

CHAPTER THREE: WORK, FAMILY AND BLACK WOMEN'S OPPRESSION

Group Y

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➤ Metaphor of black African American woman as “*the mule*”

➤ REFLECTION: “Your work, and this goes for white people and black, is what you are...your work is your life.”

(Byerly)

The background of the slide features several faint, concentric circles in a lighter shade of blue, resembling ripples in water, positioned in the lower right area.

“White people think you are your work.”

-- (Gwaltney, John Langston, 1980)



THEME OF OPPRESSION:

- Black woman as “mule” in the workplace and in the home --→ **Exploitation**
- Dissonance – “Everything the imagined traditional family is thought to be, the African American family is not.”

Patricia Hill Collins

- Extended kin and Othermothers as a response to slavery
- Security in motherhood as a Black slave woman *(Issues related to fertility and sexuality come into play here.)*
- Primacy of mother-child relationship over that of husband-wife

- *Plessy vs. Ferguson Supreme Court decision – redefinition of segregation*
- Rigid boundaries between blacks and whites
- Threat of sexual harassment – in the home, in the workplace

CHAPTER FOUR: MAMMIES, MATRIARCHS, AND OTHER CONTROLLING IMAGES

RACISM AND THE DYNAMIC OF POWER

hegemony

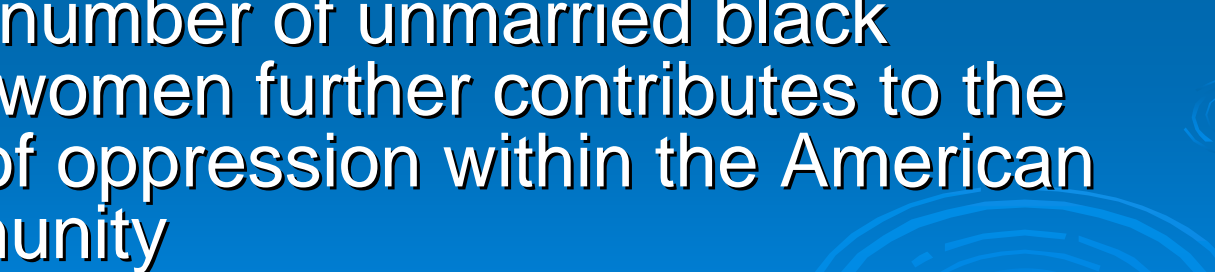
“Because the authority to define societal values is a major instrument of power, elite groups, in exercising power, manipulate ideas about Black womanhood.”
Hill Collins (Cosby)

Use of Binary Thinking to categorize people and promote oppositional difference:

black/white

male/female

general ed/special ed

- Inequities of education, employment and deeply entrenched patterns of racial segregation in housing...
 - Despite a shift from work as domestics to the industrial world
 - Increase in number of unmarried black adolescent women further contributes to the dimension of oppression within the American black community
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- The background of the slide is a solid blue color. In the bottom right corner, there are several decorative concentric circles in a lighter shade of blue, resembling ripples in water. These circles are centered around the bottom right and extend towards the bottom center of the slide.

CONTROLLING IMAGES

“***Mammy***” is the public face that Whites expect black women to assume for them.

Images of Black womanhood serve as a reservoir for the fears of Western culture. Matriarchal outcome of slavery – depicts African American woman in very physical terms.

Sees female-headedness as an important cause of black poverty

CULTURAL DEFICIENCY

“...DOMINANT IDEOLOGY SUGGESTS THAT BLACK CHILDREN LACK THE ATTENTION AND CARE ALLEGEDLY LAVISHED ON WHITE, MIDDLE-CLASS CHILDREN. THIS ALLEGED CULTURAL DEFICIENCY SERIOUSLY RETARDS BLACK CHILDREN’S ACHIEVEMENT.” Hill Collins

Such a view diverts attention from political and economic inequalities that increasingly characterize global capitalism.

WELFARE MOTHER – another controlling image that intrudes on Black women's decisions about fertility

(Remember that during slavery, motherhood enhanced the female slave's position.)

The welfare mother is labeled as a bad mother. She's "too aggressive" and does not adequately provide for her children.

1:3 = The ratio of African-American families officially classified as poor

The bottom right of the slide features three sets of concentric circles in shades of blue, resembling ripples in water, which serve as a decorative background element.

Jezebel, whore, “hoochie”

**Central in the nexus of controlling images -
originated in slavery**

**Current White-controlled media that
promotes this image - e.g., Hip-Hop**

- **Sexual preference further confounds the
plight of the Black American woman**

Social Institutions that Propel Controlling Images

Schools

Media

Government



“Portraying African-American women as matriarchs allows other groups to blame black women for their children’s failures in school and with the law, as well as Black children’s subsequent poverty.” (Hill Collins, p.)



“Color is the ultimate test of
‘American-ness,’ and Black is the
most un-American color of all.”

-- Elena Featherstone
1994, p.90

The background of the slide is a solid blue color. In the lower half, there are several decorative elements consisting of concentric circles, resembling ripples in water. These circles are rendered in a lighter shade of blue than the background, creating a subtle pattern.