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Perceptions of Black Female Sexuality in Reality Television Shows

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Poster Presentation P42

**PERCEPTIONS OF BLACK FEMALE SEXUALITY IN
REALITY TELEVISION SHOWS**

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Mass media plays a crucial role in socialization of racial stereotypes. One outlet of mass media, reality television, has become a popular alternative to scripted shows. As a recent phenomenon, the implication of racial stereotypes in reality television has yet to be studied. The current study examines how race influences people's perception when different racial groups are shown in similar contexts. In addition, it explored if an integrated friends circle and awareness of structural inequalities affects perceptions. Participants (N=64) were asked to rate the portrayals of Black and White women on two popular reality dating shows, *Rock of Love* and *Flavor of Love*. Ratings did not differ significantly on how realistic the portrayals of the women were on each show, but participants believed the women on *Flavor of Love* were portrayed more stereotypically than the women on *Rock of Love*. Interestingly, we found that when asked about stereotypical traits of Black women (i.e. these women are hypersexual, could not stay monogamous and use sexual appeal to get ahead) participants were more likely to agree that the White women endorsed these traits significantly more often than the Black women. While counter to our hypotheses, we suggest that these results might be indicative of the fact that since participants acknowledged that the Black women were depicted stereotypically, they may still covertly believe the behavior as realistic. Whereas, the White women's behavior was incongruent to expectations of White women, and as a result, participants were more likely to notice the behavior and rate them more harshly than the Black women, whose behavior would be seen as predictable. The current study offers a unique insight to begin understanding the influence of racial stereotypes when similar behaviors are viewed in different racial groups.