Chains of Psychological Enslavement: Olivia Pope and the Celebration of the Black Mistress in ABC's *Scandal*

by

Cassandra Chaney, Ph.D.
cchaney@lsu.edu
Associate Professor, College of Human Sciences and Education,
School of Social Work, Child and Family Studies,
Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge

&

Ray V. Robertson, Ph.D.
ray.robertson@famu.edu
Associate Professor, Department of Sociology,
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, Tallahassee, Florida

.

Abstract

Scandal is an American political thriller television series that debuted on ABC on April 5, 2012. The series was created by Shonda Rhimes and stars Kerry Washington whose character, Olivia Pope, is partially based on former George H.W. Bush administration press aide Judy Smith, who serves as a co-executive producer. The show takes place in Washington, D.C. and focuses on Olivia Pope's crisis management firm, Olivia Pope & Associates, and its staff, as well as staff at the White House. Given its growing viewership, critical acclaim, and the numerous awards secured by its producers and actors, no scholars to date have examined the clandestine realities that are the impetus for this show's success. Through the use of the Black female tropes identified by Collins (1997) and Stephens and Phillips (2003), as well as the African-Centered paradigms that encompass DeGruy-Leary's (2005) Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome, and Kambon's (2006) African-Self-Consciousness (ASC) and Cultural Misorientation (CM) Model, we argue the televised celebration of Olivia Pope, a politically successful Black female mistress simultaneously objectifies Black women, minimizes the historical and contemporary position of white men and Black women in America and keeps Blacks in a state of psychological slavery.

This paper will provide a conceptual framework, as well as pose and respond to the following three questions: (1) What Black female stereotypes does Olivia Pope exemplify? (2) How does Olivia Pope's illicit relationship with President Fitzgerald Thomas Grant III (e.g., "Fitz") simultaneously denigrate the position of Black females and promote the power and privileged position of European males*?* (3) In what ways is Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome demonstrated by individuals who dismiss the historicity of the Fitzgerald-Pope relationship? Implications regarding the image of Olivia Pope, particularly in regards to her relationship with a prominent White male character will be discussed.

Keywords: Black; African-American; African Self-Consciousness; Cultural Misorientation Model; Kerry Washington; Media Portrayals; Olivia Pope; Post-Trauma Slave Syndrome; Privilege; *Scandal*; Stereotypes; Television; White men.

"The slavery that feeds on the mind, invading the soul of man, destroying his loyalties to himself and establishing allegiance to forces which destroy him, is an even worse form of capture. The influences that permit an illusion of freedom, liberation, and self-determination, while tenaciously holding one's mind in subjugation, is the folly of only the sadistic." – Naim Akbar, 1996, VI, *Breaking the Chains of Psychological Slavery*)

Scandal is an American political thriller television series that debuted on ABC on April 5, 2012. The series was created by Shonda Rhimes and stars Kerry Washington whose character, Olivia Pope, is partially based on former George H.W. Bush administration press aide Judy Smith, who serves as a co-executive producer. The show has the distinction of being the first series to feature an African American woman in the leading role since Diane Carroll played the role of *Julia* in 1974. The show takes place in Washington, D.C. and focuses on Olivia Pope's crisis management firm, Olivia Pope & Associates, and its staff, as well as staff at the White House. Since its inception, the show has seen tremendous success. In 2012, the NAACP Image Award honored Kerry Washington as "Outstanding Actress in a Drama Series" and *Scandal* as "Outstanding Drama Series." In 2013, Dan Bucatinsky won the "Outstanding Guest Actor in a Drama Series" from the Primetime Emmy Award. In 2014, *Scandal* received the "Outstanding Drama Series," Kerry Washington received the "Outstanding Actress in a Drama Series" and Joe Morton received the "Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series" from the NAACP Image Awards. Furthermore, in 2014, *Scandal* received the Peabody Award for "Area of Excellence (Television)."

Given its growing viewership, critical acclaim (among television critics and bloggers), and the numerous awards secured by its producers and actors, no scholars to date have critically examined the clandestine realities that are the impetus for *Scandal*'s success. Our focus on this political thriller is especially timely given the mass appeal of this dramatic series. Case in point: "Scandal Viewing Parties" are common social events in the Atlanta area (http://www.wsbtv.com/gallery/entertainment/scandal-viewing-parties-around-atlanta/g9md/#3431025), "ScandaHolics" is a Facebook page devoted to individuals "who are addicted to Scandal" (https://www.facebook.com/ScandalHolics), and a Black woman by the name of Tamiko Washington started "Scandal Party Ideas" which provides food and drink recipes when hosting a *Scandal* party (http://www.pinterest.com/jerseyluv/scandal-party-ideas/). Even the world of fashion has been influenced by the power of *Scandal's* female protagonist. "Actress Kerry Washington and costume designer Lyn Paolo, in partnership with Elliot Staples, head of design from The Limited, have developed a collection that evokes the striking and aspirational style that has become synonymous with the Scandal brand and its heroine Olivia Pope. Washington, Paolo and Staples collaboratively developed each piece in the outfit driven collection, which is characterized by its authenticity, originality and unique artisanal details and trim. Anchored in a neutral palette, The Limited Scandal Collection includes tailored wide leg trousers, separate jackets, feminine blouses and heroic outerwear, easy to mix and match to create head-to-toe "Gladiator" style" (The Limited, February 4, 2015). Each of these respective homages to *Scandal* are evidence of the show's mass appeal and staying power. On the other hand, *Scandal* has also been met with its share of fans and critics who commend the strength demonstrated by a Black female lead (*The Feminist Spectator*, May 24, 2012) or assert the show glorifies adultery (Lucas, September 3, 2013).

This paper will focus on Olivia Pope, a Black professional woman and her relationship with President Fitzgerald Thomas Grant III (i.e., "Fitz") and members of her staff. Our focus on a Black professional woman is deliberate and is important for three reasons. First, Black women are the largest group of single people in the United States (Banks 2011; Nitsche & Bruekner, 2009), and Olivia Pope is a member of this demographic. Currently, white women are the highest married group (51%), followed by Hispanic women (45%), White men (44%), and Hispanic men (43%) respectively. However, Black men and women are among the lowest ranked in regards to marriage, with Black men (32%) being more likely than Black women (26%) to marry (Marriage Statistics, 2014). Second, Black women have typically been portrayed in the media in negative ways, and this scholarly endeavor will reveal whether the Olivia Pope character is a positive or negative depiction of Black women. Finally, this scholarly work will examine the historical and contemporary position of Black women and elite White men in America. As it relates to race, please note that throughout this manuscript, we will use the term Black to refer to people of the African Diaspora, and to such populations that reside within the United States. To some, African Americans are a subgroup within a larger Black community. Since this discussion purposely includes individuals who may not identify as African American, we employ the term "Black." Furthermore, we capitalize the term Black to distinguish this racial category and related identity from the color. Similarly, we capitalize the word White when referring to race.

Through the use of the Black female tropes identified by Collins (1997) and Stephens and Phillips (2003), DeGruy-Leary's (2005) Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome, and Kambon's (2006) African-Self-Consciousness and Cultural Misorientation Model we argue the televised celebration of Olivia Pope, a politically successful Black female mistress simultaneously objectifies Black women, minimizes the historical and contemporary position of white men and Black women in America and keeps Blacks in a state of psychological slavery and supports White supremacy. This theoretical paper will pose and respond to the following three questions: (1) What Black female stereotypes does Olivia Pope exemplify? (2) How does Olivia Pope's illicit relationship with President Fitzgerald Thomas Grant III (e.g., "Fitz") simultaneously denigrate African-Centered values and promote the power and privileged position of European males and supports White supremacy*?* (3) In what ways is Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome demonstrated by individuals who dismiss the historicity of the Fitzgerald-Pope relationship?

In the section that follows, we discuss relevant literature on this topic. We begin by discussing the relationship that generally existed between Black women and white men during and after slavery. After this, we highlight the most common media portrayals of Black women. Following this, we discuss the goals of White Supremacy. Then, we present the tenets of DeGruy-Leary's (2005) Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome, and Kambon's (2006) African-Self-Consciousness and Cultural Misorientation Model, as well as how these paradigms reject White Supremacy, which underlies the success of *Scandal*. Lastly, we present and discuss the conceptual framework that is foundational to our argument.

Review of Literature

In general, the physical and psychological safety of Black women was threatened when they arrived to America. Anderson (1995) explained how even before their arrival to America, a significant number of Black women were sexually brutalized by European men during slave raids. He wrote: "If you were caught in one of these raids (there were thousands of raids every year all over Africa-particularly West Africa), and if you were a woman, you would most likely be sexually abused. Rape, public and private, gang and individual, was a primary form of disempowering a powerful and proud people. It was usually the first act after all were rounded up and shackled and yoked" (p. 52). While these systematic rapes invariably led to the physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual trauma of African females, not to be ignored are the ill-effects for the fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons who, threatened with sudden death, were forced to witness the physical assault of their female loved ones (Davis, 1981). Even though the compulsory sexual assault of Black female bodies by European men was a societal norm, in reality, however, not all sexual encounters between Black women and White men were forced.

The earliest documented case of miscegenation occurred in Virginia in 1630, 10 years after the first Africans arrived to the United States (Bodenhorn & Ruebeck, 2005). Nevertheless, the true date of the first case of miscegenation in America may never be known, because the exact date for the arrival remains questionable. For instance, African-centered scholars Van Sertima (1976) and Imhotep (2012) both cite evidence of Africans on American dating back several thousand years ago. Moreover, while laws prohibited interracial unions, sexual relations between Black and White people continued, with some being consensual and others not. The *Code Noir,* which was issued in 1724, explicitly and expressly prohibited marital and non-marital sexual relationships between Africans, whether slave or free, and Europeans (Spear, 2003). However, the low social position of Black women impelled many of them to enter relationships with White men. For example, during the Octoroon and Quadroon Balls, these women would dress in expensive, elaborate gowns, and demonstrate social grace in order to attract a married White man who was often the wealthy son of a Planter (Kein, 2000). These consensual relationships were formed in order to secure a comfortable life for the Black woman and her biracial children. Historically, the paternity of the interracial child was not viewed the same as that of a child born to White parents. Childs (2005) revealed that while the White-male dominated power structure is not threatened by the prospect of a Black woman bearing a child for a White man, the reverse is perceived as a threat to the purity of the White race and the dilution of the White man's power.

While many Octoroon and Quadroon Black women willingly became the mistresses of White married men to elevate their social status (Spear, 2003), the majority of sexual encounters between white men and African female slaves were nonconsensual, as Black bodies were property, a commodity, expected to perform and serve at the master's will (Altink, 2005; Collins, 2000; Crais & Scully, 2009; Fields, 1990; Johnson, 2005; Perrin, 2001). Black men on the other hand, were prohibited from looking at White women, let alone having sexual relations with these women as the White race was to remain pure (untainted with Black blood). Paradoxically, the majority of the White male population did not frown upon White men, married or single, who had casual or long term sexual relations with female slaves. For instance, in 1823 farm resident John Stewart remarked that 'every unmarried man, of every class, has his black or brown mistress, with whom he lives openly' and that despite this 'his White female friends and relations think it no breach of decorum to visit his house.' (Altink, 2005, p. 281). In her seminal work, *Medical Apartheid,* Washington (2008) explained that it was often considered a rite of passage for a young master's White son to have sex with one of the African female house slaves. Additionally, she chronicled how racist White men would blame Black women for their own rapes:

> Whites ascribe Black women's sexual availability not to their powerlessness but to a key tenet of scientific racism: Blacks were unable to control their powerful sexual drives, which were frequently compared to those of rutting animals. This lack of control made Black men dangerous and Black women sexually aggressive Jezebels who habitually enticed White men into inappropriate sexual relations (p. 45).

Sadly, there were tragic consequences for Black men who were sexually involved with White women, or in many cases, even *perceived* by White men to be too comfortable with White women. Case in point: "Between 1890 and 1917," some two to three Black southerners were hanged, burned at the stake, or quietly murdered every week" (Ward, 2012, pp. 80-81). Further, more than 3,000 Blacks were lynched between 1882 and 1947, and in 1917, "adults compelled a ten year –old to castrate a Black lynching in Texas, and adults held up a young boy to throw the rope over the branch of a tree before a 1931 lynching in Maryland "(Ward, 2012, p. 93).

While Black and White women have been victims of denigrating imagery throughout time (Burrell, 2010), the perceived beauty and sexuality of both groups has been patently different. To support this, Historian Nell Irvin Painter (2010) revealed that even when young White women were presented as enslaved in artwork they were portrayed as beautiful, a privilege that was not bestowed on Black women. The most popular piece of 19th century sculpture in America was *The Greek Slave* (1846) by Hiram Powers, which depicted a young White woman wearing chains across her waist and thighs. So great was the effect of this sculpture that Painter (2010) wrote: "When this monumental piece toured the United States in 1847-1848, young men unused to viewing a naked female all but swooned before" (p. 54). The adoration given to this white female image stands in direct contrast to the many enslaved Black women who were sexual tools for enslavers. Consider Sara Baartman, who was known as the *Hottentot Venus,* and recently labeled the *Original Video Vixen.* She was an African slave whose body was put on display as she was a "supposedly paradoxical freak of race and sexuality, both alluring and primitive, the very embodiment of desire and the importance of conquering the instincts" (Crais & Scully, 2009, p. 1). Baartman's body, curvy and voluptuous was seen as animalistic and hypersexual. White men were so sexually fascinated with her body that they raped, beat, mentally abused, and showcased her at freak shows. Thus, the portrayal of African women as animal-like, sub-human, and oversexed has been a mainstay of world history and has advanced the goals of White Supremacy (Washington, 2008). As a final insult, Bartmaan's genitals were kept on display in Britain for 160 years (removed from public display in 1974) after her death and returned to South Africa (the country of her birth) with the rest of her remains in 1994 (Washington, 2008).

The socially-accepted supremacy of White skin and the inferiority of Black skin gave birth to and advanced the immoral and unethical use of Black bodies in racially-sanctioned medical experiments. Historically, the disgusting use of Black bodies for medical experimentation was the norm in the South during the nineteenth century. This debauchery was frequently included in the medical journal writings of perpetrating physicians who frequently concealed their actions against enslaved Black women by using illustrations of White women (Washington, 2008). Such actions against Black women included, but were not limited to, using forceps during childbirth which facilitated the development of vesicovaginal fistula (an abnormal fistulous tract extending between the bladder, or vesico and the vagina that allows the continuous involuntary discharge of urine into the vaginal vault), vitamin deficiency, and malnutrition, which caused sterility (Washington, 2008).

The aforementioned provides an interesting historical paradox. On the one hand, Black women willingly entered relationships with (and bore children) from White men in order to secure their social standing (Kein, 2000; Spear, 2003). On the other hand, White men disseminated and promoted images of Black female bodies as animalistic, grotesque, and sub-human while simultaneously raping, experimenting on, sexually objectifying, and subjugating them (Mowatt, French, & Malebranche, 2013; Washington, 2008). In essence, this historical paradox can be explained by the promulgation of White Supremacy.

White Supremacy

White supremacy is defined "as an historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations, and peoples classified as "non-White" by continents, nations, and peoples who, by virtue of their White (light) skin pigmentation and/or ancestral origin from Europe, classify themselves as White" (Blay, 2011, p. 4). Essentially, White Supremacy is the notion that the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of White people are superior to those of non-White people. Bonilla-Silva (2012) asserted that White supremacy is inclusive of a racial grammar that normalizes its existences and leaves it immune to any critical significant societal critique. As an example of the aforementioned, the normalized racial grammar enables societal members to refer to Black movies and Black TV shows as Black but not discuss White movies and White televisions shows as White despite the fact that most are undoubtedly White (Bonilla-Silva, 2012). Such exhortations inform us that White supremacy has power maintenance at the root of its profitability and its tentacles are far-reaching. For instance, Swan (2013) explicated the breadth and power of White supremacy in his treatise on the need for Black scholars to reclaim the field of Black power studies from the influence and control of White Supremacy. To support this, Blay (2011) asserted that the overuse of skin bleaching products by communities of color is an outgrowth of White supremacy.

In her study of legislative resolutions calling for apologies for the enslavement of Africans, Davis (2012) posited that such apologies actually promulgate White supremacy by covertly thwarting reparations claims or other racial justice claims for Black Americans. In other words, by focusing on an apology rather than financial compensation for the forced enslavement of Africans, Whites can deny individuals' rightful compensation for slavery. Finally, Chaney and Robertson (2013a) discussed how the White-dominated media promotes the erroneous belief that White lives are more valuable than Black lives (Armour, 1997; Bass, 2014; Bell, 1992; Chaney & Robertson, 2013a; Du Bois, 2004; Marger, 2012; Robertson, 2014; Staples, 2011; Williams, 2013). The perpetuation of White supremacy via the media, and in particular the media's degradation of Black women will be the focus of the next section.

Media Portrayals of Black Women

For the most part, the media is perhaps the strongest and most far-reaching arm of White Supremacy in that it provides constant reinforcement that the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of White people are superior to those of Black people. In general, media images of Black men and women are stereotypical and negative (Baker, 1996; Banjo & Fraley, 2014; Bogle, 1989; Griffin, 1998; Mask, 2004; Wallace, Townsend, Glassgow, & Ojie, 2011; Halley, Eshelman, & Vijaya, 2011). Due to the belief that there are certain appearances, behaviors, or attributes that are shared by all members of a certain group (Wallace et al, 2011), longstanding images associated with Black women have largely been deleterious. Scholars have identified several tropes that have been attached to Black women in the media, namely: (1) The Mammy; (2) The Matriarch; (3) The Welfare Mother; (4) The Lady; (5) The Jezebel (aka "Hoochie"); (6) The Diva; (7) The Golddigger; and (8) The Freak.

In her essay, "*Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images,*" Patricia Hill Collins (1997) presented five stereotypical personas of the African American woman. She wrote, "Portraying African American women as stereotypical mammies, matriarch, welfare recipients, and hot mommas has been essential to the political economy of domination fostering Black women's oppression" (p. 142). A Mammy is "a faithful, obedient, domestic servant" who by loving, nurturing, and caring for the White master's children better than she does her own "symbolizes the dominant group's perceptions of the ideal Black female relationship to elite White male power." (p. 80). The Matriarch, in contrast to the Mammy which presents an ideal image of Black motherhood for Whites, this woman is an uncaring, unloving, and uninvolved mother to her own children. In essence, the Matriarch is a "bad mother" who has failed her family responsibilities and has contributed to numerous social ills within her family and community.

The Welfare Mother was "a class specific, controlling image developed for poor, working-class Black women who make use of social service benefits to which they are entitled by law." (p. 86). Further, it is important to note that because she is typically portrayed as an unwed mother, the Welfare Mother violates the "one cardinal tenet of White, male-dominated ideology (e.g., without a man), and therefore, "she is a woman alone." (p. 85). The Lady, which occurred during the same time as The Welfare Mother, refers to middle-class, professional Black women who support the notion of respectability. Although on the surface The Lady appears to be less egregious than the other images, a closer inspection reveals that her image is also a damaging one, albeit in a different way. According to Collins, The Lady is "another version of the modern Mammy, namely the hard-working Black professional who works twice as hard as everyone else. The image of the Black Lady also resembles aspects of the matriarch thesis – Black ladies have jobs that are so all-consuming that they have no time for men or have forgotten how to treat them. Because they so routinely compete with men and are successful at it, they become less feminine.

Highly educated Black ladies are deemed to be too assertive – that's why they cannot get men to marry them" (p. 89). Contrastingly, The Jezebel functioned to "relegate all Black women to the category of sexually aggressive women, thus providing a strong rationale for the widespread sexual assaults by White men typically reported by Black slave women" (Davis, 1981, 1985, p. 89). In addition to the aforementioned, more recent images include:

> The diva; her beauty is characterized by western standards (long, straight hair, slim build, light skinned). She appears independent but chooses to target men who can raise her social status (trades sex for social status). The gold digger barters with her sexuality for economic and material gains. The freak seeks to satisfy her sexual desires. Considered a bad girl who gains male attention by being overly sexual, she is sexually liberated and empowered and seeks out sex for physical satisfaction not for a relationship. (Stephens & Phillips, 2003 cited in Wallace et al., 2011, p. 1316).

Although many of the aforementioned images have been presented in the media as single tropes, at times, one or more of these tropes have been combined. For example, as previously mentioned, The Lady is a combination of the Mammy and Matriarch tropes. Historical images of the promiscuous biracial slave girl still remain, albeit in a different historical context. In the movie *Monster's Ball*, the biracial (Black father, White mother) Hollywood actress Halle Berry portrayed Leticia Musgrove who used the only commodity that she had (her body) to elevate and secure her social status. To support this, Mask (2004) noted, "Leticia Musgrove seems a conflation of the sexual siren and the welfare queen." (p. 46). The aforementioned media portrayals of Black women must be acknowledged because when compared with White women, Black women are the subjects of deleterious images, are dissatisfied with society's treatment of them, and face multiple forms of oppression (Davis & Tucker-Brown, 2012; Potter, 2013). Thus, even though they are several hundred years removed from slavery, negative effects of the immoral institution of slavery still remain within the minds of many African Americans, who are descendants of African slaves.

Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome

The travel of African people to America was a tumultuous one (Feagin, 2014). Despite being freed from enslavement in 1865, the psychological effects of the "peculiar institution" still linger, impact the mental well-being of African-Americans and generally have not been adequately understood by mainstream therapists (Wilkins, Whiting, Watson, Russon, & Moncrief, 2013). Thus, this lingering mental trauma has contributed to a condition known as Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome (DeGruy-Leary, 2005).

Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome encompasses a set of actions, ideas, and deeds emerging from or connected with the intergenerational trauma experienced by African-Americans that may include, but not be limited to, post-traumatic stress disorder in enslaved Africans. The syndrome continues to plague present day African-Americans primarily because it is not a disorder in the vein of "PTSD" which can be treated clinically and can only be rectified by a complete overhaul of the social and institutional inequities that have historically and contemporaneously existed in America. Presently, African-Americans are still maligned and marginalized and egalitarian treatment is far from a reality (Feagin, 2014). Exactly how the past, (i.e., enslavement) affects the current station of African-Americans in the stratification system have not been fully understood (Wilkins et al., 2013; Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008), however, the inability to acknowledge historical events/circumstances can severely inhibit an individual's ability to interpret modern realities (DeGruy-Leary, 2005).

The psychological impact of slavery on African-Americans facilitated the development of non-threatening identities to combat stereotypes of the "enraged slave" and survive brutalities that were part of the institution of slavery. Wilkins et al. (2013) asserted the passivity required for continued existence during enslavement re-surfaced in the form of assimilation and being silent in the face of maltreatment and moral degradation. Thus, passivity and accepting abhorrent treatment became a survival mechanism for African-Americans who have historically lacked social power (Cush, 2013; DeGruy-Leary, 2005; Olatunji, Tomarken, & Zhao, 2014). Thus, DeGruy-Leary's (2005) post-traumatic slave syndrome can help elucidate the mass appeal of *Scandal*, particularly among Black women.

African Self-Extension Orientation (ASEO) and African Self-Consciousness (ASC)

A critical evaluation of the impact of *Scandal* on the racial consciousness of African-American women must acknowledge the significance of African-Centered scholarship in understanding personality formations of peoples of African descent across the diaspora. The use of African-Centered scholarship is necessary because for far too long Eurocentricism has provided a racially-skewed analysis of the socio-historic problems that afflict Blacks and offered the negative stereotypes by which Black people have been judged (Bryson, 1998; Davis & Tucker-Brown, 2013; Jamison, 2006).

Kambon and Bowen-Reid (2010) suggested African-Centered personality models employ the African worldview as a lens to understand and delineate the African American personality. In particular, African-Centered taxonomies apply indigenous African philosophical-cultural values, beliefs and behavior norms for formulating/constructing the psychological traits, dispositions and behavioral patterns that are used to represent normal and natural African American personality as distinguished from the maladaptive and dysfunctional African American personality.

Thus, African-Centered models distinguish themselves from Eurocentric (e.g., Kardiner & Ovesey, 1951; Pettigrew, 1964) approaches which emphasize a European worldview orientation as the standard for delineating African American personality and Pseudo-African-Centered models developed by persons of African descent (e.g., Fanon, 1967) but still rely on Eurocentric criteria for interpreting the self-concept, identity, and motivation of Black people.

According to Kambon (2006), the African personality consists of a core system called the African Self-Extension Orientation and African Self-Consciousness (ASEO & ASC), and a number of basic traits emanating from its core. Put succinctly, the ASEO (African Self-Extension Orientation) is the substance of the Black personality. This personality is defined by the construct of spirituality, which acts as an energy-encompassing catalyst for the individual's "self" to merge into the totality of phenomenal experience that is immutable and grounded in the African psychical system. The ASEO reveals itself in a set of psychological and behavioral traits, or "Africanisms," expressive of the African spirituality dynamic (Kambon & Bowen-Reid, 2010). The ASC (African Self-Consciousness) emanates from the ASEO when the African-American experiences a normal socialization process (which does not occur in a Eurocentric society).

Stated differently, under normal socialization, a Black individual cultivates an African self-consciousness which is an outgrowth of their indigenous ASEO. Hence, the ASC is a conduit for the personality system to achieve African-Centered goals and objectives (Kambon, 1998, 1992). Kambon and Bowen-Reid (2010) contended the ASC (African Self-Consciousness) model has the following four tenets at its core: (1) Awareness of one's collective identity; (2) Priority value placed on African survival, racial-cultural self-knowledge and positive development; (3) Participation in African cultural institutions and their perpetuations; and (4) Practice of resolute resistance against all "anti-African" forces. Combined, these tenets form the thrust of the African American personality's striving for collective self-empowerment.

Given the ASC's core basic dependence on experiential development (environmental forces), it is susceptible to change/modification under certain socio-cultural conditions (Kambon, 2003). Thus, the directional thrust and strength of ASC can vary radically from its natural tendency under certain unnatural-abnormal experiential conditions. Furthermore, the strength of the ASC depends on the extent to which early socialization experiences and/or significant institutional processes actively nurture and reinforce it (Kambon, 1998, 1992). In a heterogeneous racial-cultural context (i.e., America) in which a Eurocentric worldview dominates the socio-cultural reality of African Americans, the natural socialization process undergirding the ASC may be weakened and distorted. Obviously, the aforementioned is the psycho-personality predicament for the African American that is enamored with a television show in which a Black woman is the lead protagonist and the mistress of a married White male.

Cultural Misorientation (CM)

Kambon (2003) posited the weakening of the ASC facilitated the onset of an African American personality disorder called Cultural Misorientation/CM, which is a psychological orientation in African Americans that results from European oppression of African culture (Kambon, 2003; Kambon & Bowen-Reid, 2010). Specifically, CM represents a Eurocentric-"Anti-African" self-consciousness among AAs (African Americans) which the European American societal-worldview context (i.e., American cultural institutions) masquerades as a normal (mentally healthy) and functionally effective psychological-cultural orientation among African Americans as a consequence of institutional reinforcement (i.e., socialization, assimilation, and societal indoctrination processes) (Kambon, 2003).

In essence, CM is a shift in the core psychological orientation of the African American personality that prompts the degradation of the African worldview and the internalization of the European worldview. The CM model proposes three levels of intensity-severity: minimal, moderate, and severe. A minimal CM is the weakest level of internalization of the European worldview, and is present within African men and women who possess an overwhelming predominance of internalized African-Centered/anti-European cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. A moderate CM represents a much stronger identification with Eurocentric consciousness and a desire to maintain parts of the African-Centered identity. The severe CM is the strongest and most pervasive European self-consciousness, in which an individual possesses an overwhelming predominance of internalized Eurocentric/anti-African cultural values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors.

CM has six tenets which reflect a European survival drive. In this section, we outline these six tenets and highlight how they support a weakened African Self-Extension Orientation and African Self-Consciousness (ASEO & ASC): (1) Materialism Orientation: reflects a physical-material objectification emphasis in life (emphasis on physical characteristics, clothes, money, things, etc.); (2) Individualism Orientation: reflects an emphasis on primarily seeking what is in the best interest of the individual. Individualism has historically been a Eurocentric trait. On the other hand, Africans, historically and traditionally value collectivism, or what is in the best interest of the group; (3) Alien-Self Orientation: reflects a European value system which motivates one's self-concept and general approach to life. A Black Anglo-Saxon (e.g., Clarence Thomas); (4) Anti-Self Orientation: reflects the Alien-Self emphasis along with negativity and hostility toward Blackness/Africanity; (5) Self-Destructive Orientation: reflects an emphasis on self-group injurious and anti-social and/or criminal thoughts and behaviors; (6) Integration Orientation: reflects a dominant emphasis on the inclusion/involvement of non-Blacks (namely Whites) in one's life (Kambon & Bowen-Reid, 2010).

Discussion

The conceptual framework on which this scholarly work was built recognizes the relationship between White Supremacy, the media, Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome, and Cultural Misorientation (CM) and how these constructs explain the appeal of Olivia Pope and *Scandal*. However, before doing so, it is important that we clearly state our position in regards to three things. First, we believe that Scandal's creator Shonda Rhimes is a talented visionary (screenwriter, director, and producer), Kerry Washington is an immensely talented actress, and the success of *Scandal* is a testament to the ability and willingness of two Black women (Rhimes and Washington) to successfully work together to create a strong, loyal following for a dramatic show on a major television network (ABC). Second, we realize that Black viewers are not the sole reason for *Scandal's* success. Stated more clearly, we are aware that individuals from both genders and ethnic backgrounds are instrumental to the show's mass appeal and success. With that said, it is imperative to view *Scandal* from a critical-socio-historical perspective. In other words, in spite of the show's immense popularity, it is important that Blacks in America clearly recognize the connection between past and present-day realities. Therefore, this scholarly work urges burgeoning, avid, and loyal viewers of *Scandal* to understand this television drama within a broad, socio-historical context. Last, while Black men and women are instrumental in *Scandal's* success, we believe that the socio-historical position between Black women and White men buttress our appeal that Black women recognize the broader implications of a show that centers on the romance between a Black woman and White man particularly appropriate.

Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome, Cultural Misorientation (CM), and Scandal Cultural Misorientation Conceptual Framework

In our conceptual framework, *White Supremacy* is the pervasive view that the cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of Europeans are superior to those of Africans. Since *Scandal* is financially backed by White men, this television show ultimately reinforces their own supremacy. In other words, although this show is written, directed, and produced by a Black woman (Shonda Rhimes), the financial backing provided by White men ultimately gives them the agency to create characters that emphasize their physical, intellectual, and socioeconomic power. In essence, the financial backing of White men, in many respects, gives them more power than Shonda Rhimes, the show's screenwriter, director, and producer. Furthermore, White Supremacy uses *the media* to advance its goals by promoting (and sanctioning) stereotypical images that harken post-slavery realities, or a time when the bodies of Black women were the property of White men. Moreover, by building a dramatic series around the romantic relationship of Olivia Pope (a Black female crisis negotiator) and President Fitz (a White married president of the United States), the media, of which Pope is an integral part, advances the stereotypical tropes of Matriarch, Jezebel, and Lady.

Since the negative effects of "the peculiar institution" may be felt by descendants of enslaved Africans centuries after their release from slavery, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* acknowledges historical events/circumstances can severely inhibit the ability of descendants of slaves to interpret modern realities (DeGruy-Leary, 2005). Since all Blacks are forced to live in a society in which the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of White people are superior to their own (Bonilla-Silva, 2012), it is reasonable to recognize and accept that all Blacks, to some degree, suffer from Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome.

From a theoretical standpoint, there are two ways in which Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome and especially a moderate or severe level of CM are evidenced among individuals who dismiss the historical implications of the Fitzgerald-Pope relationship. For one, although Olivia Pope is successful, many Blacks choose to exclusively focus on Pope's professionalism and not her illicit behavior. In other words, they only *want* to emphasize Olivia's career success and ignore the fact that she is the mistress of a married man with children. Second, Black women that minimize or ignore the adulterous affair between Olivia and Fitz may secretly desire a powerful white man that will elevate their social status. These viewers may believe that although Fitz remains with his wife, he is stuck in a love-less marriage, and thus deserves sympathy, not condemnation, for being unfaithful to his wife. In short, Fitz remains with his wife because it is the morally "right" (and politically advantageous) thing to do, although *he really loves and wants to be with Olivia*. Specifically, those who are effected by the moderate or severe level of CM simultaneously rally Pope's position as mistress and influences Black women to aspire to mirror Pope via the romantic attention of a White male.

Although African-Americans reside in a world in which the cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of Europeans are valued more than Africans, Kambon's (2003) *Cultural Misorientation* (CM) acknowledges the capacity of Black men and women to embrace a European worldview (socialization, assimilation, and societal indoctrination) or reject the African worldview (Kambon, 2003). As mentioned previously, the CM model includes three levels of intensity-severity: minimal, moderate, and severe, and it is important that these be discussed within the context of *Scandal*.

Minimal Cultural Misorientation (CM)

The minimal CM is the weakest level of internalization of the European worldview, and is present within African men and women who possess an overwhelming internalization of African-Centered/anti-European cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. In addition, because they (1) have a strong awareness of their collective identity; (2) place a priority on the survival, self-knowledge, and positive development of African people; (3) participate in the perpetuation of African cultural institutions; and (4) resolutely resist all "anti-African" forces, they demonstrate a strong African Self-Consciousness (ASC) (Kambon & Bowen-Reid, 2010).

Theoretically, individuals who demonstrate a minimal CM and therefore a strong African self-consciousness: (a) do not view *Scandal* and/or are highly critical of this form of media as they see it in a broad socio-historical context; (b) do not believe that *Scandal* should be evaluated solely on its entertainment merit; (c) believes *Scandal* furthers the goals of White Supremacy; and (d) see a clear connection between historical and contemporary realities, or specifically, the long-standing relationships between Black women and White men. In essence, Blacks with a minimal CM regard *Scandal* as a painful and skewed romantic reincarnation of slavery when the bodies of Black women were the property of White men.

Moderate Cultural Misorientation (CM)

The moderate CM represents a much stronger identification with Eurocentric consciousness and a desire to maintain parts of the African-Centered identity. Essentially, individuals who are effected by a moderate CM are deeply conflicted about the Pope-Fitz relationship. As an extension of Kambon and Bowen-Reid's (2010) African Self-Consciousness (ASC) model, these individuals (1) are aware of their collective identity, but place the Eurocentric identity as superior to their own; (2) place a high priority on European survival, racial-cultural self-knowledge and positive development over African survival, racial cultural self-knowledge, and positive development; (3) participate in European cultural institutions and their perpetuations, and to a less degree African cultural institutions and their perpetuations; and (4) find it difficult to understand when media offerings of Africans advance the goals of Europeans and indirectly encourage an "anti-African" thrust.

From a theoretical perspective, individuals who demonstrate a moderate CM and therefore a weak African self-consciousness: (a) are frequent, avid, and/or loyal viewers of *Scandal*; (b) believe a critique of Scandal should only be based on its entertainment value and not within a broader, socio-historical context (e.g., "It's only entertainment."); (c) believes *Scandal* puts Black womanhood in a positive light; and (d) acknowledge the painful historical relationships between Blacks and Whites (and, in particular, White men and Black women, in which Black women were the property of White men), but feel that this reality has little to do with present-day realities, specifically the Fitz-Pope relationship. In essence, Blacks with a moderate CM will readily acknowledge values that are consistent with an African-Centered thought such as the existence of racism (Katz-Fishman, Scott, & Gomes, 2014; Unnever & Gabbidon, 2013), the mistreatment of Blacks by police (Chaney & Robertson, 2013b), and the overrepresentation of Blacks in the criminal justice system (Nelson, Gabbison, & Boisvert, 2015), yet praise the ability of a Black woman (Shonda Rhimes) to secure a successful show in which a Black woman is the mistress of a White man on a major television network (ABC) owned by Whites. Thus, it is possible that even the show's creator (a Black woman) could herself suffer the same psychological malady of being a descendant of slaves and producing art, which has a higher likelihood of being societally accepted if it does not challenge or refute historical relationships, within a largely white male-dominated space.

When examined from a psychosocial perspective, tragically, the willingness of Pope to be in a highly sexualized relationship with Fitz, may lead individuals to unconsciously challenge or refute the historicity of the denigration of Black female bodies by White men who possessed social, economic, and legal power (Anderson, 1995; Kein, 2000; Washington, 2008). Stated more simply, the consensual acts between Pope and Fitz may cause individuals to internally question whether African women were in fact raped, minimize the number of severity of these rapes, and whether they did not secretly desire to be sexually conquered by powerful White men.

Severe Cultural Misorientation (CM)

The severe CM is the strongest and most pervasive European self-consciousness in which an individual possesses an overwhelming predominance of internalized Eurocentric/anti-African cultural values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, individuals who demonstrate a severe CM embrace all 6 tenets of CM, and thereby reject African Self-Consciousness (ASC). In the paragraphs that follows, we outline ways that the severe CM may manifest within the Black woman (or man) that supports *Scandal*.

The Materialism Orientation reflects a physical-material objectification emphasis in life (emphasis on physical characteristics, clothes, money, things, etc.). Thus, support for the Materialism Orientation and a weakened African Self-Consciousness (ASC) would place great emphasis on Pope's physical appearance, socioeconomic status, and material possessions (i.e., "Olivia has got it together. She is beautiful, powerful, and makes her own money."). The Individualism Orientation reflects an emphasis on primarily seeking what is in the best interest of the individual. Individualism has historically been a Eurocentric trait. On the other hand, Africans, historically and traditionally value collectivism, or what is in the best interest of the group. Moreover, support for the Individualism Orientation and a weakened African Self-Consciousness (ASC) would be present among Blacks that believe that Olivia should place her needs above those of others (i.e., "Olivia has got to do what will make Olivia happy"). The Alien-Self Orientation reflects a European value system which motivates one's self-concept and general approach to life. Support of a weakened African Self-Consciousness (ASC) are evidenced among African-Americans that believe that Blacks can only function by placing the interests of Europeans above those of African-Americans (i.e., "In order for Olivia to function in a white-man's world, she must think, feel, and act like a white man"). The Anti-Self Orientation reflects the Alien-Self emphasis along with negativity and hostility toward Blackness/Africanity. Support for a weakened African Self-Consciousness (ASC) would be present within Black viewers who believe that Pope would fare better if she avoids becoming romantic with Black men (i.e., "No one can blame Olivia for being in a relationship with Fitz because he treats her better than any Black man would!"). The Self-Destructive Orientation reflects an emphasis on self-group injurious and anti-social and/or criminal thoughts and behaviors. Support for a weakened African Self-Consciousness (ASC) would be evident if Black-on-Black crime were featured.

The Integration Orientation reflects a dominant emphasis on the inclusion/involvement of non-Blacks (namely Whites) in one's life. Support for a weakened African Self-Consciousness (ASC) would be evident among Blacks who consciously or unconsciously value close association with Europeans (i.e., "If a Black person is going to get anywhere in life, they must closely associate with White people" or "I want a White man to love me the way that Fitz loves Olivia!" or "I want a white man too!").

From a theoretical perspective, individuals who demonstrate a severe CM and therefore a non-African self-consciousness: (a) are frequent, avid, and loyal viewers of *Scandal*; (b) believe a critique of *Scandal* should only be based on its entertainment value and not within a broader, socio-historical context; (c) believe *Scandal* is evidence that America is in a post-racial society (Bass, 2014); and (d) believe the historical relationship between Blacks and Whites (and, in particular, White men and Black women, in which Black women were the property of White men) is completely alienated from the Fitz-Pope relationship on *Scandal*. [See Figure – Scandal Cultural Misorientation (CM) Conceptual Framework]

The Black Female Tropes that Olivia Pope Personifies

What Black female tropes identified by Hill-Collins (1997) and Stevens and Phillips (2003) does Olivia Pope exemplify? Although Pope is an immensely successful, financially secure, *Black woman*, she is an amalgamation of the Matriarch, Jezebel, and Lady Tropes (Hill-Collins, 1997). First, she is a Matriarch in that she "births" owns her own business, Olivia Pope & Associates, and decides whether her office accepts or rejects a case. Furthermore, her racially-diverse staff (two white females, a white male, and a black male), who are similar in age to Pope, frequently seek her advice and counsel, as one would a mother (Matriarch) and rarely make a move without Pope's approval. Even though she does not have biological children of her own, Pope is a mother-figure that chastises, encourages, and supports her "children" (staff). Contrastingly, Olivia Pope is a sexually aggressive female (Jezebel) who willingly engages in passionate and animalistic sexual relations with the married President Fitz. Many of these clandestine encounters frequently occur in hotels, Olivia's apartment, and even The Oval Office (out of the video camera's sight) in The White House. In regards to the Lady trope, Olivia Pope is physically attractive, has incredible fashion sense, is a hard worker, and is highly respected because she is the best in her field. She is educated, articulate, and confident - the individual that Whites actively seek when they need a "problem" fixed, and works very hard to maintain and solidify her success (Stevens & Phillips, 2003). Furthermore, she is a "power-player" who freely circulates in the same world as that of her white male lover (and other white males). Thus, she embodies a woman with whom a large segment of Black professional women can identify and a large number of less-educated Blacks can aspire (*The Washington Post*, 2012). Frequently, Pope has been awakened from sleep in the middle of the night to handle a difficult situation and willingly does so. During these situations, Pope demonstrates that her all-consuming career takes precedence over her own physical need for sleep.

While avid viewers of *Scandal* may assert President Fitz's sexual involvement with Olivia Pope is a high compliment to her beauty and sexual desirability, there are several realities regarding this relationship which must be acknowledged. For one, although Fitz has frequently professed his love for Olivia, Fitz has not divorced his White wife nor abandoned the children he has with his wife to be with her. This reality is painfully reminiscent of the relationships that existed between Octoroon and Quadroon women and the children they bore with the sons of wealthy White planters (Kein, 2000). Second, even if the fictional Fitz abandoned his wife and children to begin a new life with the fictional Olivia Pope, *in reel life*, White men are not generally marrying Black women *in real life*. Although the past ten years has seen an increase in the number of interracial relationships, these pairings are substantially more likely to occur between Black men and White women than Black women and White men (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Since in reality, Black-White marriages represents the lowest percentage of inter-racial marriages, the inability to secure a powerful White male romantic partner may especially heighten Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome and Cultural Misorientation among Black women. The aforementioned could be why, instead of drawing disdain, *Scandal* is particularly popular among Black women. Finally, although on the surface Pope appears to be powerful, when evaluated critically, she is a contemporary reminder of a harsh historical reality when the bodies of Black women were the property of White men. Therefore, individuals who are consciously or subconsciously attracted to the status that comes with being linked to white male power will discuss *Scandal* through a European, racially-affirming lens. So, these individuals will romanticize this illicit relationship by primarily focusing on the physical desirability of Olivia Pope to Fitz (and thus Black women to White men), as well as Pope's agency in this relationship and downplay the historically egregious relationship that has existed between these individuals for hundreds of years.

Individuals who suffer from a moderate or severe Cultural Misorientation (CM) will minimize or romanticize this historical reality, highlight Pope's success or the agency that she has in the relationship (Pope is a consenting adult in a romantic/sexual relationship that she *wants to be in*), or ignore the socio-historical context, altogether. Regardless of the form that Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome takes, those who suffer from a moderate or severe CM fail to recognize the correlation between the historical sexual conquests of White males of Black female bodies and the contemporary dynamic of the Fitz-Pope relationship.

We contend that African Americans, and in particular, African American females who are fans of *Scandal*, suffer from a moderate or severe degree of Cultural Misorientation (CM) and ignore stereotypical tropes (e.g., Matriarch, Jezebel {oversexed and promiscuous Black woman} and Lady) because these tropes are masked within a veneer of socioeconomic success. Thus, the unacceptable (i.e., the negative, stereotypical, and degrading tropes of Matriarch, Jezebel, and Lady) is immediately and/or gradually accepted and celebrated as a new, truncated and skewed version of "Black womanhood" (Chaney, 2011).

Throughout America, African-American men and women, but particularly women for the purposes of this discussion, suffer from moderate or severe levels of CM because they live in a world in which the norms, values, ideas of beauty and success are based on a European standard rather than an African-Centered one.

The Impetus for Scandal's Success

Given the historical taboo that underlie Black male-White female sexuality (Johnson, 2005), we offer two explanations for the mass appeal of *Scandal*. First, we are highly confident that this dramatic series would not have as large of a cult following if the president were Black and the mistress were White. Given the free reign that White males had over Black female bodies, Black men were prohibited from looking at White women, let alone having sexual encounters with them as the White race was to remain pure; untainted with Black blood produced with a Black penis. To put this reality within an historical context, remember that more than 3,000 Blacks were lynched between 1882 and 1947, and in 1917, "adults compelled a ten year–old to castrate a Black lynching in Texas, and adults held up a young boy to throw the rope over the branch of a tree before a 1931 lynching in Maryland "(Ward, 2012, p. 93). So, because White men were intimidated by the potential of the mixed race and uneasy with having to sexually compete with Black men (Johnson, 2005), this especially complicated the position of Black men in society. However, even in more recent times, America has expressed discomfort with the idea of a Black male-White female onscreen romance. Case in point: Although the male and female protagonist in John Grisham's *The Pelican Brief* were romantically involved, test audiences objected to a romance between Denzel Washington (an Oscar-winning Black actor) and Julia Robert's (an Oscar-winning White actress) characters in the 1993 movie (Paschall, 2013). When examined via a White Supremacist frame of reference, the interracial relationship can only work if the privileged person (in terms of power) is White, male, and privileged and the less-privileged person (in terms of power) is *Black and female*. Therefore, although Shonda Rhimes may be heralded by many African-Americans as a "power-player," in reality, she is an agent of the white media, and furthers the goals of White Supremacy. How does Rhimes accomplish this? Whether she intends to or not, Rhimes promotes the belief that the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of White people are superior to those of Black people (Bonilla-Silva, 2012, 2009; Halley, Eshelman, & Vijaya, 2011; Lazaridi, 2014; Tonry, 2011; Wise, 2013) and that Black female bodies are subject to the sexual will of White men (Altink, 2005; Collins, 2000; Crais & Scully, 2009; Fields, 1990; Johnson, 2005; Perrin, 2001; Washington, 2008).

Despite all of her accolades, Vera (2015) delved into how Rhimes occasionally received some pushback from Black viewers who were not satisfied that Olivia Pope did not have a consistent, Black male love interest. These same fans were also critical of the fact that the lead character in another Rhimes show, namely Annalise Keating in *How to Get Away with Murder* (played by award winning actress Viola Davis), has a White husband. Lastly, Vera (2015) pointed that in network television nor movies do fans often see the reverse (i.e., a Black male lead with a White female love interest).

In an article in *Clutch Magazine*, author Britni Danielle (2012) explained how a frequent viewer of the show *Scandal* expressed some less than favorable views regarding the lack of Black male-female romantic love on network television. Specifically, the viewer expressed little faith that Olivia Pope would ever fall in love with a Black man. The viewer then expressed their disdain with Black females having White male love interests on other shows (on air at the time of publication), such as, Vanessa Williams (666 Park Avenue), Joy Bryant (Parenthood), Anika Noni Rose (The Good Wife). Since White Supremacy protects the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of members of the dominant group (Bonilla-Silva, 2012), the financial supporters of *Scandal* are able to use television media as the vehicle of romantic fantasy by which White men are romantically involved with attractive Black women. Unfortunately, Black men, if present at all, maintain tertiary or clandestine positions in the lives of Black women.

Second, even if the aforementioned racial dynamic (Black male president and White female mistress) were featured on television, it would invariably be short-lived because Black men and women are currently living during a time when the United States witnessed its first Black (two-term) president. Therefore, an adulterous Black president (who had a White mistress) would inevitably draw strong negative comparisons to President Barack Obama and the strong marriage and family life that many perceive he has with his wife and First Lady, Michelle Obama (Chaney & Fairfax, 2013a, 2013b). In other words, a Black adulterous president might lead many who support Scandal to consciously or unconsciously question the strength of the Obama marriage as well as the perceived worth of Black women. Essentially, for these reasons, the adulterous Black president-White mistress would receive little traction and mass appeal because it does not support the goals of White Supremacy.

Earlier in this paper, we provided a socio-historical reminder of the relationships that generally existed between White men and Black women, and the large support of this show by African Americans is evidence of the extent to which many Blacks have ignored their collective history. In particular, Black women that are enamored with *Scandal* have forgotten (or forgiven) the transgressions of White men against them. Interestingly, in spite of their allegiance to *Scandal*, Black women generally disapprove of interracial dating and marriage between Black men and White women (Childs, 2005; McNamara, Tempenis, & Walton, 1999; Rosenblatt, Karis, & Powell, 1995).

Given the paucity of marriage within the Black community, Black women generally view interracial relationships between Black men and White women as tantamount to Black men's rejection of them as suitable marriage partners (Collins, 2004). So, it is interesting that while Black women overwhelming reject the idea of Black male-White female romance in *real life*, they wholeheartedly embrace the illicit relationship between a White male and Black female in *real life*.

In her study regarding why interracial marriage has become more accepted in recent years, McCain (2011) found Black families after the civil war and during the 1960's were more tolerant than white families of the marriage of a son or daughter to a different race spouse. However, this sentiment has not been echoed by White parents with a son or daughter involved in an interracial union (McCain, 2011). Perhaps the greater acceptance of interracial relationships by Blacks is consciously (or unconsciously) related to a desire for external validation from Whites by becoming closer to the White ideal through marriage, the most obvious legal indicator of cultural assimilation (Bonilla-Silva, 2012; Feagin, 2014). Morrison (2010) used hair-straightening as a proxy for identity formation. She wrote:

> My assertion is that Black identity can go through the same process as Black hair. In the way that chemicals or heat are applied to kinky hair to tame it or straighten it out, identity markers more culturally assigned to Whites and, in the case of interracial relationships, Whiteness itself, are applied to Blacks to tame us and straighten us up. Straightening is essentially the assigning of Whiteness to any aspects of our identity that can be construed as positive. Straightening emerges from the notion that Whiteness has to have to something to do with why any Blacks are able to even exist in a White-dominated environment (pp. 89-90).

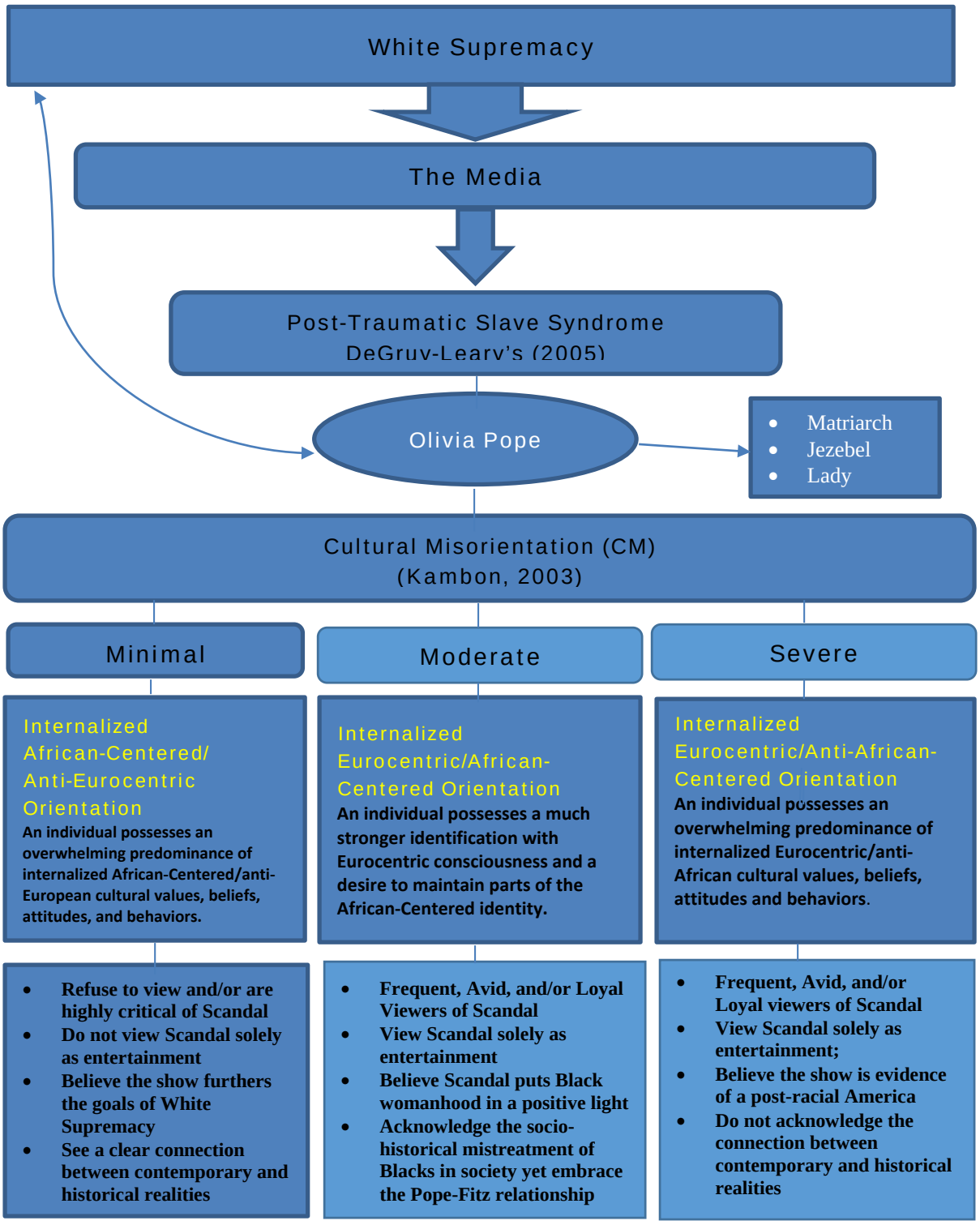
The introduction of Africans to America was harsh and stripped them of their individual and collective identity and over time, resulted in Post Traumatic Slave Disorder (PTSD) and the erosion of the African Self-Conscious (ASC). We concur with Morrison in that the goal of White Supremacy is to subtly "straighten" African people in America so that they unquestionably embrace the values of Europeans and weaken or disregard their arrested African-Centered development. Black men and women with a minimal or strong African Self-Consciousness (ASC) place a higher regard on spirituality, or what is in the best collective interest of their people. In other words, instead of emphasizing materialism, individualism, and racial devaluation, they are aware of historical realities and how these realities shape what is generally promoted in the media. Essentially, by building a show around the illicit romance between a powerful White male (Fitz) and a less powerful Black female (Pope), Rhimes and her financial supporters demonstrate that Pope's power is directly linked to Whiteness (and White power) and not Blackness (and Black power).

So, in addition to her socioeconomic status and (perceived) power, Olivia Pope's affair with a powerful White man furthers the goals of White Supremacy, the popularity of *Scandal*, and is evidence of a moderate or severe CM. Tragically, under the guise of entertainment, a subtle form of "straightening" occurs when the African mind is alienated from Afrocentric cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, and thus allows Black women to live vicariously through Pope and seek external validation and acceptance from White men, the historical and contemporary gatekeepers of White Supremacy. Thus, Black women can view the role of mistress as a misguided form of empowerment because the powerful White man chose a Black woman (instead of a White woman) with whom to have a sexually-charged affair.

Conclusion

As *Scandal* begins its fifth season (ABC renewed the show on May 7, 2015), it will be interesting to see how the relationship between Olivia Pope and President Fitzgerald Thomas Grant III (e.g., "Fitz") unfolds. While avid viewers of Scandal will assert the show advances the talent of its creator (Shonda Rhimes) and lead Black female actor (Kerry Washington) and the Olivia Pope character should only be evaluated according to its entertainment value, we contend that current media representations of Black women are linked to historical and contemporary realities. Moreover, Blacks who cannot or refuse to recognize the historicity of the Fitz-Pope relationship (in which a Black woman is the mistress of a White man) are victims of a compromised ASC, a moderate or severe CM, and an affinity for the Jezebel image (Davis & Tucker-Brown, 2013; Kambon & Bowen-Reid, 2010), which masquerades as "success." Simply put, it is historically irresponsible and culturally dangerous to merely regard *Scandal* as an indicator of a post-racial society or as harmless entertainment. Regardless of whether those who support the show acknowledge it or not, Olivia Pope supports the stereotypical Matriarch, Jezebel and Lady tropes generally associated with Black womanhood. Perhaps even more disturbing is the Pope-Fitz relationship harkens a post-slavery time when the bodies of Black women, whether consensual or not, were the property of White men. We urge those that support *Scandal* to honestly evaluate whether this political drama fosters an African Self-Extension Orientation and African Self-Consciousness (ASEO & ASC) or subtly erodes it via a Cultural Misorientation (CM) that minimizes or ignores the historical reality of slavery that places the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of White people above those of Africans. At the beginning of this manuscript, we began with a quote by well-renowned Black Clinical Psychologist Dr. Naim Akbar. In that quote, Akbar noted that psychological enslavement 'feeds on the mind, invades the soul, destroys an individual's loyalties to himself, and creates an allegiance to those who are intent on causing one's destruction. By recognizing *Scandal* as a beacon for White Supremacy and the cultural misorientation of African-centered consciousness, enslaved Africans in America may subtly release their mental and psychological allegiance to a political drama that promotes White Supremacy, further alienates them from their cultural identity, ignores their painful history, and grossly distorts their contemporary realities.

Figure – *Scandal* Cultural Misorientation (CM) Conceptual Framework



References

Armour, J. D. (1997). *Negrophobia and reasonable racism: The hidden cost of being black in America*. New York: New York University Press.

Akbar, N. (1996). *Breaking the Chains of Psychological Slavery*. Tallahassee: Mind Production & Associates, Inc.

Altink, H. (2005). Deviant and dangerous: Pro-slavery representation of Jamaican slave women's sexuality, c. 1780-1834. *Slavery and Abolition*, *26*(2), 271-288.

Baker, J. (1996). Analyzing stereotypes in media. *Teaching & Change*, *3*(3), 260-271.

Banjo, O., & Fraley, T. (2014). The wannabe, the man, and Whitebread: Portrayals of Whiteness in Black films. *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, *38*(1), 38-52.

Bass, A. (2014). Ghosts of Jim Crow: Ending racism in post-racial America. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, (ahead-of-print), 1-2.

Bell, D. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. New York City: Basic Books.

Bodenhorn, H., & Ruebeck, C. S. (2005). Colorism and African-American Wealth: Evidence from the Nineteenth-Century South. Cambridge, MA National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper.

Blay, Y. A. (2011). Skin bleaching and global White supremacy: By way of introduction. *Journal Pan African Studies*, *4*(4), 4-46.

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2012). The invisible weight of Whiteness: the racial grammar of everyday life in contemporary America. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *35*(2), 173-194.

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2009). *Racism without racists: Colorblind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in America*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Bryson, S. (1998). Relationship between race and attitudes toward black men. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development*, *26*(4), 282-294.

Burrell, T. (2010). *Brainwashed: Challenging the myth of Black inferiority*. New York: Smileybooks.

Chaney, C. (2011). The character of womanhood: How African American women's perceptions of womanhood influence marriage and motherhood. *Ethnicities, 11*(4), 512-535.

Chaney, C., & Fairfax, C. N. (2013a). A change has come: The Obamas and the culture of Black marriage in America. *Ethnicities 13*(1), 20-48. doi: 10.1177/1468796812463546

Chaney, C., & Fairfax, C. N. (June 2013b). The Obamas and the culture of Black parenting in America. *The Journal of Pan African Studies, 5*(10), 20-49.

Chaney, C., & Robertson, R. (2013a). Media Reporting of the Sandy Hook Elementary School Angels. *Journal of Pan African Studies, 5*(6), 74-114.

Chaney, C., & Robertson, R. (2013b). Racism and police brutality in America. *Journal of African American Studies*, *17*(4), 480-505. doi: 10.1007/s12111-013-9246-5

Childs, E. E. (2005). Looking behind the stereotypes of the "angry Black woman": An exploration of Black women's responses to interracial relationships. *Gender and Society, 19*(4), 544-561.

Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment* (2nd ed.). NY: Routledge.

Collins, P. H. (1997). Mammies, matriarchs, and other controlling images. C. P. Gould's In *Gender: Key concepts in critical theory* (pp. 76-106). New York: Humanity Books.

Crais, C. C., & Scully, P. (2009). *Sara Baartman & the Hottentot Venus: A Ghost Story & a Biography*. Princeton University Press.

Cush, I. (2013). Still not easy being an African-American. *New African*, *47*(534), 72-74.

Danielle, B. (September, 2012). Are tv shows promoting interracial relationships for Black women. Retrieved from: http://www.clutchmagonline.com/2012/09/are-tv-shows-promoting-interracial-relationships-for-black-women/

Davis, A. M. (2012) Racial reconciliation or retreat? How legislative resolutions apologizing for slavery promulgate White supremacy. *The Black Scholar*, *42*(1), 37-48.

Davis, A. Y. (1981). Rape, racism and the capitalist setting. *The Black Scholar*, *12*(6), 39-45.

Davis, S., & Tucker-Brown, A. (2013). Effects of Black sexual stereotypes on sexual decision making among African American women. *Journal of Pan African Studies, 5*(9), 111-128.

DeGruy Leary, J. (2005). *Post traumatic slavery syndrome*. Milwaukie, OR: Uptone Press.

Du Bois, W. E. B. (2004). The black codes. *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States: An Integrated Study*, 474.

Feagin, J. R. (2014). *Racist America: Roots, current realities, & future reparations* (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Fields, B. J. (1990). Slavery, race and ideology in the United States of America. *New Left Review, 181*(1), 95-118.

Griffin, J. (1998). Aunt Jemima: Another image, another viewpoint. *Journal of Religious Thought, 54/55*(2/1), 75-77.

Halley, J., Eshelman, A., & Vijaya, R. M. (2011). *Seeing White: An introduction to White privilege and race*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

Imhotep, D. (2012). *The first Americans were Africans*. Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse.

Jamison, D. F. (2006). The relationship between African self-consciousness, cultural misorientation, hypermasculinity, and rap music preference. *Journal of African American Studies*, *9*(4), 45-60.

Johnson, K. (2005). The legacy of Jim Crow: The enduring taboo of black-white romance. *The Social Science Research Network Electronic Paper Collection, 57*, 1-30.

Kambon, K. K. K. (2006). *Kambon's reader in liberation psychology*: Selected works, Volume I. Tallahassee, FL: Nubian Nation Publications.

Kambon, K. K. K. (2003). Cultural misorientation: The greatest threat to the survival of the Black race in the 21st century. Tallahassee, FL: Nubian Nation Publications.

Kambon, K. K. K. (1992). *The African personality in America: An African-centered framework.* Tallahassee, FL: Nubian Nation Publications.

Kambon, K. K. K., & Bowen-Reid, T. (2010). Theories of African American personality: Classification, basic constructs and empirical predictions/assessment. *Journal of Pan African Studies, 3*(8), 83-108.

Kardiner, A., & Ovesey, L. (1951). *The Mark of oppression: A psychosocial study of the American Negro*. New York: Norton Publishing.

Katz-Fishman, W., Scott, J., & Gomes, R. (2014). Race, class and transformation: Confronting our history to move forward. In *Teaching Race and Anti-Racism in Contemporary America* (pp. 265-273). Springer Netherlands.

Kein, S. (2000). *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color*. Louisiana State University Press.

Lazaridi, K. (2014). Breaking down prejudices: Racism in America: Past and Present. *Journal in Humanities, 2*(1), 39-45.

Lucas, D. L. (September 3, 2013). Does Scandal Condone Adultery? Retrieved from: http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2013/09/does_scandal_condone_adultery_shondarhimes_addresses_the_criticism.html

Marger, M. (2012). *Race and ethnic relations: American and global perspectives*. (9th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Marriage Statistics (January 1, 2014). Retrieved from: http://www.statisticbrain.com/marriage-statistics/

Mask, M. (2004). Monster's Ball. *Film Quarterly, 58*(1), 44-55.

McNamara, R. P., Tempenis, M., &Walton, B. (1999). *Crossing the line: Interracial couples in the South.* Westport, CT: Praeger.

Morrison, A. M. (2010). Straightening up: Black women law professors, interracial relationships and academic fit(ting) in. *Harvard Journal of Law & Gender*, *33*(1), 85-98.

Mowatt, R. A., French, B. H., & Malebranche, D. A. (2013). Black/female/body hypervisibility: A Black feminist augmentation of feminist leisure research. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 45*(5)*, 644-660.

Nelson, M. S., Gabbidon, S. L., & Boisvert, D. (2015). Philadelphia area residents' views on the disproportionate representation of blacks and Hispanics in the criminal justice system. *Journal of Crime and Justice, 38*(2), 270-290.

Olatunji, B. O., Tomarken, A., & Zhao, M. (2014). Effects of exposure to stereotype cues on contamination aversion and avoidance in African Americans. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, *33*(3), 229-249.

Painter, N. I. (2010). *The history of White people*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Paschall, V. (Friday, September 22, 2013) in Curbed. Mapping the Filming Locations of The Pelican Brief. Retrieved from: http://dc.curbed.com/archives/2013/09/mapping-the-filming-locations-of-the-pelican-brief.php

Perrin, L. M. (2001). Resisting reproduction: Reconsidering slave contraception in the old South. *Journal of American Studies, 35*(2), 255-274.

Pettigrew, T. F. (1964). *A profile of the Negro American*. Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand Reinhold Publications.

Potter, H. (2013). An argument for Black feminist criminology: Understanding African-American women's experiences with intimate partner violence using an integrated approach. In M. Chesney-Lind & L. Pasko (Eds.). *Girls, women, & crime: Selected readings* (pp. 53-66). Los Angeles: Sage.

Robertson, R. (2014). *Blacks behind bars: African-Americans, policing, and the prison boom* (1st edition). Cognella, Inc.

Rosenblatt, P. C., Karis, T., & Powell, R. D. (1995). *Multiracial couples: Black & White voices*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

'Scandal': Kerry Washington Explains her Quote about Fitz's Race (April 26, 2014). Retrieved from: http://www.eurweb.com/2013/04/scandal-kerry-washington-explains-her-quote-about-fitzs-race/

Scandal Viewing Parties Around Atlanta (2014). Retrieved from: http://www.wsbtv.com/gallery/entertainment/scandal-viewing-parties-around-atlanta/g9md/#3431025

ScandalHolics (2014). Retrieved from: https://www.facebook.com/ScandalHolics

Spear, J. M. (2003). Colonial intimacies: Legislating sex in French Louisiana. *William and Mary Quarterly, LX*(1), 74-96.

Staples, R. (2011). White power, Black crime, and racial politics. *Black Scholar, 41*, 31-41.

Stephens, D. P., & Phillips, L. D. (2003). Freaks, gold diggers, divas, and dykes: The socio-historical development of African American adolescent females' sexual scripts. *Sexuality and Culture, 7*, 3-47.

Swan, Q. (2013). Caveat of an obnoxious slave: Blueprint for decolonizing Black power studies from the intellectual governs of White supremacy. *Journal of Pan African Studies, 6*(2), 53-71.

The Feminist Spectator. (May 24, 2012). Scandal. Retrieved from: http://www.thefeministspectator.com/2012/05/24/scandal/

The Limited "Scandal" Collection (February 4, 2015). Retrieved from: http://tomandlorenzo.com/2015/02/the-scandal-collection-for-the-limited/

The Washington Post (January 22, 2013). Survey paints portrait of Black women in America. Retrieved from: http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/survey-paints-portrait-of-black-women-in-america/2011/12/22/gIQAvxFcJQ_story.html

Tonry, M. (2011). *Punishing race: A continuing American dilemma*. New York: Oxford University Press.

U. S. Census Bureau (2010). Marriage in Black America. Retrieved from: http://blackdemographics.com/households/marriage-in-black-america/

Unnever, J. D., & Gabbidon, S. L. (2013). Do Blacks speak with one voice? Immigrants, public opinions, and perceptions of criminal injustices. *Justice Quarterly*, (ahead-of-print), 1-25.

Van Sertima, I. (1976). *They came before Columbus: The African presence in ancient America*. New York: Random House.

Vera, B. (February 10, 2015). No ma'am: Where are the Black couples on network tv? Retrieved from: http://www.centrictv.com/news-views/commentaries/articles/2015/02/11/no-ma-am-where-are-the-black-couples-on-tv.html

Ward, G. K. (2012). *The Black child-savers: Racial democracy & juvenile justice*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Washington, H. A. (2008). *Medical apartheid: The dark history of medical experimentation on Black Americans from colonial times to the present*. New York: Anchor.

Wilkins, E. J., Whiting, J. B., Watson, M. F., Russon, J. M., & Moncrief, A. M. (2013). Residual effects of slavery: What clinicians need to know. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, *13,* 14-28.

Williams, P.J. (2013). The monsterization of Trayvon Martin. *Nation*, *297*(7/8), 17-22.

Wise, T. (2013). *Between Barack and a hard place: Racism and White denial in the age of Obama*. San Francisco: City Lights Books/Open Media Series.

Zuberi, T., & Bonilla-Silva, E. (2008). Telling the real tale of the hunt: Toward a race conscious of racial stratification. In T. Zuberi & E. Bonilla-Silva (Eds.), White *logic, White methods: Racism and methodology* (pp. 329-341). New York: Rowman & Littlefield.