between media images of Blacks and racial identity (Allen, 1998; Allen & Bielby, 1979; Allen & Thornton, 1992; Berry, 1998; Gerson, 1966; Gordon, 2008; Lee & Browne, 1981; Ward, 2004). Youth-oriented research has established a connection among self-esteem, body image, and media (Gordon, 2008; Ward, 2004). Racial socialization studies with youth have traditionally focused on message transfer between family and youth, not between media and youth. Existing studies fall short of exploring relationships between Black racial identity and R/E socialization with exposure to Black media images for Black adolescent youth. Unfortunately, research that examines racial identity and R/E socialization as influencing media exposure, body image, and self-esteem is also scant.

This study's purpose was to determine if racial socialization and Black history knowledge influence the interpretation of Black media images, and to identify the relationships among these images, the racial identity, body image, and self-esteem of Black adolescents. Although not all hypothesized relationships between the CARES, BHK, and BMMQ factors were confirmed, the results of this study suggest that racial socialization and Black history knowledge influence television-viewing preferences, hours of viewing and magazine reading and identification of racial stereotypes. More specifically, youth who receive affirming racial socialization messages seem more able to identify negative and positive stereotypes. Youth with higher Black history knowledge scores were also more likely to identify stereotypes, but not to endorse negative stereotypes as valid representations of Black people.

The R/ES youth experience serves as the lens for how youth interpret messages about Black people and helps them to identify messages as positive or negative. Many prime-time TV shows do not include Black characters (Jefferson, 1970; Nama, 2003; Watkins, 2005). Thus, Black children, youth, and adults watch Black-oriented half-hour sitcoms that tend to be racially segregated, but feature an all-Black or majority Black cast (Jefferson, 1970; Watkins, 2005). Although the representation of Black TV images evolved to reflect sociohistoric moments in time, negative stereotypes persist (Nama, 2003).

There were significant age and gender differences in identifying media messages as positive or negative. Younger youth identified more positive media images than older youth. This could be a reflection of TV-viewing habits; younger youth's media diet may be inclusive of TV shows targeting preteens and younger adolescents. Research supports the idea that Black youth watch TV for entertainment (Berry, 1998; Browne Graves, 1982; Watkins, 2005); it could also be that as younger youth have less exposure to negative racial experiences than older youth, they are less sensitive to negative messages when presented in media. The type of parent R/E socialization strategy also varies with the age and gender of the child, which could also influence youth's response and interpretation of Black media images (Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002; Coard & Sellers, 2005; Constantine & Blackmon, 2002; Davis & Stevenson, 2006; Hill, 2002; Sanders, 1996; Stevenson, 1994; Stevenson & Bentley, 2007).

Males were less likely to identify negative media stereotypes, but more likely to endorse the negative messages than females. Gendered media stereotypes of Black women are very often sexualized (Balaji, 2008). Puberty and the early maturation of Black girls are probable influences on how females perceive Black media images, particularly those associated with body image. The gender socialization experience and messages that men

receive about women are likely to influence their belief in stereotypical media messages about women and/or sexual behaviors and attitudes (Epstein & Ward, 2008; Ward, Merriwether, & Caruthers, 2006).

One dimension of racial identity was associated with Black media images. Positive media images were inversely correlated with Private Regard. It is possible youth with higher Private Regard scores scrutinize media images and would be less inclined to ascribe positive messages to media images. Negative stereotype beliefs were positively correlated with Private Regard. This was a surprise that leads to speculation that youth high in Private Regard are internalizing negative messages about Black people. In contrast, youth who are high in Public Regard believe that the general public positively views Black people as a racial group. As such, they are less likely to identify the images of Black people in the public media as negative, even if they might be.

Body image is very much influenced by socially accepted norms. Mainstream definitions of beauty rarely consider or include Black women (Patton, 2006). However, because this study is about media images of Black people, we expected there would be a relationship between media images and body image, but when all four body image variables were entered into a correlation matrix with the five media variables, none of the relationships were significant. Alleyne and LaPoint's 2004 study suggests Black women and girls' tolerance for so-called large-size women may have evolved from West African standards of beauty. Additional research with Black female youth about body ideals and body image within the Black community will help researchers to better understand how and whether Black media exposure relates to their body image ideals.

It was expected that youth with higher R/E socialization scores would identify significantly more positive messages about Black people when watching TV; however, as demonstrated, this hypothesis was not supported. It may be that youth with higher R/E socialization scores are unlikely to identify positive messages about Black people when watching TV if in fact those positive images and messages are not prevalent on TV. While a significant relationship between N-BMMB scores and the CARES Stereotype and Racialism factors was not found, future research might consider increasing the sample size to re-examine these relationships. The non-significant relationship between racial socialization and P-BTME may be appropriate given that youth with higher racial socialization scores are likely to report negative media messages and unlikely to identify positive messages when watching TV because they are not dominant. Overall, magazine reading was low for this sample, which could explain the lack of significant findings for these variables.

Theoretically, Black history knowledge should be closely associated with racial socialization and racial identity. Black history knowledge can serve as a form of racial socialization, as an asset it can provide youth with positive historical and contemporary ethnic and racial examples and resources about Black people. Black history was a significant variable, correlating with both of these variables as well as self-esteem. Private Regard and self-esteem were found to be significant with Black history in multiple analyses. The findings suggest that the more one is aware of Black history, the more likely one will have a high Private Regard for Black people in spite of messages that present Black people negatively.

Alone, the self-esteem results offered little insight into Black adolescent self-esteem and media exposure. Self-esteem scores for this sample were relatively high as supported by prior self-esteem research with Black adolescents (Grantham & Ford, 2003; Teasley & Lee, 2006; Young-Hyman, Schlundt, Herman-Wenderoth, & Bozynlinski, 2003). The results of this study demonstrate that researchers who continue to investigate the esteem of Black youth using this method will continue to misinterpret the high self-esteem scores of Black adolescents and miss opportunities to develop intervention and/or treatment models that are inclusive of and appropriately address the developmental challenges of Black youth.

Theoretical Paradigms: Media Research and Black Adolescents

The media industry is an integral element of American society wherein racial, cultural, and gender biases persist in the media products produced. Television images of Black people are frequently controlled and/or created by non-Black entities that present stereotypical characterizations (Allen & Thornton, 1992). In *Stereotypes in the Media: So What?* Gorham suggests racial stereotypes in the media are important contributors to racial myths, which are sustained via repeated exposure. As a result, these myths inform how individuals process subsequent information about the group or individual being stereotyped (Gorham, 1999). Our critique of cultivation theory is that it does not explicitly incorporate the perspective or intentions of the people responsible for creating the images. Instead, cultivation theory implies that television media is designed for entertainment. Thus, researchers approach the effects of media exposure as incidental to the utility of viewing TV and using other media for entertainment.

In 2000, Berry wrote "Multicultural Media Portrayals and the Changing Demographic Landscape: The Psychosocial Impact of Television Representations on the Adolescent of Color," which critiqued common research platforms for their failure to consider how media influences

manipulate adolescent development within the context of youth's familial and community environment(s). He suggested that researchers take an "ecological media research approach." From the researchers' perspective, the five ecological media research questions Berry (2000, pp. 59-60) suggests for consideration when designing research models conflict with the implicit principles of cultivation theory.

Cultivation theory is based on the principle that media-television's primary function is entertainment. The ecological media approach considers socialization as a primary function of media, because of this our emphasis and interest in how racial socialization and identity relate to Black adolescents' exposure and understanding of Black media stereotypes provide pertinent insight into the potential of TV images to enhance or harm the identity development processes of Black youth.

The findings of this study suggest that endorsement of negative stereotype images on TV and to a lesser extent on magazines is related to the racial identity and racial socialization of Black adolescents. Age and gender are also key indicators of whether youth identify negative stereotype messages and whether they endorse them. Correlations between racial socialization and racial identity suggest that there is a direct relationship between the messages received about being Black and how youth identify as Black.

One of the limitations of this research is the design of the BMMQ. Certainly, the influence of sociohistoric factors on the story lines and characters that appear on TV shows is a critique of creating an instrument that can be used to analyze media stereotypes. As noted, advanced technology preserves discontinued shows for viewing by current and future generations. As such, the media racial socialization of negative Black stereotypes persists across generations as older shows are retained, stereotypical characters are not modified despite contemporary contexts and frames, and no counter-socialization strategies are presented in contemporary shows to debate the negative portrayals of these stereotypes.

As noted, standard factor guidelines could not be applied to the first scale of the measure. This may invoke a critique about the ability of the measure to validly capture and codify the attitudes and beliefs of participants. Ideally, the BMMQ scales would be able to measure a construct independently; however, the responses to the latter three scales are linked to the first Message subscale. Although this could be considered a weakness of the measure, the association of the responses with the images also serves as a source of strength because this process mimics theoretical assumptions of the persistence of stereotype characterizations across different television shows, media, and generations. The BMMQ design limited the level of statistical analyses performed for this study; however, clear patterns were discovered in the data. An

updated and revised version of the BMMQ will allow for advanced analyses of relationships among study variables.

Another element that some might consider a limitation is the use of still images. Images carry meaning; the interpretation of the images may be context-specific. It is likely that viewing the still images activated schema that were used to interpret the messages within the context of a particular TV show, video, and so on. Given the focus on insidious negative stereotype media messages and the difficulty of creating a quantitative measure of context, the BMMQ does not incorporate a measure of context.

The results of this study demonstrate that gender is a significant variable for media interpretation. Existing research provides evidence that Black parents socialize male and female children differently (Hill, 2001, 2002). Inclusion of more male participants may have netted additional findings that could contribute to our understanding of gender differences in how media exposure relates to Black adolescent identity processes.

This is the first study to examine both identification and endorsement of adolescent interpretations of Black media stereotypes. This is also one of very few youth media studies that incorporate racial socialization and racial identity as important variables for consideration. Although television is an influential socializing agent full of stereotype images of Black people, racial socialization experiences of Black youth can serve as a buffer for unfavorable Black media images. Designing future studies that investigate youth attitudes about stereotypes can help us learn if youth are internalizing any of these messages.

Our discovery of differing relationships between Race Centrality and Private Regard with Black media images is novel. Research results of Centrality and Private Regard are often closely aligned, with some researchers arguing that they are the same. The results of this study provide evidence that these are two different constructs, and that Private Regard may be more closely aligned with measures of global self-esteem.

Where media studies reference mainstream TV shows and images, this study used all African American images. The images of women that were used reflected a variety of phenotypic features and body types. With Black children exhibiting a preference for Black characters and TV shows, studies that use Black media shows and characters are more likely to discover how influential media exposure is on identity development (Adams & Stevenson, 2012). Using images of diverse Black women in body image studies may help us to understand the attitudes of Black girls about body type and preference that could lead to meaningful and effective healthy weight interventions.

Television continues to be a primary media source for African American youth. Researchers concerned with the impact of expanding media platforms

on Black children and youth functioning will need to research the power of Black media images using measures such as the BMMQ and include racial socialization and racial identity into study designs. By doing so, these studies may provide clearer insight into the impact of media on Black youth's identity development processes.

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Notes

1. See Jackson (2006, pp. 20-24) for a detailed discussion of this phenomenon.
2. Bogle (2001b) discusses the introduction of the "sidekick" as a contemporary negatively stereotyped characterization of Blacks.
3. Jackson (2006) and Bogle (2001a, 2001b) detail other characterizations of Blacks that are premised on the same assumptions that underlie the stock negative profiles.
4. Within the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST) framework, emergent identities may be positive or negative. The access youth have to protective factors and supports influences their coping behaviors, which ultimately shapes their emergent identities.

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