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Occupational Role Portrayals of African-American Women on Prime-Time Television

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Occupational Role Portrayals of African-American Women on Prime-Time Television

by

Shani Tyhirah Jefferson

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
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Shani T. Jefferson

ABSTRACT

This study examined portrayals of African-American women shown in professional careers on prime-time network television during the May 2005 sweeps month. Specifically, the study compares these portrayals to actual U.S. Department of Labor workforce statistics to observe a possible similarity. Additionally, the study identifies any behavioral and conversational stereotyped attributes ascribed to African-American female characters shown in the workplace. A quantitative content analysis of four broadcast networks (FOX, ABC, UPN, and WB) ranked by Nielsen Media as having the highest rated prime-time television programming among minority households for 2003-2004 revealed that African-American female characters on network television are over-represented in terms of professional careers in comparison to their actual presence in U.S. workforce statistics. However, their actual presence in these careers is higher than that of African-American male characters on network television, which closely resembles the distribution of professional African-American males and females in the U.S. working population. The results also revealed that out of the four networks, UPN had a substantially greater number of African-American female characters in professional careers, but their representations include subtle messages of racial/ethnic stereotypical behaviors commonly associated with African-Americans.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In the “Saturday Forum,” section of *The Tampa Tribune* on January 15, 2005, an insightful columnist wrote:

In James Brooks’ “*Spanglish*,” Adam Sandler, a Los Angeles chef, falls for his hot Mexican maid. The maid, who cleans up after Sandler without being able to speak English, is presented as the ideal woman. The wife, played by Tea Leoni, is a repellent: a jangly, yakking, over-achieving, over-exercised, unfaithful, shallow she-monster who has just lost her job with a commercial design firm. Picture Faye Dunaway in “*Network*” if she’d had to stay home, or Glenn Close in “*Fatal Attraction*” without the charm (Dowd, 2005).

Current trends in today’s film and television programming are portraying the modern-day career woman as undesirable. Columnist Maureen Dowd (2005) says the media have depicted modern-day career women as “objects of rejection rather than affection.” A number of studies, she says, have found that “men going for long-term relationships would rather marry women in subordinate jobs than women who are supervisors” (p. 15). For example, Dowd (2005) says, in the movie *Spanglish*, the “ideal” woman for Sandler is in the subordinate position of housekeeper and is Latin. This compelling observation leads one to ask the following questions: In today’s entertainment media, are audiences viewing images of lonely, competitive, emotional, promiscuous, and over-accomplished female characters in professional careers? Have we reverted to the former depictions of women as homemakers and secretaries? Or, is art merely imitating life?

Meet Shanté Smith, senior advertising executive at Parker & Long; although it is obvious, she is not reluctant to declare: “I’m a sistá--an educated, strong sistá, who remembers where she came from and knows where she’s going.” African-American actress Vivica Fox personifies the arrogance of this character in McHenry and Brown’s 2001 film, *Two Can Play That Game*. In one particular scene, Shanté says, “Look at all these people up in here,” gawking at the number of white faces in the room. “Notice anything different? Me. I’m 28 years old, a sistá, and still made partner” (McHenry & Brown, 2001). Shanté enjoys a lavish life that includes not only a great career and nice home, but also close friends and a significant other who share her success of having glamorous jobs and posh homes. However, Shanté is unmarried and having problems in her current relationship that at times inclines her to quarrel with other women--a stereotype all too familiar with the depiction of professional African-American women on television.

Statement of the Problem

Throughout today’s entertainment media, characterizations of women in reputable careers are no longer seen as contrary to reality. Many female characters in popular movies and prime-time television shows are depicted in professional careers. Women are no longer portrayed working predominantly in the home. African-Americans are less frequently shown in domestic and service work. But analyses of ethnic and sex representation on television dramas have revealed that the distribution of TV occupation roles per group do not compare with population statistics (Seggar & Wheeler, 1973). These and other findings lead to a concern that the presence, occupations, and behavioral

traits displayed by African-American female characters on prime-time television may be giving audiences a somewhat distorted view of racial/ethnic minorities in the world of work.

Prior research has revealed that television can “disseminate specific, consistent, and often stereotypic messages about the world of work” (Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001, p. 5). Over the past decade, most prime-time television programs have been set in the workplace. According to Julianne Malveaux (1997), if one were to spend an evening or a week consuming prime-time television programming, one would walk away with the sense that almost everybody is earning a “cushy” living and money does not matter (p. 32). According to Signorielli (2001), the percentage of women cast in professions increased from the 1970s to the 1990s, compared to gender-typed portrayals of women as homemakers and clerical workers during the early 1960s (p. 346). Although female characters afforded roles as judges or surgeons, their characterizations contained disparaging behavioral elements in their “continual struggle for competence, happiness and fulfillment in their personal lives” (Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001, p. 5). Furthermore, previous research has suggested that these representations may not reflect actual U.S. labor force statistics (Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001). Subsequently, today’s media may be providing audiences with a distorted view of the presence and characterizations of women in the workplace.

In recent years, the focus has been on the prominence of roles played by minorities on television. Exposure to counter-stereotypical images of minorities on television can validate the idea that “individuals do not fit into all encompassing categories,” and this can bring about change in viewers’ attitudes and encourage

increased contact among different races and cultures (Sherman, 2002). However, this cannot be accomplished by merely changing the quantity and not the quality of the counter-stereotyped image. According to Hae-Kyong Bang and Bonnie Reece (2003), it is not just the quantitative representation of ethnic groups (i.e., how many of them are present), but also the qualitative representation (i.e., how important the featured representations of them are) that influence audience perceptions of them (p. 50). Therefore, the overall objective of this study is not only to identify the number of occupational role portrayals of African-American women on prime-time television but also to assess the extent to which those depictions may include subtle traces of disparaging behavioral characteristics.

The purpose of this study is to examine present-day occupational portrayals of African-American women on prime-time fictional television programming. Specifically, the study will determine whether character portrayals of African-American women include stereotyped behavioral and conversational traits and whether those portrayals accurately reflect the representation of African-American women in the U.S. workforce. The framework for this study arises from the theory of cultivation, which asserts that television is a makeup of recurring images that “cultivate a common view and common stereotypes through a relatively restrictive set of programs” (Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001, p. 7). In order to further trace the presence and nature of such images, the analysis will borrow coding patterns from Dana Mastro and Bradley Greenberg’s 2000 study, “The Portrayal of Racial Minorities on Prime-time Television.”

Mastro & Greenberg’s (2000) study assessed the frequency and prominence of minority characters in major and minor roles on prime-time television during the fall of

1996. However, the researchers did not focus exclusively on occupational roles, but also compared character traits of African, Latin, Asian, and Native-Americans (ALANA) as well as Indo-Europeans (whites). The present study will focus specifically on identifying the presence, frequency, and attributes of occupational role portrayals of African-American women, but also will include an analysis of Latin/Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and Indo-European (white) female groups. African-Americans, as described by Mastro and Greenberg (2000), have achieved “a niche of greater parity in the amount and variety of their fictional portrayals.” In addition, Mastro and Greenberg (2000) assert no other ethnic minority group is “sufficiently observable to be studied within a traditional paradigm” (p. 701).

Aside from comparing the presence and frequency of occupational roles of African-American women, the study will attempt to identify the specific stereotypical “behavioral and conversational traits” their characters possess (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000; Vande Berg & Streckfuss, 1992, p. 196). Mastro and Greenberg (2000) assessed “the attributes or characteristics which have been associated with an ethnic stereotype” (p. 694). Using the early study as a model, the present study will borrow from the coding of their variables related to behavioral and conversational characteristics ascribed to minority characters (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000).

Justification for the Problem

Television is a persistent supplier of images, some programs being all-inclusive, others exhaustive. Cultivation researchers assert that it is “socially significant” to examine how television networks represent minorities (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000, p.

690). According to Mastro and Greenberg (2000), the nature of the portrayals of ethnic minorities has been “conceptualized as a potential contributor to perpetuating or diminishing racial stereotypes” (p. 690). There remains a need for ongoing analysis of the patterns in which television portrays minorities and women, especially in the workplace (Vande Berg & Streckfuss, 1992, p. 204). An important value of this study is that it will enrich the basis on which the cultivation theory is founded and will ascertain whether today’s occupational images of African-American women include stereotyped traits. However, this study will not attempt to identify what effects these images have on an audience. Instead it will describe a specific type of repeated imagery that may evoke certain perceptions among an audience about female racial/ethnic minorities.

Portrayals of African-Americans on television are more pervasive than in earlier decades. According to Mastro, Greenberg, and Brand (2002), early content analyses found African-Americans to be underrepresented compared to their actual presence in society. In the 1980s, African-Americans made up roughly 11 percent of the actual U.S. population, yet their number of televised representations only rose from six to nine percent between the 1970s to the 1980s (Mastro, Greenberg, and Brand, 2002). Finally, in the 1990s, “African-Americans began to constitute a proportion of the prime-time television population (11%) that approximated to their actual population of 12%” (Mastro, Greenberg, and Brand, 2002, p. 335). In 2004, the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that African-American women made up 30.6 percent of management, professional and related occupations. Within that same category, African-American men represented 21.7 percent (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 2004). Therefore, the first objective of the study is this: *To determine whether occupational role portrayals*

of African-American women on prime-time television are reflective of their presence in U.S. workforce statistics.

In today's comedies, African-Americans have, to some extent, gained a level of equal occupational prestige in comparison to whites (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000). According to Mastro & Greenberg (2000), this can be attributed to the emergence of several sitcoms, like the mid-1980s program *The Cosby Show*, featuring African-American families leading normative lifestyles with respect and intelligence. This led to more programs that presented non-traditional characters or counter-stereotyped casts who were not the "common stereotype of one's particular gender, racial or sexual orientation group" (Sherman, 2002). A television phenomenon, *The Cosby Show* (1984-1992) is credited with "revolutionizing the African-American situation comedy genre by setting a standard for non-ridicule, by recognizing and celebrating African-American culture, and by presenting African-Americans as ably negotiating mainstream America with equal status" (Means-Coleman, 2000, p. 95). More importantly, it showcased an African-American family centered on a "pediatrician father, lawyer mother and several upstanding upper-middle-class children," something that had never been seen on network television during that time (p. 95).

From the 1970s to the 1990s, content analyses found female characters shown in professional and managerial positions were portrayed as unmarried and employed outside the home in contrast to depictions of married women who were shown most frequently inside the home (Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001). In addition, female characters in decision-making functions displayed different traits from women shown in secretarial or operational functions. Signorielli and Kahlenberg (2001) assert, portrayals like these sent

a message that “women cannot have higher status, better paying jobs and also maintain a successful marriage” (p. 5). Therefore, the second objective of the study is this: *To compare the depictions of African-American women in professional careers to females of other race/ethnic backgrounds in professional careers on prime-time television shows.*

Since the 1990s, African-Americans have achieved equivalence to whites in terms of the number of occupational roles; however, according to Mastro, Greenberg, and Brand (2002), the “quality and variety remains debatable” (p. 336). Early content analyses of occupational role portrayals revealed sex-typed behaviors, with women especially, having portrayals as emotional or in need of emotional support, or as sympathetic and nurturing, and as lacking interpersonal and occupational power (Vande Berg & Streckfuss, 1992, p. 196). Minority characters, like that of Shanté Smith, are depicted with behavioral traits that can “serve to promote biased racial attitudes and ethnic stereotypes” (Entman, 1994). Decades ago, minority characters were less likely to have an identifiable job. Today, they are in distinguishable careers, but under what behavioral stipulations? Therefore, the final objective of this study seeks *to identify any negative behavioral and conversational characteristics among African-American female characters on prime-time television shows.*

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The present study rests on the assumption that by examining the dominant attributes of occupational role portrayals one can produce a baseline of data that could then be applied in studies of how these images may influence viewer notions of racial/ethnic minorities. The following review of literature exemplifies how those images can affect viewer perceptions of members within society. In order to understand the extent to which a media message can influence an individual's social reality, one must observe the ways in which mass media cultivation can occur and the consequences it can have on an audience.

Cultivation Theory

Almost thirty years have passed since George Gerbner first introduced the *cultural indicators* research paradigm as the foundation for the cultivation theory. The paradigm, researchers have (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli & Shanahan, 2002), tracked "the central streams of TV's primetime weekend-daytime dramatic content and explored the consequences of growing up and living in a cultural environment dominated by television" (p. 43). The cultivation hypothesis originated from the cultural indicators paradigm and is concerned with the effects of television viewing over a long period. It assumes that "the media communicate information about the social environment that influences perceptions about the social world" (Mastro & Robinson, 2000, p. 386). Thus, heavy television viewers, in contrast to light viewers, are more likely to accept the images

shown on television as representations of the “real” world (p. 386). Those images, values, and portrayals shown on most TV programs are virtually “inescapable for regular and especially for heavy viewers” (Gerbner, et. al., 2002, p. 49). Therefore, individuals who watch television news programs with images of crime and poverty are far more likely than non-viewers to perceive the world as “harsh or mean,” hence, there is a need to clarify the nature of these messages.

Introduced in 1976, the cultural indicators paradigm involves a three-tier research strategy which illustrates the consequences of “living in a mass-produced symbolic and cultural environment dominated by television” (Signorielli & Morgan, 1990, p. 9). The first tier, the *institutional* process, examines how media messages are produced, managed, and distributed, including any underlying constraints that can influence the production of those messages (Signorielli & Morgan, 1990). The second tier, or *message system analysis*, tracks the recurring images in media content. This tier asks, “What are the dominant, aggregate patterns of images, messages, facts, values, and lessons expressed in media messages?” (Signorielli & Morgan, 1990, p. 9). Initial studies immediately analyzed violence, minorities, gender roles, and occupations in the media. Finally, *cultivation* analysis, the last tier, attempts to identify how exposure to the world of television contributes to an audience’s perception of construction of their social reality (p. 9). The theory is focused not necessarily on the impact of one particular television program, but on the repetition of the messages or images within several programs and how it may impact viewers over an extended period.

According to Signorielli and Morgan (1990), cultivation theory has evolved into a number of complex and dynamic abstract ideas. They report that scholarly debates have

led to refinements and enhancements in the methodology of cultivation analyses. For example, intervening variables and processes have explained different outcomes; among the variables have been “perceived reality, active vs. passive viewing, the psychological mechanisms underlying cultivation, and applying cultivation analysis outside of the United States” (Signorielli & Morgan, 1990, p. 10). Most cultivation analyses have focused on television because of its greater use than several other media in the United States and its unique ability to portray “repetitive and pervasive message characteristics” (p. 16).

Signorielli and Morgan (1990) contend that cultivation is not a unidirectional flow of television images to an audience, but is the result of a continual interaction between messages and contexts (p. 21). It is both dependent on and a manifestation of “the extent to which television’s imagery dominates viewer sources of information” (p. 21).

Therefore, audience involvement is important. Television messages are derived out of the context of audience participation and behaviors. For example, personal interaction in the lives of the individual makes a difference in how he or she perceives reality. Yuki Fujioka (1999) found that mass media messages have more impact when direct human interaction is limited; this will be described in detail later in this manuscript (p. 52).

According to Signorielli and Morgan (1990), the relationship between amount of viewing of depictions of crime and fear of crime is strongest among those who live in high crime areas; this illustrates the concept of *resonance*, where everyday reality and television provide a “double dose of messages that resonate and/or amplify cultivation” (p. 21).

The viewing patterns and orientations toward television from parents can “either increase or decrease cultivation among adolescents” (Signorielli & Morgan, 1990, p. 21). This,

along with other theoretical advances, has introduced several conditional processes that “enhance, diminish, or otherwise mediate cultivation” (p. 21).

Mainstreaming is a process that can serve as both an indicator of vulnerability toward cultivation effects among an audience and as a general consistent pattern representing one of the consequences of living with television. According to Signorielli and Morgan (1990), mainstreaming is the result of heavy viewing and “may absorb or override differences in perspectives and behavior that ordinarily stem from other factors and influences” (p. 22). Television provides a strong cultural link between higher socioeconomic status (SES) segments of society and lower SES segments. The “mainstream” can be thought of as the commonality those segments share in terms of “outlooks and values that heavy exposure to the features and dynamics that the television world tends to cultivate” (p. 22). It is the direct result of heavy television viewing and diminishes the variation of viewer responses that are commonly associated with “varied cultural, social and political characteristics of these groups,” thereby incorporating different views and converging disparate viewers into one homogenous group (p. 23). Both resonance and mainstreaming clarify the effects of media messages.

Cultivation Effects & Social Cognitive Theory

One researcher conducted an analysis to explain why certain conditions enhance or diminish cultivation effects through cultivation judgments that are made. L. J. Shrum (1995) assessed how the social cognition perspective can be used to analyze how judgments, in light of research findings, might “plausibly” be affected by television viewing (p. 403). His research draws on “particular types of judgments that are typically

used in cultivation research and then draws on social cognition research” in an effort to explain how those judgments are made (Shrum, 1995, p. 403). He introduces two types of judgments that cultivation research can elicit: “(a) those that indicate a person’s perceptions of the prevalence of things, and (b) those that indicate a person’s attitudes and beliefs” (p. 404); these are *first-order* and *second-order* judgments, respectively. According to Shrum (1995), cultivation effects for first-order judgments have been shown to hold for multiple control variables while cultivation effects of second-order judgments hold less. Shrum (1995) only provides explanations for first order judgments, where cultivation effects have shown to be more stable (Shrum, 1995). The present study will focus on first-order observations of the depictions of African-American female characters in the workplace.

First-order judgments require researchers to provide some sort of “quantitative estimate regarding the prevalence of particular objects, people, or behaviors” (Shrum, 1995, p. 404). Like the present study, these judgments require percentage estimates, for example “the prevalence of particular occupations (i.e., percentage of the workforce employed as lawyers or police officers), the prevalence of crime, or the assessment of personal risk (i.e., percentage estimate of one’s own chances of being involved in a violent crime)” (Shrum, 1995, p. 404). Shrum (1995) contends that these types of prevalence estimates may be considered a subset of a larger class of judgments known as *set-size judgments* (p. 404). Set-size judgments determine the “number of instances or percentage of instances of a particular category that occurs within a larger, super-ordinate category” (Shrum, 1995, p. 404). For this judgment, one would estimate the percentage

of all minority lawyers on television (*super-ordinate* category) and then estimate the number of African-American lawyers (*particular* category) (p. 404).

In a set-size judgment, we assume that people are asked to estimate the percentage of African-American female lawyers who are married. Shrum (1995) says that one way to approach this task is to search memory for as many examples of lawyers as one can recall, make a judgment as to each example's marital status, and then perform "some sort of algebraic computation to arrive at a preliminary judgment" (p. 405). People, however, may try to simplify the task and use a "cognitive shortcut" and base their judgments on the qualities of the first few lawyers that come to mind (Shrum, 1995, p. 405). For instance, their first example might be their family lawyer who may be a white male, or they may refer to a television program, like *Ally McBeal* or *L.A. Law*. In this case, especially in reference to the characters on *Ally McBeal*, their judgment may be that a large proportion of female lawyers are unmarried. Shrum (1995) uses these examples to illustrate how a number of processing strategies may be undertaken to make a particular judgment (p. 405).

In the first example an individual must scan memory for various examples, consider all of the information made available by this scan, then perform "an algebraic weighing and balancing of the information" to reach a judgment (Shrum, 1995, p. 406). This strategy is known as information integration or cognitive algebra and is used when time is available, and motivation to make the "correct or best decision is high (i.e., high involvement)" (Shrum, 1995, p. 406). The second example, on the other hand, bases the judgment on the first piece or pieces of information that may come to mind. Shrum (1995) describes this as *accessibility*, which refers to the ease or readiness to which

information is retrieved from memory (p. 406). Accessibility bias “occurs when information that is more accessible in memory is used disproportionately as a basis of judgment” (Shrum, 1995, p. 406). Priming, a psychological process where a person’s thinking is changed over a period of time, increases the likelihood that a person’s judgment of another person will be made on the basis of an accessibility bias.

Certain conditions will lead to the choice of particular strategies, but judgment strategies differ in terms of the effort they require. This concept, Shrum (1995) says, is confirmed by extensive evidence showing that the “judgment effort expended is a function of at least two things: involvement with the judgment and the time pressure to make the judgment” (p. 407). *Systematic or central processing*, the more arduous judgment process, occurs when “involvement is high or time pressure is low” (Shrum, 1995, p. 407). A less strenuous processing, otherwise known as *heuristic or peripheral*, is more likely to “occur when there is high time pressure or the decision task is unimportant or uninvolved” (Shrum, 1995, p. 407). Therefore, the process in which a judgment is made is ultimately dependent on an individual’s viewing patterns, the individual’s direct contact with the judgment, the significance of the judgment itself, and the amount of time available for making the judgment.

Yuki Fujioka (1999) found that direct contact is extremely important in diminishing unfavorable racial attitudes cultivated in an audience, particularly when personal contact is limited. He suggests that because whites represent the majority of the population, “minority groups (e.g., African-Americans) are more likely to have interracial contact with members of the majority (Indo-Europeans) than with members of other (e.g., Japanese international) groups” (p. 52). Hence his hypothesis that the less contact a

group (Japanese internationals) has with minorities, the more television will influence their perceptions (Fujioka, 1999).

Fujioka (1999) introduced the contact hypothesis, which predicts that “positive personal contact produces favorable change in racial attitudes and promotes interracial respect and liking” (p. 53). This is evident through the integration of public schools and workplaces; an increase in the interaction of people and cultures has produced a society of mixed racial and ethnic backgrounds. While this did not come without adverse struggles, the racial attitudes of whites today, collectively, are not what they were forty years ago. However, while there is indeed more racial intermingling, the contact hypothesis has produced mixed findings in “real-life situations” (Fujioka, 1999, p. 53). Fujioka (1999) attributes this to socioeconomic factors that have caused fragmentation and limited positive interracial contact among majority and minority groups within society (53).

A survey among 83 Japanese international students and 166 Indo-European students was conducted to measure stereotypes of African-Americans and “vicarious contact (television) variables” (p. 52). Fujioka (1999) chose to test for the influence of *vicarious* contact because previous research has found explicit visual images of African-Americans to be more influential on those individuals who “lack or have limited direct contact” with minorities than those individuals who have regular contact (p. 54). The results showed that Japanese students’ interaction with African-Americans was significantly lower compared to their interaction with whites (Fujioka, 1999).

Respondents were first asked to rate the level of contact they have with African-Americans, whether formally or informally. Then they were asked in an open-ended

question to recall the most recent entertainment programs they had viewed and describe how African-Americans were portrayed in those programs. The results showed that Japanese overall ratings of African-Americans were lower (more negative) than those of whites for the following variables: “rich, hardworking, intelligence, trustworthy, drug dealing, and education” (Fujioka, 1999, p. 63). Like Shrum (1995), Fujioka (1999) used the *social cognitive theory* to explain why “one’s evaluations and interpretations (positive or negative) of television messages affect consequences of television viewing” (p. 56). For example, the formation of stereotypes depends heavily on how the viewer interprets the portrayal of African-Americans on television as being either positive or negative.

According to Fujioka (1999), instrumental learning theories suggest that people prefer individuals who provide them with a favorable experience and dislike individuals who leave them with an unpleasant experience. In terms of television effects, someone who has frequent positive contact with minorities will be unaffected by negative portrayals of African-Americans on television, versus someone who has frequent negative contact with African-Americans; the messages will affect each person differently. Thus, the study provides evidence that when firsthand information is lacking, television images can have a “significant impact on viewer perceptions” (Fujioka, 1999, p. 67).

Television's Contribution to Stereotyping

Today, the average American watches a little over two hours of television each day, while the average college student views an overwhelming three hours and 41 minutes of content each day (Bauder, 2005). Television has a remarkable storytelling function that can reach large numbers of people at one time. Its messages can construct viewers' social reality by teaching them about the intricacies of society. Stereotypes are the result of messages that aid television in socialization. Stereotypes, according to Signorielli (2001), are "conventional, standardized images or conceptions; they are generalizations or assumptions that are often based on misconceptions" (p. 343). Stereotypes lack originality; they are dependent on the commonly known and are often one-dimensional elements of portrayals of a particular person or group of persons (Signorielli, 2001). Stereotypes often target women, minorities, socio-economic status and sexual orientation. More importantly, television can encourage negative attitudes toward racial/ethnic minorities.

Klaus Scherer (1970), identified television as a major source of distinguishing something as simple as characteristics of our favorite superheroes and villains from as far back as the 1960s. Scherer (1970) studied how "television (as well as comic books) are largely responsible for the existence of stereotyped judgments in person perceptions in post-Nazi-era Germany, by depicting heroes as tall, blond, and blue-eyed supermen while portraying villains as smallish, dark-haired, dark-eyed, and sly-looking scoundrels" (p. 92). Furthermore, during the Nazi era, Adolf Hitler may have reinforced this type of good-versus-evil stereotype, since his main ideology was glorification of what he referred to as the "blond-haired, blue-eyed Aryan" (p. 92). Scherer (1970) posits that if these

images are shown in the mass media, the depictions will be reflected in viewer judgments and they will “consistently rate blue-eyed actors higher on positive personality attributes and lower on negative personality attributes than dark-haired, dark-eyed characters” (p. 92). In contrast, if those same subjects were to view counter-stereotyped heroes with dark-hair and dark eyes, they would evaluate those persons more favorably (Scherer, 1970, p. 93).

Scherer (1970) analyzed two groups: 15 (nine male and six female) students and 26 (15 male and 11 female) adults (p. 93). After viewing a series of movie clips and photographs, subjects were asked to rate their impressions of the actors (Scherer, 1970). Results indicated that blond-haired, blue-eyed types were viewed more positively than dark-haired, dark-eyed types. However, there were significant differences between the ratings from the two subject groups. After showing counter-stereotyped images of blond types, student subjects viewed the actors less positively than the adult viewers (Scherer, 1970, p. 95). Scherer (1970) says this may be attributed to “lack of exposure of the younger generation to the Aryan ideology of Nazi Germany and the excessive display of its blond-haired, blue-eyed representatives in the mass media” (p. 95). Ultimately, Scherer’s study exemplifies how mainstream media can influence audience perceptions about members of society.

Prior experimental and correlational studies “have shown that indeed counter-stereotyped occupational portrayals can influence the attitudes and aspirations of children” (Wroblewski & Huston, 1987, p. 285). In a study of the effects of occupational stereotypes on adolescents, researchers found that television serves as a source for occupational information and that it leads to sex-stereotyped views of the occupations

portrayed (Wroblewski & Huston, 1987). According to Roberta Wroblewski and Aletha Huston (1987), the amount of television viewed correlated with knowledge about occupations frequently shown on television but not with knowledge about other occupations (p. 285). The researchers administered a questionnaire to 65 children from fifth to sixth grades. The children were asked to identify 25 of 60 prime-time network television dramas and comedies aired during 1987. They were asked to indicate whether they “usually” viewed the listed programs and to identify their favorite characters (Wroblewski & Huston, 1987, p. 290). Results indicated that television portrayals were gender-typed more so than “real life” occupations. Males shown in nontraditional occupations were seen more negatively in “real life” than on television.

Wroblewski and Huston (1987) also introduced the *gender schema theory*. According to the theory, through a series of experiences, children develop schemas or images of masculine and feminine attributes and activities (p. 286). Television can have two types of influences on those schemas: “it could activate existing schemata or promote altered schemata” (Wroblewski & Huston, 1987). More specifically, stereotypes shown on television can serve to “activate existing schemata” in children (p. 286). Children with a preponderant amount of schema are more likely to recall gender-typed information from television and, often times, will distort a message inconsistent with their schema. For example, the authors found that 5- to 6 -year-old students who viewed films with male nurses and female doctors only recalled seeing the male doctors (Wroblewski & Huston, 1987). They remembered the data by matching them within the realms of their schema. The researchers argued that the only way non-traditional occupational roles or schema-inconsistent information can be remembered is through

repeated images where viewers can have enough time to register the positive portrayals. The researchers assert that “images on television can influence schemas, attitudes, and aspirations of early adolescents,” and that showing more consistent portrayals of women as lawyers, doctors, and police officers can have a profound effect on young girls (Wroblewski & Huston, 1987, p. 296).

Throughout history, occupational role portrayals have been stereotyped and more often sex-typed--meaning that career fields were far more limited for females than they were for males (Signorielli, 2001, p. 346). Some of the more common themes of stereotyped occupational roles were that more prestigious and high status professional law enforcement jobs were frequent among male characters, while female characters shared the less prestigious, less glamorous careers like secretaries, nurses, teachers, and homemakers (Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001, p. 6).

According to Signorielli and Kahlenberg (2001), during the 1970s and 1980s female characters in television shows were commonly seen in these traditional female occupations (p. 8). Marital status also became an important indicator as to whether female characters were cast in traditional female occupations like a secretary or nurse, or traditional male occupations like a police officer, doctor, or lawyer (p. 8). Single and divorced female characters were typically cast in traditional male occupations more often than in traditional female or gender-neutral occupations (Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001, p. 8). Lastly, non-white characters or minorities, male or female, were “most frequently cast in service or clerical positions” (p. 6). In addition, racial/ethnic minorities made up only six to eight percent of prime-time television characters from the 1970s to the 1980s (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000).

Occupational Role Portrayals of Women on Prime-time Television

Long before the shortage of minority characters on television, women of all ethnic backgrounds during the 1960s and 1970s were portrayed in ways inconsistent with their actual presence in the U.S. population (Elasmar, Hasegawa & Brain, 1999). Donald Davis (1990) asserts that “while changes have been made in television’s treatment of African-Americans, Hispanics, and others, little change has occurred in the portrayals of women” (p. 330). Elasmar, Hasegawa, and Brain (1999) compared the results of four studies conducted between 1971 and 1987 looking at the distribution of female characters on prime-time-television. In 1974, women made up 28 percent of major roles and were more likely to be shown in comedies than in any other genre (Elasmar et al., 1999). Female character roles increased in the late 1970s to 34.5 percent, but they were frequently cast in comedies or family dramas (p. 22). In a 1975 prime-time study by J.C. McNeil, 32 percent of characters on prime-time television were women and 44 percent of them were employed (Elasmar, et al., 1999). Findings from that study revealed 15 percent of women in both daytime and prime-time television were ethnic minorities; out of that, 12 percent had speaking roles and seven percent had major roles (Elasmar et al., 1999, p. 22). Lastly, studies in the 1980s found “few differences in gender stereotyping” from previous years when women made up 29 percent of characters on television (Elasmar et al., 1999).

In order to identify the attributes and actions of foreground characters in organizational settings and how they perform, Vande Berg and Streckfuss (1992) conducted a two-week study on 116 prime-time television program episodes on three

major networks (CBS, NBC, and ABC). They examined the ways in which female and male characters were portrayed, with a focus on “equality of representation across industries, occupational roles, hierarchical position, depictions, genre and dramatic tone” (p. 197). The researchers restricted the sample to regularly scheduled prime-time network programs, “excluding all specials, movies, sports, and news programs” (Vande Berg & Streckfuss, 1992, p. 197). The study used two forms of analyses: analysis of the foreground characters and analysis of the organizational actions performed by those characters. Foreground characters were defined as those major and minor characters with speaking roles who serve an important plot function within an episode. The researchers chose to use dual analyses in order to identify “significant differences in the organizational action that did not appear in the single overall character analysis” (p. 204). This study, along with Mastro and Greenberg’s (2000), not only quantified the number of women in professional careers, but also focused on the depictions of those characters within an organizational setting.

Vande Berg and Streckfuss (1992) introduced the concept of *organizational action*, as a useful contextual variable to identify the behavior characters exhibited within occupational role portrayals. Five major behavioral categories are associated with organizational actions: “interpersonal function, development and cultivation of interpersonal activities in the organization, which includes counseling, motivating and general sociabilities; informational function or disseminating information to and from organizational insiders and outsiders; decisional function (problem solving and conflict resolution); political function (display, development, or use of power to accomplish individual or group self-interests); and lastly, the operational function, directly resulting

in manufacturing products, delivering services, or everyday work being done” (Vande Berg & Streckfuss, 1992, p. 197). Female characters in managerial positions or decisional functions might exhibit different traits from women shown in secretarial or operational functions.

Results indicated that female characters are far more likely to be portrayed performing interpersonal, counseling, and motivational functions in organizations, while their male counterparts were “seen fulfilling informational, decisional, political, and operational functions in organizations” (p. 204). In 1992, women were more likely to hold lower positions than males within the status hierarchy of their organization (Vande Berg & Streckfuss, 1992). The findings suggest that television continues to present career women as lacking the “competitively achieved” occupational status of their male counterparts (Vande Berg & Streckfuss, 1992, p. 205). Moreover, in a study by Donald Davis (1990) analyzing the portrayals of women on prime-time television, demographic variables identified most characters to be “overly emotional, dependent, less capable as planners; dominated by men; and less intelligent” (p. 326). While shows like that of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *Charlie’s Angels* provided a progressive change in the roles of female characters, the portrayals were often undermined by what Davis (1990) refers to as scenes involving subliminal submissiveness and sexism. Needless to say, as Vande Berg and Streckfuss (1992) posited, television’s world of work remained a “man’s world” (p. 204).

Portrayals of African-Americans on Prime-time Television

In 1970, President Lyndon Johnson appointed the Kerner Commission to study and make recommendations on the issue of improving media coverage of minority groups. His contention was “the media seemed to encourage racial conflict by presenting African-Americans in negative and limited ways” (Signorielli, 2001, p. 343). The Commission “recommended an increase in the number of African-Americans among newscasters and television fiction” (Matabane & Merritt, 1996, p. 329). This was in response to widespread occurrences of violence stemming from racial discrimination during the 1960s. In 1968, the Commission, formally known as the *National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, issued a report that identified broadcast television networks as having a significant role “in the creation of an antagonistic schism between African-Americans and white America” (Matabane & Merritt, 1996, p. 329). The Commission proclaimed that television networks have a moral obligation to “serve all of the nation’s citizens by representing their lives in both fiction and nonfictional programming” (p. 330). Fictional portrayals of African-Americans on network television have changed dramatically since the 1960s.

Paula Matabane and Bishetta Merritt (1996) assessed the representation of African-American fictional characters on four prime-time television networks. They contend that during the time of the Commission’s report there was a “marked difference in the nation’s cultural and racial makeup as well as the marketplace of television and video delivery systems” than the cultural makeup and marketplace during the 1990s (Matabane & Merritt, 1996, p. 329). Since then, there has been a proliferation of

communications media and new technology “that has led to the fragmentation of audiences...with more program choices and keener market competition” (p. 329). The advent of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 allowed for “greater network/cable cross-ownership” increasing monopolization by the very same corporate forces that were producing negative images of African-Americans; the same images condemned by the Kerner Commission (p. 329). Matabane and Merritt (1996) assert that “while we might criticize or applaud the visibility of African-American characters, there is a need to pay attention to the subtle messages in which racism and sexism are so often embedded in this era of supposed diversity and multiculturalism” (p. 336). Therefore, it leads one to question whether the nation has progressed beyond the racist ideologies blatantly depicted in the media during the 1960s, or has the nation reverted back to where it started.

According to Matabane and Merritt (1996), the influx of program competition and the rapid adoption of communications devices such as VCRs, satellite services, and DVDs, have meant that “television programs are given less time to establish themselves before being replaced by a new series” (p. 330). Therefore, according to Matabane and Merritt (1996) the only constant in network television is “change” (p. 330). An issue of concern is that the values of the “dominant class” are reflected in television fiction, given that network executives who belong to that class “promote their own agenda or preferred values to help maintain the status quo” (Matabane & Merritt, 1996, p. 331).

In order to identify present-day portrayals of African-Americans, the researchers monitored episodes on four TV networks (ABC, CBS, NBC, and FOX) over a period of four weeks. Programs were coded for two types of information (Matabane & Merritt,

1996, p. 331): “(1) characteristics of individual characters (i.e., demographics, physical depictions, roles played, and family relationships), and (2) characteristics of individual programs (i.e., program setting, location, region, and racial composition of setting and neighborhood).” A total of 142 African-American characters in 44 programs were analyzed; 59 percent were sitcoms and 31.8 percent were dramas (Matabane & Merritt, 1996). There were no all-African-American cast dramas or action programs (p. 332).

Matabane and Merritt (1996) found the majority (60.6 percent) of African-American characters were portrayed in positions of little power or significance. These positions were defined as having “little consequence...or decision making power in the broader world,” and included students, blue-collar workers, criminals, and unknowns (p. 332). Findings revealed 28 percent of African-Americans were cast in professional occupations and 10.6 percent were shown in law enforcement (p. 336). Another significant finding was that each network featured more males than females, with CBS and FOX having “twice as many males than females” (p. 336). There was also a large number of characters shown with “undeveloped backgrounds, unknown occupations, and unknown family connections” meaning that many characters were not shown tied to a family or home life (p. 334). The researchers contend that depictions of unknown social relationships among African-Americans are dramatically disparate from reality and, often times, leave viewers to fill in the blanks or “define characters more by materialistic consumption levels that presume, but do not adequately reflect, social class” (Matabane & Merritt, 1996, p. 334). Although there were far more African-Americans on television than in the 1960s, the authors assert there were disturbingly too many unknowns “and

fewer cues for understanding those characters and how audiences might view African-American images on television” (p. 336).

Sarah Eschholz, Jana Bufkin, and Jenny Long (2002) profess that it is rather “typical for the media to either utilize stereotypes disparaging females and minorities, perpetuate myths concerning their existence, or to completely exclude them, implying that members of these groups occupy no significant social space” (p. 300). They posit that most films are produced with a “capitalist system” that operates under the principle of competition; therefore, “producers are motivated to make movies that sell” (p. 301). As media ownership becomes increasingly monopolized, open competition becomes threatened, providing consumers with poor choices of media content (Eschholz et al., 2002). Hence, these images inundate audiences “with unrealistic portrayals of females and minorities,” thereby persuading audiences to “adopt cultural double standards based on race and sex” (pp. 300-301).

In order to determine the strength of female and minority portrayals, the authors analyzed the “demographic composition of leading actors/actresses in the top 50 grossing films in 1996” in order to provide an assessment of “character representations through an analysis of labor force participation, sex-role occupation, and gender” (Eschholz et al., 2002). During the late 1990s, women and minorities were “disproportionately excluded” from starring roles in films and prime-time television, but were shown most frequently in comedies (Eschholz et al., 2002, pp. 304-305). Character age has long been tied to physical appearance and the underlying myth of “youthful beauty” has been seen as the basis of valuation of females in this society. On the other hand, youth displayed by a minority character often times meant “carefree comic or criminal” (p. 306). Also, while

female and minority characters were shown as younger and less mature, male Indo-European characters tended to be older and depicted as more mature, (Eschholz et al., 2002). In 1996, female characters, in terms of depictions of marital and parental status in film, were most frequently shown as devoted wives and mothers, while males were shown having the “freedom to pursue challenges and attain goals separate from the family” (p. 306).

Eschholz et al.’s (2002) results indicated that in 1996 the number of African-American actors and actresses in major films increased from the early 1990s; women and men were shown in equal numbers as both spouses and parents; and women and men were shown having equal occupational status (Eschholz et al., 2002, p. 322). However, despite obvious improvements, the authors posit, “Hollywood is a white man’s world” (p. 322). For example, women were found to be significantly underrepresented in leading roles, and along with minorities were shown younger than white males. Overall, the occupational prestige of African-Americans was still less “than their white counterparts” (Eschholz et al., 2002). While comparing results to previous research, the authors also found that films were even more likely than television to sex-role stereotype both male and female characters (p. 318-319).

Research Questions

In light of the research cited above, it can be argued that it is important to analyze portrayals of women and minorities in the workplace. Essentially, the patterns or messages displayed on television can provide the environment in which people define themselves, others, and their social reality (Signorielli & Morgan, 1990). In order to

analyze character portrayals of African-American women in employment settings, one must identify the recurring images that can be constructed into a perceived reality among members of an audience. An important aspect of the cultivation theory “begins with identifying and assessing the most recurrent and stable patterns in television content, and emphasizing the consistent images, portrayals, and values that cut across most program genres” (Signorielli & Morgan, 1990, p. 16).

John Seggar and Penny Wheeler’s (1973) study, “World of Work on TV: Ethnic and Sex Representation in TV Drama,” analyzed portrayals of women and minorities on prime-time television. The study analyzed “the extent to which major minorities were represented and compared their portrayals with white American portrayals” (p. 202). Some objectives of the study were to identify “(1) the over- and under-representation on TV relative to each group’s proportionate representation in the national population; (2) sex distribution in allocation of roles; (3) overrepresentation and under-representation on TV of occupational roles in comparison to national labor market statistics; (4) analysis of the representation of selected groups relative to some selected specific occupations; and (5) the amount of exposure given to various minorities” (p. 202). Findings revealed that women from all minority groups were under-represented on TV, and all groups were over-represented in professional and managerial fields (Seggar and Wheeler, 1973, p. 213). There was an under-representation in occupations with little prestige among all minority groups, except in the service area (p. 213). The present study will also attempt to determine if the number of occupational portrayals of African-American women accurately reflect their presence in the U.S. workforce. Therefore, the first research question:

RQ1: Are portrayals of African-American female characters in professional careers on prime-time television less than proportionate to their presence in U.S. Dept. of Labor statistics?

According to Eschholz, et al., (2002), in the workplace, female depictions evolved but still lacked the “quantity and prestige” awarded to male characters (Eschholz et al., 2002). Lead female characters were likely to be employed alongside a male most commonly involving some form of “romantic tension” between the characters within the storyline (p. 307). Likewise, minorities were portrayed in various occupational roles, but less frequently with inclusion into the upper class. African-American women were shown making a transition from unemployment, having few decision-making opportunities when employed, or having little organizational power (Eschholz et al., 2002; Matabane and Merritt, 1996).

Marital status was a major factor in determining occupational roles of female characters. For example, Elasmr et al. (1999) found that “over twice as many unmarried females as married females were found in professional white collar positions” (p. 29). Although the authors found no significant relationship between marital status and success, more women who were not married were clearly successful in comparison to those who were married (Elasmr et al., 1999). This also had an influence on the occupations of females in major roles. The authors found that 32.7 percent of female characters with major roles were unmarried or were formally married; only 12.6 percent of characters were married (Elasmr et al., 1999). The authors contend that the decrease in portrayals of married women on television could be the result of a shift in the societal value of marriage as defining a woman’s identity (p. 32).

In 1971, female characters comprised 18.3 percent of characters on television but were over-represented in professional roles by 19.4 percent compared to statistics of the general population. During the same year, researchers found more portrayals of unemployed women than men, when in fact, according to research statistics, “men had a higher rate of non-achievement than women (19 percent vs. 13 percent) did” (Elasmar et al., 1999, p. 21). Males in professional roles were extremely over-represented (58 percent) compared to their actual presence in the population (15 percent) (Elasmar et al., 1999). Herewith, the second research question:

RQ2: Are the percentage of African-American male characters in professional careers higher than the percentage of African-American female characters in professional careers on prime-time television, but less in U.S. Dept of Labor statistics?

Elasmar et al. (1999) identified a possible association between the increase of the female presence on prime-time television and changes in American values (p. 21). In the 1980s, portrayals of career women on TV shows changed dramatically from the 1960s and 1970s (p. 23). This was probably due to the “acceptance of women as valuable individuals outside the home” and trends in female contributions to the workforce (Elasmar et al., 1999, p. 24). Their content analysis found that 9.9 percent of female characters held professional, white-collar positions, while 19.1 percent were employed in blue-collar professions (p. 28).

In recent prime-time television programming, most professional women have been depicted as single and struggling to find meaningful love lives. *Ally McBeal*, a show produced by FOX network, featured actress Calista Flockhart playing a “young,

single, white, educated lawyer” who was in search of the ideal fantasy: love, couplehood, partnership, career, and children (Patton, 2001, p. 237). FOX had branded her character as the single career woman who was always swooning over potential mates. According to Tracey Patton (2001), McBeal was often socially constructed as innocent, vulnerable, angelic, delicate, and pure (p. 237). For example, episodes often depicted McBeal with “soft lighting, beautiful music, halos over her head, and walking on air” (Patton, 2001, p. 237). This was quite the contrast from her ethnic counterparts, Renee Radick (African-American) and Ling Woo (Asian-American), who were seen as “evil, erotic, and hypersexualized vixens” (p. 240).

Ling Woo, played by Lucy Liu, is an accomplished entrepreneur and lawyer, but serves as the show’s anti-McBeal (p. 250). According to Patton (2001), Woo is blunt, rude, crude, and secure; otherwise, socially constructed as the “*Asian fantasy woman*” (p. 250). The skill and intelligence of District Attorney Renee Radick’s character, played by Lisa Nicole Carson, was overshadowed by her overt “sexual prowess” and the camera’s constant fixation on Ms. Carson’s chest area (Patton, 2001, p. 244-245). This *showcase showdown* depiction of professional women reifies stereotypes of African-American women shown in professional careers as aggressive, over-sexed, and in constant search of companionship, especially when shown in the workplace.

Eschholz, Bufkin, and Long (2002) analyzed female and minority presence in film. They found that minority and female characters had the following behavioral characteristics: improper dialect, especially among all-minority casts; “seeking inadvertent attention” while acting in comedic roles or as ruthless criminals; behaving as “passive, sometimes emotional, rule-followers who are preoccupied with pleasing men;”

and serving a “more ornamental than functional” role (Eschholz et al., 2002). Some additional behavioral stereotypes noted in African-American female characters were that they were portrayed in “highly sexualized and masculine roles rather than occupying the space of traditional femininity” (Eschholz et al., 2002, p. 322). Furthermore, Mastro, Greenberg, and Brand (2002) also found prime-time television portrayals of minority women to “be more provocatively dressed and unprofessional than their White counterparts” (p. 336). Therefore, the final two research questions:

RQ3: Are behavioral characteristics of African-American female characters on prime-time television more negative compared to female characters of other racial/ethnic groups (Indo-European, Latin, Asian, and Native American)?

RQ4: Do African-American female characters have more tense conversation characteristics on prime-time television compared to female characters of other racial/ethnic groups (Indo-European, Latin, Asian, and Native American)?

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine occupational role portrayals of African-American women on prime-time television. Specifically, the data analysis has two major focuses: (1) to compare the presence of African-American female and male characters on television to workforce statistics, (2) to compare behavioral and conversational characteristics of African-American female characters in occupational roles with portrayals of females of other ethnic groups. To accomplish these objectives a content analysis of prime-time television shows on four television networks was conducted. This study presents the results of a content analysis conducted from the 2005 May sweeps, prime-time (8-11 p.m.) television schedule. A representative sample was collected from all fictional entertainment programming on UPN, FOX, WB, and ABC networks, excluding all “sports, news, reality, and public affairs programs” (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000, p. 693). Shows were randomly selected from each network’s prime time schedule in order to create one composite prime-time week for each of the four networks. The programming which qualified revealed 37 shows totaling 28 hours. A digital video recording (DVR) device or DVD recorder was used to record each program.

In their study of racial minorities, Mastro and Greenberg (2000) selected a composite one-week sample from each of the four major networks (ABC, CBS, NBC, and FOX) over a period of four weeks, from each network’s prime-time (8-11:00 p.m. EST) television schedule (p. 693). Over a six-week period, Mastro and Greenberg (2000)

collected a one-week representative sample from the prime-time programming lineup of ABC, CBS, FOX, and NBC. Specific days of the week to be analyzed were selected at random from each network’s prime-time schedule so there remained a complete prime-time week (seven different nights) for each of the four networks (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000, p. 693). After assessing the qualified programming, Mastro and Greenberg (2000) had 64 shows totaling 44.5 hours (p. 693). The present study is more modest in scale.

The present study analyzed programs during May sweeps, a time when networks enhance their television line-up in order to push advertising rates up and gain the most audience viewership (Wikipedia, 2005). Based on Nielsen ratings, sweeps periods are used for measuring television audiences and determining advertising rates. In the U.S. sweeps months are February, May, July, and November (Wikipedia, 2005). According to Sean Rocha (2004), because networks tend to show programs with shocking plot elements, it is “almost perfectly unrepresentative of the year as a whole.” Outside of these peak period; however, reruns of popular programs are more common (Wikipedia, 2005). Therefore, it is important to content analyze shows during this month because networks tend to over-dramatize character attributes to obtain a substantial audience viewership. Table 1 reveals distribution of shows in the sample.

Table 1: Distribution of Television Shows in the Sample (May 2005)

Network	No. of hours	No. of shows
FOX	3.5	4
UPN	8.5	13
WB	9	11
ABC	7	9
Total	28	37

Mastro and Greenberg (2000) analyzed television content from ABC, CBS, FOX, and NBC. The present study will analyze prime-time television shows from UPN, WB, FOX, and ABC, because all four networks had the highest-rated prime-time television programs among U.S. households from 2003-2004 according to Nielsen Media ratings, with UPN, WB, and FOX having the highest-rated programs among African-American audiences (2003-2004) (Nielsen Media, 2003-2004). UPN and WB initially featured programming from shows in syndication taken from other networks (Wikipedia, 2005). The two networks had been created in 1995 with the premise that they would replicate and/or exceed the success of the relatively new FOX network. Today, both networks, UPN particularly, produce shows that have been ranked among the top ten highest-rated prime-time television programs in African-American households by Nielsen ratings (Nielsen Media, 2003-2004). In addition, UPN and WB pride themselves on creating shows that target young adults and racial/ethnic minorities (Childrennow.org, 2000).

UPN was established in January of 1995 as part of a joint-venture between Paramount Studios (Viacom) and Chris-Craft Industries' United Television group (now owned by News Corp) (Wikipedia, 2005). From UPN, formally the United Paramount Network, the first telecast was a two-hour pilot of *Star Trek: Voyager* (Wikipedia, 2005). Later on that year, Viacom changed its name, opting for the use of the three-letter initials, "UPN" (Wikipedia, 2005). According to a report by Childrennow.org, *Fall Colors: How Diverse is the Prime-time Lineup?*, UPN has the highest proportion of shows with diverse casts (80 percent). Furthermore, more than half of the programs on both UPN and WB networks, and about 43 percent of those on FOX, "feature a mix of race and ethnicity in their recurring casts" (Childrennow.org, 2000). In 2003, it was estimated that UPN was

viewed by 85.98 percent of all households, “reaching 91, 689, 90 houses in the United States” (Wikipedia, 2005). During that same year, The WB was created as a joint venture through Time Warner and the Tribune Company. The network was established as a direct result of “changes in the television regulatory environment that allowed television networks to produce and syndicate more of their own programming” (Clark, 2004). The WB is “widely recognized” as the first to take advantage of “fragmenting television audiences” (Clark, 2004). According to Lynn Schofield Clark (2004), by tailoring programming to teens and young adults, the WB has become a successful broadcast network, “reaching 88% of the U.S. audience through broadcast and cable channels.”

According to Elasmir, Hasegawa, and Brain (1999), prior research on the portrayals of women in prime-time television suggest that there be strict identification of reliable trends and development of “standardized definitions and coding schemes” (p.33). Like that of Mastro and Greenberg’s (2000) study of racial minorities on television, the present study coded characters for the following variables: (1) program levels, (2) occupational category levels, (3) individual character levels. Program level variables were coded for network, length, program setting (family/home, work/occupation, entertainment [club, concert, lecture], leisure [park, recreation, outdoors]), and genre (action/adventure, comedy, crime, family, drama, and fantasy/science fiction). Program setting variables were used to evaluate where the essence of the conflict and resolution occurred and where major and minor characters were more frequently observed in each episode. Occupational category level variables were coded for professional, management/business, service, sales, office/administrative, farming, construction/trades, installation/maintenance, production, and transportation career categories. Income levels

were not included as a variable in this study because such values rely heavily upon speculation.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, *professionals*, or professional occupations, are those “with the theoretical or practical aspects of such fields of human endeavor as art, science, engineering, education, medicine, law, business relations, administrative, managerial, and technical work...most of these occupations require a substantial educational preparation--usually at the university, junior college, or technical institute level” (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). These characteristics, along with the appropriate industry codes for specific occupations, are based upon the 1987 Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) System and the newly implemented Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) System. Under the SIC system, each industry group is categorized by a two-to-four-digit SIC code. The codes are structured to allow historical comparisons to employment classifications from early years (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004). For example, today’s SIC code for the radio and television broadcasting industry is 4830.

The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) System is used by Federal statistical agencies to classify workers into occupational categories for the purpose of “collecting, calculating, or disseminating data” (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004). For example, all workers will be classified into one of more than 820 occupations reflective of their occupational definition (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004). Each occupational category variable was referenced using the U.S. Department of Labor’s 2004-2005 *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, which is also used by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics to calculate labor statistics nationwide. Since the aim of this study is to analyze occupational role portrayals of African-American female characters on prime-

time television, each occupational role portrayal served as the unit of analysis for each program.

For variables within the individual character level, each was coded for role prominence, age, sex, ethnicity, marital status, behavioral and conversation characteristics. The role prominence variable evaluated actors/actresses whose name appeared in the opening program credits. For example, major roles are those female and male characters integral to the story line, and minor characters are supporting roles involved in but not integral to the plot. Background characters (i.e., people passing on the street, groups on the dance floor, a waiter asking for orders, etc.) were not included in the analysis. Marital status was coded as single, married, divorced/widowed, homosexual partner, and unable to determine. For the race/ethnicity variable there were five identifiers: African-American, Asian, Latin, Native American, Indo-European (white), and Ambiguous (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000, p.693-694). The *ambiguous* race was used to code for characters who show evidence of being from mixed racial/ethnic backgrounds or is shown in a plot where race/ethnicity is indistinct.

To evaluate behavioral, appearance, and conversational attributes of minority characters, Mastro and Greenberg (2000) coded variables based upon “five-point, bipolar adjective scales” (p. 694). The present study eliminated the appearance characteristics, because they were unrelated to the research questions and instead used a two-point scale (1 or 2) to create a more simplified coding sheet and to allow better interpretation of coder results. For the behavioral characteristics, characters were coded for their accent, attitude, articulation, aggression, decision making, friendliness, intelligence, language, respect, and work ethic. As described in Mastro and Greenberg’s 2000 study, most of

these variables reflect an attribute or stigma which has been associated with an ethnic stereotype. Lastly, for conversational characteristics, characters were coded for tension, premeditation, and tone. Findings from the two sets of variables describe attributes of characters when they interact with other characters in a program (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000).

In order to make empirical observations of character attributes, the following operational definitions were identified: portrayal-- “the appearance of a person on the screen performing some kind of recognizable duty;” occupational role--a social position in which a television performer was seen in an occupation as classified by the U.S. Department of Labor 2004-2005 *Occupational Outlook Handbook* as follows: professional, management/business, service, sales, office/administrative, farming, construction/trades, installation/maintenance, production, and transportation (Seggar and Wheeler, 1973, p. 203). Instead of operationalizing race/ethnicity and marital status, the researcher let the coder set her own criterion used to make both evaluations. While this may be equally vicarious as creating operational definitions for race and marriage by way of appearance or moral traits, it is necessary to assess perceptions of the coder, in this case the audience, as they are ultimately the ones who will be influenced by any possible distorted images.

Additional operational definitions, as defined by Merriam-Webster, Inc. (2005), include: “*Accent*-- intensity of utterance given to a speech sound, syllable, or word producing relative loudness; *attitude*-- (a) a mental position with regard to a fact or state, (b) a feeling or emotion toward a fact or state; *articulation*-- (a) the act of giving utterance or expression, (b) the act or manner of articulating sounds; *aggression*-- a

forceful action or procedure (as an unprovoked attack) especially when intended to dominate or master; *decision* (making)-- (a) the act or process of deciding, (b) a determination arrived at after consideration; *friendliness*-- of, relating to, or befitting a friend: (a) showing kindly interest and goodwill, (b) not hostile; *Intelligence*-- the ability to learn, understand or to deal with new or trying situations; *language*-- the words, their pronunciation, and the methods of combining them used and understood by a community; *respect*-- the quality or state of being esteemed, expressions of respect or reverence; *work ethic*-- a belief in work as a moral good; *tension*—(a) inner striving, unrest, or imbalance often with physiological indication of emotion, (b) a state of latent hostility or opposition between individuals or groups; *premeditation*-- consideration or planning of an act beforehand that shows intent to commit that act; *tone*-- accent or inflection expressive of a mood or emotion, style or manner of expression in speaking or writing” (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2005).

In order to establish reliability of coding decisions, a 10% random sample of shows was chosen and coded by the researcher and one other coder who was a University of South Florida alumna with a B.A. in Psychology. For the purpose of establishing reliability, the researcher and coder analyzed 10 percent of episodes in the 37 randomly selected programs. The total number of shows coded was four-- one from ABC, two from UPN, and one from FOX network. There were no shows chosen from WB network within the four randomly selected episodes. The author conducted a brief training session with the coder to explain the conceptual and operational definitions of each of the variables mentioned earlier. The intercoder reliability between the coder and the researcher was computed with the help of Holsti’s (1969) formula:

$$C.R. = \frac{2M}{N_1 + N_2}$$

where M is the number of coding decisions on which the coders agreed, and $N_1 + N_2$ refer to the number of coding decisions made by each coder (Matabane & Merritt, 1996, p. 331; Wimmer & Dominick, 2003; Hosti, 1969). The results generated from the calculation with the help of Holsti's formula, was .83. The researcher borrowed from Matabane and Merritt's 1996 study of African-Americans on television to obtain a reliability score on an acceptable level of at least 0.80.

A single coding sheet was used to code all observed major or minor characters in each episode, categorizing them by their sex, profession, race/ethnicity, marital status, and behavior and conversational characteristics (see Appendix A). The researcher and coder also observed characters in the program setting, or the area where they were more frequently shown-- family/home, work/occupation, leisure, and entertainment.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This study analyzed occupational role portrayals of African-American women during prime time television programming on ABC, FOX, UPN, and WB networks. Two of these networks were found to have at least one or more occupational role portrayals of African-American women in their television programming; while the other two had absolutely none. UPN (N=15) and ABC (N=1), respectively, had the most coded occupational role portrayals of African-American female characters in the sample prime-time programming. In order to determine that a character role was an occupational role, coders observed the program setting which the character was most often featured. A total of 92 female characters were observed, with two having unidentifiable or ambiguous race/ethnicity. Native-American characters were nil. Out of those 92 female characters 48.9 percent of them were shown in the work/occupation program setting, while 41 percent were shown primarily in the family/home setting. Appendix B (p. 62) reveals attributes of the 37 television programs with racial/ethnic minority female characters for all four networks.

A total of 30 female professionals were identified with 39 having no identifiable occupation. To determine a character's professional category, the coders observed the actions, dialogue, and overall plot of the story. Once a professional category was perceived, then coders referred to the 2004-2005 U.S. Dept. of Labor *Occupational Outlook Handbook* in order to make a coding decision. Table 2 shows the percentages of

all televised occupations of female characters by race/ethnicity. UPN not only had the highest number (N=15) of African-American female character occupational role portrayals, but their programming accounted for 90% of all African-American female characters coded within sample. Albeit this figure may seem high, the majority of shows in the sample came from UPN's prime time programming line-up including those with the most diverse casts. WB and FOX networks had no African-American female characters from the episodes coded during their May sweeps prime time programming line-up, with ABC having two coded characters.

Table 2: All Televised Occupations of Female Characters by Race/Ethnicity

	African American (%)	Asian American (%)	Latin (%)	Indo- European (%)	Native American (%)
Occupations	N=20	N=2	N=5	N=63	N=0
Management/business	---	---	---	11	---
Professional and related	55	50	20	25	---
Service	10	---	20	11	---
Sales	10	---	---	3	---
Office/administrative	5	---	---	---	---
Farming	---	---	---	---	---
Construction/trades	---	---	---	2	---
Installation/maintenance	---	---	---	---	---
Production	---	---	---	---	---
Transportation	---	---	---	---	---
Unable to Determine	20	50	60	48	---
Total	100	100	100	100	0

Note: The following percentages are based on a sample of 37 shows randomly selected from WB, FOX, UPN, and ABC networks 2005 May sweeps prime-time television schedule.

These data are important in order to determine if the number of African-American females shown in professional careers coincide with U.S. Dept. of Labor statistics, and thus addressing the first research question: “Are portrayals of African-American female characters in professional careers less than proportionate to their presence in U.S. Dept. of Labor statistics?” As indicated in Table 2, the percentage of African-American female portrayals in professional careers on television was 55 percent versus 20.7 percent in the U.S. population as reported in the U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004 Household Data Averages.

This may lead one to posit that African-American females in professional careers are over-represented on television compared to their actual presence in the U.S. However, the figure can be attributed to only one network. Ninety percent of all African-American female characters for the entire selected sample were shown on UPN network. Furthermore, in response to the percentage of other female racial/ethnic minorities in professional careers, Latin and Indo-European women were most frequently shown in the family/home program setting with an unidentifiable occupation. Matabane and Merritt’s study, “African-Americans on Television: Twenty-five Years After Kerner,” conducted in the fall 1993 found that out of 142 characters analyzed over a four week period, 31.5 percent of the females were shown in professional/managerial occupations compared to 27.4 percent of the males (p. 333). In fact, females were far more likely to be shown as middle or upper-middle class (Matabane & Merritt, 1996). However, in terms of the number of African-American characters per network in the Matabane/Merritt (1996) study, FOX far exceeded ABC, CBS, and NBC. Therefore, given the short duration of the previous study and the present study, one cannot ultimately conclude that all African-

American female characters in professional careers are over-represented on television, hence the second research question, “Are the percentage of African-American male characters in professional careers higher than the percentage of African-American female characters in professional careers on television, but less in U.S. Dept. of Labor statistics?” Table 3 reveals the distribution of African-American male and female characters in professional careers on television and in the U.S.

Table 3: All African-Americans in Professional Careers on TV and in the U.S.

	Females (%)	Males (%)
	N=20	N=27
Television	55	44.4
U.S. Dept of Labor	20.7	12.8

Note: Based on Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004 Household data annual averages, *Employed persons by occupation, race, Hispanic Latino ethnicity, and sex.*

The percentages indicate that both African-American female and male characters in professional careers are over-represented on television in terms of their actual numbers in U.S. Dept of Labor statistics. However, in terms their distribution (females being higher, males lower) on television and Bureau of Labor Statistics, the numbers somewhat mimic society. The findings indicate that television continues its attempt to reflect society in terms of socioeconomic status, also evident in Matabane and Merritt’s study in 1993. Nonetheless, these figures can be attributed to a shift in societal trends.

According to Donald Davis (1990), studies from the 1950s showed that men outnumbered women on television by two to one, even though women consisted of 51.2 percent of the population during that time. Conversely, in the 1970s television programming started featuring women in varied situations outside of traditional

homemaker roles (p. 326). These portrayals continued to evolve into what we see today, with the ABC drama, *Commander In Chief*, which features actress Geena Davis starring as the first female President of the United States. While this is far removed from reality, it is not totally inconceivable since the appointment of Condoleezza Rice as the first African-American female Secretary of State. In addition, in terms of higher education, African-American women are obtaining college degrees at a faster rate than African-American males. In 1993, African-American women earned 45,000 B.A. degrees, compared to 23,505 degrees for African-American males (Malveaux, 1997). Remarkably, in 2000 an increase in the number of master's degrees obtained by African-American women exceeded that of African American (64%) men by 100 percent (Jet magazine, 2000). While these numbers are significant in explaining the presence of African-American female characters in professional careers, what is to be said about subliminal stereotypes in the portrayals of these women on prime-time television?

According to findings from Eschholz, Bufkin, and Long's (2002) study of racial/ethnic minorities in modern film, African-American female characters were found in highly sexualized, masculine roles rather than occupying a persona of traditional femininity (p. 322). Mastro and Greenberg (2000) also found African-Americans to have more portrayals as lazy and least respected thereby addressing the third research question: "Are behavioral characteristics of African-American female characters on prime-time television more negative than portrayals of female characters of other racial/ethnic groups (Indo-European, Latin, Asian, and Native American)?" Table 4 reveals the distribution of stereotyped attributes among all female characters coded in the sample.

Table 4: All Female Behavioral Characteristics by Race/Ethnicity

Variables	African American (%) N=20	Asian American (%) N=2	Latin (%) N=5	Indo-European (%) N=63	Native American (%) N=0
Accent					
Heavy	5	---	60	3.2	---
None	95	100	40	96.8	---
Attitude					
Apathetic	40	50	40	31.7	---
Emotional	60	50	60	68.3	---
Articulation					
Articulate	100	100	100	95.2	---
Inarticulate	---	---	---	4.8	---
Aggression					
Aggressive	75	50	40	60.3	---
Passive	25	50	60	39.7	---
Decision Making					
Decisive	75	100	80	87.3	---
Indecisive	25	---	20	12.7	---
Friendliness					
Polite	60	50	80	74.6	---
Brash	40	50	20	25.4	---
Intelligence					
Dumb	5	---	20	4.8	---
Smart	95	100	80	95.2	---
Language					
Profane	5	---	---	3.2	---
Reverent	95	100	100	96.8	---
Respect					
Ridiculed	15	---	---	25.4	---
Respected	85	100	100	74.6	---
Work Ethic					
Lazy	15	---	20	9.5	---
Ambitious	85	100	80	90.5	---

Note: The following percentages are based on a sample of 37 shows randomly selected from WB, FOX, UPN, and ABC networks 2005 May sweeps prime-time television schedule.

In terms of character behaviors African-American women were not shown to have more negative attributes than other racial/ethnic minorities. With regard to attitude, African-American women were perceived to have similar emotional traits as all other

ethnicities; with Indo-European women having slightly more portrayals with an increased emotional state. Donald Davis's study tracing the portrayals of women on television found that during the 1970s, when most women starring in television shows were Indo-European, women were depicted as overly emotional and dependent. In today's sitcoms and dramas, however, portrayals of women are extremely varied, but judging from the data in Table 4 it is apparent that coders, the audience in this case, perceive Indo-European women to be more emotional than all other racial/ethnic minorities.

Subsequently, 75 percent of all African-American female characters were noticeably more aggressive compared to that of all other minority women. Perceptions of African-American women as aggressive can be attributed to racial stereotypes in early American films of the "Black mammy" servant who was depicted as loud and overtly aggressive. While these *harsh* stereotypes have dissipated, it is not uncommon to observe small reminders of them in some of today's fictional characters. Thus, the final research question asked "Do African-American female characters have more tense conversation characteristics on prime-time television compared to female characters of other racial/ethnic groups (Indo-European, Latin, Asian, and Native American)?" Table 5 reveals the distribution of conversation characteristics by race/ethnicity.

Table 5: All Female Conversational Characteristics by Race/Ethnicity

Variables	African American (%) N=20	Asian American (%) N=2	Latin (%) N=5	Indo-European (%) N=63	Native American (%) N=0
Tension					
Tense	30	50	20	55.6	---
Relaxed	70	50	80	44.4	---
Premeditated					
Premeditated	50	100	80	69.8	---
Spontaneous	50	---	20	30.2	---
Tone					
Quiet	55	100	60	71.4	---
Loud	45	---	40	28.6	---

Note: The following percentages are based on a sample of 37 shows randomly selected from WB, FOX, UPN, and ABC networks 2005 May sweeps prime-time television schedule.

The data in Table 5 indicate that the percentages of conversational characteristics were relatively the same among all minority women. Because coders observed only two Asian-American female characters and at least five or more portrayals of other racial/ethnic groups, some percentages may seem higher than others. African-American female characters had a half split for observed premeditated and spontaneous conversations. This was in contrast to results from Mastro and Greenberg's 2000 study that found African-Americans to have more perceived spontaneous conversations, yet they were also portrayed as being most relaxed (p. 700). In terms of tone, African-American female characters, alongside Latin females, were perceived as having louder speaking voices than all other female characters. According to Mastro and Greenberg (2000), Latino characters were also depicted as the least articulate, having the heaviest accent, and the least spontaneous conversations among their other ethnic counterparts (p. 700). Table 5 also revealed Indo-European female characters were seen as having more quiet tones when speaking, reifying stereotypes mentioned earlier of white women as

having traditional feminine qualities. The data suggest that although the media have drastically improved depictions of African-American women on television in terms of occupational power and prestige, there remains subliminal endorsement of stereotypes that continue to disparage racial/ethnic minorities.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

George Gerbner probably could not conceive how much his cultivation theory would impact the field of mass communications nearly three decades later. Since 1976, researchers have been testing and re-testing the theory that relentlessly maintains the media have an influence on what we perceive about our social reality. The results remain consistent: television's "repetitive and pervasive" images can influence how we view members of society, including how we see ourselves. Several studies have been conducted on occupational role portrayals of minorities, especially, women. The present study is unique in that it focused specifically on occupational role portrayals of African-American women and identified negative behavior and conversational character traits. While African-Americans are largely over-represented on today's network television in comparison to their presence in the U.S., there remains an ongoing need to analyze the evolution of their presence in the media, not only to draw conclusions about their depictions, but also to create a model that can be used to evaluate portrayals of other racial/ethnic minorities who will soon have a greater presence on network television.

This study examined prime-time television programming of four networks that were ranked by Nielsen Media as having the highest rated shows among minority households from 2003-2004. The results revealed that UPN had significantly more portrayals of African-American women in professional careers, yet they had more African-American female characters with racial/ethnic stereotyped attributes. Although the study findings provided just enough answers for the research questions posed, the

sample is not large enough to draw strong conclusions. One would need to perform a longitudinal study during each sweeps month (February, May, July, and November) for the calendar year to get significant results. In addition, one would need to analyze repeated episodes of each selected show. The present study coded one episode from each of the sampled shows. Therefore, characters and scenarios may have been missed from a particular episode.

Findings from this study would be of greater use if applied as a pre-test for a longitudinal study. For example, findings revealed that 50 percent of all Asian-American female characters were seen as apathetic compared to all other female characters. This data would draw stronger conclusions had there been more than two Asian-American characters observed within the television sample. However, an item that deserves attention, in terms of the number of Asian-Americans observed, is that at least one of the two characters was seen as apathetic.

It can be inferred that even the lack of television portrayals can have a possible cultivation effect. In 2004, a study headed by the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium out of UCLA found that Asian-American actors were depicted as asexual, isolated, and obsessed with professional status (NAPALC, 2005). The study, conducted from September through November 2004 on six national broadcast networks, found that Asian-Americans were less likely to be shown in romantic or domestic relationships, which they posit, “may contribute to an image that Asian-Americans do not represent the ‘American Family’” (p. 4). In addition, Asian-Americans were also non-existent in network television shows set in highly Asian, Pacific, Islander American populated cities such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York City (NAPALC, 2005). According

to NAPALC president, Karen Narasaki, images like these, or the lack there of, imply that Asian-Americans “are missing from the American social fabric, not even seen as neighbors or friends. It also contributes to the inability of other Americans to connect with them as people like themselves” (Agence France Presse (AFP), 2005).

Another area that deserves attention is the low representation of Latin females on television and in professional occupations. Several of the Latin women featured in the sample prime-time programming were portrayed in the home, having unidentifiable occupations. According to a research report by UCLA’s Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies (2003), Latin Americans are the most underrepresented group in prime-time network television. Latin Americans account for 13 percent of the U.S. population, yet only accounted for about three percent of all characters in prime-time television in 2003 (Bunche, 2003). For the 1996-1997 television season, Mastro and Greenberg (2000) also found it difficult to observe Latin Americans on broadcast television because of their lack of representation. Given that this group is now the nation’s largest minority group, it is apparent that network television is lacking significantly in representing all members of society. The same can also be said of Native Americans who continue to be non-existent in prime-time television.

Finally, a less strong observation that should be addressed is that how we see ourselves may reinforce cultivation effects. While this study did not evaluate how television images can affect an audience, there are cultivation implications with regard to observations of the coders. Both coders for the present study were African-American women. This may have influenced coding decisions, specifically for behavioral and conversational characteristics of African-American female characters. It has been

implied that, disturbingly, African-Americans, at times, have ascribed to racial/ethnic stereotypes. Several of the programs observed on UPN had minor references to so-called “racial norms.” Not only does this detract attention from the talents of the African-American actor/actress, it inadvertently endorses stereotypes about African-Americans and other racial/ethnic minorities.

Since the cultivation theory states, that ultimately, how we see ourselves is linked to our exposure to the world of television, one can conclude that how we see ourselves is also how we view others in our community. Therefore, stereotypes are not solely reinforced through television, but also cultivated in us through our community, family, and friends. According to George Alexander (2003), the last decade has shown the greatest growth in the number of Black-created or produced programs. Among popular shows on UPN and ABC, African-Americans are behind the camera--half of them being UPN shows (Alexander, 2003). Future research could expand upon this research study by first evaluating perceived views of racial/ethnic minorities among other racial/ethnic minorities then have various racial/ethnic minorities code characters from prime-time television programming featuring diverse casts. With this method researchers will have assessed certain perceptions of the coders that could possibly compromise study results prior to analyzing television content. Future content analyses could also incorporate international coders, or those lacking direct contact with the racial/ethnic minorities observed in prime-time television programming.

As mentioned in the review of literature, Yuki Fujioka (1999) found that television can have a substantial influence on viewers who lack firsthand information. He tested his hypothesis that rather than the number of television programs seen, viewer

evaluations of television portrayals significantly affects the influence of stereotypes. Using results from a survey of 83 Japanese internationals and 166 Indo-European students, Fujioka (1999) found a correlation between the number of perceived positive television portrayals of African-Americans and positive views of African-Americans, and vice-versa, among Japanese international students who lacked direct contact. Several of the stereotypes and negative traits observed by the white students were not observed by the Japanese internationals in Fujioka's study.

In conclusion, the theory of cultivation requires regular evaluation of televised images that can influence audience perceptions of members in society. It is also important for researchers to identify the unseen images that can manifest perceptions of an "invisible" race. In addition, cultivation can extend well beyond television into our own communities; this should be accounted for when selecting coders for future content analyses.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Coding Sheet

Program Network: FOX ABC UPN WB

Program name _____

Program length 30:00 minutes 60:00 minutes

Program genre

- crime comedy drama
 action/adventure fantasy/sci. fi family

Program Setting

- 1-Family/home 2-Work/occupation 3-Entertainment (club/concert/lecture)
4-Leisure (park/recreation/outdoors) 0-Unable to determine

A. Character name or description _____

B. Character Role 1-Major 2-Minor

(Disregard ALL background characters, passers-by, waitresses, etc.; anyone insignificant to the storyline)

C. Age 1-20-29 2-30-39 3-40-49 4-50 and above

D. Sex 1-Male 2-Female

E. Occupation _____

F. Category:

- 1-Management/business 2-Professional 3-Service 4-Sales
5-Office/administrative 6-Farming 7-Construction/trades
8-Installation/maintenance 9-Production 10-Transportation
0-Unable to determine

G. Ethnicity

- 1-Indo-European (white) 4-Asian
2-African-American 5-Native American

3-Latin

0-Ambiguous

H. Marital Status

1-Single

2-Married

3-Divorced/Widowed

4-Homosexual/Partner

0-Unable to determine

Behavioral Characteristics

I. Accent

Heavy	None
1	2
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

J. Attitude

Apathetic	Emotional
1	2
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

K. Articulation

Articulate	Inarticulate
1	2
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

L. Aggression

Aggressive	Passive
1	2
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

M. Decision Making

Indecisive	Decisive
1	2
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

N. Friendliness

Polite	Brash
1	2
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

O. Intelligence

Dumb	Smart
1	2
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

P. Language

Profane	Reverent
1	2
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q. Respect

Ridiculed	Respected
1	2
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

R. Work Ethic

Lazy	Ambitious
1	2
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Conversational Characteristics

S. Tension

Tense	Relaxed
1	2
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

T. Premeditation

Premeditated	Spontaneous
1	2
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

U. Tone

Quiet	Loud
1	2
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix B: Attributes of 37 TV Programs with Minority Female Characters

Attributes	n	
	(N=92)	(%)
Program Genre		
Comedy	44	47.8
Crime	9	9.8
Drama	29	31.5
Family	2	2.2
Fantasy/Sci. Fi.	8	8.7
Program Setting		
Family/home	38	41.3
Work/occupation	45	48.9
Entertainment	1	1.1
Leisure	5	5.4
Unable to determine	3	3.3
Network		
ABC	23	25
FOX	8	8.7
UPN	37	40.2
WB	24	26.1
Role		
Major	71	77.2
Minor	21	22.8
Age		
20-29 yrs	24	26.1
30-39 yrs	52	56.5
40-49 yrs	13	14.1
50+ yrs	3	3.3
Occupation		
Managemnt/bus.	7	7.6
Professional	30	32.6
Service	10	10.9
Sales	4	4.3
Office/admin.	1	1.1
Construction	1	1.1
Unable to determine	39	42.4
Race/Ethnicity		
Indo-European	63	68.5
African-American	20	21.7
Latin	5	5.4

Appendix B (Continued)

Asian	2	2.2
Ambiguous	2	2.2
Marital Status		
Single	47	51.1
Married	20	21.7
Divorced/ Widowed	8	8.7
Unable to determine	17	18.5

Note: The following percentages are based on a sample of 37 shows randomly selected from WB, FOX, UPN, and ABC networks 2005 May sweeps prime-time television schedule.

Appendix C: Sample of Shows Coded for All Networks

FOX	UPN	WB	ABC
House	Cuts	Living with Fran	Desperate Housewives
The O.C.	Veronica Mars	Charmed	Lost
Stacked	Kevin Hill	Gilmore Girls	George Lopez
24	Half in Half	One Tree Hill	Blind Justice
	Eve	Reba	Grey's Anatomy
	King of Queens	What I like About You	Alias
	One on One	Everwood	My Wife in Kids
	All of Us	7 th Heaven	Hope and Faith
	Bad Girls Guide	Smallville	According to Jim
	Girlfriends	Jack & Bobby	
	That 70's Show	Blue Collar TV	
	Star Trek Enterprise		
	CSI		

Appendix D: Prime-Time Programming Record Schedule, May 2005

Network	Week 1 May 1-7	Week 2 May 8-14	Week 3 May 15-21	Week 4 May 22-28	Week 5 May 29- June 4
ABC	Hope and Faith Grey's Anatomy		My Wife and Kids George Lopez Blind Justice Lost Alias	According to Jim Desperate Housewives	
FOX	House	The O.C. Stacked		24	
WB	7 th Heaven Blue Collar TV Charmed Gilmore Girls Smallville	Reba	Everwood Jack & Bobby Living with Fran	One Tree Hill What I like About You	
UPN	Eve Girlfriends Half & Half CSI	Veronica Mars King of Queens	All of Us Star Trek Enterprise Kevin Hill One on One Cuts	That 70's Show	The Bad Girls Guide