

Lost In Intersectionality: POSE & the Symbolic Annihilation of the Black Transgender Woman

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Abstract

Media has proven to be very influential when it comes to creating a certain perception of different groups. Television and film storylines rely heavily on distorted and biased stereotypes to portray different cultural groups, such as black transgender women, due to their simple comprehension as opposed to complex character dynamics. It allows shortcuts, preventing the need to create and build complex identities for supporting characters. Stereotypes in media act as a device to demonstrate how people should behave toward certain groups in a way that is socially appropriate. This study seeks to look at multiple aspects of media portrayals including race, gender and sexuality as they pertain to the black transgender woman. This research attempts to elucidate the hardships that are created for these women as multidimensional identities oftentimes erased from the image of society.

Introduction

In this digital age of mass media, where film and television play an immense role in how society receives information, film and television act as a shared medium that sends direct and subliminal messages through flat character portrayals, in turn creating shared universal ideals about certain topics and particular groups of people. Like several other domains, the film and television world is a predominantly white industry consisting heavily of cisgender people. This becomes an obstacle when the subject of representation comes to the forefront of the discussion. Generally, people tend to surround themselves with those who portray qualities and identities that reflect their own, so film and television is a key source, sometimes the only source of exposure to groups outside of one's direct life. The world of Hollywood, the entertainment capital of the world, consists of tightknit groups of rich, wealthy white cisgender individuals who routinely take center stage in the development of screenplays and storylines. Due to this lack of diversity, as a specific marginalized group, black transgender women are prone to suffer the consequences of their own erasure. Symbolic annihilation is defined as "the absence or active non-representation of a cultural group, disallowing the symbolic representation of that group or misrepresenting that culture within the mainstream media or consciousness" through stereotypes placed onto them that have become the norm through this medium (Brook, Charlie, *Her Me Out*).

Purpose

This study seeks to look at multiple aspects including race, gender and sexuality as they pertain to the black transgender woman. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate how

distorted and biased character tropes of black transgender women in film and television negatively contribute to the specific group's mental health and comparatively low self-esteem issues while further deforming their true compound identities.

Literature Review

Women's Movement & Intersectionality

As this research concerns women, the mention of the feminist movement must be explored. The feminist movement, also known as the women's liberation movement began in 1848 as a series of political campaigns which aimed to reform various issues that women had and continue to face today, such as lack of equality compared to the rights of men. There have been many waves of feminism that all accomplished varying tasks for various groups of women. The movement progressed in a series of four waves, each accomplishing progressively higher levels of rights and freedoms for women. The women who led the first wave intentionally left out poor women and women of color. The second wave focused on eliminating these women's limited patriarchal roles in media portrayals. The third wave broadened the idea of feminism to include a more diverse group of women and a more fluid range of sexual and gender identities, but still did not reach much progress on the issues of sexual harassment and sexual assault. The fourth wave brought to light accusations against men in powerful positions, including Hollywood with the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements. This wave promotes inclusion of all genders and sexualities,

yet while the intersectional aspect of feminism was and continues to be promoted, there is still a great degree of exclusion and misrepresentation of black and transgender women.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is defined as the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. This must be taken into account when discussing the maltreatment of black transgender women as, unlike others, they happen to fall under not only one, but three of the most marginalized groups simultaneously. The term “Misogynoir,” coined by Moya Bailey, a black queer feminist, was created to bring to light the specific experience of misogyny directed toward black cisgender women in pop culture. This term then inspired the term “Transmisogynoir,” which directly acknowledges the specific system of oppression that surround black transgender women including antiblackness, cissexism and misogyny.

Symbolic Annihilation

Symbolic annihilation is the annihilation, absence or active non-representation of a cultural group, i.e. decimating a culture by disallowing the symbolic representation of that group or misrepresenting that culture within the mainstream media or consciousness. In modern day media, this takes place in various forms; one crucial example being that cisgender men are

continually cast as transgender women in major Hollywood films. Some well-known examples include Jared Leto in *Dallas Buyers' Club* (2013), Eddie Redmayne in *The Danish Girl* (2015) and Matt Bomer in *Anything* (2017).

A male actor would not be cast as a cisgender woman so why is it acceptable for him to be cast as a transgender woman? There is a clear distinction in this. In society, transgender women are considered less feminine than cisgender women, or masculine.

Cisgender casting for transgender women warps people's perception of the identities of transgender women. Put simply, it makes cisgender people believe that transgender women do not exist; they are merely men playing dress up, an idea that Bomer's portrayal in *Anything* supports. Bomer, a cisgender gay man, only promotes the idea of this proposed facade by insinuating that transgender women are simply men denying their homosexuality. Various examples like these result in gross misrepresentation, and it is not difficult to see how this error becomes an issue for transgender representation.

Cisgender men cannot accurately portray the emotional strains of transgender women as they have not experienced nor will they ever understand the gender and body dysmorphia that is attached to it. Even when black transgender actresses Laverne Cox and Kitana Kiki Rodriguez played transgender women in *Orange Is The New Black* and *Tangerine*, their roles revolved solely around their transness, limiting their entire existences to a singular aspect of their beings, denying them human complexity.

Even with transgender model Roxy Wood's portrayal in the film, she appears only as a supporting character to Bomer, which only proves that cisgender white men reign at the top of the social pyramid and all others are merely an extension or continuation of them.

These portrayals repeatedly invalidate the complete existence of transgender women. Transgender people could play these roles as well as other roles with excellence if only given the opportunity by those in power of the mainstream industry. This is where the idea of “passing” comes into play. “Realness is what it’s all about. Being able to fit into the straight, white world to embody the American dream, but [black transgender women] don’t have access to that dream” (*POSE*). The mainstream society does not respond well to people that do not look like them. If one does not “pass” as a cisgender woman, they are often times alienated and they are more prone to experience violence. The more a transgender woman resembles society’s ideal cisgender woman, the more likely she is able to obtain opportunities in life, and in roles, as a cisgender woman would.

Violence

To properly acknowledge and assess the violence that black transgender women go through, it is necessary to broaden our definition of the word. While the most protruding definition of violence is physical abuse, it can also present itself in many other forms, including sexual abuse and verbal abuse. Microaggressions are the most common expressions of verbal abuse as they are naturally subtle, sometimes subconscious, discriminations against a marginalized group. While many of these microaggressions are verbal, most of them exist in the form of conscious or absentminded actions. These negative images of this subset of women are rooted in institutionalized racism, homophobia, transphobia and sexism that leave them to reflect, or project, these ideas onto themselves continuing the cycle of abuse. (*See Ballroom*

Culture & Vogue) Psychological projection is defined as the tendency for people to see in others characteristics that they are motivated to deny in themselves. Those who project tend to feel better about themselves and experience less anxiety as a result of doing so.

Sex Work

Oftentimes transgender women will experience discrimination when seeking employment, finding significant difficulty making an income, let alone a stable one. As they have limited access to employment opportunities, queer youth and young adults settle hopelessly into the field of sex work, oftentimes working as escorts as a means to earn money.

Sex work is a consensual exchange of sex between consenting adults. It is not a form of sexual abuse since all parties are consenting to take part in it. As previously mentioned, black transgender women live in a constant pathway of danger. Due to the criminalization of sex work, these women often do not come forward to report cases of rape or sexual harassment in fear that they will be arrested or not taken seriously due to the taboo nature of their work.

This lack of trust in the police system exposes workers to emotional and physical abuse by those seeking the services, including police officers. In a survey amongst transgender people involved in sex work or other underground economies, 53 percent of black transgender people reported elevated levels of police violence against them. Authority figures meant to protect its citizens are exploiting black transgender people, especially women, as they are well aware that, due to their status, any reports of abuse they made would not be investigated.

HIV/AIDS Crisis

Being limited to sex work employment and having multiple sexual partners also leads to a higher exposure to sexually transmitted diseases, the most prominent being HIV. There are a multitude of myths surrounding how HIV is contracted. Despite general belief, HIV is not an airborne illness therefore it cannot be spread through acts of hugging, kissing, sneezing or coughing, or sharing food. It can only be spread from person-to-person through bodily fluids such as blood, semen, vaginal fluid, anal mucous and breastmilk. With that being said, it is important to take note that condoms are a highly effective means of protection against the virus.

Due to the limited knowledge about HIV/AIDS, the homophobia and transphobia surrounding it is detrimental to the health of LGBTQ+ members as well as those outside of the community. Another common myth that must be debunked is that the HIV crisis is only a problem for those assigned male at birth (AMAB). As aforementioned, the virus is spread through bodily fluids of all sorts. This means that anyone who has sexual relations with another person living with the virus has a chance of contracting the virus, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Due to discriminations in health care in the United States, HIV is more than three times more prevalent among black transgender women than white or latina women as they are more likely to avoid getting tested and stay in HIV-related treatments.

Ballroom Culture & Vogue

As a result of being banished, from the black world for being queer and from the spotlight of the queer world for being black, the black queer community was forced to find their own sense of community and belonging in what they introduced as the ballroom.

Ballroom, or ball culture, began in 1970s during the Harlem Renaissance, in response to a campaign run by the Black church to get rid of the neighborhood's queer residents. The ballroom became a place where black and brown youth came together in community centers after hours to compete, or walk, in competitions with categories that reflected pop culture and the mainstream society they were excluded from. Within this culture existed groups made up of ballroom members creating their own chosen families, or houses. Each house is named after the "mother" or "father," usually an older queer person who has taken the younger members under their wing.

In the ballroom competitions, house members are critiqued by a panel of judges as they compete to win trophies for how well they portray the assigned categories. An issue with these categories is the fact that they foster attributes of mainstream culture, and judges deduct points for physical aspects that do not reflect the images of the cisgender women of pop culture. One of these categories, dating back to the 1860s charity balls where black men dressed in drag, was titled the "most perfect feminine body displayed by an impersonator." This category alone pushes the idea that one has to be "perfect," copying the "perfect" image of the cisgender woman, in order to be seen as a woman. Common ballroom etiquette is to have no signs of body hair excluding long flowing locks on the head, bodily curves consisting of wide hips and a tiny waist, flawless makeup and the tallest high heels are a non negotiable. For transgender women,

any visible masculine features resulted in a deduction of points and lesser chance of scoring a ballroom trophy.

As previously mentioned, “passing” becomes the substantial goal for a great deal of transgender women, especially those involved in ball culture, as they feel it is the only way to be truly seen as a woman. In the ballroom, these women are judged as harshly as they would be in the outside world. The question then becomes “Would you pass in the real world?” and if the answer is no, then the scores will reflect it.

Vogue!

Voguing is yet another aspect of ball culture as the ballroom is where it originated. The “vogue” dance is inspired by poses from the popular fashion magazine, VOGUE. Although voguing had been prominent for years among the LGBTQ+ members of ballroom, it was not until pop singer, Madonna, showcased the dance in her music video, “Vogue,” that it became a popular trend among the rest of the world.

Despite her status as an icon and supporter of the gay community, some members of the ballroom community argue that Madonna’s “Vogue” was an act of cultural appropriation. Although famous ballroom members such as Jose Gutierrez Xtravaganza and Luis Xtravaganza were brought along to choreograph the music video, some are still upset. Madonna, a cisgender straight white woman, became the face of vogue reaping the benefits of the stylized dance while the minorities who created it were victims yet again to symbolic annihilation. Even with their art in the spotlight, black queer people are still left in the dark.

Black Trans* Lives Matter

During the combined years of 2019 and 2020, nearly 53 transgender and gender non-conforming people were the victims of murder. Of these 53 people, the majority of them were black transgender women under 30 years old. According to a report by the Human Rights Campaign, Black trans women are killed at disproportionate rates due to “intersections of racism, transphobia, sexism, biphobia, and homophobia.”

A 2020 study by the National LGBTQ Task Force showed that black transgender people had a 26% unemployment rate which is more than likely to be much steeper now. This study also found major disparities between transgender people in comparison to the general population. Forty-one percent of black trans people have been homeless, 34% have household incomes less than 10,000 dollars and nearly half of the black transgender population has attempted suicide at least once (Forestiery 2020). Although these numbers are not specific to black transgender women, it is more than reasonable to assume that the numbers are higher for them as they are women.

The Trump administration removed the Health Care Rights Law (HCRL) from the Affordable Care Act, a law that prohibits discrimination in health coverage and care. This included discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age and disability. In 2016, the Trump Administration blocked the rule from the Department of Health and Human Services that specified that the discrimination mentioned in the HCRL included protections

against transgender people as well. Along with this attack, Congress has also failed to pass the Equality Act, a bill meant to provide protections for all of the LGBTQ+ community in all areas, including prisons. Many transgender inmates are placed in facilities that do not match their gender identity, therefore putting them at a higher risk of physical and sexual assault. While this block has only recently been reversed by the Biden administration, the message remains clear: since the law takes no notice of black trans women then it gives individuals an excuse to do the same. The problem begins when these individuals make up bigger groups such as the influential world of Hollywood.

Research Questions

1. What are the physical traits and personal characteristics of the characters? Are the character's looks mentioned in a positive light or negative light?
2. How often do the characters engage in sexual acts or talk about sex?
3. Do the characters portray feminine traits or characteristics?
4. How often are the characters engaged in physical or verbal violent acts?
5. Do the characters demonstrate mental health issues? Are these issues of concern to other characters? If acknowledged, how are their issues addressed?

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to bring focused attention to the disparities that black transgender women face as a specific group which falls under multiple layers of oppression. To analyze the effects of media portrayals of this specific group, the television series, POSE was chosen as the focal point for collecting data on this topic as the main characters and dominant storyline are both centered around this group. Random episodes were selected from the existing two seasons of this singular television series. Five episodes were selected from each of the two seasons for a total of ten episodes. A coding system was developed using several broad categories based off of the focused research questions listed above. Each main category consists of specific subcategories that branch off into related aspects of that focus. The coding was designed using varying point scales; each aspect was assigned a specific number, or points, ranging from 0 to 1 and 0 to 4. The number of points for each subcategory varied depending upon the level of variety within each main focus.

Findings

Personality

The codes looked for within the “personality” category were: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism.

Blanca portrayed several aspects of openness throughout every episode. Aspects of conscientiousness, extraversion and agreeableness were primarily shown throughout all episodes, although there was one instance in each of these areas where the trait was not shown. Aspects of neuroticism were only shown in five of the ten episodes.

Attractiveness

The codes looked for within the “attractiveness” category were: hair length, hair texture, real or fake hair, clothing, makeup and sex.

For majority of the episodes coded for, Blanca wore the same wig which was styled in different hairstyles aligning with the ball categories and personal preference. The wig was made of dark colored hair and held loose curls. The hair length and texture remained constant throughout the entirety of the show excluding one instance of a flashback. In this flashback, Blanca wore a wig with tapered, straight hair style.

Blanca dressed in mainly feminine clothing throughout the entirety of the episodes. Her signature style consisted of big dangly earrings, tight fitted jeans, crop tops exposing midriff, heeled boots and purses. There were some instances, such as in ballroom competitions, where

Blanca wore entirely feminine attire such as extravagant dresses, heels, makeup, jewelry, long manicured nails and wore elegant hairstyles.

A full face of makeup was worn in nearly all episodes. Some variations included lighter makeup, with only mascara and applied lipstick. The only episode where she was not seen wearing makeup was when she was in the hospital for an extended amount of time.

There were rarely any instances of Blanca being involved in sexual situations. The one and only occurrence where she was involved in a sexual situation and it is sexual assault, a form of violence.

Socioeconomic Status

The codes looked for within the “socioeconomic status” category were: home, food, success/job authority, and verbal submission or aggression.

Blanca’s lodging remained constant throughout the entirety of the episodes. She rented a run down New York apartment with only a handful of bedrooms in which she lived with all of her kids, or house members. The apartment was dingy, had broken glass and very minimal furniture. The apartment could be described as spacious in some areas, but small considering the fact that some of the house members had to share the same bedroom to effectively utilize the space.

Most of the food in these episodes came from Blanca or the kids cooking meals at home. These meals included easy meals, like sloppy joe, spaghetti, and meat pies from her mother’s recipe book. A couple of episodes also showed a singular instance of eating out at restaurants, such as the time Blanca won “Mother of the Year” in a ball. Sometimes Blanca was the one

paying for the bill. Other times, people were paying for her meal. There was no food in the final hospital episode.

As the mother figure of her house, Blanca oversaw all of the projects and activities her kids were involved in. She had a strict set of rules in place for the people in her household; one of these rules was that everyone had to get some sort of education. Upon meeting Damon, one her kids, in the first episode, she forced him to audition for a dance school; she did not give him the choice of deciding where or not to do it. She made sure to be informed on the progress and problems all of the kids were facing and stepped in when necessary. Although she was mainly giving orders, she portrayed an instance of submission in about half of the episodes. In the hospital episode, she mainly took orders given to her.

With verbal aggression or submission, Blanca stood her ground. Oftentimes, she used an aggressive tone when talking with those who spoke to her in the same tone. When someone yelled at her, she would very rarely back down. In three of the ten episodes, she did have at least one instance of back down or being silenced by someone talking to her aggressively. In the final episode coded for, Blanca was neither aggressive or submissive.

Violence

The codes looked for within the “violence” category were: microaggressions (including verbal, behavioral, and environmental instances), sexual harassment, physical harassment and assault.

The most common form of violence was microaggressions, specifically verbal, although there were other behavioral aggressions as well. An example of this was when Blanca and her friend Lulu, two transgender women, went into an all-men gay bar and were glared at by surround white gay men. Verbal aggressions were most frequent, coming from outside of the community, but also from the community itself. Among the episodes that showed several different kinds of violence, verbal microaggressions were always one of them. Of the episodes that only had one form of violence, the form of violence was always microaggressions. The next most common form of violence was physical harassment, specifically manhandling, which was shown in three of the ten episodes. Three of the ten episodes did not have any instances of violence against Blanca. There was one instance of sexual assault against Blanca and physical assault, including fist fights in a club.

Mental Health & Personal Issues

The codes looked for within the “mental health and personal issues” category were: behavioral differences, and mental aid and access to resources.

Blanca’s normal behaviors were only slightly affected in two episodes, as she was very ill and fatigued after finding out her AIDS status. Despite her exhaustion, she did not sway from her normal activities.

In the majority of the episodes, Blanca had received a great amount of emotional support from the community around her. This emotional support included encouraging words and holding accountability. An example of this emotional support is when Blanca’s birth mother passed away and Pray Tell encouraged her to attend her mother’s funeral to say her goodbyes.

She was discouraged by her family members' disapproval of her new identity, but Pray Tell reminded her of the importance of saying goodbye, obtaining peace and forgiveness from her mother. There was one instance each of someone acknowledging, or bringing attention to Blanca's problems and another instance of gaining access to prescription to azidothymidine (AZT), a drug used to slow the progression of the HIV virus. It is important to note that this medication was prescribed and given to Blanca under the table by a medical doctor who was aware Blanca could not afford to obtain access to otherwise.

Discussion

As there were a few key findings and connections discovered in the process of completing this research, the most fascinating one was that a great deal of the verbal microaggressions came from within the transgender community itself. In moments of anger, the POSE characters tended to resort to calling others transphobic slurs and making negative comments about their physical appearance.

In the first episode of the series, Blanca calls out Electra for stealing one of her ideas. Electra, the mother of the house, has several times been pointed out as being able to pass as a cisgender woman. Due to this, she has been given the opportunity to create a higher status for herself among the rich white people of the area, putting herself at a much higher advantage than the other members of the house. In response to Blanca, Electra makes a harsh metaphor comparing ideas to ingredients, stating that only a "real mother" knows how to prepare them. To this, Candy, another black transgender female character, responds with an emphasis on Electra's "real woman" comment with "You hear that, crossdresser?" (*POSE*) The term crossdresser is not necessarily derogatory, but it holds an implication that the person being referred to only dresses

in the clothes of the opposite sex, yet has no intention of living their life as the opposite sex. This specific comment implies that Blanca is not a woman, but a man in women's clothing.

Upon finding out about Blanca's plan to leave the House of Abundance to start a house of her own, Electra sees this as a threat to her own legendary status and boastfully brings up her "passing" privilege to Blanca. "I can strut down Fifth Avenue when the sun is sitting high [and be waited on]...same as any white woman, while you hide away in the shadows, beast!" (*POSE*). This is a clear jab to Blanca's more masculine physical features. The term "beast" has a negative connotation, meaning unrefined, feral, or animalistic: all harsh inhumane comparisons. Due to Blanca's less "refined" look, Electra thinks of herself in a higher light than she does Blanca.

These are two examples of psychological projection which is defined as the tendency for people to see in others characteristics that they are motivated to deny in themselves. The fact that these comments were made by other black transgender women speaks volumes on the societal ideas of transgender beauty. This is a direct example of how institutionalized transphobia bleeds into all areas of society until it circles back to the transgender community itself.

These microaggressions continued into the ballroom. As balls are spaces where queer youth of color gather for a sense of community, belonging and validation, something they cannot find out in the "normal" world, it seems paradoxical that its main objective is to point out flaws in the community's appearance as this is already done by mainstream society. Yet, those who participate want to win fake trophies for a sense of accomplishment. The white, straight, cisgender world does not allow them to participate in their affairs, so the ballroom culture, despite it holding up a magnified mirror to their faces, they still depend on this mirror to feel seen.

Another memorable quote directed to Blanca from Lulu, another brown transgender woman, stated “Everybody need someone to make them feel inferior. [That line] runs downhill, past the women, the blacks, latins, gays, until it reaches the bottom and lands on our kind” (*POSE*). It was heartbreaking to hear this, especially coming directly from a transgender woman of color.

It is clear that this subset of women are thoroughly aware of exactly where they stand in the eyes of society. Even with the release of Madonna’s “Vogue,” these women, and other brown and black members in the community, relied on the promising thought of a **cisgender** white woman shining a light on them, as they did not have the resources nor opportunity to do it themselves. The unfortunate truth is since there is little being done about the mistreatment and overlooking of black transgender women, they seem to have fallen victim to a sense of hopelessness and learned to accept their lack of power over it.

Conclusion

Accurate representation is important because it allows for people to feel seen and have a sense of validation. Media has an immense amount of power. It has the power to inform and deconstruct false ideals commonly shared by society. Constantly being surrounded by images of people that do not look similar to what one is, or images that do not correctly portray a certain group that one a member of can lead to insecurities, lack of self respect and self deprecation, especially when only certain aspects of one identity are represented.

Intersectionality is multidimensional. Human beings are quite literally multidimensional. This world is three-dimensional, meaning nothing is made up of a single point; people cannot

just be one thing. There are several different layers of each person that make up their identity, therefore they cannot be reduced to a singular identity.

The black transgender woman's media representation is not more important than other cultural groups' representation. The black transgender woman just so happens to fall under the category of three of the most marginalized groups. While each of these singular groups, black people, transgender people and women face harsh challenges, it has to be emphasized that being a part of all three of these groups at once leaves this specific group exceptionally vulnerable to hardship. Without denying the value of other groups, it is crucial that focused attention is placed on this group to protect their existence in media and life.

Coding Sheet

Unit of Analysis: Television Episodes

Seasons: 2

Episodes: 10

I. PERSONALITY

Openness

0 - NO

1 - YES

Conscientiousness

0 - NO

1 - YES

Extraversion

0 - NO

1 - YES

Agreeableness

0 - NO

1 - YES

Neuroticism

0 - NO

1 - YES

II. ATTRACTIVENESS

Hair Length

0 - Bald

1 - Small Afro/Tapered Cut

2 - Short Hair (Past Ears)

3 - Shoulder Length (Touching or Past Shoulders)

4 - Long Hair (Bra-Strap)

Hair Texture

0 - Straight

1 - Wavy

2 - Loose Curls

3 - Kinky or Coily

Real or Fake Hair

0 - Wig

1 - Natural

2 - Wave or Extensions

Clothing

0 - Mainly masculine attire such as suit and tie, loose fitting clothing, work boots, etc.

1 - One masculine article of clothing such as tie, suit, button down shirt, etc.

2 - Gender neutral clothing such as T-shirts, jeans, sweatshirts, etc.

3 - One feminine attire such as bra

4 - Mainly feminine attire such as short shorts, blouses, crop tops, dresses or skirts, heels, exposure of cleavage, etc.

Makeup

0 - No makeup

1 - Light Makeup

2 - Full Face

Sex

0 - Not involved in sexual situations

- 1 - Shown briefly with connotation of sex such as a brief kiss or the connotation of sex without depiction
- 2 - Long kiss or expression of lust
- 3 - Shown in explicit sexual situation
- 4 - Shown in more than one sexual situation or with multiple partners

III. SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Home

- 0 - No home
- 1 - Project housing or small home with one to two bedrooms
- 2 - Middle class home or typical size and style home
- 3 - Big home with three to four bedrooms
- 4 - Mansion or Penthouse

Food

- 0 - No food
- 1 - Quick meals such as cereal or sandwiches
- 2 - Eating leftovers or cooking meals at home
- 3 - Eating fast food or takeout
- 4 - Fancy dinners such as steak, seafood, champagne, etc.

Submission or Dominance

- 0 - Taking orders or not in charge of a group project
- 1 - Mostly following orders, but giving some order and showing dominance
- 2 - Neither taking nor giving orders
- 3 - Mostly giving orders, but taking some order and being submissive
- 4 - Giving orders at work, overseeing projects

Verbal Submission or Aggression

- 0 - Quiet or reserved when yelled at
- 1 - Mostly quiet or reserved but has a slight aggressive tone toward the aggressor
- 2 - Neither aggressive nor submissive
- 3 - Mostly using an aggressive tone, yelling or screaming, derogatory language but has an instance of submission (e.g. other person yells and the character backs down)
- 4 - Using derogatory language, yelling or screaming, using an aggressive tone

IV. VIOLENCE

- 0 - None
- 1 - Microaggressions including environmental, behavioral and verbal and verbal abuse
- 2 - Sexual Harassment such as groping, unsolicited touching, or malicious intent behind sexual actions
- 3 - Physical Harassment such as manhandling
- 4 - Assault such as punching, kicking, weapons, restraint and sexual

V. MENTAL HEALTH/PERSONAL ISSUES

Behavior

- 0 - No differences in behavior
- 1 - Temporary withdrawal from usual activities, unusual fatigue, lack of hygiene
- 2 - Temporary withdrawal from usual activities, usual fatigue, lack of hygiene (for weeks or longer)
- 3 - Alcohol or drug abuse
- 4 - Suicidal

Aid & Resources

- 0 - No help or acknowledgement from others of issues
- 1 - Acknowledgement from others (e.g. "You have a problem")
- 2 - Emotional support such as recommendations, encouraging words, providing lodging, holding accountability
- 3 - Access to resources such as therapy, rehab or prescriptions

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