

**Black Consonance and Dissonance Theory: As Explored Through The Social Media
Use Of Black Women In Late-Adolescence**

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Abstract

Media messages play a crucial part in teaching people how to view themselves and others through the representations of things like gender roles, racial groups, and perceptions of what is deemed beautiful. There is an abundance of stereotypical images of Black women in the media. In addition, they are also inundated with unrealistic beauty standards reflective of Eurocentric ideals of attractiveness that do not include them. Social media allows for content containing stereotypes about Black women and beauty criteria that do not include them at unprecedented rates. This narrative qualitative study aimed to examine how social media content used by Black young women in late adolescence impacts how they define beauty and articulate their self-identity. This study's findings have contributed to Goode-Middleton's emerging Black Consonance and Dissonance theory.

Keywords: black consonance and dissonance theory, social media, beauty standards, black women, adolescence, identity development

Dedication

This study is dedicated to my children, Jadel, Onajae, Sol, and Princeton, for being my biggest sources of inspiration, support and love. I am in awe of each one of you and cannot put into words how proud I am that all four of you call me Mom, Mommy, Ma, and now finally, you will be able to say Dr. Mom. You all bring me so much joy. I pray that I lead you by example and demonstrate what is possible with hard work, determination, and prayer.

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“My grace is all you need for my power is the greatest when you are weak” (2 Corinthians 12:9). God, I am so grateful for the blessings and favor you have continually shown me in my life. You have made a way when I thought there was none.

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Chapter One: Black Consonance and Dissonance Theory: As Explored Through The Social Media Use Of Black Women In Late-Adolescence

Overview

Adolescence is part of human development when identity formation is taking place. Young Black women in late adolescence are in the development phase where they establish a stronger sense of self, moving past the period of identity negotiation that they experienced in their early teen years (Adams & Stevenson, 2012). However, these young women are influenced by messages from media sources similar to those younger than them. Media can communicate messages to the population and shape society's perspective of the world (Fujioka & Neuendorf, 2015). Young Black women use social media frequently, making it the primary source of their media messages (Schott, 2016). Exposure to messages on social media can promote unrealistic beauty standards and racial stereotypes (Patton, 2006). Messages communicated about beauty ideals and stereotypes have been linked to potentially harmful effects on young women (Mastronardi, 2003). This study explores how young Black women express how they see themselves next to the beauty standards and stereotypes encountered on social media.

This chapter provides a compelling framework as the basis for this narrative phenomenological study. The problem statement identifies why research on the impact of social media messages on young Black women is warranted. The background of the study provides the historical and social climate that contributes to the need for the study. The situation of self delves into how the researcher's lived experiences led to the study of how beauty standards communicated on social media impact the ideals of beauty and self-identity of Black females in

late adolescence. This research seeks to fill the gap in research on the relationship between social media messages and how young Black women see themselves next to those messages. The purpose statement, problem statement, research questions, and hypotheses outline the study's goals.

Background of Study

Black young women have a challenging experience when it relates to beauty and body image in the United States. Historically, Black women's beauty and bodies have been devalued and deemed less attractive than White women and other racial groups due to the emphasis placed on Eurocentric beauty standards (Awad et al., 2015; Craig, 2017; Patton, 2006). Media messages are significant in communicating societal norms and standards, including those around beauty, to the masses (Radesky et al., 2015). Black women internalize these beauty standards communicated to them through media and, as a result, assess themselves next to ideals that are not based on their phenotypical appearance. With social media use on the rise, it allows for unprecedented amounts of messages about beauty to be communicated to young Black women that can be potentially harmful to their beauty self-perception.

It has been found that while adolescent girls understand the consequences of social comparison caused by social media use, they still engage in the activity (Burnette et al., 2017). People are exposed to images primarily of models and celebrities in media representing beauty ideals. Social media displays many images that can significantly impact how adolescents view beauty and body image. Additionally, social media allows exposure to peers and other popular influencers, which adds more images and people for adolescent females to compare themselves to more frequently due to the availability of social media sites on smartphones (Saunders &

Eaton, 2017). Images shared on social media are often edited, which skews realistic expectations of beauty (Fardouly et al., 2017).

Despite its possible harmful outcomes, social media use is prevalent today among adolescents and young adults (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Media messages that Black adolescent females are exposed to can contain stereotypes about their race and gender, which poses concern about how this content impacts them as these young women are developing their concept of self-identity. Adolescent young women come into contact with content shared by family, friends, influencers, celebrities, and brands, which has dramatically increased the sources of messaging in media. In addition, today's Black young adult females can engage with an unprecedented amount of media content due to this continually evolving time in media that has come with online access and smart cellular devices. This accessibility allows media content consumption at almost any location and time. This chapter provides an overview of the research problem through an analysis of the messages communicated in social media content regarding skin, features, hair, and body type.

Eurocentric Beauty Standards

Beauty standards determine what is considered attractive and desirable in societies (Frederick et al., 2015). Eurocentric beauty standards center features predominately possessed by White people as the traits that determine attractiveness. These standards of beauty are harmful to all women. However, the detriment is experienced more by Black women who have been made to feel less attractive than women of other racial groups because their body features are the furthest away from being adjacent to Eurocentric beauty ideals that are communicated as the standard of beauty through media (Awad et al., 2015). Satoshi Kanazawa wrote in a deleted

Psychology Today article that black women were "objectively less physically attractive" than all other races of women," which is an example of the devaluation and rejection that Black women have experienced in America (Kaufman, 2011 para. 1).

Eurocentric beauty standards have shaped how Black women see and determine beauty due to the lack of diversified representation in media, which shows whiteness as the example of beauty. This vantage point of beauty has caused many issues for Black women accessing themselves next to an ideal that is the opposite of who they are naturally (Awad et al., 2015; Craig, 2017). This evaluation has resulted in Black women engaging in practices to alter their appearance to fit the beauty standard. These practices range from skin bleaching hair extensions to plastic surgery, which are done in an attempt to align closer with the beauty ideals rooted in whiteness.

One of the most controversial practices used by Black women to achieve the beauty standard is skin bleaching. Skin bleaching, particularly in Africa, involves using chemical creams to lighten darker skin. Health risks are associated with using these creams. A study found that Black women were willing to use skin whitening products, fully aware of the harmful ingredients and health risks associated with putting them on their skin due to their desire to be lighter (Ashley, 2021).

Skin bleaching is a problem beyond the United States. The creams are top-rated in Asia, India, and Africa. This practice of skin bleaching is due to the widespread European influence around the world that has caused that beauty standard to spread worldwide. Several West African countries have banned skin-lightening products due to the health risks. It has been reported that

almost 70% of women in West Africa use skin-bleaching products to achieve lighter skin, which they believe will make them more attractive and appealing to African men (Cooper, 2016).

Media messages containing these beauty standards are potentially problematic for the health and positive self-identity and esteem development of Black adolescent girls. These messages have resulted in elevated levels of body dissatisfaction for women, resulting in increased rates of depression and low self-esteem in women (Mir et al., 2022). There are strong correlations between magazines depicting images of glamorous, thin models, resulting in increased body dissatisfaction, stress, shame, disordered eating, and insecurity in young women (Mastronardi, 2003). Adolescence young women are particularly prone to these problematic outcomes from images of beauty shown in the media (Saunders & Eaton, 2017).

Colorism

The preference for lighter skin and straighter hair textures is rooted in slavery. Children produced by enslavers and their rape of enslaved African women were sometimes born with lighter skin and straighter hair textures. These children were given preferential treatment over darker enslaved people with kinkier hair, who were forced to work in the fields, while those with lighter skin and straighter hair worked in the master's house (Monk Jr., 2021). This better treatment of lighter enslaved people resulted in internalized racism in the form of colorism, as darker black people were made to feel inferior to lighter-skinned Black people. These advantages play out in today's society, with lighter-skinned Black people having advantages over darker-skinned Black people, from better treatment in society and more employment opportunities to being considered more desirable (Banks, 2000).

Colorism has far-reaching consequences, affecting the self-esteem and overall well-being of darker-skinned Black people. The ideologies of colorism are pervasive in Black society even

today. Colorism is not exclusive to Black people and is found in many other cultures due to colonialism (Yancey-Bragg, 2022). The impacts of the prevalence of Eurocentric beauty standards can be seen worldwide. 62% of Latinos report that darker skin hurts their ability to progress, while 59% believe lighter skin helps their ability to get ahead in America (Noe-Bustamante et al., 2021). Colorism is a complex and deeply rooted issue that affects dark-skinned people around the world.

There is a strong correlation between light-skinned privilege and upward mobility due to increased access to opportunities. The paper bag test was used to grant access to schools, clubs, and jobs. This test divided Black people by skin tone, with a preference for lighter skin tones to grant them access to certain privileges and aspects of life. For example, in Black communities, a paper bag would be placed on the door of social gatherings to deny admittance to people darker than the bag (Kerr, 2005). This preference for lighter skin also contributed to lighter Black people having access to better resources, which contributed to their advancement over darker-skinned Black people, leading to better social and economic outcomes.

Texturism

Black women's hair is a form of expression and a political statement. Hair is a complex subject for many Black women in the United States and beyond. Black women have varying hair textures that range from straight to tightly coiled. Hair types range from 1, straight, 2a-c, wavy, 3a-c, curly, and 4a-c, kinky (Ama, 2021). Most Black people have hair types from the 3c to 4c range (Ama, 2021). The hair textures of Black people are the furthest away from white people, making it distinct from all other ethnic groups.

Black people with looser hair patterns have been categorized as having "good" hair, making those with kinkier hair textures dislike their hair. This preference for straighter hair

textures is called texturism. These ideas about hair being good or bad have been passed down from generation to generation in the Black community, which has allowed this ideology to influence the perceptions of Black hair by Black people and others in modern times (Fox, 2021). The 2016 Good Hair Study conducted by the Perception Institute found that, on average, white women are biased against black hair, seeing it as less attractive and more unprofessional than smooth hair (perception.org). In addition, it was found that Black women have anxiety about their natural hair due to how it is viewed by others (perception.org).

Companies have used black women's insecurities about their tresses to drive the hair care industry. Black women spent approximately 2.5 billion on hair care in 2018 (Holmes, 2020). The first female self-made millionaire, Madam CJ Walker, grew her wealth in the early 1900s with her hair care pomades and iron combs used to grow and straighten black women's hair (Kettler, 2021). Walker's success and the straightening comb's popularity led to the idea that straight hair was synonymous with social upward mobility and access to wealth.

There have been shifts in Black women's attitudes about their hair over the decades. Natural hair was embraced during the Black Arts and Black Nationalists Movements (Baird, 2021). Black is Beautiful sought to reject Eurocentric beauty ideals in favor of embracing Afrocentric ones. Cosmetic companies were able to use the push toward natural Black beauty to create products geared toward Black people to increase profits. The slogan encourages the embracement of dark black skin and kinky hair, which had been considered undesirable, and redefines beauty standards to include Black people as they are naturally (Baird, 2021). The pride in natural hair waned in the 1980s as Black people started integrating more into White society and began to conform their hair to fit in (Baird, 2021). There has been a resurgence of an appreciation of black hair with the natural hair movement that began in social media spaces over

recent years, which has led to a sharp decline in the sale of chemical hair relaxers used to straighten hair (Sidibe, 2015).

However, the new wave of natural black hair embracement has been scrutinized in recent years. The natural hair movement was supposed to include all Black hair types, but it has not. There have been articles expressing that the natural hair movement has been co-opted by those with looser curl patterns, framing them as the desirable hair type and promoting products and techniques to those with 4c hair to manipulate their hair to make it appear looser (Akutekha, 2021). 4c hair representation is not given the same appreciation in this new natural hair movement, which has caused many to divest from the movement (Asare, 2022). This development within the natural hair community shows how deeply rooted these Eurocentric beauty standards have been embedded into the consciousness of Black women.

Many factors contribute to texturism due to the scrutiny placed on most Black hair types. Black women risk facing discrimination when deciding to wear their natural hair. Black women have historically used hair styling methods to manipulate their hair's texture, color, and length to achieve styles more adjacent to whiteness (Lukate, 2021). Chemicals and heat manipulation are used to straighten their hair to make it align with Eurocentric beauty standards, which allows Black women to assimilate into a society that has deemed straight hair to be more acceptable in the workplace and society. It has been found that Black women who wear their hair in its natural state or with Afrocentric hairstyles are viewed as unprofessional and less attractive, which leads to a desire to conform to Eurocentric hair norms, especially in the workplace (Dawson et al., 2019).

Black hair discrimination in the workplace has been an ongoing issue in the United States. Black women were forced to cover their hair in public with the Tignon laws in Louisiana. These

laws declared that whether free or enslaved, the elaborate hairstyles worn by the Creole women had to be covered to make them identifiable as members of the slave class (Everett, 1966). This rejection of Black hair continues as Black people are discriminated against in the workplace, which has resulted in several discrimination lawsuits over hair (McGregor, 2019). Black hair has become a political issue as legislation is being created to stop racial hair discrimination. The CROWN Act, an acronym for Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair, is proposed legislation by Dove and former Senator Holly J. Mitchell of California to offer protection in the workplace and schools from hair discrimination (dove.com, 2021).

Sizeism

Body image is based on how one feels about their body in terms of size and shape. Beauty is an encompassing term that includes facial features, skin color, hair length, texture, and body image. Body image for Black women is complex as they juggle between two ideals. There is a thin body standard that fits the Eurocentric beauty standard and is considered the most desirable body size in most communities. However, there is also another standard within the Black community that places value on a curvier body shape with more prominent buttocks, which stems from historical stereotypes rooted in black oppression that sexualized Black bodies (Ashley & Jung, 2017).

Sarah Baartman, also known as the Hottentot Venus, was an African woman who was used as a freak show attraction in London and Paris due to her having steatopygia. This condition caused her to have excessive fatty tissue around her hips and buttocks (Mwansa, 2018). White Europeans used her body as a spectacle to be fetishized and dehumanized. Baartman and other Khoi women were coerced by European scientists who characterized Black women as primal, hyper-sexual subjects to be studied (Mwansa, 2018). She died in 1815, and her sexual organs,

skeleton, and brain were left on display until 1974 in a Paris museum (Parkinson, 2016).

Baartman's body parts were not buried until 2002 (Parkinson, 2016). Baartman's objectification has continued into modern times, with the curvy body ideal and stereotype of being sexually promiscuous still being attached to Black women.

All women feel the pressure to meet an ideal body type. Black women are stuck between two ideals: one that is very curvy or a thin body that is more associated with whiteness (Ashley & Jung, 2018). Popular songs like *Baby Got Back* by Sir Mix A Lot and *Bootylicious* by Destiny's Child celebrate larger derrières that are associated culturally with Black women. The desire for this body shape is unattainable for many Black women who are not naturally curvy. Black women, like all women, have bodies that differ in size and shape. However, there is an expectation in society that black women have curvier bodies.

Large buttocks were once primarily associated with black women and considered undesirable and ghetto (Wellington, 2020). Women of other ethnic groups, like Jennifer Lopez and Kim Kardashian, have been praised for their more prominent buttocks, changing the perception of larger buttocks to be positive (Harris, 2020). Young women on social networking sites, especially Instagram, showcase their large buttocks, which have popularized surgically altered bodies with thin waists, large hips, and big buttocks. The popularity of this body ideal has changed the desired body type from thinness to curvier, with a more prominent buttock in recent years. This new body shape has caused the Brazilian Butt Lift, one of the deadliest cosmetic surgeries, to grow in popularity from 2017 to 2022, especially among black women, the highest demographic getting the surgery (Ruthefurd, 2022).

There is a shift in popular culture as the large butts achieved through surgical enhancements are losing their desirability (Williams, 2022). Recently, Kim Kardashian and her

sister Khole Kardashian have revealed much smaller body frames with noticeably smaller bottoms, causing speculation that they have reversed their Brazilian Butt Lifts. The change in the body sizes of the Kardashian sisters exemplifies how black women's body aesthetics have been worn, commodified, and discarded as a trend (Williams, 2022). This shift back to a thinner body shape leaves many black women who naturally or have enhanced their bodies to meet the larger buttock beauty trend will be left with bodies that are no longer idealized.

Stereotypes

The relationship between stereotypical content and beauty standards on social media and how it affects the development of self-identity in Black adolescent females has not been thoroughly investigated in research. The studies on social media's impact on adolescents have concluded with conflicting results (Burnette et al., 2017; Nierengarten, 2017; Grube, 2012). There are positive and negative findings on topics ranging from socialization to mental health ramifications concerning adolescent use of social media. In addition, no studies show concrete evidence that the benefits of adolescents' social media use outweigh its negative consequences.

Like all girls in adolescence, Black girls attempt to develop their self-identity and esteem (Williams & Lewis, 2021). A large part of the development of self-esteem is a positive self-concept (Mann et al., 2004). Media communicates messages that are influential on how Black girls begin to understand themselves through self-comparison to the messages contained in the media they consume (Adams & Stevenson Jr., 2012). Media messages can uniquely impact Black adolescent girls because they are forced to interpret messages through both racial and gendered filters. There have been correlations made between media containing stereotypical images featuring Black people being harmful to the psychosocial development of Black youth (Adams & Stevenson Jr., 2012).

Prevailing cultural stereotypes exist in society and can shape our beliefs about ourselves and others. Boys having better mathematical abilities than girls or blond-haired people being dumb are examples of stereotypes that are commonly shared. Black women have many negative stereotypes about both their gender and race present in media content. Exposure to negative stereotypes about a demographic has been shown to impact the group's self-identity, self-esteem, and behavior, putting young Black women at risk of adverse outcomes (Coleman & Reynolds, 2019).

It has been shown that exposure to stereotypes during adolescence can cause groups to adhere to society's stereotypical representations prescribed to them (Coleman & Reynolds, 2019). The ease of access to social media sites due to widespread smartphone usage allows adolescents to be exposed to more content than generations preceding them. These substantial amounts of media adolescents consume are causing issues with identity development (Gunduz, 2017). Many teenagers report that social media use negatively impacts their emotions, socialization, and productivity.

Situation to Self

I am an assistant professor of theatre and communication at a four-year private historically Black university. I also own a performing arts school serving youth aged 3 to 19. I have owned the performing arts school for ten years. My performing arts school serves primary Black students with a large population of female students. I am also the mother of a sixteen-year-old daughter. She is dark-skinned with type 4c hair, and I have witnessed her navigate developing into a young woman next to beauty ideals she has internalized from her social media that do not include her. My daughter's experience is not unique.

I have observed many girls go through this process as they stare at their social media and attempt to accept or reject the beauty ideas and stereotypes they receive from these platforms. I have also observed how those beauty messages make them see and feel about themselves. My past experiences with my Black female students sparked my interest in understanding how young Black women perceive their beauty and what beauty is after consuming beauty messages from social media. I discovered a gap in research specific to black young women concerning their experiences with beauty ideals communicated on social media and their perception of beauty and desirability. The phenomenological design conducted in narrative research will allow the experiences of this population of women to be studied.

Situation to Communication Theory

Communication studies examine how people engage in the exchange and interpretation of messages. The study of communication aims to investigate and understand the process of human communication. Communication studies explore the creation, delivery, receiving, and development of the meaning of messages from various mediums in different settings and contexts (Littlejohn et al., 2017). Communication is a complex topic that has caused scholars to have differing views due to the vastness of the subject. This complexity has resulted in the study of communication encompassing a wide range of ideas and theories that explore various perspectives on communication that continue to be challenging to define and be identifiable concretely (Craig, 1999).

Communication studies is an interdisciplinary subject that spans social, mass media, organizational, and other contexts. Humans engage in communication daily in different contexts and environments. Humans communicate in many ways, such as by attempting to exchange

information or messages and receiving them. Forms of communication are interpersonal communication, small group communication, intercultural communication, mass media communication, and many other contexts in which communication is divided. Researchers' studies, research, observations, and perspectives contribute to theories being developed about communication.

Communication Traditions

Communication is a broad field that encompasses many aspects of how we create, share, understand and process symbols and messages. Many approaches have been developed for researchers to gain an understanding of communication and its complexity. The many theories that have developed offer concentrated or specialized views of communication. Theories that examine communication are influenced by these contexts and the theorists' perspectives, which result in a wide variety of theories (Littlejohn et al., 2017). These broad theories have been structured into seven traditions by researcher Robert Craig that organize these theories into specific aspects of communication (Littlejohn et al., 2017).

Communication theories are a body of theories that are utilized to construct understanding of the processes of communication (Littlejohn et al., 2017). There are seven significant traditions in communication developed by Robert Craig, which include semiotics, phenomenology, cybernetics, socio-cultural, socio-psychological, critical, and rhetorical (Littlejohn et al., 2017). Each of these traditions offers different specialized areas that can be utilized to examine different aspects of communication. The theories can conflict as well as complement each other. In addition, no one theory can cover all aspects of communication alone.

The seven communication traditions collectively offer ways to group theories that attempt to understand different communication processes and systems. These seven traditions overlap and differ in their viewpoints on communication. Each tradition influences the others and can be combined to add depth or innovation in research (Zelizer, 2015). The traditions collectively offer opportunities for scholars to discuss and debate communication topics through various lenses.

Social Media

Social media networks have significantly changed how we communicate and become a part of daily life. Many popular social networking sites, such as Facebook and Instagram, amass millions of users worldwide. The sites allow users to share updates, video messages, photos, and locations and react to what others post. Due to the growth of social media, identity formation in online spaces has become a part of the construction of self. Many people attempt to share content that others deem favorable, which will garner likes or approval from others on the platform. Social media allows individuals to curate online personas. People's online presence is often performative and constructed to gain positive interaction with their social group online (Ganda, 2014).

Smartphones have given teenagers increased access to online content and social media sites. Teens are navigating social media and creating online identities. Adolescents are in a period of development where they experience the emergence of themselves in real life away from digital spaces while simultaneously creating identity online (Doble, 2018). Social media allows teens to interact with many groups that are or will become fused with their self-identity.

The uniqueness of social media created a basis for considering the sociocultural tradition's overlap with the phenomenological tradition. This study examines the sociocultural

influence of the way young Black females interpret content on social media in late adolescence. At the same time, the phenomenological design allows the participants to share their individual experiences of social media use.

The Sociocultural Tradition

Humans are social creatures that construct their opinions, values, and views through communication with others. Individual interaction with their social groups and community constructs the lens through which understanding of the world is developed, and identity formation comes from these experiences (Iyabode, 2013). The sociocultural tradition “approaches to communication theory address how our understandings, meanings, norms, roles, and rules are worked out interactively in communication (Littlejohn & Foss, 2017, p. 43). Sociocultural communication theory derives from sociology, and semiotics influence anthropology (Craig, 1999). Semiotics deals with how meaning is created from signs and symbols by people (Allen, 2017). There is a juxtaposition of the socio-cultural and semiotic traditions that shape our understanding of symbols and signs through our lived experiences within our cultural contexts (Apuke, 2018). The sociocultural tradition theorizes that communication is constructed through social interactions that become an individual’s reality (Craig, 1999). Social interactions within the context of culture form an individual's reality through their experiences as the members of the groups they belong to that comprise their identities.

The socio-cultural tradition examines communication through the context of groups and is not individualistic. It encompasses different worldviews and perspectives due to the diversity of cultures and groups of people. The socio-cultural tradition aligns with qualitative research

because it “begins with assumptions and interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social human problem” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 81).

The Phenomenological Tradition

The phenomenological tradition centers around how individuals understand the world based on how they interpret their experiences and “conceptualizes communication as the experience of self and other in dialogue” (Cosmin-Constantin & Constantin, 2015, p. 170). It is believed in phenomenology that subjective experiences create reality (Littlejohn et al., 2017). The phenomenological tradition is rooted in looking at the authenticity of how we experience ourselves and others in dialogue and intentionally analyzing a person’s life from the vantage point of the person living it (Cosmin-Constantin & Constantin, 2015).

The experiences of each individual are unique. Phenomenology allows for the examination of experiences by analyzing the dialogue of the individual. The research being conducted on how the self-identity development of black adolescent females is impacted by exposure to stereotypical images on social media and how they communicate who they are as a result is being conducted through in-depth interviews. Phenomenology asserts that individuals decipher the world as they engage and participate in it; this is how they interpret and gain meaning from these experiences (Littlejohn et al., 2017). The phenomenological tradition allows for the analysis of participants' dialogue, which becomes the data.

Identity

Identity development is a complex yet ubiquitous term that has been the subject of many scholarly theories and studies. The concept of identity is vast and can be difficult to define concretely. Identity can be thought of as who a person is based on how they see themselves in the world through interactions. The notion of identity has changed throughout history. It differs through different theoretical lenses, but most agree that it “is an attempt to understand the entity that enables one to move with purpose and direction in life and with a sense of internal coherence and continuity over time and place (Kroger, 2017). “Identity becomes a fusion of the individual self with social, community, and cultural roles” (Littlejohn et al., 2017, p.43).

The term communication is more than producing communication. It is an ongoing process that allows identity formation through communication within the self and with others (Hecht, 1993). Identity is layered and is developed and negotiated continuously. Communication theory of identity conceptualizes identity as expressed through communication that is synthesized from social interactions, relationships, and experiences used to form, maintain, and adapt one’s identity (Jung & Hecht, 2004). Communication and identity are connected; through this connection, people conceptualize and understand the world and themselves.

While identity is constructed of many things, culture is a significant component of people’s self-concept. Language, religion, food, and attire are just a few aspects of culture. Cultural identity connects individuals to groups, which can be related or unrelated. For example, a person may belong to a racial or religious group that is not associated with their racial grouping.

Cultural Identity Theory

Culture comprises a group of people's shared values, beliefs, customs, and behaviors, typically from the exact location and racial group. Cultural identity theory examines the communication process used to create and negotiate cultural identity. The cultural groups a person belongs to are factors that shape their identity. Cultural identity can be comprised of many components with “race, gender, sex, sexuality, nationality, age, religious beliefs, political beliefs, location of living, class, health condition, social status, language, ethnicity, ability/disability, ancestry, traditions, social structures.” It can include additional factors (Bajracharya, 2018). These components are expressed through how individuals communicate their identity.

Jane Collier utilized ethnography and social construction to develop the properties of cultural identity. The properties of avowals, ascriptions, and salience are some aspects of cultural identity theory. Chen & Collier (2011) state:

Avowals refer to how group members present themselves to others. Ascriptions are representations of others by others about one's own group identities. Salience refers to the importance of a particular cultural identity enactment relative to other potential identities.

These are three properties utilized to examine cultural identity. Each of these properties is relevant to the research on the self-identity development of black girls as influenced by social media use. Avowals are how individuals describe their identity alongside how they express how they view their group's identity.

Black females are both racially and gender grouped. They can also belong to other groups that are components of their identity. How they view these identity components impacts how

they negotiate their self-identity. Ascriptions focus on how individuals are perceived and include stereotypical ideas about individuals based on the groups they belong to. The way the world views black women is shown and expressed heavily in media, which often portrays negative and stereotypical images of black women. The acceptance or rejection of these ascriptions also impacts self-identity development in black adolescent females. How much an individual shows and demonstrates their identity is salience.

The study will examine how black adolescent females represent themselves on social media, examining salience next to avowals and ascriptions to see why they choose to communicate their identity in particular ways. It is essential to understand the construction of cultures socially and structurally to gain knowledge of what the group values and what meaning the symbols hold regarding their identity development and negotiation (Collier, 2008). Gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation are intersecting identities that are simultaneously negotiated within varying contexts (collier, Hicks, 2002). This lack of fixed identity is a limitation of cultural identity theory because identity comprises many constantly negotiated components that need to be set or concrete (Cohen & Kassan, 2018). This fluidity of identity can be challenging to research because the components are in continual negotiation.

Identity Negotiation Theory

Identity Negotiation theory is another prominent theoretical framework within communication studies that informs understanding how individuals actively navigate, negotiate, and construct their identities in various communicative contexts (Ting-Toomey, 2017). Rooted in social constructionist perspectives, this theory emphasizes identity formation's dynamic and context-specific nature, highlighting the complex interplay between individual agency and social

structures (Littlejohn et al., 2021). At the core of Identity Negotiation Theory is that individuals engage in ongoing negotiation processes and perform and interpret their identities in communication (Ting-Toomey, 2005). This negotiation occurs through various communicative practices, including language use, nonverbal behaviors, storytelling, and identity displays (Ting-Toomey, 2017). Additionally, Identity Negotiation theory highlights the role of power dynamics, social norms, and cultural expectations in shaping how individuals navigate and negotiate their identities within different contexts.

As stated within cultural identity theory, identity is complex and comprises many components that construct identity together. A negotiation process is undergone to manage these multiple parts of each individual's identity. Identity negotiation theory refers to an individual's multifaceted identities of cultural, ethnic, religious, social class, gender, sexual orientation, professional, family, roles, and personal image based on self-reflection and other categorizations of social construction processes (Ting-Toomey, 2012, p. 418). Cultural identity is "the experience, enactment, and negotiation of dynamic social identifications by group members within particular settings (Chen & Lin, 2016).

Identity is a complex and multifaceted concept. Individuals are not limited to one form of identity but have multiple aspects that together form identity. Identity is not static and can adjust and change. Ting-Toomey's identity negotiation theory focuses on converging an individual's cultural and personal identities. Cultural identities include race, ethnicity, religion, and gender, while personal identity comprises unique characteristics like interests and talents (Littlejohn et al., 2017). The interaction of values and interests in and around negotiation is one way of defining what is meant by negotiated identities. (a) Identities, which include the strength of

commitment to a group and its values of ideologies, are influenced by a negotiation process that moves toward or away from agreements that usually settle (b) compromise.

The portrayal of beauty in media profoundly impacts individuals' perceptions of themselves and their identities. For Black women, the representation of beauty in mainstream media has often been narrow and exclusionary, perpetuating Eurocentric beauty standards that do not fully reflect the diversity of Black women's experiences and identities (Adams & Stevenson, 2012). Black women experience the intersection of race and gender, which significantly shapes their experiences with messages about beauty and those containing stereotypes of Black people in the media (Awad et al., 2015). Identity negotiation theory provides a lens to understand how beauty and stereotypical messages on social media intersect with their multifaceted identities, including race, gender, and cultural heritage. The theory examines how Black women negotiate their identities in response to the limited and often exclusionary beauty messages and stereotypical content on social media. It acknowledges the complexities of their lived experiences and the challenges posed by dominant beauty and stereotypical narratives.

Identity negotiation theory recognizes the performative nature of identity, emphasizing how individuals actively negotiate and present their identities. In the study, the participants expressed how they negotiate their identities through various communicative practices, including self-presentation, self-disclosure, and acceptance or resistance to dominant stereotypes and beauty standards. The theory illuminated the power dynamics inherent in the messages on social media that influence social norms, cultural expectations, and beauty ideals that the young Black women in the study are forced to contend with as they form their identities. Furthermore, the use of identity negotiation theory as a framework for the study illustrated how the participants engage in acts of resistance and empowerment as they negotiate their identities in response to

stereotypical and hegemonic beauty standards on social media that marginalize or erase their experiences.

Black Feminist Standpoint Theory

Standpoint theory is a foundational framework within the field of communication that offers a powerful lens through which to understand how individuals' societal positions shape their perceptions, experiences, and communication patterns (Harding, 2009). Emerging from feminist scholarship and expanding to encompass diverse marginalized perspectives, standpoint theory has shaped the understanding of communication about power dynamics, social inequities, and diverse lived experiences with messages about beauty, race, and gender on social media (Best, 2008). Standpoint theory sheds light on how power dynamics manifest in communication. The theory reveals how individuals from different standpoints may interpret and communicate differently based on their social status (Harding, 2009). Standpoint theory contends that those from privileged standpoints may unconsciously perpetuate power imbalances through communication behaviors such as centering Eurocentric beauty ideals and behavioral norms as the standard for all groups or representing other groups stereotypically (Collins, 2000).

While standpoint theory initially focused on women's experiences, the theory has evolved to incorporate the perspectives of individuals from diverse social locations, including class, sexuality, ability, and race. Patricia Hill Collins's Black Feminist Standpoint theory is used in this study to reflect the unique standpoint of Black women. Black Feminist standpoint theory centers on Black women's experiences and perspectives, highlighting the intersectionality of their race and gender that shapes the lived experiences of Black women within society (Collins, 2000).

The study showcases how Black women, who represent a marginalized group, have to employ distinct communication strategies to resist dominant narratives and to maneuver through systems of oppression. Black Feminist Standpoint theory centered on the voices of Black women in this study, which was essential to identify the unique challenges they face and understand the complexities of power dynamics in communication processes. Analyzing the distinct experiences of Black women is crucial for fostering inclusive and equitable communication about media messaging and its effects on them and for challenging dominant discourses that reinforce social inequities in media.

The use of Black Feminist Standpoint theory in this study critiques representations that perpetuate stereotypes and advocates for more diverse and authentic portrayals of Black women in media by allowing them to share their experiences. The centering of Black women's voices sheds light on how beauty and stereotypical messages intersect with power dynamics and contribute to the marginalization of non-white women (Allen, 1998). Incorporating Black Feminist standpoint theory into this study of the impact of beauty and stereotypical messages on social media on the articulation of identity by Black women in late adolescence enriched the research by providing a comprehensive understanding of how social media content is interpreted, internalized and contested by young Black women.

Problem Statement

Social networking sites have surpassed television and digital platforms as the most popular mediums used to consume media in recent years (Bayindir & Paisley, 2019). It has been found that the average US teen utilizes entertainment media for an average of nine hours daily (Common Sense Media, 2015). Social media use is increasingly favored by teens, who receive unprecedented amounts of messages from the content they consume due to the accessibility of

smartphones (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). The average teen starts and ends their days on social networking sites (Spies-Shapiro & Margolin, 2014). The information in media is a pervasive part of US culture that disseminates many messages, including stereotypes that influence how the world is perceived by those exposed to them (Behm-Morawitz, 2020).

Adolescence is a period of human growth when physical and psychological development takes place that moves an individual from being a teenager into an adult. Self-identity and self-concept are formed during adolescence. Media consumption plays an influential role in shaping youth's perceptions of themselves and others (Ross, 2019). The general problem is that exposure to stereotypes and standardized beauty ideals can harm adolescents' identity development due to the processes of identity formation that happen at this time of human growth.

Gender intensification and identity negotiation are experienced during adolescence. Sravanti & Kommu (2020) define gender intensification as “any association of things, traits, roles, and activities with biological sex in ways that conform to cultural stereotypes (p.190). Adolescents' gender intensification and identity negotiation can cause an increase in their acceptance and adoption of racial and gendered stereotypes (Spies-Shapiro & Margolin, 2014). Stereotypes are continually reinforced by the media (Kidd, 2015). Social media use increases adolescents' exposure to negative stereotypes, leaving them vulnerable to harmed identity formation and difficulty developing their self-concepts (Spies-Shapiro & Margolin, 2014). The use of social media causes groups to conform to how they are represented on the platform, which impacts all groups, causing the development of reflective identities that mirror the stereotypical images consumed about who they should be according to these messages (Gunduz, 2017).

The specific problem is that the process of identity negotiation is complex for Black females who are being exposed to primarily negative stereotypes about their race and gender

simultaneously. Numerous stereotypes associated with Black women can influence Black females during adolescence (Boulton, 2016). In addition, Black women are forced to synthesize meaning from internalized beauty standards to determine if they should conform to or reject those ideals (Patton, 2006; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). Exposure to media by teens has been shown to decrease self-esteem in all girls and Black boys while increasing it in white males (Martin & Harrison, 2012). The results of this study will examine the beauty ideals and stereotypical images of Black women on social media and their impact on how Black girls in late adolescence represent themselves and identify.

There are many implications on the lives of Black women due to the value society places on beauty and desirability that are framed within prescribed beauty ideals. Black women's beauty is often filtered through lenses of racism, colorism, texturism, featurism, and Eurocentric beauty standards by themselves and others. Traditional media channels like magazines and television in the United States have disseminated messages of what society perceives as idealized beauty standards to the masses for decades (Mehraj et al., 2014). Social media has become the dominant media channel for communicating beauty messages recently, which can lead to issues of low self-esteem and body image concerns, especially when the representations are not diverse or inclusive.

This shift to heavy social media use has allowed young Black women to interact with more content that devalues their beauty next to whiteness than ever before. Most women highly desire physical beauty, often determined by how they measure up to these societal beauty standards. Many women believe their value is tied to beauty (Ramati-Ziber et al., 2019). American beauty standards are deeply rooted in Eurocentric beauty ideals that are often unattainable by many women but are the most difficult to be met by black women who have hair,

skin, and body types that deviate most from the set standard (Walk-Morris, 2021). The American beauty standard sets white skin, straight blond long hair, blue eyes, and a skinny body as the ideal of beauty while subverting the features of Black women, which often do not align with this standard.

This exploratory qualitative study is designed to investigate how college-aged Black young women negotiate their beauty self-perception and the impact of social media on their ideas and experiences. The inquiry delves into how the content on social media intersects with beauty standards. The examination also analyzes how racial and gendered stereotypes influence these ideals. The study focuses on young Black women's experiences with social media because they have unique perspectives due to their racial and gendered identities, which have not been thoroughly investigated in the research.

Purpose Statement

This exploratory qualitative study will investigate how the self-identity and concept of Black adolescent females are impacted by exposure to negative representations of Black females on social media that are inherently stereotypical. The purpose of the study is to determine if negative stereotypical images of Black women consumable on social media affect the development of adolescent Black females. Stereotypes are common in society. There are many harmful tropes and stereotypes based on race and gender, with Black people and females being heavily targeted by these depictions. Negative stereotypes doubly impact black females as a result due to their race and gender.

Black adolescent girls are exposed to extremely high levels of images containing negative stereotypes about Black females on social media. As a Black woman, I have experienced firsthand how negative stereotypes can skew how we view ourselves. This qualitative research

study seeks to examine through a social constructivist worldview that seeks to examine what role exposure to negative stereotypes on social media plays in how adolescent Black females develop self-identification. Ting-Toomey's identity negotiation theory serves as the theoretical framework for the research study. Identity negotiation theory examines how individuals develop their cultural, ethnic, gendered, and socially constructed identities (Littlejohn et al., 2021). The process of identity negotiation theory is tied to how one perceives the groups and sees themselves in their social and racial groupings. Stereotypes are the way that the behaviors and attributes of many social groups, including females and Black people, are referenced. Stereotypes have a direct impact on identity negotiation. In addition, the Black feminist standpoint theory centers on the experiences of young Black women with social media content that contains messages about beauty and stereotypes about Black women to gain understanding from their perspectives on the phenomenon.

Through a phenomenological design, this study seeks to (a) delineate the everyday experiences of Black young women negotiating their self-identity next to stereotypical images, (b) examine how these experiences impact the formation of the identity of Black young women, and (c) investigate how body image and self-worth are affected by exposure to the stereotypical images and Western beauty standards on social media. The study participants are young Black women between the ages of 18 and 22 who utilize social media. A narrative design is employed to capture the study participants' responses in their own words. The study participant's stories and experiences provide the data for analysis.

Research Questions

This exploratory study aims to examine the relationships between the use of social media platforms and its impact on the self-identity, self-esteem, and body image development of

adolescent Black females. The research is focused on allowing the participants to share their stories and perceptions on how their use of social media impacts them in their own words.

The research questions that will be addressed in this study are:

RQ 1. How does viewing American beauty standards on social media impact how adolescent Black girls articulate how they define beauty?

RQ 2. How does the consumption of messages containing American beauty standards on social media impact how adolescent Black young women perceive their beauty?

RQ 3: How does viewing stereotypical images of Black women on social media impact how adolescent Black girls articulate their self-identity?

Study Significance

This study will examine how exposure to social media and the stereotypical representations of Black women and images that uphold American beauty standards on social media impact the self-identity development of Black adolescent females and how they represent themselves in life. There is a continued increase in the use of social networking sites by adolescent Black girls containing stereotypically negative images of Black females and those of idealized beauty standards that justify research on the impact of the phenomenon on Black adolescent females (Gautier, 2021; Craig, 2017; Patton, 2017). This study aims to identify how exposure to negative stereotypes and beauty standards on social networking sites impacts Black adolescent girls as they negotiate their self-identity. The information derived from this study will be valuable to parents, educators, media, advertisers, and young Black women in understanding and adjusting the targeted population's use of social media. There are several reasons to study how social media use by Black adolescent young women impacts how they perceive their identities and beauty. First, young Black women frequently utilize social media sites (Anderson

& Jiang, 2018). Social media use has been reported to have adverse outcomes for adolescent users (Nierengarten, 2017). Social media allows users to come into contact with unlimited amounts of content from many sources (Zika, 2018). There has never been a media platform that has allowed this virtually unlimited amount of content from various sources to be shared. The potential for adverse outcomes warrants the study on how the high levels of social media use and messages shared influence how this use impacts Black young women in particular.

Second, this exploratory study is relevant because it examines stereotypical content shared on social media and how it affects young Black women of adolescent age. It has been shown that stereotypical messages in media can have those stereotyped conform to the stereotypes (Williams et al., 2015). It has been shown that self-esteem has been lowered by groups depicted in stereotypical manners in media (Tukachinsky et al., 2017). In addition, beauty standards communicated through social media can significantly impact how young Black women view beauty and body image. There are potentially significant adverse outcomes on the psychology and identity formation of young Black women for social media use to warrant study.

Third, this study offers information on how the beauty and body image perception of Black adolescent females is associated with the use of social media platforms. Social media use encourages social comparison, which can harm adolescent girls who feel inadequate as they measure themselves against beauty standards in America (Perloff, 2014; Ahadzadel et al., 2016; Burnette et al., 2017). Black girls can have additional challenges because they are the furthest away from beauty standards that are often based on European standards (Saunders & Eaton, 2018). In addition, body dissatisfaction, eating disorders, and lowered self-esteem have all been connected to social media use (Burnette et al., 2017). It is relevant to study how social media use

influences body image and adds to the body of literature that seeks to understand the experiences unique to Black adolescent females around the phenomenon.

The targeted population for the study is Black early college-aged young women. Adolescence is a period in which identity development occurs (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). This identity development process makes early college-aged young women ideal for studying identity formation and esteem in correlation to social media use. The research confirms that young Black women utilize social networking sites at high rates, which warrants a study to assess the impact of this use on them (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Black young women are being exposed to increased levels of content that can potentially contain messages with stereotypes and beauty standards that can be harmful to them. Examining social media use by adolescent Black females in late adolescence can offer substantial insights into how the messages on these platforms impact their perception of their beauty and identity development.

Limitations in Past Studies

Research has been conducted that explores the relationship between self-identity development and stereotypes. Numerous studies have had contradictory results regarding the impact of social media use containing stereotypical images on identity development. The research consistently correlates with body image surveillance and social media use. These studies have been conducted primarily with general subjects and are not specific to Black women. There has been limited research conducted focusing on Black adolescent females and how exposure to negative stereotypes about Black females on social media impacts them.

Research studies involving young women in adolescence are rarely conducted but are necessary due to the vulnerability of this demographic. In addition, there is a research gap on social media stereotypes and how they impact Black females. Lastly, there is an insufficient

examination of how Black adolescent females are impacted by beauty ideals communicated on social media sites.

Summary

Chapter One introduced the research topic through a background statement, situation to self, problem statement, and study significance. The research questions and hypotheses explain the concepts this qualitative phenomenological narrative study seeks to understand. The study's limitations are explained to give an accurate context of the research's constraints. Chapter Two will review the literature of related academic and scholarly sources and articles on the topics relevant to the scope of the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Overview

Chapter two will discuss previous research that aligns with the study's scope. It provides an overview of the current research, theories, and concepts pertaining to the study's goals. The literature review will discuss the studies related to the research with critical analysis and synthesis. Lastly, this chapter will explore the gaps in the current research that are unanswered or insufficient on the explored topics.

Literature Review Purpose

This exploratory qualitative study seeks to understand how the self-identity and self-esteem of Black adolescent young women are impacted by Black female representation on social media. The purpose of the study is to investigate how exposure to images of Black women on social media affects how adolescent Black young women articulate their perceptions of their beauty and identity. Black young women in adolescence are frequent users of social media. Black adolescent young women's experiences on social media are dynamic and complex. A growing amount of research is being conducted about social media use and well-being. However, there is minimal research specific to particular platforms, focused on adolescents and Black female adolescents in particular.

There are significant gaps in research and understanding of the implications of the risks and benefits of their social media use to ensure their well-being and improve their experiences. Research on this topic should be ongoing because of the constant changes in the technology of these platforms. Social media has become a part of our daily lives as smartphones have given us access in the palm of our hands. This access has allowed society to consume unprecedented

amounts of data and have windows into the lives of others. Sites like TikTok and Instagram are visual, allowing people to share images, and some accounts become popular, creating social media influencers who are trusted sources for information by their followers.

This literature review examines the literature surrounding social media, stereotypes, and identity formation. The content in this section will focus on the combination of negative stereotypes, media consumption through smart cellular devices, and the development of identity in Black adolescent young women in the literature selected for review. This synthesized literature review examines whether exposure to negative media stereotypes adversely affects self-identity development in Black adolescent young women. There was no specific literature available on how negative stereotypes in social media impact the self-identity of Black adolescent young women.

Adolescence

Adolescence occurs between 10 and 19, with late adolescence between 18 and 21 (Allen, 2019). According to Steinberg & Morris (2001), "adolescence has been characterized as a time when individuals begin to explore and examine psychological characteristics of the self in order to discover who they are, and how they fit in the social world in which they live" (p. 91). During adolescence, people develop their self-identity, cultivate relationships, and their understanding of the world. Media messages are a component that can influence the process of identity development. There are strong correlations between magazines depicting images of glamorous, thin models, resulting in increased body dissatisfaction, stress, shame, disordered eating, and insecurity in young women (Mastronardi, 2003). In addition, research supports that television use contributes to developing attitudes and beliefs about beauty and decor (Mastronardi, 2003).

Youths are developing identities and distancing themselves from their parents as they seek adolescent autonomy. Young people seek approval and acceptance from their family and peer groups during adolescence. There is an increased sensitivity to the need to belong and be accepted by their peer groups. It has been found that adolescents are influenced by their peers who form social groups that are often defined according to stereotypes, like popular kids, nerds, or jocks, which contributes to identity development (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Youth of minority racial and ethnic groups are undergoing the process of identity development, which includes racial and ethnic affinity, next to stereotypes, which is shown to influence how they self-identify by adopting the stereotypes into their behaviors (Okene et al., 2009).

There is a wide range of suggestions for how parents can approach their adolescents' social media usage with exposure to both negative and positive influences that can be dynamic and vary from day to day due to varying content and platforms, which is beneficial to adolescents to learn how to weigh and manage their emotions. In the study by Weinstein (2018), it is suggested that parents should understand that there are both positive and negative influences to which their child will be exposed. Vannuci et al. (2020) found that adolescents' high levels of social media use is associated with increased risky behaviors like sexual acts, substance abuse, and violence.

Social media is increasingly becoming a factor in how adolescents learn about themselves, learn what interests them, make connections, and express themselves. Adolescents are motivated to use social media for varying reasons. Throuval et al. (2019) state, "key motivations for social media use were social psychological and functional and were based on six motivational themes, reflecting, constant interactivity and a symbiotic relationship with peers via smartphones, the need for control of content and relationships and to construct social reality

along the idealization-normalization continuum" (p. 173). It has also been found that motivation for social media use is peer connection, information seeking, and managing boredom. It can be very problematic when teens use social media to combat boredom. This behavior can have problematic outcomes like an inability to disengage from social media, obsessive use, and difficulty establishing real-world social relationships (Stockdale & Coyne, 2020).

Adolescence is considered a challenging part of human development that is considered even more difficult in today's society due to growing up with digital media (Michikyan & Suarez-Orozco, 2016). There has also been a connection found between social media usage and depression in adolescent girls. Social media has also been found to cause teenage girls to have issues with body image, self-esteem, and self-identity, which are multifaceted and complex (Burnette et al., 2017). Body surveillance is increased in adolescent young women who use social media because they compare themselves to images that have been edited, filtered, or are of people who fit acceptable beauty standards, which results in the development of a negative body image (Mir et al., 2022).

In recent years, extensive research has been done on how social media impacts adolescent subjects' well-being (e.g., Saunders & Eaton, 2018; Nierengarten, 2017; Burnette et al., 2017). The studies consistently support the idea that social media use can result in adverse outcomes for adolescents surrounding mental health and self-esteem. Research on stereotypical content on social media and its impact on adolescents is less prevalent. In addition, research on specific social networking sites and how their use results in adolescents' behaviors and mental health are lacking. However, research on traditional media and social media (e.g., Fardouly et al., 2017; Chan, 2017; Vandenbosch & Eggert, 2016; Michikyan & Suarez-Orozco, 2011) yielded conflicting results in relation to adolescent identity development and esteem. Research

specifically focused on Black adolescent young women was very limited (Schott, 2016; Williams & Moody, 2019), reflecting the difficulties uniquely faced by Black young women as the studies show the same adverse outcomes of body image issues, mental health challenges, and problems with identity development and self-esteem that are conflated with racialized components that make them more vulnerable.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes are "a standardized mental picture held in common by group members, representing an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment (Merriam-Webster). Stereotypes have been proven to shape how we view the people they depict. In a qualitative study using images of people of various races and shades of skin tone, it was found that people in the study found images of dark-skinned Black people to be the most threatening when they had ambiguous facial expressions (Arendt, 2015). The research looked at how stereotypes in crime news placed bias in people's minds. The research aligns with the premise that exposure to stereotypes influences how groups of people are viewed.

Stereotypes allow people to judge people automatically by appearance and other characteristics. Racial and gendered stereotypes are common in today's society. Behavior and self-identity can result from these stereotypes (Coleman & Reynold, 2019). Many studies conducted around stereotypes have shown this acceptance of stereotypes. Research has shown that negative stereotypes lower ethnic groups' self-esteem perpetuated in the media (Tukachinsky et al., 2017). This impact of stereotypes on self-esteem connects stereotypes and self-identity development in those who are stereotyped.

The use of stereotypes allows people to provide individuals with information about groups. People can be impacted by racial and gender stereotypes and ecological stereotypes in

the environment, which influence behavior (Williams et al., 2015). The racial stereotypes have caused many negative traits to be placed upon Black people. Studies have found that, for example, dark-skinned Black people have been identified as more threatening than people from other races with various skin tones just from photos (Arendt, 2015). Harvard has developed the Implicit Association Test to develop “new ways of understanding attitudes, stereotypes, and other hidden biases that influence perception, judgment and action” (projectimplicit.org). A study conducted using the Implicit Association Test found that teacher bias impacts student outcomes, with Black students being suspended at more than double the rate of white students, especially in counties with larger White populations (Chin et al., 2020). This prejudice lays the foundation for biases placed upon Black people.

Media portrayals of Black people are how many people are viewed by society (Musambria & Jackson, 2018). The history of these images has created a long history of negative feelings toward Black people. Studies have found that media exposure is connected to negative feelings directed toward Black people and other ethnic minority groups (Seate, 2018). This stereotypical media exposure contributes to racial tensions and misconceptions in society.

There are many prevailing negative stereotypes attributed to Black women. We often see the angry Black woman trope played out in film and the media (Childs, 2005). Many of the stereotypes focus on the femininity and sexuality of Black women. The stereotypes in media are shown to depict Black women as subordinate and as sex objects (Jerald, 2016). Black females are forced to deal with both racial and gendered stereotypes, which can be challenging to reconcile while developing identity (Davis, 2019). Historically, popular visual culture has shown harmful images of Black girls. There has been an adaptation made by Black girls to attempt to

take the negative images and transform them to create representations of empowerment (Lindsey, 2013).

The gold-digger, jezebel, and single mother are some of the stereotypes repeatedly placed in the consciousnesses of society about Black women (Giannio & China, 2017) through media. The experience of sexual and identity negotiation is happening next to stereotypes. Black girls are forced to confront sexual coercion due to the stereotypes widely shown of Black women, which others deem to be a truthful representation of them (French, 2013).

The first lessons about gender are taught to children by their parents. Parents often are responsible for teaching and reinforcing gender stereotypes to their children by how they dress them, the chores assigned, and what they teach them about their gender. A study by Choi Lewallen (2017) concluded that the online representation of youth shared by their parents is mainly aligned with the stereotypical gendered representation of the sexes. For example, girls will be dressed in colors like pink and boys in blue. The children's activities also align with gender stereotypes, with boys being shown as athletic and playful. At the same time, girls are mainly depicted as reading and participating in artistic activities (Choi & Lewallen, 2017).

Gender identification is a process by which adolescent youth have an increased sensitivity to gender stereotypes and are more willing to adhere to those stereotypes (Evans et al., 2012). The study found that Black adolescent youth will ascribe to gendered stereotypes about academics, with Black girls adopting both racial and gendered stereotypes, making them doubly affected. Studies have found that Black young women will endorse and accept negative stereotypes they are exposed to as a part of their identities and other women of their race (Barrie et al., 2016). Individual identity formation and well-being of black girls can be influenced by stereotypical content about black women and black people as a whole. Adolescent youth learn

from exposure to media models and will imitate these models. Media messages on television become the gateway that exposes adolescents to ideas about romance and relationships, which become normalized and repeated (Ter Bogt et al., 2010).

Black people try hard to go against the prescribed stereotypical accounts. Many Black women work hard to reject all ideas of stereotypes (Steele, 2018). We see many cases of Black women being loud, fighting, and overly sexual. Some black women consciously oppose these behaviors, as seen on many reality television shows and black television shows (Musambria & Jackson, 2018). These behaviors have been ascribed to Black women participating in code-switching around other people (Bolton, 2016). Code-switching is often done in white environments to conform with the dominant society.

Black young women have a unique journey toward developing self-identity. Black women are connected through gender and racial identities (Davis, 2019). They both hold significant importance in the establishment of their identity. Black media centers Blackness in its content, which is integral in showing Black people who they are and how they are viewed in society (Musambira & Jackson, 2018). There are many negative stereotypes of how Black females are portrayed in the media. Black girls are challenged to form self-identity while navigating and processing what stereotypes perpetuate that they are. From the qualitative data collected by surveys, it has been concluded that exposure to harmful and unfavorable messages that perpetuate negative stereotypes about one's ethnic group is proven to lower self-esteem (Tukachinsky et al., 2017).

Seate, Ma, Chien, and Mastro (2018) utilized cultivation theory to examine if media consumption triggered negative emotions toward Black people, Latinos, and Asians. The research found that media exposure impacts how racial identity is connected to stereotypes and

that angry and hostile emotions toward the group are stereotyped. Exposure to television programming that depicts Black people as violent or criminal will make people (including Black people) believe this to be true for the ethnic group. An interesting finding in this study was that while hostility and anger increased toward Black people and Latinos, it did not grow with Asians. These findings show that the identity development of Black adolescent females can be altered and changed by exposure to negative media stereotypes about Black females and Black people in general.

Media Content

Media comprises channels that share information, entertainment, educational content, news, and other messages (Mehraj et al., 2014). Media consumption has been linked to influencing how youth develop ideas about themselves and the world around them (Grube, 2012). Television, newspapers, magazines, radio, film, and social media are popular media that Americans use to engage with and receive messages. Media messages are virtually unavoidable in the United States because, in society, individuals are surrounded by various forms of media in daily life.

There are constant evolutions in media consumption that have changed the way we communicate and receive messages. Television, the former most commonly used form of media in today's society, has now been surpassed by social and digital media (Hutchinson, 2019). Social media is an umbrella term used to describe various forms of online platforms, from blogs to video sharing, that facilitate some form of socialization and interaction between users (Aichner et al., 2021). The use of social networking platforms allows users to be exposed to a continuous flow of information shared on the sites. These sites give users endless opportunities to share and engage with others. Users are also exposed to infinite amounts of content. Teenagers use social

media at high rates in the United States, with over 70 percent reporting that they use it multiple times daily (Molla, 2018). This high use of social media exposes teens to large amounts of media that can cause psychological and self-development problems (Nierengarten, 2017).

Black blogs provide platforms for black conversations, thought, and expression. However, research indicated that blogs also indicate how Black people of lower socioeconomic levels behave in contrast to those with a middle or high socioeconomic level. Due to the costs, time, and skill sets, it is found that many bloggers identify themselves as middle-class or privileged (Steele, 2018). These differences in socioeconomic class level impact how Black young women perceive and receive the positive content created by Black bloggers. Black bloggers who blog in long format have been associated with the term 'bougie,' which is used to distance Black people from each other by class, education, tastes, and access to opportunities (Steele, 2018). The researcher utilized critical techno-cultural discourse analysis to holistically analyze "the interactions between technology, cultural identity, and technology practice guided by the conceptual framework" (Steele, 2018, p. 113).

Black content made by Black people can often contain negative stereotypes about Black people and women specifically. Tyler Perry's popular television shows *House of Payne* and *Meet the Browns* show portrayals of Black people that can be perceived as stereotypical (Musambria & Jackson, 2018). The research found that Black people of lower socioeconomic status accepted the character portrayals as accurate, and this idea was rejected at high socioeconomic levels of Black people (Musambria & Jackson, 2018). The research found that Black parents do not limit their children's media use at the rate that parents of different races do (Top, 2016). In addition, people with lower socioeconomic status did not actively monitor their children's consumption of

media (Top, 2016). This research is problematic because adolescents need parental guidance to help interpret messages encountered through media, especially those around identity (Top, 2016).

Research supports that television use contributes to the development of people's attitudes and beliefs (Mastronardi, 2003). Reality television is often accused of depicting the most damaging negative Black women stereotypes because it is considered to be accurate. This representation of Black women has been examined through Berlant's idea of the intimate public to examine reality shows and Black stereotypes. Popular Black reality shows like *Basketball Wives*, *Love and Hip Hop*, and *The Real Housewives of Atlanta* show Black women fighting, being manipulative, sexually objectified, and many other negative stereotypes (Gates, 2015). These shows reinforce the stereotypical images of Black women.

Black young women may participate in code-switching as they negotiate their self-identity, and many maintain this practice into adulthood. Within the Black community, code-switching is when a Black person changes how they speak, dress, and behave to gain acceptance in white environments (Boulton, 2016). The practice of code-switching is done to disassociate oneself from negative Black stereotypes attributed to the group's natural vernacular, style of dress, and body language. This code-switching is done due to subconscious anxiety that Black people are socially and intellectually inferior to white people (Boulton, 2016).

Media Consumption

There have been positive and negative understandings concerning social media use and its impact on society. New technologies in media have continually changed the way humans communicate and socialize. Media can shape the way humans perceive the world around them. There has been an increase in the use of digital screens by children of younger ages, with limited information about the results of this use on their social and emotional development (Radesky et

al., 2015). Adolescents in today's society live in a media-saturated world, growing up with smartphones and tablets at their fingertips. This generation is called digital natives because they have interacted with digital media their entire lives (Prensky, 2001).

Adolescents are drawn to social media for social connection and to manage their online identities as an extension of who they are as individuals seeking social acceptance (Crone & Konijn, 2018). According to the Pew Research Center, 95% of teenagers report having access to smartphones, with 45% reporting they use the devices nearly constantly (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). The statistics also show that access to smart cellular devices is nearly the same across genders, socioeconomic levels, and races (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). There are differences in social media usage by gender. In a study, 50% of teenage girls said they almost constantly use their smart cellular devices (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). The data on how social media will impact teens is still unclear. However, 24% of teens reported that social media mostly negatively affects them (Anderson & Jiang, 2018).

Social media networking sites like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and TikTok are all immensely popular among Black adolescent females. In addition, streaming apps like Netflix, Disney+, and Hulu allow television shows and movies to be instantaneously consumed directly from their cellular devices. Smart cellular devices have allowed an unprecedented amount of media to be available to everyone at any time, leading to mass content consumption. As a result, adolescent Black young women are coming into contact with varying types of media messages due to the increased use of cellular devices.

Studies have found that adolescents consume media excessively for many reasons, mainly to understand the world around them (Zika, 2018). The self-determination theory was used to understand the motivation behind adolescents' desire for excessive media consumption.

Online devices have surpassed other forms of media like television, books, and magazines (Twenge et al., 2019). All of the forms of older media can be accessed through cellular devices.

Social Media

Over 95 percent of teenagers use smartphones, consistent across racial, gender, and socioeconomic levels, giving them access to social networking sites (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). This study shows that substantial numbers of adolescents have access to images on social media. The data supports that the internet and smartphone's ability to access these sites has contributed to their high usage. Social media use has contributed to high levels of connectivity to others and access to information. It has been found that today's teens consume unprecedented amounts of media daily, and physical and psychological problems arise from this use (Zika, 2018). The use of social media sites is prevalent in culture today. Media is being viewed through online devices more than any other media form (Twenge et al., 2019).

Social media use is continually rising, with 72% of Americans engaging on the platforms (Auxier & Anderson, 2021). New social media sites continue to be introduced, and popularity shifts based on varying factors. The types of social media platforms utilized by individuals prove to be influenced by age, with Americans under 24 showing a preference for sites like Instagram, followed by TikTok, and older people prefer Facebook (Auxier & Anderson, 2021).

Social media use triggers social comparison. Adolescents experience identity implications caused by social comparison (Yang et al., 2018). Many social networking sites are part of Black girls' daily lives. Political narratives contribute to a feeling of fear and oppression of Black females (Kelly, 2018).

Social media can have harmful outcomes for adolescents. Instagram specifically is problematic for young women because it is a visual platform. Body comparison is increased by

Instagram usage, which has been shown to cause depression and a loss of esteem in the young women who view these images (Fardouly et al., 2017). Girls have been shown to change their behaviors due to the influence of social networking. This social media use has impacted their dating behavior and demonstrates behaviors like internet stalking (Howard et al., 2017).

Social media exposure has the possibility of being harmful to youth. According to a 2011 study, parents should be responsible for keeping their children safe online and have controls to monitor their children's use, but some parents prefer not to use those methods (Lenhart et al., 2011). 61% of Black parents will use parental controls, especially if they are college-educated and high-earning (Lenhart et al., 2011). However, Black youth of lower socioeconomic status spend more time consuming media without parental supervision than other demographics, and their parents are the least likely to utilize parental controls (Top, 2016; Lenhart et al., 2011). Unsupervised time does not allow youth to have parental input or guidance to gain an understanding of the images and messages they are exposed to. This exposure is problematic as more exposure to these images without parental guidance can leave youth without tools to understand what they are viewing. It has been found that parents.

Social Media Use

Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, WhatsApp, and YouTube are all social networking platforms used to communicate electronically. Social media has become a part of the daily lives of most Americans. Social media use has increased dramatically over the last 16 years. In 2005, only 5% of American adults utilized at least one platform, which grew to 50% by 2011, and ten years later, 72% used social media platforms (Auxier & Anderson, 2021). These platforms have given individuals a way to stay connected to others in a passive or engaged way at all times. Adolescents' frequency of social media use impacts their well-being (Bulu et al., 2016).

Social media and its smartphone availability have enabled new socialization, entertainment, information sharing, and identity exploration developments. Many adolescents utilize social media as an online community to experience social engagement. Adolescents use social media to connect with others and find those similar to them based on interests, ethnicity, and age (Chan, 2017). An example of this is the popularity of Issa Rae, bringing her awkward Black girl representation on social media, which grew in popularity as many Black girls and women found a safe space to converse and explore their identities constructively and humorously (Bradley, 2015). The show *Mis-Adventures of Awkward Black Girl* expanded from YouTube to television with the successful show *Insecure*, which gave many representations of black characters that were more nuanced than seen in previous shows.

Teens attempt to limit their social media use unsuccessfully, with 36% acknowledging that they spend too much time online and 54% saying it would be difficult to give up social media (Vogels et al., 2022). It has been found that middle schoolers in early adolescence spend a lot of time on social media, dramatically impacting their attitudes toward the various platforms negatively or positively (Bulu, 2016). Redden & Way (2019) found that young people try to exert control over their social media use by maintaining a small curated audience and deactivating their accounts for varying periods.

Social media sites like Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and Snapchat all have diverse types of content, formats, and ways to share and engage. The popularity of social media is present in daily life, and I see the majority of teen girls in my life absorbed into the sites. This behavior informed this research exploring how social media sites impact Black females in late adolescence. Smartphones give young adults online access in the palm of their hands, allowing them to utilize social media easily. Social media is used for social interaction with peers who are

known to them and for cultivating new relationships with strangers (Odgers, 2018). Engagement on social media consists of sharing content and soliciting feedback from others in the form of likes and comments that translate into validation or approval from others (Nierengarten, 2017). Social media has built-in mechanisms that are evaluative in nature. Posts made by users attempt to garner "likes" and positive comments from others, and the need to gain followers or friends can be translated into one's level of popularity.

Adolescent females are also exposed to sexualized content when on social media. Females in adolescence will post sexualized images of themselves (Daniels & Zubriggen, 2016). Adolescent girls will post negative comments and make judgments about young women who post what they consider to be sexualized images. It can be concluded from this that there is a general and accepted ideology about how females should present themselves on social media and in the world that is deemed acceptable. This acceptability standard of how to dress causes adolescent females to place great scrutiny on what they wear and post to ensure they present themselves in an acceptable manner, according to social media (Daniels & Zubriggen, 2016).

Social media content can have the potential to expose adolescents to harmful content because while platforms try to regulate content, users can post almost anything that they want to, including pornography, graphic violence, and other types of messages that can be deemed problematic. It has been found that social media can encourage adolescents to engage in harmful behaviors like sexting and cyberbullying, which can be addressed with targeted preventative programming by school professionals to raise awareness of the downsides of digital communication (Bhat, 2018).

In addition, information can be shared at a rapid rate online, which can be false and or derogatory in nature. Social media is a tool that young people will use to bully others by posting

images and comments that are embarrassing or harmful to the victim. There have been several incidents in the media of young people committing suicide due to online bullying. The Blue Whale challenge is an example of this where, through social media, participants engage in a 50-day challenge and post themselves completing each task doing things like watching a horror film, staying up all night, and progressing into self-harming behaviors like drinking poisonous liquids, cutting themselves, fracturing bones and concluding with committing suicide in public (Upadhyaya, 2022). The challenge began in Russia and has moved around the globe, with some cases now appearing in the United States (Timm-Garcia & Hartung, 2017). The Blue Whale challenge grew in popularity due to social media users attempting to raise awareness to discourage participation. However, the sharing normalized it and created a contagion, increasing its popularity and building more curiosity and desensitization of self-harm and suicide among adolescents (Khasawneh, 2020).

Online spaces can be dangerous spaces for children and adolescents. Policies are being developed to safeguard adolescents from the risks posed by digital media due to online vulnerability, which is the content risk, contact risk, and criminal risk encountered in digital spaces (Savoia et al., 2021). Adolescent behavior on digital media can be challenging for parents and guardians to monitor and supervise. The rapid pace of technological advancements in digital media has made it increasingly difficult to keep pace with to allow for research to be developed to monitor and regulate these platforms.

Lastly, economic status is a factor in social media use. Whether social media is viewed as positive or negative is linked to economic status (Steven et al., 2017). People of higher economic status have access to digital technology that is readily available to them. Those of lower socioeconomic status have less access, resulting in a digital divide.

Body Image

Numerous factors result in social media use being harmful to young women's body image. Social media use has been connected to body dissatisfaction and eating disorders in adolescent young women due to increased social comparison to others (Saunders & Eaton, 2018). Body dissatisfaction is often caused by mass media exposure. However, it is greatly intensified by social media use due to its accessibility to adolescents, which has resulted in high usage by this demographic (Burnette et al., 2017). The visual nature of social media platforms, coupled with the ability for others to like or comment, results in increased body surveillance and attempts to alter appearance through filters and editing, which creates an unhealthy relationship between women and their bodies that starts as young as ten (Pescott, 2020).

Media messages tell girls early on that attractiveness is essential to attaining social status (Adams & Stevenson Jr., 2012). Beauty standards in the United States are drawn from a Eurocentric view of what is attractive (Saunders & Eaton, 2018). Black women are indirectly taught that features associated with an Afrocentric aesthetic are less attractive and desirable (Awad et al., 2015). This devaluing of Black features causes Black women to have a complex experience navigating how to assess and define their beauty (Patton, 2006).

The societal ideals that communicate what skin color, facial features, body type, and hair textures are the most desirable can have a toll on Black women's perception of themselves and their identity. The Lily complex is a term that explains the process of assimilation and conformity that Black women experience when trying to exist in a predominately White world (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). Black women feel pressure to alter their appearance to meet Eurocentric ideals due to being made to feel inferior to other races of women (Patton, 2006).

Social Comparison

Social comparison is normal as people assess themselves next to their economic status, looks, and other things they may see or know about others. Social media platforms like Instagram allow users to look at the images posted to individual accounts, which can lead to comparing one person to another based on what a person shares. Adolescent girls engaging in social media use compare themselves to other young women they see in their peer groups, celebrities, and influencers (Bulu et al., 2016). Peer competition is a significant contributor to adolescent girls having body dissatisfaction issues (Ferguson et al., 2014). Research has discovered that self-image formation is impacted by social media use, with users having a higher desire to alter their faces and bodies (Fardouly et al., 2015).

One study discovered that adolescent girls view selfie posting as a way to get compliments. Some do not post due to concerns about their appearance and seeing themselves as unattractive (Burnett et al., 2017). Individuals utilizing social media can ascertain their popularity by the number of followers, likes, and comments they receive on their posts (Sukamoto et al., 2019). Excessive reassurance is a high factor in social media use due to adolescents' desire for love and acceptance earned through likes on their social media posts, which validates their level of social status among their peers (Sheldon & Newman, 2019). It has been found that among adolescent teens, social media use is more frequently used by girls and that they demonstrate anxiety and stress about their selfies posted online in relation to how their images posted are received and judged online in comparison to boys at the same age of development (Boursier et al., 2020). These aspects of social media use increase social comparison and the desire for acceptance by others. The research is consistent in that social

comparison behavior has adverse adolescent developmental and emotional outcomes for young women (Burnett et al., 2017).

Selfies

Image sharing is a popular aspect of social media use, especially 'selfies' or photos of the individual posting. There can be issues associated with selfie posting on social media. Posting selfies can potentially boost self-esteem if the feedback is positive. However, if the responses are negative, it can lead to possible feelings of inadequacy. Adolescents engage in selfie posting on social media to seek approval from their peers through likes, which translate into assurance, validity, and popularity (Attard, 2021). Adolescent-aged girls spend more time on social media daily and post more selfies than boys (Boursier, 2020).

Constantly posting selfies can contribute to an unhealthy relationship with young women's appearance. Editing allows adolescent teens to adjust, create, and manage their online image to self-present in a manner they feel is most likely to garner approval from online audiences. Instagram has built-in features to allow users to edit or enhance their photos. Other photo editing software and applications are also popular for enhancing photos. Selfies posted by adolescents tend to be edited by them, resulting from their self-objectification anxiety about perceived body shame and negative appearance evaluation from their peers, which is potentially problematic for girls (Teran et al., 2020). Studies suggest that adolescents may experience detrimental consequences like low self-esteem and narcissism from posting selfies that are either well-received or not (Safna, 2017). Some teens admitted paying money for more likes, adding hashtags, and using apps to help drive attention and engagement with their posts (Redden & Way, 2019).

Identity Development

Identity development is the process of how individuals form who they believe themselves to be. Identity development is complex and nuanced, with many components contributing to it. Children form self-identity as infants from those around them who teach them things like their name, cultural association, gender expectations, and more (Ting-Toomey, 2005). Identity development is vital to adolescents as they affirm who they are and are independent of their parents and others. Adolescents draw from social cues to help determine who they are (Crocetti et al., 2017). This use of social norms to self-identify can be problematic for Black adolescent young women because their formation of identity can be shaped according to the stereotypical information they receive about who they are in society through media. Exposure to media messages on social media shapes how people see themselves and others. Young adults (those between 18 and early 20s) rely on social media interactions to figure out who they are. This usually occurs within reality, but the emergence of social media has moved to virtual reality, thus increasing identity formation to a whole new level because of the massive amount of information that young adults are bombarded with due to social media and the internet. “This kind of self is built on the false representations that are offered by social media of what is appealing, tempting and accepted,” which can cause an individual to accept or reject their own identity to create a version deemed worthy by others (Attard, 2021, para. 13).

Media plays a more significant role in our socialization process as humans. Mass media sends messages that teach us values, morals, and cultural and societal norms. Racial minorities like Black people have a challenging time negotiating their identity and place in society because what is shown of minorities in media is often stereotypical and becomes accepted as the norm for people of color by others and themselves (Fujioka & Neuendorf, 2015). Media is influential in

how we see others and how we see ourselves. Media transmits stereotypes to the mainstream, and frequent exposure to this content impacts how people these stereotypes represent see themselves (Coleman et al., 2019).

Some research indicates that there is a negative impact on the self-identity of adolescent Black young women due to the content that portrays stereotypical and negative images of Black girls and women. Media has pushed forward stereotypical portrayals of Black women as mummies, jezebels, single mothers, ghetto queens, ex-convicts, ratchet, gold-diggers, and big butt whores to list some of the common depictions shown in media (Giannino & China, 2017). According to Michikyan and Suarez-Orozo, social media and media play an essential role in allowing young adults to develop their identities (2016).

Women engage in self-objectification and evaluation in their pursuit of meeting societal beauty ideals. Body surveillance is the practice of assessing one's external appearance in comparison to others. It has been found that body surveillance and self-objectification are caused by the usage of mass media in many studies, which can cause negative behaviors due to girls attempting to meet prescribed body image standards set by Western societies (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2016). Engaging in body surveillance can be problematic for those who meet culturally valued ideals (Rollero, 2022). Objectification theory examines how adolescent girls view their bodies after exposure to media images. Instagram photos retouched by adolescent girls are common as they demonstrate that they have internalized unrealistic body ideals and show signs of body dissatisfaction (Kleemans et al., 2016). Vandenbosch and Eggermont (2016) conducted a longitudinal study to see if social media and mass media cause the development of an objectified self-concept. The study found that sexual-based content exposure in social media and mass media impacted which image ideals caused body surveillance and self-objectification

in adolescents. The research findings suggest that body surveillance and self-objectification happened even with little exposure to sexualized content. These studies indicate how powerful media messages are in how adolescents self-identify and engage in self-objectification.

It has been found that identity development is dynamic, nuanced, and dependent on the context. Redden and Way (2019) reinforce in their findings that there is an emergence of a layered identity created by teens online based on which social media platforms they are utilizing. Teens cultivate identities online in various manners depending on the social media platform they are using, with a more positive and polished presentation on what they deem more public sites and an honest, less flattering image on ones that they have a more selective audience on. The teens expressed that platforms like Instagram are more open to the public, making it a site where they would share photos or posts that are more generally acceptable and less authentic to who they are.

Humans pull components of their identities from the communities they engage with, making social media's influence on identity formation valid because it expands the user's community. Adolescents' social media use can allow them to develop their personal and collective identities through the multiple communities engaged within online spaces. The communities on social media provide spaces for users to connect and share information that is normative within their groups. Social media allows users to build, grow, and maintain communities that are composed of parts of their collective identities (Stevens et al., 2016).

A qualitative research article by Chan (2017) examined how social media impacts racial identity, and found that students consuming racial information through media gained a strong attachment to their racial identity. Students in the study reported seeing news articles about social and political issues that reflected the mistreatment of Black people, like police brutality, and

comments from friends and family against these types of behaviors with messages like Black Lives Matter accompanying them. It was also found that some students studied did not want to be connected to their Blackness out of fear of being tied to the negative stereotypes associated with it. Ultimately, social media puts people in a place where they begin to negotiate their affinity or rejection of their racial identity.

Social media use through smartphones has allowed adolescents to share their experiences in online spaces, which can make them feel a part of a community. Research by Michikyan and Suarez-Orozco (2016) found that adolescents use social media to form identities, experience intimacy, and improve social well-being. Social media allows adolescents to find spaces where there are others like them, which is crucial for identity development. However, the researchers caution that social media also contributes to adolescents presenting a false self, which can adversely affect mental health and the shaping of identity. The information in this study proves the complexity of the relationship between media exposure and adolescent identity development.

Identity Negotiation Theory

The process of negotiating identity is complex and is a topic worthy of examination in communication scholarship. Social media creates unique communication interactions that can impact how a person's identity is shaped. Complex issues arise when defining one's identity due to the many facets that compose an individual. Identity negotiation theory was formed from the work of Stella Ting-Toomey, examining the sociocultural identity development of minorities (Ting-Toomey, 2017). The theory asserts that identity is continually developed through social interactions. In addition, each person has several identities that compose an individual. Race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and other components are all part of each person's identity (Ting-Toomey, 2015). Identity negotiation theory suggests that each person has multiple images

of themselves that consist of cultural, social, and personal lenses through which they can see who they are (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Identity negotiation theory highlights how media and the community teach culture, societal norms, and expectations, including beauty standards (Ting-Toomey, 2015). Media can frame the idea of what is acceptable and normal within society and what is not (Michikyan & Suarez-Orozco, 2016). Through the media, girls learn beauty standards and measure themselves according to them. The internalization and acceptance of beauty standards that in America focus on things like thinness, hair types, skin tone, and facial features can harm those who do not fall within the prescribed standard (Saunders & Eaton, 2018).

Black Feminist Standpoint Theory

Standpoint theory centers on perspectives based on how people are positioned in society. The theory allows those in marginalized groups to share their perceptions without being muted and forced to adjust and follow the dominant group (Allen, 1998). Black feminist standpoint theory specifies Black women as a distinct group due to their marginalized positions in society due to both their gender and race (Collins, 2000). Collins does not argue that all Black women have universal experiences but argues that they will share similar perspectives based on their collective legacy of struggle, and common challenges faced in the United States which unites them (Collins, 2010). Black women are a marginalized group and, as a result, lack power in the dominant society. Collins views the word standpoint as group knowledge (Collins, 2010). Hill (1990) states:

Knowledge is a vital part of the social relations of domination and resistance. By objectifying African-American women and recasting our experiences to serve the interests of elite white men, much of the Eurocentric masculinist worldview fosters Black

women's subordination. However, placing Black women's experiences at the center of analysis offers fresh insights into this worldview's prevailing concepts, paradigms, and epistemologies and its feminist and Afrocentric critiques. Viewing the world through a both/and conceptual lens of simultaneity of race, class, and gender oppression and of the need for a humanist vision of community creates new possibilities for empowering Afrocentric feminist knowledge.

The goal of Black Feminist Standpoint theory is to allow Black women to define their identity, change how they are perceived as a group, and encourage activism that helps and supports Black women (Collins, 2000). Black Feminist Standpoint is grounded in the experiences of Black women and serves as a tool to develop ways to improve their position in society. The theory uses the challenges faced by Black women to gain insights and grow consciousness to ills impacting Black women.

Black Identity

Black identity is a complex and multifaceted concept for Black people in the United States. Black people's identity is constructed through a socio-political process that is influenced by negative stereotypes, systemic oppression, and a constructed creation of group culture due to being uprooted from their home continent of Africa and being given identities by White people, among other factors. Due to the historical implications of slavery, Black people in America were given identities by the White people who enslaved them that were demeaning in connotation. Enslaved Black men were often addressed as 'boys' to negate their masculinity and manhood. Black men and women were also called Bucks and Wenches to dehumanize them (Davis, n.d.). These terms reduced Black people to their reproductive ability and sexualized them which continued in the stereotypes of Jezebel and Mandingo. The most common name for Black people

was ‘nigger’, which captured the magnitude of anti-Black feelings (Pryor, 2016). The word is still seen as derogatory and is a racial slur.

Black people have settled on names to be called as a group through the years. Colored was the first term used for Black people from the mid to late 19th century following slavery which then became Negro (Smith, 1992). The word Negro fell out of favor with Black people in the 1960s, who felt the term was inherited by them and rooted in slavery (Smith, 1992). However, the term had early opposition shown in the W.E.B. Du Bois (1928) shared a letter from Roland A. Barton where he expressed that Negro and Nigger were White man’s words used to make Black people feel inferior (Bennett et al., 1969).

Black was the identity chosen by Black activists in the 1960s and 70s who sought to empower and improve the lives of Black people in the United States (Smith, 1992). The term Black was the first time in the United States that Black people as a group chose their own identity as a group rather than being defined and named by White people. Black as an identity was “a self and collectively conscious effort for people of African descent to be self-naming and self-defining in route to increasing the human respect and dignity of African people and their descendants” (Claybrook Jr, 2021, para. 2). Afro-American is also a term popularized during the Black Power movement that African-American replaced at the encouragement of Jesse Jackson in the 1980’s (Martin, 1991). Currently, the most used terms for Black people are African-American and Black.

Racial identity is both internal and external. Conformity to the group, dissonance, appreciation, resistance, immersion, introspection, and integration are internal processes we go through as we learn and accept our racial identity (Sue, 1999). However, a person's physical attributes signify their race and supersede the internal part of racial identity. Racial identity is

associated most with physical attributes. Internal and external racial identity is particularly integral to Black identity because it shapes many aspects of their lives.

White men raped and produced children with enslaved Black women. The children were often not phenotypically Black, displaying traits similar to those of both parents. The mixed phenotypes created a need to create criteria to determine who was, in fact, Black or White. Holliger (2005) states, “The one drop rule has meant that anyone with a visually discernible trace of African, or what used to be called Negro ancestry is simply Black,” which continued through the Jim Crow era, civil rights era, and today remains a concept accepted by Black and White people alike (p. 18). This rule only factors in when Black people produce children with other races. The rule was created to ensure those with Black blood remained subjugated, and at its root shows why those with Black identity are still faced with many challenges in American society. It speaks to the experiences of many Black people in this country who are discriminated against based on how they look, which is derivative of the one-drop rule.

Blackness is considered a centric part of their identity by many Black people, with 76% reporting it to be very important or extremely important to how they see themselves (Cox & Tawir, 2022). Due to the wide range of people included in the racial group, there are many different experiences with Black identity. However, there is a collective identity rooted in discrimination, oppression, inequality, and bias that is shared by many. Black people consciously and unconsciously progress through an anti-Black worldview as they navigate through a dominant White society as they learn to accept and develop a positive association with Blackness (Constantine et al., 1998).

Black Aesthetic

The impact of slavery still resonates today, with 63% of black people in America believing that slavery still influences their position in society currently (Horowitz, 2019). Black people in America who are descendants of enslaved Africans have a complex relationship with their racial and cultural identity. The identity issues experienced by Black Americans result from the separation of the people from their countries in African traditions, religions, familial lineages, and homeland. Black people have been forced to negotiate identity in a cultural narrative that deems them inferior to whiteness due to their oppression in the United States during and since slavery. This negotiation of identity has made race the central identity for Black Americans because slavery has made it more difficult for this group to trace their family history before the 1870 census (Cox & Tamir, 2022).

White people who migrated to America created the prevailing standards for the culture in the United States that are rooted in their European heritage (Awad et al., 2016). Colonization and slavery allowed the narrative of beauty to be encapsulated within a context of whiteness (Mosby, 1972). These Eurocentric standards are exclusionary of Black people who are descendants of Africans whose physical appearance, culture, and history are not included in the aesthetic that they are measured against (Ogbu, 2004). Black women and Blackness, as a result, have been devalued and dehumanized next to the idealized beauty standards in America.

Leroi Jones, later known as Amiri Baraka, created the Black Arts Repertory Theatre school in Harlem, significantly contributing to the Black Arts Movement. The black aesthetic sought to encourage black artists to produce and categorize their work through an Afrocentric worldview instead of a Eurocentric lens. The goal was to see and value their culture with reverence and pride. The Black aesthetic grew alongside the civil rights movement in the 1960s

to move artistic works created by Black people from a marginalized Western perspective (Addison, 1972). During this period, Black dark skin and afros became synonymous with black beauty and pride (Baird, 2021). However, this representation of Black beauty was exclusionary of lighter-skinned or mixed-race Black women who are viewed as having inauthenticity in their Blackness (Tate, 2013). Blackness comes in a wide range of shades, hair textures, body types, and features, making defining an inclusive aesthetic framework for Black beauty challenging. However, it has been found that Black women with dark skin tones who embrace their natural hair instead of those who wear weaves have been shown to have higher levels of body importance/satisfaction and ethnic identity level (Gautier, 2021). These positive outcomes suggest that embracing a black beauty aesthetic can help reconcile the issue of Black women in America and beauty.

Discussion

This review of literature examined how media containing harmful stereotypical content about Black females consumed from smart cellular devices can impact self-identity in adolescent Black females. The research showed that adolescents' usage of cellular devices is at the highest level since their invention. The number of adolescents with a cellular device is also at its highest. It was also shown that many adolescents and, in higher numbers, young women are using their devices almost constantly, allowing them to come into contact with various forms of media. Much of adolescents' activity on cellular devices is not monitored by adults.

This study also showed that stereotypical images do impact how individuals judge people. Negative stereotypes of Black people shown in the media were proven to produce hostile and negative emotions in other racial groups and Black people. It was also found that stereotypes can be adopted as truth by the depicted group. In addition, it was found that exposure to negative

stereotypes can cause rejection of racial identity to avoid being seen in a negative stereotypical way by others. The research supports that exposure to negative stereotypes about your racial and ethnic groups can be harmful to self-identity development.

Reality television and content created by Black people containing negative stereotypes of Black young women were also examined. Research shows that Black people of lower socioeconomic levels embrace shows that contain Black stereotypes. The studies also found that differences in socioeconomic status among Black blog creators and consumers were more prevalent at the middle and upper socioeconomic levels. The findings indicate that Black adolescent young women of lower socioeconomic status are more likely to engage in the consumption of media that depicts Black young women in negative stereotypical manners.

The research also showed that media content impacts identity development in adolescents. Exposure to media content can have both positive and negative effects on adolescents. However, it was revealed that body surveillance and mental health issues like depression could develop in adolescents due to media exposure. The results were inconclusive about whether the positives outweigh the negative aspects of social media exposure on adolescents.

Gaps in the Existing Body of Literature

The studies shared many of the same limitations, including the small sample groupings, research not specified to Black adolescent young women, and usage of self-reported data. The term media is also vast, making it challenging to differentiate media accessed through smart devices from older devices like televisions. The current literature does not have any research focusing solely on Black adolescent young women to examine how media impacts

self-identification. There was also little research on how the negative stereotype of racial groups and different genders impacts self-identity.

Limited studies also exist on adolescents and how media impacts their identity development. The research showed a connection between media, stereotypes, and self-identity. However, the findings were not specific to the population of adolescent Black young women. The research also needed to understand the positive versus adverse effects of social media and media exposure on adolescents. The gaps in research show opportunities for further research to be conducted.

Summary

This literature review analyzed research on how exposure to these negative stereotypes affects adolescent Black young women who are developing their concept of self-identity. Adolescents are consuming media at unprecedented rates due to its availability to them through their smartphones. Media has a broader reach than ever and is more accessible due to the internet and smart cellular devices. Evidence from this literature review confirms that harmful stereotypes can damage the self-identity development of Black adolescent young women, which offers opportunities for further research.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Overview

The first section of this chapter describes the methodology and illustrates the rationale for approaching the research with a qualitative design using a narrative approach. The second section delves into the researcher's role in conducting the study. The following section outlines the sample design, data collection process, data analysis process, and data storage. This section will also address the reliability and validity of the study.

This chapter will discuss the approach to this phenomenological narrative qualitative study. This narrative research study examines how social media use and exposure to the messages on these platforms impact how late adolescent Black young women articulate their self-perception formation and define beauty. The theoretical frameworks for the study are the Black feminist standpoint theory and identity negotiation theory. These theories will be used to investigate the phenomenon of beauty messages on social media and how they affect how Black adolescent young women formulate identities and produce self-esteem.

Academic research can be conducted using various approaches. This study focuses on understanding how adolescent Black young women experience the negotiation of their self-identity and the development of their self-esteem, as well as reconciling their body image with the messaging they are exposed to on social media. Qualitative phenomenological research coupled with narrative analysis allows study participants to tell their stories, allowing the researcher to gain insights into the phenomenon being studied from each individual's perspective (Poth & Creswell, 2018). Phenomenological research seeks to describe how people experience a phenomenon. A phenomenological qualitative research design with narrative analysis will be employed to examine the phenomenon of how adolescent black females interpret and discern

meaning from the messages they are exposed to on social media containing societal beauty standards, in addition to racialized and gendered stereotypes and how this exposure affects how they articulate their body image, self-identity, and development of esteem.

Conducting the study through phenomenological and narrative research is the best method to meet the study's goals. Narrative analysis allows the researcher to collect the subjects' stories in their own words (Poth & Creswell, 2018). Using a narrative research design aligns with the study's goals of capturing the subjects' experiences as told by them. In addition, narrative investigation allows researchers to interpret the participants' lived experiences based on how the subject shares them. Interviews will be used to collect the narrative data from study participants. Individual participant interviews with open-ended questions were utilized to encourage insightful and reflective accounts of their experiences that will be analyzed thoroughly.

Theoretical Framework

Many factors together account for the elements that compose an individual's identity. Race, gender, age, ethnicity, economic status, and education level are factors that develop an individual's identity (Ting-Toomey, 2005). Identity negotiation theory centers on the concept that identity formation is developed by cultural norms, meanings, values, and other components from their cultural group's interactions (Ting-Toomey, 2017). Family structure highly influences identity formation in adolescents. In addition, media channels send out media messages that adolescents internalize and are influenced by. These messages make up popular culture and teach ideas about gender roles and behaviors based on ethnicity (Ting-Toomey, 2017). Pop culture messages are very prominent on social media, which exposes adolescent Black females to these popular culture messages at high rates.

Identity negotiation theory, a fundamental concept in communication theory, examines how individuals develop and manage their sense of self through communication processes. Rooted in the idea that identity is not fixed but rather shaped and negotiated through interactions with others, this theory emphasizes the dynamic nature of identity construction (Ting-Toomey, 2017). According to this framework, individuals engage in a continuous process of negotiating their identities in various social contexts, drawing on cultural, social, and personal factors to shape their self-concept. Furthermore, identity negotiation theory underscores the significance of communication in constructing and maintaining identity.

At the core of identity negotiation theory is the notion that individuals navigate multiple identities, which are influenced by cultural, social, and interpersonal factors. As individuals interact with different groups and navigate various social roles, they are confronted with the task of managing and reconciling potentially conflicting aspects of their identities. Through communication, individuals engage in identity work, which involves actively shaping and presenting different facets of themselves to others. This negotiation process can lead to the reinforcement, transformation, or even rejection of certain aspects of one's identity (Ting-Toomey, 2005).

Identity development primarily occurs in adolescence (Crocetti et al., 2017). Our lived experiences within our social and cultural groups frame our perception of ourselves and others. Through identity negotiation theory, it is asserted that an individual's self-identity is gained through a process of negotiation of their self-identification adjacent to how others self-identify in identity negotiation theory (Ting-Toomey, 2005). Identity negotiation theory highlights the complexities and challenges that Black women face as they strive to reconcile their multifaceted identities in a society that may marginalize or stereotype them based on their race and gender.

Content shared on social media exposes Black adolescent females to the content shared by Black women and others about Black women that they can use to derive information about themselves and Black women as a whole. Identity negotiation theory is used as a framework for this study because it provides a lens for understanding how Black young women navigate and negotiate their identities within various social contexts, with the emphasis of this examination being social media.

Standpoint theory allows a lens to frame the perspective of how privilege next to others segmented by race, class, gender, and sexuality impacts outcomes (Pause, 2019). In addition, standpoint theory examines phenomena usually centric on issues around feminism from the standpoint of those expressing it (Best, 2008). The standpoint theory approach is rooted in its goal of understanding the experience of women in society (Smith, 1997). Standpoint theory is closely tied to feminism but can be employed outside it (Kokushkin, M., 2014). Power dynamics between oppressed groups and groups in power are examined in standpoint theory. The theory was developed to study how females navigate in a male-dominated society (Houle, 2009). The role of societal positions concerning how people are viewed and given agency are basic ideas studied through standpoint theory (Landau, 2008). It is interrogated through standpoint theory of how groups in power and marginalized groups relate to each other (Etengoff, 2020). Standpoint theory offers opportunities to be used as a lens to research women's societal experiences (Harding, 2009). Social justice can be evaluated through standpoint theory to identify areas of inequality between groups (Hall, 2019).

Standpoint theory has multiple versions of its application, such as child standpoint theory (Medina-Minton, 2019). While standpoint theory considers many aspects of the privileged class, it does not take into account the unique experiences of black women who are faced with both

gender and race inequalities that qualify them as a distinct group (Collins, 1996). Collins (1986) contends, “Black feminist thought...specializes in formulating and rearticulating the distinctive self-defined standpoint of African-American women (p. 750). The sexualization and objectification of girls in online spaces align with the child and feminist components of standpoint theory (Intemann, 2010). Black feminist standpoint takes into account the unique factors that directly impact Black girls, who are often oversexualized and associated with sexually objectifying stereotypes like the Jezebel (Pelland, 2019). In addition, Black women are forced to navigate racial and gendered stereotypes, creating a nuanced battle between two parts of their identity that align with Black standpoint theory (Pompper, 2007).

Within the context of communication, Black feminist standpoint theory calls attention to how power operates in discourse and interaction. This framework asserts that communication is not neutral but reflects and shapes existing power structures. Black feminist standpoint theory posits that Black women’s lived experiences offer a unique vantage point to critique and challenge dominant communication norms and practices (Collins, 1996). By recognizing and amplifying the voices of Black women, this theory seeks to disrupt and transform communication processes that perpetuate inequality and marginalization.

The study brings the collective voices of young Black women to the forefront to share how social media messages about Black women impact their identity formation. For Black women, communication is a powerful tool for expressing their unique experiences, resisting stereotypes, and affirming their multifaceted identities. Therefore, understanding and applying the principles of Black feminist standpoint theory and identity negotiation theory, the study is informed to navigate the complexities of their identities, assert their voices, and advocate for

social change, ultimately contributing to more inclusive and empowering communication practices that honor the diverse experiences and perspectives of all individuals.

Review of Purpose Statement

Media messages impact human perceptions of the world and themselves, and social media has the ability to send unprecedented amounts of content. Adolescence has been considered a challenging part of human development; it can be regarded as even more difficult in today's society due to growing up with digital media (Michikyan & Suarez-Orozco, 2016). There has also been a connection found between social media usage and depression in adolescent girls. Social media has also been found to cause teenage girls to have issues with body image, self-esteem, and self-identity, which are multifaceted and complex (Burnette et al., 2017). Body surveillance is increased in adolescent females who use social media because they compare themselves to the images that have been edited and filtered or are of people who fit acceptable beauty standards, which results in the development of a negative body image (Mir et al., 2022).

In recent years, extensive research has been done on how social media impacts adolescent subjects' well-being (Saunders & Eaton, 2018; Nierengarten, 2017; Burnette et al., 2017). The studies consistently support the idea that social media use can result in adverse adolescent outcomes surrounding mental health and self-esteem. Research on stereotypical content on social media and its impact on adolescents is less prevalent. In addition, research on specific social networking sites and how their use results in adolescents' behaviors and mental health is lacking. However, analysis of traditional media and social media (Fardouly et al., 2017; Chan, 2017; Vandenbosch & Eggert, 2016; Michikyan & Suarez-Orozco, 2011) yielded conflicting results about adolescent identity development and esteem. Research specifically focused on Black adolescent females was very limited (Schott, 2016; Williams & Moody, 2017), reflecting the

difficulties uniquely faced by Black females as the studies show the same adverse outcomes of body image issues, mental health challenges, and problems with identity development and self-esteem that are conflated with racialized components that make them more vulnerable.

This exploratory study is designed to discover how social media use impacts how Black young women articulate their self-esteem and self-identity. The narrative design allows study participants to explain the phenomenon in their own words. The participant interviews offer insights into individuals' perceptions of their lived experiences in the context, which is valuable for conceptualizing and understanding data collected in transcription.

The research questions that will be addressed in this study are:

RQ 1. How does viewing American beauty standards on social media impact how adolescent Black girls articulate how they define beauty?

RQ 2. How does the consumption of messages around American beauty standards on social media impact how adolescent Black young women perceive their beauty?

RQ 3. How does viewing stereotypical images of Black women on social media impact how adolescent Black girls articulate their self-identity?

Qualitative Research Design

Researchers attempt to understand the phenomenon being studied from the shared experiences of the subjects, which become the non-numerical data for the study. Communication studies are well suited to a qualitative research design (Chesebro & Borisoff, 2007). Using a qualitative research design is helpful for this study because it allows the subjects' narratives to give a compelling, complex, and thorough understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Words shared by the subjects are the data that will be analyzed and used to derive meaning and themes from their experiences. The researcher strives to look at the phenomenon by

studying from the vantage point of the subject (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study will use a qualitative research design to understand adolescent black females' experiences with social media use and how it affects their beauty self-perception formation and esteem.

Narrative Research Tradition

Ethnography, life histories, biographical studies, and oral histories are all forms of narrative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher pulls the data from the participants' shared stories that are collected as data (Overcash, 2003). The information is analyzed by the researcher to gain perspective and understanding of the oral data shared by participants (Butina, 2015). The narrative research design allows for large quantities of data that are in the form of the participants' stories to be conceptualized and understood to form the research data (Creswell & Poth, 2018)

Study participants tell stories to share and frame their experiences in narrative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The goal of a narrative study design is to pull meaning and conceptualize the lived experiences of the study participants. Oral histories are the form of narrative research data collection methods that will be employed to collect the personal reflections of the subjects from the context of adolescent Black females and their experiences with Instagram use. The narrative research design relies on the information derived from the participants' oral stories chronicling their experiences with the phenomenon to explore and gain understanding, which makes this research design well suited to conduct the study.

Using a narrative inquiry allows participants to share in-depth insights into how the participants interpret and internalize social media messages around Blackness and womanhood. The collection and analysis of stories and experiences provide rich data, allowing for comprehension of the complexities of the human experience. The participants' experiences can

be studied through a more holistic lens that considers how the cultural, racial, social, and historical influences shape their perspectives. Lastly, narrative research empowers the Black women in the study by allowing their voices to be centered, heard, and respected, allowing others to glean from their shared words for a deeper understanding of their lived experiences.

Researcher's Role

The researcher is essential in qualitative research. The participant and researcher engage in a collaborative process. The qualitative researcher observes participant behaviors, examines documents, and conducts interviews with participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher must strive to examine the stories told and keep the information authentic and accurate. It is imperative to maintain the study's validity, reliability, and trustworthiness (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Researchers must try to make participants feel comfortable by developing a rapport with them. Making the participants feel comfortable encourages them to be more truthful and transparent in their responses (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interview process and data collection method will also be discussed with the participants to familiarize them with the process and encourage truthfulness and transparency (Overcash, 2003).

Relationship to Site

I am a full-time professor at the university where the study was conducted. I have been employed at the university for seven years, an adjunct professor for three years, and a full-time professor for four years. Study participation was not granted to any student currently or previously enrolled in courses taught by the researcher. The students who participated in the study were not familiar to me.

Process and Procedures

The study participants responded to flyers advertising the need for research subjects posted on the university's campus. The study sought subjects between 18 and 22 years old, Black and female, and could not be current or past students of the researcher. The participants sent the researcher emails of interest to participate in the study. Thirty-four respondents were sent participation consent forms. Convenient and purposive sampling was used to select the study participants. Research participants were selected from those who responded and met the selection criteria. They were sent consent forms to sign and scan back to the researcher. The first ten respondents who sent in completed consent forms were emailed to set up interview times. The interviews were conducted and recorded through Streamyard, an online video conferencing software.

The study participants were all asked the same questions in identical order. There was no time limit to the interviews to allow the participants to fully articulate their ideas without feeling rushed due to a time limit. The videos were recorded, the audio was removed from each video, and the visual file was deleted. The audio files were transcribed using the Otter application. The transcription created by the Otter application was verified next to the audio file, and any necessary corrections were made so each participant's responses were written verbatim. The transcripts were read thoroughly several times to clarify each participant's commentary. The transcripts of the interviews were analyzed for emergent themes in the data. The information relevant to the themes was extracted for further examination concerning the study questions.

The narrative data was pulled from transcribed video recordings of the ten study subjects who participated in online interviews. The participants in this study were all aware of how social media shapes perceptions of beauty, body image, and self-image. The young Black women

interviewed their lived experiences, offering varying perspectives. The responses were very raw, honest, and, at times, emotional, which led to compelling and informative data to analyze for the study.

My desire in conducting this study is to give voice to the experiences of Black young women concerning social media's impact on how they articulate their self-identity and perceptions of beauty. The goal is for those reading this study to understand how pervasive social media messages are and what they communicate to young Black women, specifically about who they are or should be. This study allowed young Black women to share their stories anonymously about how beauty standards and stereotypes impact how they see beauty and themselves.

Sampling

Sampling allows researchers to make inferences about a population. A purposeful sampling of participants was used because "the subjects need to thoroughly understand the central phenomenon and research problem examined in the study" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 224). This study relies on the experiences of black late adolescent females who utilize social media, which made purposeful sampling appropriate for the investigation to observe the targeted group's publication. The study design allowed for detailed and informed accounts of their experiences when sharing their narratives.

Specific guidelines were established for those participating in the study. The study's criteria were Black females between the ages of 18 and 22 who utilized social media. The participants responded to a survey to confirm that they met the study criteria. The students in the study all attended a mid-sized historically Black southern university.

Participant Selection

The study participants included ten undergraduate college students at a mid-sized southern historically Black university. The racial makeup of all participants was Black and female. The young women interviewed were the following ages: two were 18, three were 19, three were 20, one was 21, and one was 22 at the time of the study. There were two first-year students, three sophomores, three juniors, and two seniors. The study interviews took place between December 2022 and January 2023.

The study allowed anonymity to the subjects. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant to keep the humanity of the subjects. The decision was made to name each participant after popular Black female models with diverse looks that often defy the prescribed European-influenced beauty standards. I chose Naomi Campbell, Tyra Banks, Iman, Beverly Johnson, Pat Cleveland, Alek Wek, Winnie Harlow, Veronica Webb, Precious Lee, and Slick Woods. I am not aware if the subjects visually look like the pseudonym assigned to them because I erased their visual files. However, I wish to represent the diversity of black women and the idea of black beauty.

Gaining Consent

The study was conducted with students who attend a mid-sized historically Black university in the South. The university's institutional review board was contacted to obtain permission to conduct the study with the students on campus. A document outlining the purpose and procedures of the research and potential risk to subjects, along with samples of recruitment and consent documentation, was submitted. The university approved the study to be conducted on their campus upon review of these materials through email.

The study participants first expressed interest in the research by sending an email of interest. Those inquiries were responded to with a consent form to fill out, sign, and send back to participate. The study participants were sent a time to interview and a link to join the conference by email upon submitting a signed consent form. Participation in the study was completely voluntary and confidential. In addition, study participants were aware of the implications of their involvement and could withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty or repercussions.

Data Collection Procedures

The participants' shared stories serve as the foundation of this narrative inquiry. The data was collected through individual interviews with the study participants. Narrative studies utilize the study participants' words to construct meaning and conclusions. The interviews were conducted conversationally without input from the researcher to allow the stories shared not to be biased or altered from their perspective and experiences.

Participants range from first-year college students to graduating seniors. Homogenous research design focuses, reduces, simplifies, and facilitates group interviewing, aligning it well as a strategy that will work well with my population and research goals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The sample size was 10 participants based on students' desire to participate in the study and eligibility. Interviews were conducted individually using the video conferencing application Streamyard. The participants were encouraged to be in a quiet, private area with a strong Wi-Fi signal.

The interviews were conducted with the ten study participants who met the study criteria, being Black females between the ages of 18 and 22 who attended the university where the study was conducted. The interviews were designed to understand how social media messages

communicated to Black young women impact their self-identity formation. The study questions were open-ended in nature to encourage participants to share their experiences and insights in a free and truthful manner.

The video interviews were transcribed and saved without the participants' identifying information. The transcripts were first numbered in order of interview to allow the transcript to be approved by the participant through an email link to a shared file of their transcribed interview. The participants responded that the transcript accurately reflects the words, thoughts, and opinions shared in the discussion by email. The emails were deleted after accuracy verification was printed and filed along with the scheduled interview list, email addresses, and all identifying information in the sealed locked file. The participants' access to the digital transcript was also removed once accuracy verification was sent.

The study does not use the participants' names to maintain confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity. Pseudonyms were used instead of numbers to allow the participants' humanity to be held in the study analysis and results. The physical copies of the transcripts were randomly assigned pseudonyms corresponding to a diverse group of Black models representing beauty in different forms. The models Naomi Campbell, Tyra Banks, Iman, Beverly Johnson, Pat Cleveland, Alek Wek, Winnie Harlow, Veronica Webb, Precious Lee, and Slick Woods were the pseudonyms used for the study.

Videotaping through video conferencing software allows for easy accessibility of the researcher and the participant being interviewed. The research was conducted through closed-taped video conferences. The interviews offered privacy, enabling the participants to feel comfortable speaking truthfully. The participant's and researcher's environments were also quiet to ensure that questions and responses were audibly recorded to allow for accurate transcription.

The researcher entered the Streamyard platform five minutes before the start of the interviews to ensure the discussions started on time. The participants were told that their interviews would be confidential and could be ended at any time they desired. The format of the interview was explained. The participants were encouraged to speak freely, and only the study questions would be repeated if asked without additional feedback or questions. The questions were asked in order without moving to the next question until the participant stopped responding to the previous question. Interviews were conducted with the researcher paying close attention to the study participants. The study participants were asked questions and asked to speak as in-depth in their responses as possible. The interviews last, on average, approximately 30 minutes in length.

A digital journal of notes was kept during the process, with thoughts and observations written after interviews concluded for review. The video recordings were downloaded onto the researcher's computer and deleted from the Streamyard site where they were recorded. The audio files were removed from the video after they were viewed once to note body language and non-verbal communication. The video files were not watched after the notes were taken to allow the researcher to focus primarily on the participants' words. These recordings were digitally transcribed verbatim for analysis using the Otter application. The transcripts were reviewed next to the audio recording, and edits were made to ensure the written transcript was accurate. The notes were taken in a digital journal and filed with transcriptions. The audio recording files were saved onto the researcher's computer, and hard copies of the transcriptions were stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office.

The following are examples of the questions that were asked during the interview process:

1. Please state your age and how you are feeling today.
2. How many hours daily do you spend on social media sites?
3. What social media platforms do you use regularly?
4. Describe what beauty standards you feel are communicated on social media.
5. Describe the images you see of black women on social media.
6. What messages do you think the images of Black women on social media communicate about Black women?
7. How does seeing the images on social media make you feel about yourself?
8. How does content on social media make you feel about your body?
9. How does content seen on social media make you feel about your hair?
10. How does content seen on social media make you feel about your skin color?
11. What, if anything, would you change about yourself?
12. How do you define beauty?
13. How does social media content make you feel about your beauty?

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The transcriptions of the interviews and digital journal notes were analyzed. The data was organized into themes through the analysis process, as the interviews were studied through coding. The transcripts and field notes will be highlighted by colors representing the derived themes and coded according to the corresponding color and theme. The data will then be interpreted into the visual representations of charts to assist in analyzing the data. Large amounts of data were gathered during qualitative research. The data should be made into digital files and named according to a developed system. Then, the data should be made into a searchable

spreadsheet that makes the location of files accessible to keep things organized and consistent (Creswell, Poth, 2018).

Some predetermined codes were determined from the digital journal notes prior to the conclusion of the study. The codes were developed from the themes found during the transcription and analysis of the interviews. A finalized list of codes with descriptions was used to create a codebook. Creswell & Poth (2018) state, "The codebook articulates the distinctive boundaries for each code and plays a vital role in assessing inter-rater reliability among multiple coders (p.260).

The interpretation process makes sense of the data. The interpretations will also be shared with participants to gain feedback and validation of the research interpretations. A thematic analysis pulled themes found in the data that were analyzed and used to present the study findings. The personal experiences and significant statements represent the analysis. The narrative writing reports the study's findings.

Inductive coding, which allows the codes to emerge from the data, was used to analyze the interview data (Chandra & Shang, 2019). The transcripts of the interviews were read thoroughly, highlighting and noting recurring themes in the interview data. The participants' statements were written to share their words regarding the themes. This data was analyzed and interpreted through the lens of the theoretical framework and research questions.

Reliability

Several assumptions were made when the qualitative research was conducted. It was assumed that the study participants would share honest and accurate accounts of their thoughts, experiences, and examples in response to the questions asked during the interviews. It is also an assumption that the participants use social media and accurately represent the implications of

that use in the study. The participants are ensured confidentiality and anonymity to increase their confidence in transparency through the interview process and subsequent research study.

Confidentiality allows for reliability by enabling the participants to share information without the risk of being identified or associated with their experiences shared in the interviews.

Validity

Researchers must emphasize conducting research that is reliable and valid. This prioritizing is necessary for the research results to be considered reliable. While there is no way to rule out issues with a study thoroughly, there are efforts that can be taken on the researcher's part to increase the study's validity. Member checking and triangulation are measures that will be employed to increase validity.

Member checking allows the researcher and participant to agree with the interpreted message to be substantiated by the participant (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The transcripts were shared with the participants to ensure no discrepancies in the data interpretation. The transcripts were shared with the participant to ensure there were no discrepancies in the data interpretation after their transcribed interview. The study participants emailed stating that the transcripts accurately represent their words, thoughts, and experiences. This process allows the data to be confirmed by the subject, which increases accountability and accuracy in data collection.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the theoretical framework and purpose statement of the study. The discussion of the qualitative narrative research tradition details the justification for the study design. The study process is explained, delving into the recruitment, sampling, gaining consent, and data collection procedures. Lastly, the reliability and credibility of the study are presented to demonstrate the efforts put into place to ensure the study's legitimacy.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Overview

This chapter presents the findings of this qualitative narrative phenomenological research study. The purpose of the investigation will be reviewed to highlight the foundation of the research. The research questions that guide the qualitative study will be listed. The process of gaining research participants and consent will be discussed. The interview process and the results from the data collected will be shared. The participant's responses will be analyzed to frame the researcher's interpretation of the narrative data.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigates how social media use impacts the self-perception of late-adolescent Black female college students. This inquiry is relevant for exploration due to this demographic's rapid growth in social media use (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). The research explored the three research questions. Through a narrative qualitative research design shaped by the hypothesis, research questions, and purpose statement, the phenomenon of social media use and its impact on the self-identity formation of late adolescent Black females is explored. A qualitative narrative design was employed to collect participant data during their interviews. The findings of the study's research questions are discussed and shared to explain how the messages of social media content influence the study participants' self-perception and definition of beauty. This chapter presents the qualitative data analysis collected in the participants' interview processes framed by the narrative phenomenological research design, research questions, and hypotheses.

The literature reviewed in chapter two suggests that Black female stereotypes and societal beauty ideals are pervasive in shaping how Black women articulate their perceptions of Black women as a group and individuals (Ahadzadeh et al., 2016; Boulton, 2016; Chan, 2017 & Fardouly et al., 2017). The literature is limited on how these perceptions of Black women as a group and their ideas around their proximity to the set beauty standards are impacted by social media use is very limited. Therefore, this narrative qualitative research approach utilized the real-life experiences of ten college-aged Black young women through the lens of identity negotiation theory. The study captures this phenomenon by allowing the participants to share their experiences as narratives in their own words.

Researcher

The researcher is a full-time professor who teaches courses in Communication and Theatre at a mid-sized historically Black university in the southeast. In addition, the researcher has an extensive background in the performing arts and has a significant social media following on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. These strong social media followings give the researcher a robust understanding of social media use and content. The researcher holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Theatre, a Master of Arts degree in Business, and a Master of Theatre and is currently a candidate for a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Communication.

Review of Research Questions

This qualitative phenomenological and narrative study examines the relationships between social media use and its impact on adolescent Black females' self-identity, self-esteem, and body image development. The research focuses on how adolescent black females' social media use affects how they articulate their perceptions of beauty and identity.

The research questions that will be addressed in this study are:

RQ 1. How does viewing American beauty standards on social media impact how adolescent Black girls articulate how they define beauty?

RQ 2. How does the consumption of messages around American beauty standards on social media impact how adolescent Black young women perceive their beauty?

RQ 3: How does viewing stereotypical images of Black women on social media impact how adolescent Black girls articulate their self-identity?

Interview Process

Each participant was given a day and time to be available for their video interview. They were sent a video link via email 15 minutes before their interview start time, allowing them into the Streamyard video conference. The study participants were asked thirteen questions in the same order. The questions were formulated to have the young women interviewed to share their personal experiences related to the research questions. The participants were recorded at a location of their choice while the researcher was in their office through Streamyard. There was no time limit to the discussions, which ranged from 32 minutes in length to 47 minutes in length.

Participant Narratives

The narratives of the study participants were used to draw conclusions and understand the research questions posed in this study. The shared experiences of the young Black women participating in this examination gave epistemic accounts of the realities of how social media messages about beauty and Black women portrayals are shaping their ideas about beauty and what it means to be a Black woman. This study's participants' voices were centered, allowing for more profound context, perspectives, and meaning derived from their experiences. The narrative data served as the basis for the findings reported in this investigation.

Research Findings

Beauty standards are a socially constructed set of ideals defined by White people, society's dominant culture. Black feminist standpoint theory and identity negotiation theory shape the approach to synthesizing the shared accounts of the study participants. Black feminist standpoint theory sees the experiences of Black women as valuable knowledge that can be utilized as a catalyst for change (Collins, 2000). At the same time, identity negotiation theory addresses the multifaceted parts of the individual that, through self-reflection and social construction processes, develop identity (Ting-Toomey, 2015). The young women's responses reflect their perspectives as young Black women interacting with social media content and how it shapes their views on beauty, Black women, and themselves.

RQ:1 How does viewing American beauty standards on social media impact how adolescent Black girls articulate how they define beauty?

The study's results found that late adolescent Black women who were interviewed provided very similar descriptions of beauty. Media messages influence our beliefs and attitudes (Mastronardi, 2003). Due to the abundance of content available and large usage levels, social media use sends unprecedented amounts of messages (Twenge et al., 2019). The similarity of the responses attests to how pervasive media messages are and their ability to influence thought in society.

The beauty ideal communicated from social media messages articulated during the interviews differs from the standard for previous generations. The All-American blond hair, blue-eyed, and thin-bodied ideal is not currently the prevailing beauty standard. A new beauty standard has emerged on social media that all participants used to define beauty. The participants

accepted the beauty standard communicated on social media, demonstrated by their similar definition of beauty. In addition, the participants also all credit this new beauty standard as one that has formed on social media, especially Instagram.

The new beauty standard that has emerged frames beauty as white or light skin, long hair that is either straight or wavy, a small nose, full lips, a body with a small waist, curvy hips, a full butt, and thin but not skinny. This beauty standard that the young Black women interviewed described is rooted in Eurocentric ideals of attractiveness. Black women do not, in most cases, naturally align with these beauty standards communicated on social media (Awad et al., 2015). This lack of ability to meet the beauty standard by Black women has been shown to cause feelings of unattractiveness, inferiority, and a need to modify their appearance as Black women to be more adjacent to whiteness (Luukate, 2021).

Light skin has been considered more attractive in many Black communities, which is rooted in slavery. Enslaved people with lighter skin who were products of the rape of enslaved Black women by their white enslavers were often afforded more privileges than those with darker skin. This differentiation in the treatment of enslaved people based on skin color created an internalized racism that caused Black people to see lighter skin as better than darker skin, called colorism (Monk jr, 2021). The participant's beauty definitions and responses prove that colorism is still prevalent in today's society. For example, Veronica states the learning of the benefits of being light-skinned in Black environments from social media:

I never thought of myself as light-skinned because I grew up in a white environment, so I was Black. I did not realize that my skin being light was considered beautiful until I got on Instagram in High School. It made me want to go to a Black college because I knew that at an HBCU, I would be considered pretty because I'm light-skinned.

The process of social comparison has been shown to lower the self-esteem of adolescents who compare themselves to the unrealistic images of women they see on social media (Rollero, 2022). The participants expressed the difficulty of comparing themselves to images representing them. Alek expressed:

I look at pictures on Instagram and think that's not me. There is a very specific way that most of the girls look that is celebrated. These girls are often not darker brown like me. They are light, bright, almost white.

The accounts shared by the study participants show the unique position Black women see these beauty standards through. While they are all Black women, their phenotype can make them experience the content on social media differently. Black American women are extremely diverse in appearance, with a vast range of skin tones and hair textures that differ from others due to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which resulted in a mixture of the DNA of various African ethnic groups, European DNA from the rape of enslaved African woman by White men (White, 2017). The consensus was that lighter skin gave a Black woman more accessibility to beauty. Darker-skinned women can be beautiful in their accounts. However, the young women describe a higher threshold to be considered attractive with dark skin.

Naomi shared her experience with the messages she witnesses about light skin on social media, "I mean to be considered pretty on social media, skin tone matters. If you're dark-skinned, you have to be flawless, but if you're light-skinned, you can be less perfect."

In this sample, the participants also had perceptions about the beauty of hair that were rooted in Eurocentric beauty standards. The young women interviewed agreed that social media defines beautiful hair as wavy, curly, or straight tresses that are not kinky or coily in texture. Texturism is the idea of certain hair textures being better than others in the Black community

(Patton, 2006). The study results show that Black people's preference for straighter hair textures is still heavily represented on social media. The participant, Precious, shared her experiences:

If you have 4c hair, it has to be kept. It has to be done like you can't just wear your hair out. If it's 4c, it needs to be styled in some way, like braids, faux locs, weaves, or whatever, so it just looks like it's kept up. I spent hours on TikTok learning how to do protective styles like these, which were basically teaching me to cover up my hair that it's not good enough on its own.

The study shows that the young women with kinkier hair textures felt that the social media messages they consumed influenced them to wear hairstyles that covered their hair. In addition, social media provides a space for users to learn how to do many different things.

Pat expressed how she used social media to learn how to manipulate her hair:

I would see the Black girls on Instagram, and their hair would be perfect. I realized they were lace front wigs and became obsessed. I went on TikTok and YouTube and learned how to lay wigs. That's how I started wearing wigs. I like the way I look with wigs, so I rarely wear my natural hair.

The participants' responses have shown that the use of social media substantially impacts how they perceive the beauty of skin, hair, and bodies. The body the young women in the study describe is difficult to achieve naturally. The body has a very small waist with full hips and buttocks while remaining thin. The participants expressed that many Black women have undergone plastic surgeries, especially Brazilian Butt Lifts, to achieve this desired body type.

Precious discusses this practice, saying:

The crazy part is that I will look at a girl on Instagram and know her body is fake. I will literally know she had work done, but I still feel bad because my body doesn't look like

theirs. I know it's stupid because I know how she got that body, but I still feel a way because I don't have it.

Shapely and curvy bodies have been popular in the Black community for a long time (Ashley & Jung, 2017). The interesting part of the data collected from the study participants is that the social media beauty standard picks certain parts of features common to Black women and adds them to traits that are predominantly associated with whiteness. Tyra stated:

I find it weird that social media has everyone finding butts to be a good thing. I mean, in the Black community, we always praised being thick. But butts were not mainstream or popular. Real talk white girls never wanted a butt. Now, everybody is embracing the things we were shamed or mocked for having outside our community.

The majority of young women studied shared similar juxtapositions of desirable physical traits of women. The definitions of beauty given used predominately White beauty ideals with select traits associated with Black women, like fuller lips and larger buttocks. Black women exist in the middle of two very different beauty standards that are strongly associated with whiteness (Ashley & Jung, 2018).

The review of literature suggested that Black young women in late adolescence exposed to American beauty standards on social media would articulate beauty in a way that aligns with Eurocentric beauty ideals. The study data reveals that social media has encouraged the study participants to view and define beauty in a particular way. The beauty ideals described by the study participants are a variation of the Eurocentric standard of the past with specific traits associated with Black women added to it. The new beauty standard moves from a purely Eurocentric way of seeing beauty to one that is now more racially ambiguous but is clearly not

Black. This new standard made all of the participants express a desire for the features associated with the beauty ideal on social media.

The study participants articulated beauty in a way that they learned from social media, which does not include them. The beauty messages communicated on social media are compelling to young Black women, proven by how narrow and similar they define beauty. The beauty standard on social media does not embrace Blackness (Saunders & Eaton, 2018). However, despite not being included in the beauty standard on social media, the young women interviewed still accepted it as the definition of beauty.

RQ 2. How does the consumption of messages around American beauty standards on social media impact how adolescent Black young women perceive their beauty?

The findings suggest that messages about beauty on social media heavily influence how beauty is perceived and articulated. Social media increases comparison to others, causing intensified body dissatisfaction (Burnette et al., 2017). The study shows that none of the young women defined themselves as beautiful. Slick stated:

I never felt beautiful. I don't see it as a word to describe who I am. I don't. I mean, I'm not ugly, but I don't look like what is considered beautiful. I don't look like an Instagram model or anything. I'm ok. I'm just me. I'm good with that.

The participants' narratives show that social media expressed a very specific component of beauty that they pulled from social media. The young women spoke freely about plastic surgery being used by young women to achieve beauty ideals. One of the most popular surgeries, the Brazilian Butt Lift, is popular despite having a high mortality rate (Rutheford, 2022). The study results showed that plastic surgery has become more accepted and desired by some participants

because of the beauty standards they consume from social media. Simultaneously, other participants negatively view plastic surgery. Iman shared:

I'm too skinny. I feel like my body looks like a little girl's body. I hate it. I would get my body done if I had the money. I wouldn't do too much, but some hips and butt that match my legs. I hate when I see the girls on Instagram with huge butts and skinny legs.

Social media use encourages women to self-objectify and sexualize themselves (DeVries & Peter, 2013). The young women in the study discuss the pressure felt to meet the beauty standard. Beverly stated,

It's like real bodies aren't good enough. I hate the idea that we are using surgery to change our bodies. The beauty trends can change fast. One day it's BBLs that are popular, then skinny, and getting the buccal fat sucked from your face is what all the celebrities are posting. It's too much.

The responses reveal that young adult Black women in late adolescence exposed to Eurocentric beauty standards on social media have negative feelings about their Blackness and Black features. The young women interviewed embraced features that aligned with the beauty standard on social media but mostly expressed that the ones that did not fit were things they desired to change. The participants acknowledged that the images they see on social media can be altered or edited, yet they still accepted the beauty standard.

The standard of beauty rooted in Eurocentric ideals that young women define predates social media, but it is being reinforced and popularized on social media. The results show that the messages about beauty on social media cause a negative relationship with how the study participants see themselves next to the perceived ideal. The participants all spoke of the pressure

they felt to live up to an ideal that none of them thought they had met. The participants desired to alter their appearance to get closer to social media beauty standards.

The findings show a direct correlation between the beauty standard on social media and how participants see their beauty. Social comparison is one of the behaviors that has been proven to be driven by social media use (Perloff, 2014; Burnette et al., 2017). The participants are engaging in evaluating themselves next to a standard that is difficult for all women to meet. However, these beauty standards shared on social media are especially difficult for Black women who are the furthest away phenotypically from the ideals (Saunders & Eaton, 2018). This distance from the prescribed beauty standard results in young Black women seeking to be something they are not. In addition, it makes them feel better than or privileged if they have parts of their bodies that fit the prescribed beauty standard.

Overall, the study's findings were consistent in determining that social media messages about beauty are harmful to young Black women. The beauty standards adopted from social media felt unattainable to the study participants. Exposure to beauty standards on social media caused an acceptance of Eurocentric beauty ideals to become the lens through which the study participants perceive beauty. This perception of beauty resulted in the young women not using the word beautiful to describe themselves.

RQ 3: How does viewing stereotypical images of Black women on social media impact how adolescent Black girls articulate their self-identity?

Communication is an integral process in identity formation (Hecht, 1993). The synthesis of social interactions and experiences forms and grows individual identity (Jung & Hecht, 2004). Social media allows people to share and engage with large amounts of people and content. The

use of social media, due to its ability to build community and share messages, has been shown to influence how young women view themselves.

The development of self-identity and self-concept formation takes place during adolescence. Intensification of gender and identity negotiation being experienced by adolescents causes an increase in their acceptance of both gendered and racial stereotypes. Many stereotypes are prevalent about Black people, females, and Black women, which makes this a complex process of identity negotiation for Black females who are navigating this process next to negative stereotypes about their gender and race. Adolescent Black young women widely use social media networking sites. Research shows that many adolescents begin and end their days on social media sites (Spies-Shapiro & Margolin, 2014). Media messages consumed during this social media use can reinforce negative stereotypes (Kidd, 2015). The high-level use of social media increases the opportunity for exposure to negative stereotypes, which can harm the formation of self-identity and concepts in adolescents (Spies-Shapiro & Margolin, 2014). Groups will adhere to their representation on social media platforms impacted by stereotypes that cause reflective identities that mirror who they should be based on what they consume (Gunduz, 2017).

Black women exist as part of two marginalized groups, being both Black and female. Black women are, therefore, associated with both racial and gendered stereotypes. The study participants appeared to struggle with negotiating stereotypes next to their identities. The review of the literature suggested that young Black women exposed to stereotypical images on social media in late adolescence would associate consumed stereotypical messages with their self-identity (Coleman et al., 2019; Okene et al., 2009). The findings emphasize that this is a challenging reality for young Black women who feel that the world does not see them as individuals but as a group stereotype. The participants had mixed responses about how to present

themselves due to being stereotyped. There are many stereotypical traits assigned to Black women. The young women interviewed were easily able to list them. Iman says, "You will always see Black women shown as loud, angry, loose, ghetto, loud, baby mama, and stuff like that ." The young women studied expressed a conscious decision not to accept the stereotypes assigned to Black women. Tyra stated, "Being a Black woman is associated with so many negative things. You have to constantly try to act the opposite of what they expect you to".

In addition, stereotypes of Black women on social media evoked feelings of embarrassment and shame in the study participants. Nine of the ten young women interviewed expressed a need to represent Black women positively. All participants acknowledged that they possess some stereotypical traits and that negotiating what that means about who they are due to the negative association with certain behaviors is complex.

The participants expressed feeling a responsibility not to forward the stereotypes of Black women seen on social media. However, it proved difficult because it made them think, in some cases, that they had to act differently than they usually do. In their attempt to prove that they are not the stereotype, they realized that parts of them align with some stereotypes. This attempt to not be stereotyped causes a dissonance between who they are and who they feel they are supposed to be to represent Black women in a manner that does not perpetuate stereotypes.

Winnie explained:

I feel like it is my responsibility to be a positive representation of black women. I am around Black women every day. I live with a Black girl. I feel like we're very magnificent. Especially attending an HBCU is a variety of different types of Black women. Here, everybody's style is different. Everybody acts differently, so I see the diversity of who we are. It irritates me when I see us on social media because it's often

the opposite. It's like they're looking from the outside instead of being on the inside looking out. So you will see black women shown as inappropriate, ghetto, ratchet, sloppy, late, and messy most often. There are times they're shown as strong, inspirational, and beautiful, so it's a range but more negative than positive.

The study participants expressed that they monitored their social media posts to avoid stereotypically representing themselves. Precious expressed her discomfort with seeing content she feels reflects Black women negatively. Precious stated:

I do not post anything crazy on my social media. I cringe when I see Black girls online talking loud and crazy, cussing, just doing the most. I just would never represent myself or Black women like that. Some of us may act all loud and ghetto, but it's not all of us, not even the majority. But when I scroll my timeline, you'd think it's way more that behaves that way. I think the algorithm is determined to show us that way.

Slick shared the difficulty she experiences as a Black woman who possesses some behaviors and attributes that align with stereotypes. She speaks of code-switching and the challenge of trying to be her true self in some settings and changing in others not to be perceived negatively by others.

Slick commented:

I am loud, and I have to catch myself. It is naturally how I am. I'm from the city, so I guess I'm more street or ghetto. I ain't gonna lie. I try hard to change it up and, speak more properly, and make sure I keep myself more chill and respectable when out, but when I'm with my friends, I'm me. On my social media, I talk how I talk and act how I act, and it is what it is. You don't like it, just keep scrolling. But it's like I have to change up sometimes. It's difficult figuring out how I'm supposed to act to keep it real.

There was an expectation that the study participants would adopt the stereotypes into their identities. The data from the interviews gives mixed results. The majority of participants rejected the stereotypes perpetuated on social media about Black women. There was a strong disdain for Black women acting stereotypically and a conscious decision to behave in opposition to those manners. Many participants also emphasized attempting to represent themselves online and in person in ways that do not align with stereotypes to change opinions and be seen in what they deem as a more positive light. This code-switching is used to prevent the participants from behaving in ways they feel will negatively represent Black women to other groups.

Summary

Chapter Four shares the study's results. The purpose and research questions were revisited to explain the study's foundation. The participant selection, along with the process and procedures, was reviewed to demonstrate how this narrative qualitative study was conducted. The thematic data was synthesized and presented in this chapter. Lastly, the research questions were addressed with the results from the narrative data pulled from the study participants. Chapter 5 will present a discussion of the study findings.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Overview

Chapter Five will deconstruct and examine the insights gained from the narrative qualitative study. Social media use has become a part of daily life today. Research has shown that teens and young adults consume large amounts of social media content (Vannicci et al., 2020; Zika, 2018). The photos and videos on social media have been found to contain racial and gender-based stereotypes (Gunduz, 2017; Howard, 2016). In addition, this content has also been found to highlight societal beauty standards that are difficult to attain for many who see them. Black women exposed to social media observe messages about themselves that are stereotypical often on social media. They also see a Eurocentric-centered beauty standard that does not reflect how Black women look visually (Saunders & Eaton, 2018). Black women can adopt or reject this messaging, influencing their self-identification (Coleman & Reynolds, 2019).

This research inquiry sought to discover how the articulation of identity of Black females in late adolescence is affected by the stereotypical content and beauty standards shown to them on social media. Chapter Four described the themes, narratives, and results of the study. Utilizing the participants' narrative data, insights were gained into how social media messages are consumed and how those messages impact self-identity articulation and acceptance in Black women.

Researcher Reflection

I am a Black woman who grew up in Queens, New York. I lived in an environment where most people in my neighborhood and school were also Black. My parents kept me in mostly Black spaces. I have danced since I was four years old. I attended the Dance Theatre of Harlem, which was still predominantly Black, even in my extracurricular activity. While I encountered

other racial groups, I grew up with diverse Black people from various socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. This experience shaped my mindset of Black people not being a monolith. I also felt great about who I was and how I looked in the insulated environment my parents created for me.

I have raised my children in a racially and ethnically diverse environment. My three sons navigated these spaces with ease. However, my daughter began to struggle with her identity and self-image when she entered adolescence. I own a dance school with a substantial Black population of Black females. She and many of the other Black young women her age were having similar struggles and engaging in conversations about their bodies and needing to lose or gain weight. They also began to all look alike. Their hairstyles were the same. They wore the same types of outfits. Their speech patterns and word choices were the same. I also noticed that they all had telephones in their hand, scrolling Instagram and doing TikTok dances during any free moment. I watched the older girls become obsessed with having larger butts and tiny waists, which is not usually a desire of dancers who typically want to be thin.

I began to inquire about the changes I was seeing in the dancers. They would all show me different photos on social media that encompassed how they wanted to look. In addition, they would constantly share videos about products or tutorials that could stretch their curl pattern. There was a false acceptance of natural hair that was, in reality, rooted in a desire to change it into a particular type of natural hair. The girls with kinkier hair textures were attempting to manipulate their hair to have the appearance of hair with looser curl patterns. Those who had curlier or wavier hair were often praised for their hair. This struggle with their hair progressed to wearing lace front wigs, and all of them covered their hair with the wigs they saw on social media.

I became fascinated by how powerful the messages were on social media. I started engaging with social media more and found alarming content that reflected Black women in very negative, stereotypical manners. I began to question if this content was shaping how young Black women see themselves and who they are. I was curious about how young Black women in late adolescence, in particular, negotiated their identity next to the representations of Black female identity they encountered on social media.

I spent extensive time researching, analyzing, and synthesizing information relevant to the study. I focused heavily on adolescence, stereotypes, black female identity, media messaging, and social media use. The insights gained from examining related information greatly expanded my understanding of these topics' nuances and historical basis. This knowledge fueled my approach to this research study and interview process.

I conducted my research to capture the experiences of the study participants freely. I asked the interview questions and did not interject my feelings or ideas into their stories and insights. The goal was to share their thoughts and lived experiences in truth without interruption, allowing the data collected to have as much validity and truthfulness as possible. The study participants shared intimate and personal experiences and thoughts with social media content and the messages received from it that were raw and honest.

I allowed the interviews to be conducted the same way as me, asking questions and making no responses. I reviewed the videos once after the interviews to take notes about body language during responses. I deleted the videos to prevent the study participants from having physical looks associated with their words. I wanted the words they used to be the foundation of what drives my data for analysis.

Social media messages are powerful and, from this research, are shown to be pervasive in how Black women see their beauty next to this messaging. The research study found that the participants spoke of beauty in a manner that leaned into Eurocentric ideas. All participants articulated the beauty standard in variations of similar ideals. There was also a new beauty standard that was racially ambiguous and pulled off features posed by Black women that were a modification of the previous blonde hair, blue-eyed, skinny white woman. The new beauty standard adopted from social media, while still rooted in Eurocentrism, prescribes tanned white skin or white skin, a curly or straight hair texture that is not skinny, and a body that is thin but with an exaggerated trim waistline along with full hips and buttocks.

None of the participants expressed that they were or felt beautiful. There was also an acceptance or pride in their features that made them feel closer to the beauty standards set by social media. Darker skin tones and kinky and coily hair types were stated by all to be the least desirable traits in accordance with the messages seen in social media content. The participants all desired to change things about themselves to align more with the images of beauty they digest from social media. This dissertation explored how Black late adolescent females' use of social media shapes their perceptions of beauty and Black identity.

Discussion of the Results

This research study examined how messages on social media about black women and societal beauty standards impact how Black women articulate their beauty and identity in late adolescence. A sample size of ten Black young women participated in a narrative qualitative study of one-on-one interviews conducted online. The interviews were informal without a time limit, allowing participants to answer the questions in-depth and not rushed. All study participants were asked the same questions to address what messages about Black women and

beauty they received on social media. In addition, these questions sought to hear how the participants would articulate their beauty and self-identity. These conversations were transcribed and analyzed to extract the answers to these inquiries from the participants' lived experiences. The findings of this study are presented in Chapter 4.

Research Questions Findings

The study findings provided a reflective view of young Black women's experiences as social media users. The shared accounts of the study participants suggest strong correlations between social media use and negative self-concept for young Black women. The participants all expressed the struggle felt to achieve a positive self-identity and esteem as Black women while constantly being exposed to content that implies that they are not due to their distance from White beauty ideals.

RQ 1. How does viewing American beauty standards on social media impact how adolescent Black girls articulate how they define beauty?

Beauty standards set the ideal around what is considered attractive and desirable. The American beauty standard valued blonde-haired, blue-eyed, white-thin women. This beauty standard puts Black women on the opposite side of beauty because their natural phenotype often is the furthest from this ideal than other racial and ethnic groups. Today's society has been pushing the idea of developing a more inclusive and diverse way of seeing beauty. However, while it has changed, the beauty standard still exists.

All of the participants in the study shared that they spent a minimum of four hours on social media sites. Research has shown that high levels of social media use can cause body dissatisfaction in young women (Jiotsa et al., 2021). The study participants' most popular social networking sites were Instagram and TikTok, which both allow for large consumption of media

messages as users scroll through their feeds. The use of social media has given the participants a shared view of the current beauty standard as interpreted through their social media use.

The participants in the study described a new standard of beauty that they have adopted from seeing social media content. There was a similarity to what they all described as the current beauty standard. This new social media-driven beauty standard is one of women with light skin or who look racially ambiguous. The ideal body was slim, thick, or the baddie body. This body type has full breasts, an exaggerated tiny waist, full hips, and a medium-sized butt. Curly and wavy hair texture that is long and not kinky or coily meets this new beauty standard. Lastly, the nose should be small, with full lips that are clear and smooth to meet the social media beauty standard.

The participants acknowledged that the social media beauty standard often requires augmentation. These looks can be achieved through makeup, hair extensions, photo editing, filters, body shapewear, and plastic surgery. While some referred shared that they knew these looks were unnatural, each still desired to achieve a look closer to the standard. All ten study participants stated variations of this definition of beauty, indicating that social media use is influential in shaping how Black young women articulate what is beautiful.

RQ 2. How does the consumption of messages around American beauty standards on social media impact how adolescent Black young women perceive their beauty?

Black women exist within an intersection of identities. They are female and Black and consist of other aspects of their ethnicity and sexuality. Social media use communicates a distorted view of beauty to young Black women. Editing, filters, makeup, and even plastic surgery are often used to create a curated version of a person. These practices have become very normalized and blur the line between reality and the fabrication of who young women are and

who they desire to be. Changing one's appearance in a photo or video can cause dissatisfaction with who a person is in real life when there is no ability to tweak or change their appearance.

All the study participants articulated dissatisfaction with at least one aspect of their appearance. The media messages around beauty are pervasive, causing all ten participants to communicate the beauty standard similarly. The new baddie or slim, thick beauty ideal has been accepted as the latest beauty standard, leaving many young black women to attempt to obtain this look. These beauty ideals are difficult to achieve, and none of the study participants felt that they met the beauty standard they defined that they interpreted from social media use.

Black women feeling that they are not part of Western beauty ideals is not a new phenomenon. Colorism, texturism, and body discrimination disproportionately affect black women. The study data showed that young Black women attempt to conform to societal beauty standards, but this practice harms them. Social media often causes users to compare themselves to others, negatively impacting self-esteem and body image. Black women are the furthest removed from Eurocentric beauty ideals, making it extremely difficult to fit the prescribed standard.

The new beauty standard includes a white or racially ambiguous look, a slim but shapely body that is still thin, and hair and features closer to whiteness. This new beauty standard is still the hardest to attain for Black women, especially ones who are not mixed race. The narrative data analysis revealed that the study participants were happiest with the parts of themselves that fit the ideal and uncomfortable with the features that were the furthest away from it. The participants stated that they were grateful for having lighter skin or straighter hair because it gave them closer proximity to beauty from their perspectives.

Darker-skinned women and those with kinky or coily hair are shown to have the most challenging time negotiating their beauty next to this standard. This group also had the highest expectations on what they must do to be considered beautiful, which includes having particular features and not embracing their natural hair in favor of wigs or weaves when presenting themselves on social media and in real life. The young women who defined themselves as brown or dark-skinned all indicated that they have experienced struggling to see themselves as beautiful due to their skin color. They expressed a struggle between embracing their Blackness and being neglected by the beauty standard they have consumed and accepted from social media.

RQ 3: How does viewing stereotypical images of Black women on social media impact how adolescent Black girls articulate their self-identity?

Stereotypes assign characteristics and behaviors to groups. Black women are stereotyped negatively in many ways, like being seen as hyper-sexual, loud, and angry, for example. Navigating these stereotypes for young black women and trying to determine if they should accept or reject these prescribed stereotypes is challenging. In addition, they are exposed to content on social media that reinforces these stereotypes, which normalizes these behaviors, which many see as unfavorable. During the interviews, the participants were candid about their experiences with negative stereotypes on social media and how it impacted their behaviors and feelings. The analysis of this data seeks to understand how stereotypical media messages on social media affect young black women's articulation of their self-identity.

The study participants shared that they feel embarrassed when they see Black women acting in stereotypical ways on social media. They pointed out that this kind of content is prevalent on social media and acknowledged that social media allows one to create content. This

conversation led to most study participants expressing how much they dislike this type of content and a lack of understanding as to why a Black woman would negatively represent the group.

However, one of the participants spoke of her struggles with rejecting some of the stereotypical behaviors. She acknowledges that she has some traits that are used to stereotype Black women as a whole. While speaking of the stereotypes as unfavorable, she articulated that she simultaneously possesses some of them. This acknowledgment causes her to engage in the practice of code-switching, in which she behaves differently around certain groups of people not to be perceived negatively.

The study participants articulate that they see themselves as black women but were clear to dissociate themselves from being "that" type of black woman. The stereotypical messages consumed through social media have placed a strong desire in the participants not to be included in the negative group. They were able to point out specific behaviors and content types that send out messages that align with the stereotypes associated with Black women. They also essentially condemned these stereotypical portrayals of Black women.

Ultimately, the interviews revealed that late-adolescent Black women are struggling to find a way to articulate their identity. Stereotypical messages about Black women are being consumed rapidly due to social media use. This consumption caused all the study participants to communicate who they were by either indicating that they are not like stereotypes or by suggesting that they engage in code-switching to be perceived negatively in specific spaces or around other groups. This practice speaks to how the consumption of media messages containing stereotypes about Black women affects how they see others and themselves. These negative messages create a need for Black women to filter their identity through these messages when defining themselves.

Black Consonance and Dissonance Theory

Black Consonance and Dissonance Theory by Iris Goode-Middleton emerged from this study. The terms consonance and dissonance are musical terms. Consonance is a term that describes musical notes that are in harmony and blend well. In contrast, dissonance is when the musical notes clash and do not align. Musical consonance “denotes connotations like harmonious, agreeable and stable while dissonance, in turn, infers connotations like disagreeable, unpleasant, and in need of resolution” (Eerola & Lahdelma, 2022, p. 1). These terms signify how Black people feel when they are in harmony, alignment, or agreement with white societal criteria versus the discomfort and discord felt when their appearance and behaviors are dissonant or do not agree with those standards.

Whiteness measures the norms and standards in the United States (Guess, 2006). White supremacy is defined as “a series of characteristics that institutionalize whiteness and Westernness as both normal and superior to other ethnic, racial, regional identities and customs” (Gray, 2019 para.2). This supremacy does not just show up in the lives of Black people only in the form of racism. Whiteness has established what is correct and incorrect in society. Therefore, Black people have to adopt white norms in how they dress, speak, behave, eat, attend shows, and every other aspect of their lives, whether in the company of White people or not. The centering of Whiteness in society also makes beauty standards align with Eurocentric ideals of attractiveness.

Eurocentric beauty standards profoundly impact Black women, influencing how they perceive themselves, how others perceive them, and their overall sense of self-worth (Adams & Stevenson, 2012). These standards, which often prioritize features such as fair skin, straight or wavy hair, and Eurocentric facial features, have historically been promoted as the ideal of beauty in many societies, including through media, advertising, social media, and popular culture. As a

result, Black women often face the pressure to conform to these standards, which can lead to a range of adverse effects on their self-identity and well-being.

Media messages reinforce these ideas about beauty and what is considered correct behavior in society (Mehraj et al., 2014). Black women are forced to assess their level of attractiveness next to a beauty criterion that does not consider or include them that is perpetuated in the media. In addition, white culture sets what is regarded as proper decorum in society as well, which is also shared with the masses through media. This comparison process leaves Black women in a position to have to evaluate their behavior next to what is deemed permissible by white people. The participants in the study expressed the difficulty in finding a way to feel in harmony with themselves due to their internalized measurement of their appearance and conduct next to white criteria that they learned through social media.

In music, dissonance refers to a quality of sound considered unstable, tense, or needing resolution. It is the opposite of consonance, which refers to a quality of sound perceived as stable, harmonious, and in a state of order. Dissonance and consonance are fundamental concepts in music theory and play a significant role in shaping the emotional qualities of music. These terms also demonstrate the emotional experiences of Black people who are taught that what is acceptable in society and that white is desirable through messages communicated by the dominant white society.

Emerging Black consonance and dissonance theory refers to the processes through which Black people assess themselves next to white beauty standards and etiquette learned through media. This developing conceptual theory speaks to how Black people conceptualize the parts of their physical appearance and behaviors that are in harmony with white expectations next to the parts that are in dissonance or do not align with white standards. Black consonance and

dissonance theory asserts that Black people accept and reject parts of themselves based on how they measure up to white standards. In addition, the theory contends that Black people are forced to acknowledge the parts of themselves that are in dissonance with the white norms communicated through media, which puts them in a position first to see those parts of them as rejected by society before learning to accept those parts. The parts of Black people that are in dissonance may not be accepted by the person, leaving them with feelings of unhappiness, embarrassment, inadequacy, and unfulfillment.

In addition, Black Consonance and Dissonance theory posits that exposure to Eurocentric beauty standards contributes to the erasure and marginalization of the diverse beauty found within the Black community. Due to messages communicated in the media, Black women who do not fit the narrow standards prescribed by the beauty standard may experience feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt, or a lack of self-acceptance. These messages that are rooted in White standards about beauty and behavior can lead to internalized racism and colorism, as well as the development of negative body image and self-esteem issues. Additionally, the pervasive nature of Eurocentric beauty ideals can create barriers to self-expression and self-acceptance, as Black women may feel pressured to conform to a standard that does not authentically represent their cultural, ethnic, and racial identity.

Emergent Themes

The participant interviews' narrative data were read thoroughly, coded, and analyzed. The findings directly relate to the research questions by addressing stereotypes and beauty standards and examining beauty standards around body type, skin tone, and hair. Four themes were identified through this research: negotiating stereotypes, the new beauty standard, body image

issues, hair inferiority, and lighter skin vs. darker skin. In addition, social media apps used by the participants and the time spent on social media will be discussed.

The first theme of negotiating stereotypes focuses on the stereotypical portrayals of Black women identified by the participants. In addition, this theme also navigates how Black women embrace or reject these stereotypes when articulating who they are as Black women. The second theme, the new beauty standard, describes how social media has modified the current beauty ideal that diverges from the All American Beauty, characterized by long blond hair, blue eyes, white skin, and very thin. The third theme, body image issues, details the body surveillance that the participants experience due to their social media use. The fourth theme, hair inferiority, processes how social media influences how the participants speak about their hair. Lastly, the theme of lighter skin vs. darker skin discusses how their social media use processes messages around Black women's skin tone.

Emerging Black consonance and dissonance theory will be employed to explore the study participants' experiences. Black people can be very phenotypically diverse, and this diversity of physical appearance causes them to experience the world differently based on their looks. The way the participants express their feelings when they are in harmony vs. discord with Eurocentric behavioral norms and beauty standards gives insights into emerging Black consonance and dissonance theory.

Social Media Sites Used and Time Spent

All of the participants used Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Only 3 used Facebook, and two also used Snapchat. The time spent on social media was varied. Five of the participants stated that they spent 4 to 6 hours. The study participants mainly indicated that they spent too much time on social media regardless of how many hours they spent utilizing the apps. While

discussing their social media use, I was given several responses that indicated that several of the study participants felt that the amount of time they spend on social media is problematic. The participants interestingly felt the need to explain or showed shame around their time on social media by saying they knew it was too much time spent or looking embarrassed to say the number of hours.

Naomi stated, "I'm going to be honest, I spend like 12 to 14 hours on social media". Iman shared, "I spend seven to eight hours daily on social media. Don't judge me, please; I know I know". Veronica commented, "I've cut down a lot this semester to only about 4 to 5 hours. It was at like eight to ten before". Beverly revealed, "I think I am addicted to TikTok. I usually spend a minimum of 10 hours a day. I scroll all day and before I fall asleep". Slick said, "I'll be honest about how many hours a day I spend on social media. It is a lot, at least seven or eight hours". She immediately looked down, ashamed of her social media usage.

Negotiating Stereotypes

The first theme, negotiating stereotypes, examines how young Black women perceive content on social media through a lens that identifies how Black women are portrayed on social media. The prevailing societal stereotypes of Black women include the gold-digger, Jezebel, and single mother (Giannio & China, 2017). The following statements by the participants speak to the theme of negotiating stereotypes. Winnie said:

They often portray images that make **Black** women not be the beauty ideal. Black women are also shown on social media as inappropriate, ghetto, ratchet, sloppy, late, messy, and other times, they're shown as inspirational and beautiful. Still, unfortunately, the negative is shown more than the positive.

The participants spoke about the harmful tropes that have been attached to Black women since enslavement became common on social media. The bougie stereotype is a newer stereotype that reflects Black women who have attained education and monetary success in a negative light.

Precious stated, "I see black women on social media stereotyped as bitter, uneducated, a stereotype I have seen recently is bougie or too good for everybody and also bad mothers." These statements align with the four main stereotypes assigned to black women: the Mammy, the Sapphire (angry and loud), The Jezebel (hyper-sexual), and the matriarch (Sivasubramaniam, 2017). The bougie stereotype is a newer stereotype given to Black women who are perceived as stuck up or thinking she is better than others. This stereotype suggests that Black women should be criticized for achieving financial success and access to life without struggle because they look down on others, not on their socioeconomic level.

There is a negotiation process that Black women engage in that shapes their identity but is rooted in Eurocentric ideals of what is right and wrong in society regarding behavior, presentation, and communication. This understanding often leads to code-switching, which makes Black women adjust their behaviors in specific ways to align more with socially accepted norms. This phenomenon seems to impact college-educated black young adults the most, with 48% saying they feel the need to change how they act and speak around other racial groups compared to 37% of non-college-educated black people (Dunn, 2019). All participants are college, which the data infers will make them more prone to code-switching. There was also a sense of having to make an effort to avoid being seen as any of the negative stereotypes. Iman stated:

I am an educated Black woman. I am not loud and ghetto. I conduct myself properly and know how to speak. It annoys me the way Black women are shown on social media

because its often the worst kinds of representations of who we are. There are plenty of educated and classy Black women.

The participants expressed the use of education to distance themselves from stereotypes. The desire to gain education to reduce being stereotyped by Black women is an example of using education to be in consonance with what is socially acceptable. It also exhibits the discomfort felt toward Black representations that are in dissonance with white standards of behavior. Pat shared:

I see us looking ghetto in the sense of just being ignorant on social media, using profanity, and stuff like that. They are more interested in street credibility as opposed to academic credibility, for lack of a better term. I work hard daily to make sure I am a positive representation of black women and not feed into the stereotypes.

The representation of Black women made the study participants feel as if those stereotypes are how they are viewed in society by others. The participants explained their rejection of those deemed to be in dissonance or acting in Black stereotypical manners and the pressure they feel to achieve consonance by not behaving in the way they have accepted as negative. Tyra said:

The images I see on social media make me feel like the world already has a preconceived notion of how I'm going to be. It kind of puts that pressure on me to not be that way, and then sometimes, depending on what type of Black woman I am and, it makes me feel embarrassed.

A dissonance happens when Black young women naturally align with stereotypes of black women. The Sapphire stereotype portrays Black women as loud, angry, and combative. Naomi remarked:

I know that I am a bit more boisterous and outspoken when, I guess, it sort of makes me sort of the stereotype. I don't know if that is a good or a bad thing. I will see black women who act like me and think I need to do better.

These statements suggest that some young Black women feel a conscious responsibility to separate themselves from stereotypes associated with them. Through the lens of identity negotiation theory, we see the study participants identifying behaviors attributed to them as a group and struggling to see what parts of them they accept and which they reject to establish themselves as individuals who are also female and Black. In addition, it reflects the desire to achieve consonance by 'fixing' the behaviors that are dissonant with societal behavioral norms.

The study participants reveal that social media representation of Black women further negative stereotypes. The Jezebel stereotype is the idea that black women are more sexual than other women. This stereotype often causes media representations of Black women to be over-sexualized and objectified. White women have been portrayed as the personification of modesty and self-respect, while Black women have been shown as innately promiscuous, lewd, and seductive (Pilgrim, 2023). This Jezebel stereotype is highly present on social media, with many Black women choosing to represent themselves in this manner online.

According to Alek, "Black women are over-sexualized on social media. On TikTok, I notice that they also over-exaggerate and act extra and loud for the camera. It's like they feed into the stereotypes for views". Users often post their content to social media, which causes some confusion as to why some Black women would choose to represent themselves sexually online.

Veronica commented:

I know that there is a stereotype of Black women being jezebels, but we are doing it to ourselves at this point. You can be anything on social media. You literally can curate your

identity, and you choose to be online twerking, half-naked, just being an object for like.

In some cases, money, but it still doesn't make it right.

These are more examples of dissonance with society's standards, and the discomfort felt when Black women behave in ways that agree with negative stereotypes. The participants have adopted and internalized Westernized beauty ideals and societal norms. Their internalization of beauty standards influences how they see themselves and the Black women they encounter on social media.

The New Beauty Standard

During the interview process, it became clear that a new beauty standard has emerged from social media use. Historically, in the United States, the beauty standard of the All-American beauty archetype was a thin white woman with blonde hair and blue eyes. Social media use has created a new stereotype that has shifted with the popularity of Kim Kardashian and Instagram models, whose popularity has moved the beauty norm. The latest beauty ideal was shared repeatedly during the interviews with slight variances. This new beauty standard, in particular, while still heavily leaning toward Eurocentric beauty ideals, also adopts racial ambiguity, unrealistic body proportions, normalizing of plastic surgery, and changes rapidly while maintaining the same aspects of the ideal of smaller bodies, lighter skin and longer hair that is curly, wavy or straight.

Alek spoke to this ability for the beauty standard to change on social media while remaining similar to its roots. She stated, "Beauty standards on social media change a lot. In some seasons, it's thin and white; in other seasons, it's thicker and light skin, but one thing that remains the same is the closest to white is the beauty standard, and that's not me, a dark-skinned, heavier-set black woman". The proximity to whiteness holds as a prevailing beauty standard that

gate keeps beauty from Black women, especially darker-skinned ones. Plastic surgery has been normalized through social media. Tyra commented:

Augmented bodies are what I see, so umm, usually I see like plastic surgery stuff heavy on social media: big butts, big boobs, makeup with high cheekbones. Nothings real. Lighter skin, almost white but not white, wavy, or curly hair texture. The body is, I wouldn't say, skinny; it's more like slim, thick with bigger thighs and a really small waist. I don't see like natural hip dips and things like that. It's usually super curvy, curvy, curvy.

The participants speak of changing beauty standards. However, that standard still holds to its roots in Whiteness in all versions. The participants describe features that are not phenotypically Black.

Pat had a similar statement:

Beauty on social media is racially ambiguous, lighter skin for us and tanned for white people. Women have to have like 3C or 3B curly hair, makeup on all dolled up with lash extensions, skinny but still curvy the BBL (Brazilian Butt Lift); it sure is kind of dying, thank God, but it still not much of an hourglass but more like a pear shape, full boobs, tiny waist but a nice sized butt.

This statement expresses the same sediments as the others. However, Pat speaks of the larger behinds as going out of style. This point exemplifies how body features associated with Black women can be made as trends for white women. Naomi shared:

The models on social media seem so tall and perfectly proportioned. They have to be slim regardless of race but not skinny with beautiful eyes that are blue or green or a lighter hue. Those eyes pop more. Small noses. People are getting plastic surgery to make their

noses smaller and lips bigger. Eyebrows were a big trend. The trends make it hard, longer lashes, big butt but not too big.

The study participants describe beauty in a similar way, adjacent to past ideals but distinct from the All-American blue-eyed, blonde hair of the past. The new beauty standard on social media is referred to as Baddies.

Veronica said, “The baddie body is really the standard. Baddies have a big chest, bigger hips, nice butt, small waist. The slim, thick body is really what everyone wants. You don't want to be fat, but skinny is bad too.” Precious also gave a similar beauty ideal stating, “On social media, you see a lot of racially ambiguous thick girls with big breasts, small waists, and butts and hips. You know, a baddie.”

The term baddie is well-established and used by the study participants. They understand the term and accept it as the desired body type. Interestingly, it is also acknowledged that the ‘baddie’ body is not a typical common body type. In addition to surgery, body shapers are used to obtain the silhouette. Winne shared:

Everybody wants the baddie body when it's not even a very common body type for anyone to have. You have to wear waist trainers or shapewear to get that small waist-to-big hip and butt ratio. So many girls are getting surgery to have it, and influencers on social media will play in your face and act like they got their bodies from the gym. No love, you got it on the surgery table.

The beauty standard on social media has morphed into a racially ambiguous presentation that still leans toward whiteness and lighter skin being more desirable. The body of this new standard is often augmented with garments or surgery to be curvy, with emphasis placed on hips and butts while the waist remains smaller than what would be normal proportions. On these bodies' full

lips are embraced but not large noses. Hair that is 4C or kinky is not the standard, with the preference being wavy and curly textures. This new beauty standard does diverge from the All-American beauty standard that has existed for decades. However, it is still rooted in Eurocentric ideals while borrowing certain features that are associated with black women, like full lips and larger hips and butts.

Body Image Issues

Several studies show that social media use can negatively impact how young women view themselves. Naomi shared:

Every time I go on Instagram or social media in general, it just makes my insecurities about my body skyrocket. I see girls with bodies that are nothing like mine. I feel so skinny, and it's frustrating. I don't feel like a woman.

The research has shown that social media use increases body dissatisfaction (Rollero, 2022). Social media use leads to social comparison, which makes people assess themselves next to others. Veronica remarked:

Sometimes, I just wish I could look like [the women on social media]. I know I never will, and it makes me a little sad and insecure; other times, I am like all I have to do is show a little more skin, but I don't want to pose sexy or do things like that just for attention.

Other participants shared the same feeling of inadequacy next to the beauty standards they see on social media. Precious commented:

I wish I were a little taller so, like, my body would kind of even out because I don't really have a torso. I feel smushed together. The girls on my feed are nicely proportioned with long legs and perfect bodies.

The young women in the study engaged in social comparison. Beverly also shared, "Social media content makes me insecure about my body. It definitely makes me feel like I am not the standard." Alek shared, "I would definitely want my stomach to be a little flatter, actually a lot flatter. When I see pictures on social media, the girls have very toned bodies, and I want that". The young women expressed dissatisfaction with their bodies, which are dissonant with Westernized beauty standards.

Popular advertisers on social media also contribute to the negative feelings they have about their bodies due to the choices in models used in their campaigns. Iman commented:

You look at these women like the Fashion Nova models in the ads on social media or the Instagram influencers with their curvy bodies, perfect hair, and faces, and if you look in the comments, you will see girls saying, like, Oh, I wish I looked like that, or I'd do anything to look like that. I mean, we all want those bodies.

Images on social media are often altered. Many applications allow users to edit their photos to change their appearance. Filters can adjust a person's appearance in Live photographs and live videos. This ability can give those who use these editing applications issues as they cannot achieve how they look on social media in real life. Winnie shared, "I have scars on my body. I saw the filters first on Snapchat, but TikTok has some great ones, too. They let me see what I could look like without them, and I wish I looked like that all the time in real life".

Plastic surgery makes it difficult to know if a person on social media looks the way they do naturally or if they have achieved their looks with surgery. Many influencers do not disclose that they have had plastic surgery and will monetize their bodies by selling products and classes to achieve their bodies that they did not create through those means. Pat remarked, "I see there are a lot of plastic Black girls nowadays on social media. Every Black girl woman on social

media wants to look like Kim Kardashian. They get their butt done, their stomach done, boobs done. Everyone has hair extensions, color contacts just fake”.

The participants speak of the inability to determine natural or augmented beauty on social media. Beverly quipped, "Plastics don't affect me, but I am inspired by the fitness people who work for the body. It makes me want to get up and go to the gym. But honestly, I think some of them have had work done on their bodies too, so you don't know if you should go to the doctor first, then the gym to maintain it".

Hair inferiority

Veronica stated, "I have always been bullied for my hair, so I want a looser curl pattern. My skin is light, but my hair is kinky." This statement speaks to the idea that while the participant has some proximity to the new beauty standard due to having light skin, she feels removed from it by her kinkier hair texture, a Black trait. At the same time, others express joy for their wavy or looser curl patterns. Beverly shared, "I was always told I had good hair. I may have brown skin, but my hair is soft and long, so it's considered pretty, but not my skin". These two statements speak to the participants feeling privileged to have attained some of the beauty ideas on social media and expressing conflicted feelings about the parts of themselves that do not align with it. The statements show the acceptance of the parts of their bodies that are in consonance with the beauty standards and the difficulty with the parts that are dissonant.

Social media can show young Black women content that affirms and celebrates them. Some of the participants shared their experiences with this type of content. Alek remarked:

I had my hair straightened a lot when I was a kid. I never had it permed, but it was hot combed often. I grew up thinking that there was something wrong with my hair in its natural state. TikTok will show you the type of content that you look at more frequently

due to its algorithm. I watched a video about natural hair, and it led me to videos about locs. I decided to lock my hair not because I thought that locking my hair would make me pretty again or pretty, but I locked it to force myself to remember that I do not have to conform to Eurocentric standards of beauty. I am still on the journey of embracing my hair and myself, but I promised myself that I will never conform.

There is space on social media for black women to be celebrated, but it seems to be still challenging for those with darker skin or kinkier hair to have spaces to be celebrated. Slick retorted:

Girls with straighter hair textures have hijacked the natural hair movement. That was once positive. But now, the girls with 3C hair or straighter are acting as if they are oppressed by their hair, which, at least in the black community, was always considered good hair because it's closer to white people's hair. Social media has all kinds of tutorials trying to convince girls with 4c naps hair that this product or technique will make our hair look like theirs, and it never will. It's mad wack.

The young women studied suggest that social media use shapes how Black hair is perceived and how it should be worn. "Social media gives two views of hair. There is either a more natural look where you embrace your hair or on the other side where you see hair extensions and lace front wigs," Naomi shared. Tyra's experience furthers this concept:

My hair texture is a 4b. It's pretty kinky but still kind of loose. Social media makes me want to keep my hair in more protective styles like braids, sew-ins, clip-ins, and lace front wigs. I don't wear my natural hair out often. Nobody wears their natural hair; like Cardi B, for instance, wears a lot of wigs and weaves, but when she takes her hair out, it's

very long underneath. Social media influenced me to keep my hair in protective styles for growth.

Social media has spaces for all hair types and offers ways to style and maintain it. Pat explained, "My hair is too much to deal with. It's too thick and nappy. I never wear it out. It's giving braided, weaved, faux locks, lace fronts". Slick explains, "I wear my natural hair in braids, puffs, Afros. It grows out of my head this way. I find cute ways to style it on my TikTok. To keep it real, I don't need other people to like my hair. I like it, and that's good enough for me. You do you, and I do me". These perspectives show how kinkier hair, which is dissonant, can be rejected and not worn out. The young Black woman who chooses to wear her natural hair acknowledges that it is in dissonance with society and is forced to push through that understanding to accept her hair.

The participants shared that the standard for hair does not align with kinky hair, which is part of the Black phenotype. Social media use by these participants reinforces the good hair trope, making those with thicker, kinky hair feel that their hair is inferior. Hair straighter in texture or loose curls is considered the most desirable. The participants with straighter hair openly expressed appreciation for their hair, while those with kinkier textures shared that they attempted to love their hair but struggled. This mindset is shown in a reluctance to wear their natural hair out, choosing to leave it in braids, weaves, or wigs.

Lighter skin vs. Darker skin

Like what was stated about Black hair, social media also finds space to celebrate black women's skin. Alek shared, "Social media makes me feel great about my melanin. I see beautiful brown women". Beverley agreed, "I've started to see an improvement where there's more inclusion for darker complexions like my own. I've seen darker-skinned women uplifted in a way

very differently on TikTok, and my algorithm is sending me more content that represents me. It makes me feel good. I can't lie".

However, the same issue exists in this space when comparing darker skin to lighter skin. The participants with lighter skin, which is in consonance with the beauty ideals, showed an appreciation for their skin color. In contrast, when speaking about darker skin, the participants acknowledge that it is in dissonance with the beauty standard and have to work through that to accept and appreciate their skin. Naomi stated, "I love my dark skin now, but it took me a long time. Most of the girls I saw being called beautiful didn't look like me, and they were lighter with straighter hair, so I felt ugly. My content did help me start to embrace myself, but it is still there on your feed that dark skin is pretty, but light skin is prettier." Veronica reinforces this notion, stating, "Social media doesn't make me feel bad about my skin because I'm light-skinned. I don't know what dark-skinned women go through like it doesn't happen to me, so it's just like that's one less thing for me to be insecure about."

There is also a presumed higher standard for darker-skinned women to be attributed as beautiful on social media, according to the study participants. Tyra shared, "If you are a dark-skinned girl, you have to be over-the-top beautiful for people to consider them attractive. Like everything has to be done, the hair, the nails, makeup, the body, and a long weave or wig". This sediment is continued by Naomi, "there has been a shift on my TikTok where I am seeing more darker skinned women. However, these women still fit into what would be considered top-of-the-line pretty. I see some regular girls like me, too, but not as many."

The participants shared that social media praises some attributes of Black women, especially when they are present on non-Black women. Winnie said,

The girls from other racial groups on social media will use lip filler like Kylie Jenner. Those lips are usually on black women. Ryan Destiny is a perfect example of what a dark-skinned black woman has to look like to be considered beautiful. She has those full lips naturally but a small nose, smooth skin, and straight, long hair. I don't see many wide-nose black women being put up on a pedestal. I don't think I have seen any with like a prominent nose popularized as beautiful.

The higher beauty standard for darker Black women is present on social media, according to the participants. Precious stated,

Skin tone matters. If you are dark-skinned, then you have to be flawless, even skin, a small button nose, no pimples or acne, and makeup done. If you are light-skinned, you are the cream of the crop; you don't have to have the best face, and if you have 4c hair, you just can't wear it out.

In addition to higher physical attributes, there was also an increased need to be sexualized for darker-skinned women to be seen as desirable, according to the participants. Alek shared, "Usually we as black women, especially for darker skinned black women, in order for us to be found attractive, we have to be a bit more sensual, show more skin, act trashy or promiscuous." The Jezebel stereotype of being hyper-sexual is often attributed to Black women. The participants speak about seeing Black women depicting themselves in this manner on social media. Iman declared:

Colorism is real. I can see all the female rappers on my line. They all talk about the same ratchet, over-sexualized things. I notice Cardi B, Latto, Glorilla, Nikki, Ice Spice even Saweetie don't get the same hate as Meg. Even JT of the City Girls don't get the same

love as Yung Miami, and they are in the same group. They all get dragged, but the darker women get dragged more.

Beauty standards set the ideal around what is considered attractive and desirable. The American beauty standard valued blonde-haired, blue-eyed, white-thin women. This beauty standard puts Black women on the opposite side of beauty because their natural phenotype often is the furthest from this ideal than other racial and ethnic groups. Today's society has been pushing the idea of developing a more inclusive and diverse way of seeing beauty. However, while it has changed, the beauty standard still exists in society.

All of the study participants shared that they spent a minimum of four hours on social media sites. Research has shown that high levels of social media use can cause body dissatisfaction in young women (Jiotsa et al., 2021). The study participants used the most popular social networking sites: Instagram and TikTok. Both allow for large consumption of media messages as users scroll through their feeds. This use has given the participants a shared view of the current beauty standard as interpreted through social media.

The participants in the study described a new standard of beauty that they have adopted from seeing social media content. There was a similarity to what they all described as the current beauty standard. This new social media-driven beauty standard is one of women with light skin or who look racially ambiguous. The body ideal is one that was referred to as slim thick, or the baddie body. This body type has full breasts, an exaggerated small waist, full hips, and a medium-sized butt. Curly and wavy hair texture that is long and not kinky or coily meets this new beauty standard. Lastly, the nose should be small, with full lips that are clear and smooth to meet the social media beauty standard.

The participants acknowledged that the social media beauty standard often requires augmentation. This ideal can be achieved through make-up, hair extensions, photo editing, filters, body shapewear, and plastic surgery. While some shared that they knew these looks were unnatural, each still desired to achieve a look closer to the standard. All ten study participants stated variations of this definition of beauty, indicating that social media use is powerful in shaping how Black young women articulate what is beautiful.

Black women exist within an intersection of identities. They are female and black and consist of other aspects of who they are, like ethnicity and sexuality. Social media use communicates a distorted view of beauty to young Black women (Sukamtp et al., 2019). Editing, filters, make-up, and even plastic surgery are often used to create a curated version of a person. These practices have become very normalized and blur the line between reality and the fabrication of who young women are and who they desire to be. Changing one's appearance in a photo or video can cause dissatisfaction with who a person is in real life when there is no ability to tweak or change their appearance (Kleemans et al., 2016).

All the study participants articulated dissatisfaction with at least one aspect of their appearance. The media messages around beauty are pervasive, causing all ten participants to communicate the beauty standard similarly. The new baddie or slim thick beauty ideal has been accepted as the new beauty standard, leaving many young black women to attempt to obtain this look. These beauty ideals are difficult to achieve, and none of the study participants felt that they met the beauty standard they defined that they interpreted from social media use.

Black women feeling that they are not part of Western beauty ideals is not a new phenomenon. Colorism, texturism, and body discrimination disproportionately affect black women (Patton, 2006). The study data showed that young Black women attempt to conform to

societal beauty standards, but this practice harms them. Social media often causes users to compare themselves to others, which has been shown to negatively impact self-esteem and body image (Howard et al., 2017). Black women are the furthest removed from Eurocentric beauty ideals, making it extremely difficult for them to fit the prescribed standard.

The new beauty standard includes a white or racially ambiguous look, a slim but shapely body that is still thin, and hair and features closer to whiteness. This new beauty standard is still the hardest to attain for Black women, especially those of mixed race. The narrative data analysis revealed that the study participants were happiest with the parts of themselves that fit the ideal and uncomfortable with the features that were the furthest away from it. The participants stated that they were grateful for having lighter skin or straighter hair because it gave them closer proximity to beauty from their perspectives.

Darker-skinned women and those with kinky or coily hair are shown to have the most challenging time negotiating their beauty next to this standard. This group also had the highest expectations on what they must do to be considered beautiful, which includes having particular features and not embracing their natural hair in favor of wigs or weaves when presenting themselves on social media and in real life. The young women who defined themselves as brown or dark-skinned all indicated that they have experienced struggling to see themselves as beautiful due to their skin color. They expressed a struggle between embracing their blackness and being neglected by the beauty standard they have consumed and accepted from social media.

Stereotypes assign characteristics and behaviors to groups. Black women are stereotyped negatively in many ways, like being seen as hyper-sexual, loud, and angry. Navigating these stereotypes for young black women and trying to determine if they should accept or reject these prescribed stereotypes is challenging. In addition, they are exposed to content on social media

that reinforces these stereotypes, which normalizes these behaviors, which many see as unfavorable. During the interviews, the participants were candid about their experiences with negative stereotypes on social media and how it impacted their behaviors and feelings. The analysis of this data seeks to gain an understanding of how stereotypical media messages on social media affect young black women's articulation of their self-identity.

The study participants shared that they feel a sense of embarrassment when they see Black women acting in stereotypical ways on social media. The participants pointed out that this kind of content is prevalent on social media. They also acknowledged that social media allows one the space to create their own content. This ability led to most study participants expressing how much they dislike this type of content and a lack of understanding of why a Black woman would represent the group negatively.

However, one of the participants spoke of her struggles with rejecting some of the stereotypical behaviors. She acknowledges that she has some traits that are used to stereotype Black women as a whole. While speaking of the stereotypes as unfavorable, she articulated that she simultaneously possesses some of them. This acknowledgment causes her to engage in the practice of code-switching, in which she behaves differently around certain groups of people not to be perceived negatively.

The study participants articulate that they see themselves as black women but were clear to dissociate themselves from being "that" type of black woman. The stereotypical messages consumed through social media have placed a strong desire in the participants not to be included in the negative group. They were able to point out specific behaviors and content types that send out messages that align with the stereotypes associated with Black women. They also largely condemned these stereotypical portrayals of Black women.

Ultimately, the interviews revealed that late-adolescent Black women are struggling to find a way to articulate their identity. Stereotypical messages about Black women are being consumed rapidly due to social media use. This exposure caused all of the study participants to communicate who they were by either indicating that they are not like stereotypes or by indicating that they engage in code-switching to be perceived negatively in certain spaces or around other groups of people. This behavior speaks to how the consumption of media messages containing stereotypes about Black women affects how they see others and themselves. These negative messages create a need for Black women to filter their identity through these messages when defining themselves.

Overall, the findings show that social media messages are powerful and, from this research, are pervasive in how Black women see their beauty next to this message. The research study found that the participants spoke of beauty in a manner that leaned into Eurocentric ideas. All participants articulated the beauty standard in variations of similar ideals. The beauty standard described is racially ambiguous and pulls some features posed by Black women that are a modification of the previous blonde hair, blue-eyed, skinny white woman. The new beauty standard adopted from social media, while still rooted in Eurocentrism, prescribes tanned white skin or white skin, a curly or straight hair texture that is not skinny, and a body that is thin but with an exaggerated trim waistline along with full hips and buttocks.

None of the participants expressed that they were or felt beautiful. There was also an acceptance or pride in their features that made them feel closer to the beauty standards set by social media. Darker skin tones and kinky and coily hair types were stated by all to be the least desirable traits in accordance with the messages seen in social media content. The participants all desired to change things about themselves to align more with the images of beauty they digest

from social media. The responses suggest that social media content influences how Black females see the world and themselves in late adolescence.

Lastly, emerging Black consonance and dissonance theory infers that young Black women accept that parts of their physical appearance and behaviors that align with White beauty ideals and norms and experience discomfort and difficulty accepting the parts that do not align. The study participants measured their attractiveness and behavior next to standards derived from Whiteness. The young women expressed feeling grateful or happy with the parts of themselves that aligned most with the standards set by Whiteness. There was a rejection of Black physical features and stereotypical behaviors shared by the participants. Features like darker skin, kinkier hair, and behaviors like speaking loud were acknowledged as being seen as less than or negative. While some of the young women did embrace their physical characteristics and behaviors that are in dissonance with Whiteness, they all acknowledged that they had to learn to accept those parts of themselves. There is a complex relationship between Blackness and Whiteness where Black people are forced to unlearn White norms to accept who they are without filtering themselves through a White lens.

Limitations of the Study

Narrative qualitative studies provide compelling data from participants' experiences and perspectives. However, there are limitations when narrative inquiries and qualitative research approaches are employed. Narrative studies use small sample sizes. Ten participants, all of the same race and gender, attend the same university. The small sample size increases the chances that the study results would be difficult to duplicate with a different population and sample.

The study focuses on how social media affects Black young women's perception of beauty and self-identity. It does not take into account how other types of media would influence

their perspectives. The study participants shared their accounts based on their social media use. However, there is no way to isolate how messages from social media alone impact the responses because participants also consume messages from other media sources.

Narrative studies use the subjects' stories and ideas as the data. Because the accounts are self-reported, the trustworthiness of the data can be limited. Despite this, using a narrative approach allows for the words of the study participants, which is necessary to understand their experiences and interpret the messages about beauty and stereotypes of Black women on social media.

Lastly, the study focuses on social media as a whole. Social media platforms are very diverse, which could change how their content influences young Black women's beauty ideals and self-perception. Multiple social media applications could potentially affect young Black women differently. Examining the phenomenon with specific social media platforms can give more specific insights into how each platform impacts young Black women individually.

Implications

The study explored how social media use influences young Black women's perceptions of beauty and self-identity. The data gathered from this study adds more valuable insights into how social media use by young women impacts how they define beauty and themselves. The study has implications that will add to the theoretical implications that are valuable for further research. The practical implications explain ways the information gained from the study can be utilized to understand the studied demographic, which can be useful to parents, educators, scholars, and companies.

Theoretical

The theoretical implications framed the analysis of the study's data. The study sought to uncover the relationship between the consumption of social media messages about beauty as a Black female and how it impacts how Black young women articulate what beauty is for them. The theoretical framework for the study includes the identity-negotiation theory and Black feminist standpoint theory. An individual's standpoint is where they gain their world perspective based on the person's societal position. The theory is linked to feminist thought surrounding the position of women in systems of power (Rhodes, 2016). Black Feminist Standpoint theory allows for the narratives of Black women to be considered in terms of how gender and race influence their lives (Collins, 2000). The participants' voices were centric on the analysis and offered many perspectives about Black women and the media messages they see on social media.

The lens of Black Feminist Standpoint theory helped guide a nuanced understanding of the experiences of young Black women and social media use. The study findings suggest that while Black women have a voice in society, they are still left filtering their thoughts and perceptions through Eurocentric ideals of appropriateness and attractiveness. The participants in the study are, through their own words, left assessing their beauty and self-identity next to beauty standards that are aligned to whiteness communicated to them through social media. The participants' narratives broadly show that their being Black and female dramatically influences how they see the world as well as how it sees them, which, in turn, through stereotypes and beauty standards in social media content, forces them to negotiate who they are next to these messages. The findings show that from the standpoint of this group of young Black women, social media use, while in some cases can challenge, most often reinforces Eurocentric cultural norms and beauty ideals.

Identity negotiation theory was also employed as a foundation for the study. Identity formation is a complex process that a person forms from many things. Identity negotiation theory refers to the intersection of identities that make up who a person is (Ting-Toomey, 2015). Culture, race, ethnicity, social class, gender, and education are components of identity that comprise a person's identity (Ting-Toomey, 2012). Identity negotiation theory informed how to analyze the narrative data shared in the study. The young Black women in the study struggled with developing who they were next to social media messages about beauty and representations of Black women. The data suggests that this impacts how study participants behave as they strive to, in most cases, be what they deem as positive representations of Black women. There is a complex process of deciding which aspects of what is understood about the components of identities of an individual and how much of that one will incorporate and accept into who they are.

The study aligns with Black feminist standpoint by centering Black women in the study and allowing their perspectives to be shared. The information gained from Black women has provided knowledge that is vital to the construction of advocacy to address how the ideas of beauty and stereotypical representation of Black women on social media is harmful to their self-identity and self-esteem. The nuanced collection of the participants' shared experiences highlights the need for Black women's standpoint due to their unique connection through race, gender, and oppression. The discussion in this study reveals how Black culture-specific issues of colorism, texturism, and stereotypes, along with general concepts like sizism and beauty ideals on social media, are experienced through the lens of Black women.

This study delved into the consequences of young Black women's consumption of beauty standards and stereotypes on social media. Black women are marginalized based on their race

and gender. The prevailing societal messages attempt to devalue Black women compared to other racial groups by making them feel inadequate in meeting the beauty ideal and societal etiquette. The voices of the Black women interviewed gave insight into the study's goals. The findings show that social media messages are pervasive and can influence how Black young women define beauty and form their self-identity.

Black Consonance and Dissonance Theory

Understanding the emerging theory of Black Consonance and Dissonance involves acknowledging and critically examining how historical power dynamics and racial hierarchies shape societal norms, cultural expectations, and systemic structures. Black Consonance and Dissonance theory by Goode-Middleton has emerged from this study. The theory of Black Consonance and Dissonance is an exploration of the process that Black people experience as they strive to make social, behavioral, and physical decisions next to the standards set by whiteness communicated through media. The theory asserts that Black people are forced to filter their perceptions of what is deemed appropriate, beautiful, and acceptable through the pervasive messages transmitted through the dominant culture of the society, which is whiteness. This process causes Black people to be forced to contend with the process of the rejection or acceptance of their looks and behaviors by first knowing the consonance, or things that align with whiteness, next to the things that are in dissonance or misaligned with whiteness. This process results in a feeling of incongruence or discomfort before finding harmony with the parts of their racial and cultural identity that are not aligned with the standards put in place for Black people by white society.

There is a continual process of comparison and contrast between the experiences, cultural norms, and societal expectations associated with being Black in a predominantly white society.

This filtering through the White and Black ideals impacts how Black people choose to communicate verbally, physically, and socially, being forced to make decisions on the appropriateness and acceptance of their existence. Race relations, social dynamics, cultural representation, and racism all shape the context of the experience of Black people in the United States, which includes gender for Black women. This study examined how the beauty standards communicated on social media that are aligned with traditional Eurocentric beauty standards leave young Black women to see themselves next to these messages about desirability and marginalized representations of Black beauty.

However, other relevant Black experiences can also be studied through emerging Black Consonance and Dissonance theory. Black cultural norms, values, social expectations, and stereotypes can all be examined through the lens of Black Consonance and Dissonance theory. There is a juxtaposition of cultural norms and values within Black communities and the dominant white culture. The co-existence of these two norms is one of the challenges faced by Black people who are forced to reconcile their cultural identities with societal expectations that are rooted in white norms. This duality is compounded by the navigation of stereotypes and bias associated with being Black in a society where white standards of behavior are deemed appropriate and correct.

The data analysis found during this study led to the emergence of Goode-Middleton's Black Consonance and Dissonance theory. The repeated patterns found in the participants' responses showed a connection between what is deemed acceptable through the standard of Whiteness that Black young women must filter through as they make decisions of how to evaluate themselves in terms of both beauty and conduct. The data showed that features that are more aligned with Whiteness were often seen as desirable or better than those connected to

Black identity. For example, most of the young Black women in the study found hair textures that are curly or straight to be better than the kinkier textures of hair that some Black people have. Some of the study participants showed appreciation for their hair. However, after first feeling as if it were unattractive, they learned to embrace their natural hair by rejecting traditional beauty standards communicated through the media. The same phenomenon was found when assessing what correct behavior in society is for young Black women, with some aligning to Eurocentric standards and others acting in opposition to these mandates but still communicating feelings of uneasiness or incorrectness in the decision to do so.

Goode-Middleton's emerging Black Consonance and Dissonance theory is significant to understanding the process of what Black people experience in a White-dominated society. The theory can be impactful in the field of communication scholarship focuses on how Black people filter messages from various channels through racialized, gendered, and social status lenses, continually making decisions on what is acceptable based on eurocentric messaging that is pervasive in society. Black Consonance and Dissonance theory can also have interdisciplinary implications due to its ability to be applied to psychology, sociology, education, and many other fields.

Practical

The findings of this research on the impact of social media on how young Black women in late adolescence articulate identity have many practical applications that are important for both academia and society. The study substantiates the need for more focus on social media use and how it affects Black women and all groups of people who consume content on social media.

Mental Health and Well-Being for Young Women

The information gained from the research can benefit educators and parents who want to teach young Black women about the possible implications of their social media use. The insights gained from the study show that social media use impacts how young Black women perceive beauty and their accessibility to being beautiful. This information is essential to explain to young women how beauty messaging makes them see others and themselves. In addition, stereotypical content has been shown to put pressure on young Black women in this study to separate themselves from the negative representations of Black women. The insights gained from this research can help foster self-esteem and promote healthy relationships with young women and social media. These discoveries are important information for psychologists, educators, and parents to know in order to assist young women in navigating establishing healthy attitudes about who they are without measuring themselves against stereotypical ideas about Black womanhood.

The findings of the study suggest that social media use can have both positive and negative impacts on self-identity development in Black young women. The use of social media is exceptionally high for young women in current times. Social media companies can utilize the information in this study to find ways to make their platforms have less of a negative impact on young Black women regarding how they see beauty and their self-identity. Previous studies have shown that social media is harmful to young women. This knowledge from prior studies and this one can inform the development of interventions and support services tailored to address challenges faced by young Black women exacerbated by social media use.

As a practical implication, parents, educators, and mental health professionals should prioritize digital literacy programs and interventions to promote healthy social media habits and improve young Black women's well-being. Understanding how young Black women engage with

social media platforms can inform initiatives to promote digital literacy and online safety. In addition, parents and educators should also engage with young Black women to assist them in navigating social media to discover positive content for them. These initiatives could involve workshops, information sessions, and guidance for adults who play a role in young Black women's lives.

Parents, youth organizations, and educators can encourage the balanced use of technology and share the adverse effects of young adults' social media consumption. Insights from the study can be used to inform educational initiatives that focus on media literacy, critical thinking, and self-affirmation for Black girls. These initiatives can help individuals navigate social media in ways that protect their self-esteem and emotional well-being. Mental health professionals can use the findings to inform the development of mental health interventions tailored to address the specific challenges faced by Black girls in the context of social media. These initiatives could include designing targeted programs that promote resilience, self-esteem, and positive body image.

Social Activism and Advocacy

Social media plays a significant role in social activism and advocacy. Advocates can use social media to launch awareness campaigns and share information through visual content, such as infographics and photos, that can convey engaging messages about social media use by young Black women and its impacts on that demographic. Young Black women can leverage the use of social media to bring awareness to the issues uncovered in this study by amplifying their voices and sharing their stories with a broad audience. The creation of social media campaigns to advocate for Black women by challenging stereotypes, eurocentrism, and societal dominance and raising awareness about Black Consonance and Dissonance by sharing their experiences with the

phenomenon to mobilize support and call for change are forms of activism. Awareness is beneficial in bringing about societal change, which is necessary for all to understand the problem and create solutions collectively.

The study findings demonstrate a need for policy discussions and advocacy efforts related to algorithmic bias and diversity in tech. This information can create a more equitable and inclusive digital environment for Black young women. Utilizing this study's findings allows scholars, policymakers, tech companies, and society to work toward solutions to the unique challenges faced by this demographic in the digital age. In addition, policymakers and advocacy groups can leverage this insight to shape public discourse and promote awareness and legislation to define and minimize harmful content.

Community Building and Support

Communities are built on social media, grouping like-minded people with shared experiences and identities. These communities provide space for information sharing, mobilizing, and support. With the information found in this study, communities can begin to align programming designed to attract and develop young Black women. The study can contribute to the creation of supportive communities and safe spaces where Black girls can engage in open discussions about their experiences with social media, body image, and self-esteem. Peer support and mentorship programs can be developed to address the needs of young Black women based on the findings of this research. Overall, the practical implications of the study's findings extend past the realm of communication to mental health, education, community, policy-making, representation, and adult guidance. The research highlights that social media use is associated with negative self-perception and esteem. These findings and other research can be pivotal in social media platforms, creating ways to reduce the adverse outcomes

of their use by young women. By translating research findings into actionable initiatives, it is possible to foster environments that promote young Black girls' well-being and positive self-image in the digital age.

Future Research

The study's findings provide insights into the core research questions. However, some additional themes and ideas emerged during the data analysis. More opportunities exist for further research into newer stereotypes of Black women, like being bougie or the archetype of the baddie. These do not fall into the commonly used stereotypes for Black women but were common enough to warrant further study. The development of these new Black women stereotypes alludes to an evolution of the representations of Black women in today's society.

Different racial groups could also benefit from the study by learning if varying populations interpret social media messages similarly or differently. The study focused specifically on Black young women. However, this study could be conducted with different racial groups, which would assist in determining if there is, in fact, a new beauty standard or if it is unique to Black women. The study being conducted with various racial groups would also allow for analysis of the outcomes of social media use that are general to all women and the things unique to different racial and ethnic groups. The prior research shows profound negative results for all young women from social media use. However, due to prevailing beauty standards communicated on social media that are aligned with cultural influences, studying how different racial and ethnic groups navigate their self-perception is worthy of further inquiry. Young men also could participate in the study to explore how social media use impacts their perception of attractiveness and identity.

The findings show different experiences for lighter-skinned and darker-skinned Black women. Colorism causes lighter-skinned Black women to be seen more favorably than darker-skinned Black women. The unique experiences of darker-skinned Black women, their accessibility to beauty, and their representations on social media are worthy of further examination. The perspectives of only dark-skinned women would be valuable in understanding how they are uniquely interpreted and impacted by beauty messages on social media.

The study participants indicated that TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, and other social media platforms were the most used. The study can focus on specific social media platforms to see how each one impacts the findings. Each social media platform has different purposes and how they function. These differences can potentially change the types of content shared, the frequency of messaging, and other factors that offer more detailed insights into how each platform impacts those who utilize them. The research focused on specific social media sites, which would help understand how format impacts the perception of beauty, how different types of beauty content affect young women, and decipher which social media platforms have the most significant influence on the self-image of young women.

A longitudinal study would allow the phenomenon to be examined over time, revealing the long-term effects of exposure to beauty standards on social media. The study could be conducted again with participants willing to be tracked over a set duration. This information would be valuable in determining whether age changes or strengthens people's perceptions of beauty, body image, and self-identity in relation to their social media use.

The research was conducted through a qualitative analysis. Narrative data helped the researcher understand the experiences of the young women in the study. However, using a quantitative study would give another perspective on the study data. Quantitative surveys allow a

broader study to be conducted. The data derived from quantitative studies is statistical and measurable.

Research on social media messages and beauty standards is a significant and growing area of study. Social media has been proven to significantly impact young women's self-perceptions of body image, beauty, and self-esteem. By addressing these research ideas, scholars can contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between the beauty standards communicated through social media use. In addition, these research suggestions can inform policies and programs aimed at addressing the negative outcomes for young Black girls who use social media.

Conclusion

This narrative qualitative study examined how messages about beauty and those containing stereotypes of Black women on social media impact how they articulate beauty and self-identity. The findings indicate that Black women are heavily influenced by the content on social media, which has resulted in all participants communicating a similar beauty ideal that they have interpreted from their social media use. The interviews reveal that the study participants do not feel they align with the beauty standard, with none describing themselves as beautiful. Black women face a difficult challenge trying to see themselves as beautiful next to a beauty ideal that does not include them.

In addition, stereotypical content on social media is shown to harm how Black young women articulate their identity. Most of the young Black women in the study felt compelled to distance themselves from stereotypes. Code-switching is a practice adopted by most to not represent themselves or Black women as a whole negatively. There is an issue with attempting to change the way you behave for the acceptance of others. It implies that there is a problem with

young Black women when they show up as their authentic selves. The participants also showed apprehension about content shared by Black women and about Black women on social media that are deemed stereotypical in nature.

Social media communicates messages in unprecedented amounts daily to a large amount of the population, especially young women. The results of consuming these large amounts of content are worthy of exploration. In addition, there are racial and gender factors that must be factored in when determining the benefits or harmful effects of social media messages on young Black women. This study revealed some social media use outcomes on Black young women in late adolescence.

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