

International Conference on Broadcasting Media & Film Industry

October 20, 2014 DoubleTree by Hilton Baltimore-BWI Airport, USA

The color of primetime television

Imani M Cheers

The George Washington University, USA

This mixed methods study will examine how a sample audience of Black women interpret the representation of African Americans on television in the upcoming 2014-15 primetime television seasons two new shows *Black-ish* and *How to Get Away with Murder*. Both shows are premiering on the Disney-owned ABC network, have a predominately black cast and/or a leading African American actress. The majority of previous research concerning Black women as cultural readers and audience members has focused on literature, films, music and the visual arts. This study intends to fill the gap that has excluded Black women as television audience members watching comedic and dramatic series. Historically, scholars have focused almost exclusively on negative stereotypes of Black women in mass media, specifically the mammy, tragic mulatto, sapphire and jezebel. Scholars Donald Bogle (1992, 2001), Herman Gray (1995), Kristal Brent Zook (1999), Patricia Hill Collins (2000, 2005), and Clint Wilson, II (2005) have all explored these stereotypes and the detrimental effects on society and the Black community. Minimal research has been conducted that explores whether or not the race/ethnicity and gender of a writer and producer impacts the preferred meanings of the television program. While all of this research is valid to mass communication studies, it's lacking in breadth concerning who has creative control over these images and the interpretation by a niche audience of Black women.

Biography

Imani M Cheers is an award winning multimedia producer and Assistant Professor in the School of Media and Public Affairs at The George Washington University in Washington, D.C which she joined in May 2013. Before joining the faculty at GWU, she was Director of Educational Resources for PBS News Hour, where she managed all educational resources for the program's website, which averages more than 50,000 hits a day and more than 10 million unique visitors a year. She also managed the News Hour's student reporting labs program, a global journalism initiative. Previously, she was a producer/writer at Howard University Television and a multimedia producer at Newsweek.com. She was also a community organizer at the DC Rape Crisis Center in Washington, D.C. She received her BFA in Photography at Washington University in St. Louis, a Master's degree in African Studies and Research with a concentration in Women's Studies from Howard University and her doctorate in Mass Communications and Media Studies at Howard. Her area of expertise is the intersection of women/girls, technology and health/conflict/agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa. She is a member of the National Association of Black Journalists, the National Association for Media Literacy Education, DAWN (Diaspora African Women's Network) and a 2013 New Media Fellow with the International Reporting Project.

imanimcheers@email.gwu.edu