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ORGASMIC SLAVERY ?
A STUDY OF BLACK FEMALE SEXUALITY

ANNECKA LEOLYN MARSHALL

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The process of doing doctoral research is usually described as a terribly isolating one. In particular, there is generally the notion of the autonomous and somewhat alienated academic who is attempting to push the scholastic horizons forward. At times this romantic vision is relevant but for me a communal background inspired the frantic writing of my thesis. This work is largely possible as a result of the support of my family and friends. This is related to these comments from June Jordan:

And really it is to honor...all the women I love, including myself, that I am working for the courage to admit the truth that Bertolt Brecht has written; he says, 'It takes courage to say that the good were defeated not because they were good, but because they were weak.'

I cherish the mercy and the grace of women's work. But I know there is new work that we must undertake as well: That new work will make defeat detestable to us. That new women's work will mean we will not die trying to stand up: we will live that way: standing up. (Jordan, 1989: 124 - 125)

I am deeply indebted to the hundred and seven people who participated in this research. It is also appropriate to give heartfelt thanks to my parents: Marlene and Doc Marshall, my sister Yvette and my feminist 'sisters', for helping me to not only believe in myself, but to have the strength to pursue my dream. To my mother I praise her with the following words from June Jordan:

...And I felt, once again, the kindling heat of my hope that we, the daughters of these Black women, will honor their sacrifice by giving them thanks. We will undertake, with pride, every transcendent dream of freedom made possible by the humility of

their love. (Jordan, 1989 :174)

I am especially grateful to my supervisor Professor Annie Phizacklea. Throughout this doctoral process she has been extremely supportive. I thank Annie for allowing me to benefit from her great intellect and kindness.

SUMMARY

What is 'orgasmic slavery'? This study interrogates the meaning of the term by analysing the racialised sexual exploitation of Black women. I examine the historical changes, differences, under - currents and complexities of the social construction of Black sexuality from the inferior position of African female slaves to the conditions of Black women in contemporary Britain.

Refuting the premise that Black women are primarily sexual beings, this thesis examines the origins and consequences of this assumption. Through a literature review, the dominant British portrayal of both Black women and Black men in terms of pathological and rampant sexualities is evident. My work assesses how the British and American film industries contribute to such misconceptions. Utilising the research method of participant observation, the perceptions of men and women from different racial backgrounds about images of Black sexuality are addressed. A questionnaire survey queried opinions about the sexual proclivity and relationships of Blacks, whites, 'mixed race' and gays. Building upon this data, a pilot study that was based on images of Black sexuality and their influence upon identity and experiences, provided more information. Central to this debate were semi - structured interviews on the issues of images, identity and relationships as perceived to be related to Black female sexuality.

SURPASSING SENSUOUS SLAVERY

INTRODUCTION.

In contemporary culture the media have become central to the constitution of social identity. It is not just that media messages have become important forms of influence on individuals. We also identify and construct ourselves as social beings through the mediation of images. This is not simply a case of being dominated by images, but of people seeking and obtaining pleasure through the experience of the consumption of these images. An understanding of contemporary culture involves a focus on both the phenomenology of watching and the cultural forms of images.

(Angus & Jhally quoted in hooks, 1991 :5)

...How do we create an oppositional worldview, a consciousness, an identity, a standpoint that exists not only as that struggle which also opposes dehumanization but as that movement which enables creative, expansive self - actualization? Opposition is not enough. In that vacant space after one has resisted there is still the necessity to become - to make oneself anew. (hooks, 1991 :15)

Traditionally excluded from the creation of sociological thought the position of the Black female researcher is unique. She is aware that the theories and concepts of sociology have, until quite recently, been developed by white men who have defined the world from their own particular point of view. This awareness is extremely alienating when she is denied the conceptual tools to tackle it. What has been purported to be a definitive knowledge of social life has negated her actual experiences.

Feminist sociologists have criticised the tendency of sociology to ignore the distinct position of women. This has been a difficult struggle that has been supported by the

increase of women sociologists in many areas of the discipline. Whilst the issue of gender is now more readily accepted to be a part of the sociological agenda, although at times this is still resisted, the specific racialisation of gender is generally marginalised. Accordingly feminist sociologists have ensured that the situation of women is conceptualised; but they have largely failed to recognise that their own focus is mainly on the experiences of white women.

One would hope that since mainstream sociology and feminism fail to realistically represent Black womanhood the sociology of "race relations" makes amends. However this has typically constituted studies by white men on the circumstances of Black men. When attention is paid to the position of Black women this has often been influenced by racist and sexist ideologies. As such Black women have been pathologised by sociological literature that has adopted popular stereotypes that exist in British society. For example, notions of Black matriarchs who emasculate their men have been given credibility by sociological discourse.

The prevalence of negative images about Black women in general society, in academia and the inadequacy of sociology to counteract this is a central concern for Black women researchers. The situation of Black female academics is even more problematic than that of white female sociologists because unlike them the former do not have large unifying networks. Due to the isolation of Black female academics and

the fact that their own training has encouraged them to be disassociated from Black female subjectivity, it is very difficult for them to transcend this scenario.

By opposing the tendency in sociology to pathologise and to dehumanise Black women I advocate a process of self - actualisation whereby Black women are active subjects. They are able to define what is essential to them, they have the ability to articulate their own self perceptions and they have the power to transform their status as marginalised Others. For me this entails developing Black feminist sociological analyses that are anti - racist, anti - elitist, anti - sexist and anti - heterosexist. These are interrogations of how women's oppression by men is linked to capitalism, racism and homophobia. I maintain that a critique of the multiple facets of the subordination of women on the basis of the autonomous and simultaneous oppressions of sexism, racism, heterosexism and class exploitation is fundamental.

My desire to support a Black feminist standpoint has motivated the aims of the present work. I intend to explain that dominant racist / sexist images of Black womanhood circumscribe Black women's lives in various ways as well as influence identities and relationships. I focus on how the dominant construction of Black female sexuality oppresses Black women in a manner that is sexist, racist, heterosexist and elitist. I want to argue that both white and Black men have defined a model of Black female heterosexuality that serves their sexual, social, economic, ideological and political

interests.

My main reason for choosing this topic is that it represents a central aspect of racism and sexism that has largely been ignored. There has been a limited amount of research on the racialised social construction of sexuality. The little work that has been done has usually been a focus on the Southern States in America during slavery. Although these studies are relevant, my thesis is qualitatively different as it represents an important contribution to contemporary British sociological and feminist thought. First, I give a historical assessment of the development of racialised images of sexuality in Britain. This criticises previous accounts that failed to recognise that the institutionalisation of images of Africans as sexually deviant, diseased and licentious were integral to the rationalisation of their maltreatment during slavery.

Second I explain, in contrast to the existing literature, that this was not merely a redundant historical phenomenon but rather a set of ideologies and practices that have continued to the present day. Moreover the fact that these images have persisted and that their impact has not been understood is, I will assert, an issue that is relevant to any discipline that is committed to coming to terms with the oppression of Black women. My work offers more than an understanding of racialised sexual imagery. Whereas previous work has given an outsider's approach of how Black women are portrayed, I use both my own consciousness as a Black woman

and that of other Black women, to assess what it feels like to be defined in this way. I discuss how the portrayal affects Black women's identities, impinges upon relationships and restricts life chances. Through participant observation I analyse the interface of race, gender and sexuality as perceived by Black women. By giving the opinions of Black women a pivotal place in my research, my analysis defies the restriction of Black women to the position of passive research objects.

Sharing a common identity with the research sample I am able to offer an insider's awareness of the complexity of their condition. The contradictions between dominant images that portray Black women as inherently hyper - sexual creatures and their actual self perceptions and experiences will be discussed. As a field of study that has been neglected, my work constitutes an important area of investigation. Furthermore, I will argue that the actual failure to comprehend the pervasiveness of these images has contributed to their formation, development and maintenance. Until this is appreciated the potential to challenge these images, which I shall argue is essential to combating the subordination of Black women, will not be realised.

This study will demonstrate that in Britain since enslavement the Black female has been predominantly relegated to the status of a sexual object. I draw on primary and secondary sources to explain the origins of such myths and I stress their merits in describing how they were used to justify the sexual abuse and economic oppression of Black

women. Nevertheless, the numerous ways in which Black women are primarily regarded as sexual fiends continues to entail pejorative connotations which are currently being underestimated. The failure of such texts to analyse the contemporary preponderance of myths, such as that of the promiscuous Black woman, is a weakness that my research aims to rectify. Hence I intend to explore the historical formation of dominant notions about Black female sexuality as well as the social, economic, ideological and political implications in contemporary Britain. My work highlights that analyses of the subordination of Black women can not concentrate on the independence and inter - connections of racism, sexism and class oppression without considering how they are supported by as well as themselves support the social construction of Black female (hetero)sexuality.

to refer to the historical subordination of Black women in both sexual and physical terms. Throughout this work 'orgasmic slavery' is examined within the over - riding context of sexism, heterosexism, racism and class oppression. Nonetheless, the phrase 'orgasmic slavery' is contradictory. Hence the word 'orgasmic' relates to experiences of debauched sexual excitement. Meanwhile, in contrast the word 'slavery' describes the condition of being the property of and dominated by another person. Under 'slavery', the slave is forced to perform extremely hard and unpaid drudgery for their owner.

Thus the expression 'orgasmic slavery' in my research,

addresses the subservient sexual, social, economic, political and ideological role of Black women in British society. However, a question mark also follows my use of the phrase as an indication that the continual state of 'orgasmic slavery' needs to be queried. Therefore, 'orgasmic slavery?' indicates a critical documentation of the extent that images of Black female sexuality serve to devalue Black womanhood. The simultaneous impact of sexist, heterosexist and racist images of sexuality upon the identity, knowledge, relationships and social status of Black women are assessed. Accordingly, I attempt to further the dialogue about the nature of Black women's lives so as to move beyond 'orgasmic slavery' in order to arrive at the 'truth' of our beings. Ultimately I consider Black women's struggles for liberation from 'orgasmic slavery'. In view of these concerns my thesis is structured in the following manner:

Chapter One provides a historical overview of the development of images of Black female sexuality. This chapter shows that initial contacts between English and African people were fraught with sexual connotations as the former labelled the latter as evil, bestial and lascivious. The institutionalisation of these images in the slave trade was, I will argue, an effective tool to legitimate the maximum exploitation of Black female reproductive labour. Besides economic motives, stigmatising Black women as sexual temptresses served to both reinforce their sexual denigration and to exonerate white men from guilt. The rearticulation of this

history, in which these images reinforce systems of racism, sexism, heterosexism and class oppression, is analysed in subsequent chapters.

The powerful legacy of these images is largely due to their propagation by the mass media. Thus Chapter Two looks at the ways in which the British and American film industries have promoted derogatory myths about Black sexuality. Reflecting the broader context of everyday racism, British and American cinemas have been fundamental in perpetuating stereotypes of the Black man as a sexual stud and the Black woman as a prostitute. Largely controlled by a white male elite, and without adequate representation of Black interests in the mass media to put forward different images to counterbalance this, such myths are largely unchallenged. Whilst Black viewers may criticise these images they usually do not have the institutional power and support to do this. As such my study attempts to explain the fallacy of these images in order to contribute to undermining their effects.

Chapter Three describes the actual process of doing this research. In particular the need for a Black feminist framework is stressed. Constructive criticism of mainstream sociological and feminist research methods that do not sufficiently examine the experiences of Black women is, I will assert, central to my work as a Black feminist researcher. As a pioneering area of investigation, Black feminist methodology and epistemology leads to exciting re-definitions of sociological thought. My research strategies are divided into three main areas: First, I tested my hy-

potheses by formulating them in questionnaires which I distributed to men and women from different racial backgrounds. Second, building upon the questionnaire data I chose a pilot group. Third, I developed the ideas which were raised by both the questionnaire data and the results of the pilot study to gain a sample of twenty one Black women. With the interviewees I discussed the issues that were raised by the literature review, questionnaire data and pilot study in more depth.

Chapter Four analyses the questionnaire data. The connections between racialised and homophobic images of sexuality are addressed. By showing how Black sexuality, 'mixed race' relationships and homosexuality are taboo, this chapter explains the significance of understanding the interconnections between different forms of oppression as well as thinking about the ways forward.

Chapters Five and Six give a respondent centred analysis of the relevance of racialised sexual images to Black women's lives: Chapter Five demonstrates that Black women are still seen largely in sexual terms that are distinct from the portrayals of most white women. Feminists have shown that women are predominantly defined in terms of their sexuality. What this research shows is that for Black women this has taken specific forms. According to the interviewees Black women in British society and in the mass media are portrayed as sensuous, sensual, promiscuous, good in bed, prostitutes, loose, Sapphires and breeders. How these images affect Black

women's sense of self is also the focus of this chapter. Bombarded by these myths Black women adopt a range of self perceptions that serve as coping strategies.

In addition to influencing Black women's identity these images also circumscribe their sexual relationships. Chapter Six assesses Black women's relationships with Black men. From slavery the Black family has been attacked. Wrenched away from each other or encouraged to blame each other for their inferior position in Britain, 'intra - racial' alliances have been difficult to sustain. This chapter also demonstrates that given the history of the sexual oppression of Black women by white men the decision to have a white partner is extremely problematic. For Black women who have relationships with white men the disapproval of other Black people, be they friends, family or other members of the community is a central feature. The difficulties that this presents are explored. Chapter Six also emphasises the heterosexist bias of previous literature on race and sexuality. Arguing that it is important that the opinions of Black lesbians be incorporated into these debates, I show that their's is a distinct situation. In various ways, the Black lesbian defies the attempts of both Black and white men to restrict her sexuality. Her ostracism by her own community will be examined.

Resisting and transforming these images is vital and as such is the focus of all the chapters. On an individual and a collective level Black women oppose racist sexual stereotypes. Acknowledging the need for change Black women create

alternative models of sexuality. By exploring how the social construction of Black female sexuality affects Black women's experiences I hope that my work will assist the debunking of stereotypes. I repeat that relatively little is known about the impact of racist images of sexuality upon Black women's lives. My thesis attempts to increase awareness about this so that these images can be challenged more. The women in my research are already combating these images in diverse ways. Opposition to controlling stereotypes is shown by the manner in which they define themselves as well as their behaviour in their relationships. Nonetheless, they argue that for these myths to be radically altered their own defiance needs to also be supported on a collective level. Additionally coalition work with other Black women, sympathetic Black men and understanding white people, for instance, in Black, feminist and left wing organisations is necessary. Furthermore, challenging dominant ideas about Black female sexuality also needs to take on more institutional procedures. For example, the mass media, educational establishments, places of employment and the welfare state as sites where these myths are perpetuated need to be criticised. This work attempts to contribute to this fundamental process of re-education and liberation. We all need to 'unlearn':

The history of the period has been written and will continue to be written without us. The imperative is clear: Either we will make history or remain the victims of it. (Wallace, 1979:177)

CHAPTER 1

SENSUOUS SLAVERY

A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE WAYS IN WHICH BLACK MALE AND FEMALE SEXUALITY HAS BEEN CONCEPTUALISED HISTORICALLY IN BRITAIN

In Britain, since the sixteenth century, controversial debates about sexuality have incorporated racist stereotypes of Black people as licentious (Fryer, 1984). I want to argue that colonialism gave rise to a racialised social construction of the sexuality of Black people that was in opposition to that of white people. I intend to demonstrate that the historical depiction of Black men and women as promiscuous has been continuously reproduced in popular culture and representations since the establishment of New World Slavery. These representations continue to have a resonance for the image of Black people held by whites and, as we shall see, for Black self - image too.

The Social Construction Of Sexuality

There is no escaping it: sex as refuge, or sex as sacrament, or sex as wild, natural, dark, and instinctual expression - all these are ideas about sex...Sexuality is a construct. It is common to resist this idea, to insist that sex is a natural force...sacred, wordless, or romantic. But these feelings, too, are social and socially constructed. (Snitow et. al., 1984:10)

I shall begin this chapter by exploring some theoretical debates about the social construction of sexuality. By

focusing on the ideas of Michel Foucault, Jeffrey Weeks and Carole Vance I provide a foundation for the study of racialised sexuality, albeit a Western one, as I shall later argue. I discuss the ways in which these theorists criticise essentialist definitions of sexuality that see everything about sexuality as naturally given. Instead they put forward social constructionist positions, that can, I believe, be utilised as a foundation for examining sexuality and race.

Foucault, Weeks And Vance: Towards A Better Understanding Of Racialised Sexuality

What follows is a consideration of the relevance of Foucault's, Weeks' and Vance's work for a greater understanding of racialised sexuality:

Foucault rejects the notion that sex is an autonomous and natural force and analyses the historical and social forces of sexual definitions. He argues that sexual behaviour is organised through powers of 'incitement', definition and regulation.

In *The History Of Sexuality* Michel Foucault refutes conventional ideas about sexuality (Foucault, 1976). He queries the significance of 'the repressive hypothesis', (the notion that during the Victorian age sex and sexuality were repressed), to an awareness of the dynamics between sex and power in the modern era of sexuality. This objection to the notion of repression was fuelled by evidence from the seventeenth century of a spread of discourses on sex whereby

sexuality is used as the secret of our being, for instance, in the nineteenth century within the Church, social work, psychiatry, criminal justice, medicine and pedagogy (Foucault, 1976). 'Sex has become the 'truth of our being'' Foucault proclaims; the core of the individual being influenced by his / her sexuality (Foucault, 1976). Discourses on sexuality in the nineteenth century had racist ramifications that were based on evolutionist myths about vigour and moral cleanliness. Foucault says of racist discourse:

...it promised to eliminate defective individuals, degenerate and bastardized populations. In the name of a biological and historical urgency, it justified the racisms of the state, which at the time were on the horizon. It grounded them in 'truth'. (Foucault, 1976: 54)

Foucault argues that modern notions of sexuality are an historical construct of the past few hundred years which is to be situated in power and knowledge relations. He argues that sexuality is of central significance to the operation of power. The relationship between sexuality and power in Foucault's *The History Of Sexuality* is discussed by Weeks:

...the apparatus of sexuality is of central importance in the modern play of power...Power is,... omnipresent, it is the intangible but forceful reality of social existence and of all social relations...Power...is relational, it is created in the relationships which sustain it. (Weeks, 1981)

Sexuality is focal to the mechanics of power, Foucault asserts. This is because sexuality is the centre of a two - pronged shift in the productive operations of power. For Foucault the complex of 'power - knowledge' is pivotal. Thus

he is concerned about how power operates through the construction of knowledge. Moreover, he argues that it is through 'discourse' that 'power - knowledge' is realised. He addresses the existence of 'a multiplicity of discourses' about sexuality in nineteenth century Western society. The history of sexuality is in fact a history of our discourses about sexuality. In different religious, philosophical, literary and medical contexts different languages of sexuality operate. In the West the experience of sex is a constant and historically changing deployment of discourses of sexuality. This entails a complex growth of surveillance over people through the apparatus of sexuality. Hence the policing of the population includes maximization of its health, productivity and wealth, and a technology of control over the body. Sex 'was a means of access both to the life of the body and the life of the species'. Hence sex is instrumental to the mechanisms of the body politic. During the Victorian era, discourses of sexuality rather than repressing sexual behaviour, created the notion of sexuality as a form of pleasure which became central to relations of power (Foucault, 1976).

Michel Foucault's analysis has become central to debates about sexuality. In particular, his assessment of the connection between sexualities and wider social forces has had a profound impact on debates about sexuality. Especially, Foucault's arguments about the discourses and practices which produce and regulate the objects of knowledge give rise in his work to an investigation of the role of appara-

tutes, such as the Church, medical, psychiatric, social welfare, charity, legal and pedagogical institutions in moulding sexualities. In his enquiry on state knowledge about and social control of sexuality, Foucault infers that there are racist overtones in state intervention in sex. Foucault deduces that:

...There also appeared those systematic campaigns which, going beyond the traditional means - moral and religious exhortations, fiscal measures - tried to transform the sexual conduct of couples into a concerted economic and political behavior. In times these new measures would become anchorage points for the different varieties of racism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
(Foucault, 1976: 26)

The strength of Foucault's work is his concern with the history of discourses about sexuality through which the phenomenon of sex is created and 'power knowledge' is realised. However, Foucault's argument that power is everywhere is, according to Mark Poster, ambiguous and vague (Poster, 1984). Additionally Jeffrey Weeks criticises Foucault for defining power as omnipresent because this occludes an understanding of the ways in which power can be challenged and reconstructed (Weeks, 1981). This is of central concern to socially and sexually marginalised groups: for example, to women, to Blacks, to working class people and to bisexuals, lesbians and homosexuals. For, if power is everywhere how can it be resisted let alone overcome? Weeks argues that a multiplicity of points of resistance are fundamental to the existence of power (Weeks, 1981).

According to Weeks, Foucault's challenge to the 'repressive

hypothesis' potentially neglects the notion of social 'repression'. There is a latent functionalism in Foucault's theory for it is implied that social control is absolute. Foucault is guilty of essentialism in terms of 'the body' being reducible to power (Weeks, 1981).

The tensions that exist between Foucault and feminism have been well documented. Issues of sexuality and power are pivotal to the work of Foucault but he lacks a gendered analysis. Indeed the absence of interest in the subject of gender in Foucault's work has serious implications for feminists. In particular, his allegedly unbiased approach to power and sexuality originates from a male perspective. Moreover, Foucault's assertion that power is everywhere overlooks women's subordination of other women as well as domination by men. Feminist criticisms of Foucault such as the contributors to *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections On Resistance* edited by I. Diamond and L. Quinby (1988), therefore, are influenced by analyses of male power over women: The experiences of women show that men have power over women and their power constitutes domination supported by force. Furthermore, such domination can not be regarded as merely a result of discourse. Instead it must be comprehended as 'extra - discursive', connected to wider realities than discourse (Ramazanoglu, 1993).

Foucault displays only a minor awareness of the problem of racism. Although he evaluates the effects of racism upon sexual technologies this is not a primary aim of Foucault's endeavour. He discusses the association between nineteenth

century racism, eugenics, the medicalization of sex in psychiatry, jurisprudence, legal medicine and agencies of social control. Foucault mentions that:

...An entire social practice, which took the exasperated but coherent form of a state - directed racism, furnished this technology of sex with a formidable power and far - reaching consequences. (Foucault, 1976: 119)

Foucault indicates that racist ideologies direct the deployment of modern sexuality through regimes of disciplinary power. He declares that in the nineteenth century eugenicists' visions of perfecting 'the species' entailed the domination and administration of blood relations between sex and race. This involved preoccupation with notions of the purity and superiority of blood, the law and techniques of state control. Eugenicism upholds the systematic genocide of groups that are defined as racially inferior, e.g. it supports nazism. Foucault adds that:

...Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, the thematics of blood was sometimes called on to lend its entire historical weight toward revitalizing the type of political power that was exercised through the devices of sexuality. Racism took shape at this point (racism in its modern, 'biologizing', statist form): it was then that a whole politics of settlement (peuplement), family, marriage, education, social hierarchization, and property, accompanied by a long series of permanent interventions at the level of the body, conduct, health, and everyday life, received their color and their justification from the mythical concern with protecting the purity of the blood and ensuring the triumph of the race... (Foucault, 1976: 149)

Whilst there is immense interest in Foucault's work amongst white academics there is not at present much debate within Black academia. This is mainly due to the fact that, in my

opinion, Foucault gives an analysis of the development of white Western sexuality and as such it could be argued that his investigation is of little relevance to people of African descent. For Foucault's work to be of use to Blacks, (and by extension to other 'minorities' for it is inadequate for everyone for the same reason), he would have had to incorporate an analysis of racialised discourses of sexuality.

Abdul R. JanMohammed criticises Foucault's work for being Eurocentric because his analysis remains within the confines of European discourses. He argues that since Foucault's theory of sexuality does not offer an understanding of racialised sexuality it is therefore of limited significance to Black people. Rather than being a universal theory, as Foucault implies, the deployment of sexuality that he describes is essentially a Western, white and bourgeois history, he does not analyse the conjunction between discourses of race and sexuality. It is, however, important to address the intersection and the deployment of race and sexuality, what Abdul R. JanMohammed defines as 'Racialized Sexuality':

Like the deployment of 'sexuality' as a putatively 'universal' phenomenon, Foucault's 'history' of that 'sexuality' is also characterized by a tendency to confine itself to a more or less homogeneous, ethnocentric field. The history of 'bourgeois' and 'racialized' sexualities is deployed in a relation of negative specularity: the first can write itself as 'universal' only if it averts its gaze from the second, its dark other, which stares from across the racial border and demands an equal historical articulation. But even in so radical a critic as Foucault, the Eurocentric gaze is consistently blind to the various forms of sexualities that it implicitly constructs

as its alterities. As a result, fields such as 'racialized sexuality' will have to be investigated by different methods, by procedures that will have to be emancipated from an ethnic and cultural narcissism - a narcissism that may well be an integral part of 'sexuality' itself.
(JanMohammed, 1992:116)

Robert J. C. Young agrees with the charge of eurocentrism and suggests that Foucault's frame of reference is France. Foucault's account of power, authority, exclusion and surveillance is applicable to racism and colonialism but he is quiet about these issues. The ethnocentric analysis of Foucault is confined to the manner in which racism, in its eugenicist structures, allowed the state to regulate the body through 'biopower'. This meant disciplinary control carried out in the name of the race through the thematics of blood. Eugenics demonstrated the links between racism, sexuality and class by its concern with the hygiene, health and welfare of the 'species', the survival of class supremacy and the supervision of the working class. Young concludes that:

Racism and racialism must be one of the best - or the worst - examples of the silent and stealthy operations of this Foucauldian form of power / knowledge. (Young, 1995: 65)

Ann Laura Stoler discusses Foucault's complex and contradictory treatment of the question of racism within European bourgeois sexuality. Stoler queries the contention that Foucault omits an analysis of racism, colonialism and imperialism. She explains that although Foucault excludes colonialism and imperialism, a focus on racism is a significant subtext of his work. Foucault discusses the connections

among European biopolitics, technologies of sexuality and racism in the late nineteenth century. The virulent proliferation of state racisms is shown by the surveillance of sexuality, control of population, and theories of racial supremacy, degeneracy and purification that legitimate violence (Stoler, 1995).

Ann Laura Stoler explains that Foucault does not engage in the relevance of colonialism and imperialism in the production of the history of Western bourgeois sexuality. During the nineteenth century racial taxonomies in empire underwrote European and bourgeois self affirmation of sexuality. Stoler addresses the impact of colonial and imperial racism on the development of Western bourgeois identity and sexuality. She criticises Foucault for failing to look beyond an analysis of racism in the holocaust (Stoler, 1995).

The way in which Foucault explores how sexuality is a socio-historical construct could provide a useful tool for the analysis of gendered racialisation of sexuality during colonialism, enslavement, imperialism and contemporary times. However, I would want to argue that Foucault's work represents a white male perspective that fails to adequately address the impact of sexism and racism upon discourses of sexuality. He describes European, white, male and bourgeois sexualities as an epitome of 'The History Of All Sexuality'. By so doing he neglects Black womanhood. Additionally his analysis of power ignores that whites generally have power over Blacks. Moreover, most Black women are at the lowest echelons of the power hierarchy whereby they are dominated

by Black men and white folks.

The work of Jeffrey Weeks like that of Foucault discusses the central symbolic and moral significance that is assigned to sexuality in Western culture. According to Weeks the primary importance that is given to the concept of 'sexuality' as a definable and universal experience is extremely problematic. He challenges the 'naturalness' of sexuality and argues that it is historically and culturally specific. Weeks explores how sexual forms, beliefs, ideologies and behaviour constitute the historical products of different social interventions. He shows that rather than being the simple product of biology, sexuality has been socially regulated within the period of industrial capitalism. Thus Weeks argues that whilst biology places important constraints on sexuality it is further conditioned by social forces. For the past two centuries, Weeks argues, sexuality has had a pre - eminent symbolic significance as a site of social intervention and organisation (Weeks, 1981).

Since the nineteenth century in European societies sex has been regarded as the main secret and the 'truth' of our being. Weeks maintains that the fact that sex is seen as the essence of our being, asserting itself against the demands of culture, has a deep impact upon our views. As such sex is held as a unified domain. It is reified as having its own general causations and specified effects. Thereby 'sexuality' has become a site of knowledge in itself. However Weeks asserts that sexuality is relational. It is shaped in social

interaction. It is important to understand sexuality in terms of its historical context, the cultural meanings that are assigned to it and the internal, subjective meanings of sexed individuals. He advocates an analysis of the variety of familial and extra - familial forces that have constructed 'modern sexuality' (Weeks, 1981).

Jeffrey Weeks discusses five forces that shape how the construction of sexuality defines us both socially and morally. First, kinship and familial systems influence a person's sexual and gender orientation. Second, socio - economic transformations transpose class relations. Changing forms of 'social regulation', e.g. religion and peer groups, is the third effect. Fourth, differences in the political moment alter moral attitudes and sexual regimes. Fifth, shifts in cultures of resistance challenge the sexual status quo (Weeks, 1981).

Although Jeffrey Weeks concentrates on the white western world, Weeks work helps me in my analysis by virtue of his general argument that sexuality is historically and culturally specific. Thus, in terms of my interest in the racialisation of sexuality I want to argue that the development of discourses of sexuality are influenced by histories of Black and white cultures.

...The study of sexual behaviour, valuable in its own right, is a powerful tool for raising innovative questions about social relations and social structure, yet much of this research avoids these questions. I suggest that a critical social and historical analysis of the implicit premises in sex research will not only improve the quality of the work in a narrow sense, but will also illuminate the relationship among

scientific investigation, the social context in which it occurs, and for what purposes and for whose benefit it is conducted. (Vance, 1984:382)

Carole Vance argues that, sexuality, which she defines in terms of diverse sexual acts, identities, desires and erotic pleasure, is the product of culture. She argues that the inability of most sex researchers to recognise the impact of male dominated ideologies upon their work results in functional and ahistorical analyses. Vance criticises such work because it puts forward narrow definitions of sexual behaviour that are based on norms that are white, middle class and heterosexual. This fails to consider the relationship between sexual behaviour and power relations. By neglecting the links between sexual behaviour and the systems of gender, race and class such work indicates that sexual behaviour is intrinsic and so unchangeable. It is necessary, Vance further asserts, for sex research to incorporate a critical social and historical analysis of its ideological foundations within the context of systems of gender, sexuality and power (Vance, 1984).

Vance, therefore, agrees with Foucault that sexuality is a social construction which is articulated with economic, social and political structures. However she argues that Foucault fails to clarify a definition of sexuality. She cautions against utilising 'social construction' in an indiscriminate way since social construction theorists differ in their perception of what was constructed. Carole Vance focuses on the instability of sexuality as a category whereby it becomes transient and threatens to vanish. None-

theless the merit of social constructionism is that its challenge to the notion that sexuality is 'natural', governed by biology and the body, provides radical possibilities for feminism. Vance uses this approach to increase a political awareness that sexuality is both a site of restriction, repression and danger as well as of exploration, pleasure and agency. She analyses the ambiguities and complexities of the relationship between sexual pleasure and danger in women's experiences (Vance, 1984).

The Women's Movement combated the commonly held belief that male lust is innate, aggressive, uncontrollable and easily aroused by any appearance of female sexuality. Feminists criticise these myths for blaming the female victim while letting men off the hook. Additionally if female sexual desire is seen as instigating male abuse it can not be freely or spontaneously shown. Such folk knowledge reinforces the view that female desire should be restricted to traditional marriage and the nuclear family. Women who do not conform to the prevailing image of a 'good' woman are deemed as legitimate of violation. Consequently women experience their sexual desires as dangerous. 'Folk knowledge' dictates that women are the moral custodians of male behaviour, which they are seen as inciting. Hence women have the formidable task of not only controlling their own sexual impulses but also their public expression. The segregation of male and female sexuality has been used to justify the need for women to have a restricted, but supposedly safe

space and highly controlled sexual expression. As such pleasure and safety have been placed in opposition for women to the extent that they internalise control of their sexual impulses and so experience their passion as dangerous (Vance, 1984).

Carole Vance discusses the implications of omissions in the literature on sexuality whereby the experiences of under - studied groups are frequently generalised about. She states that it is impossible to compare the sexual domains of differently defined groups of women. Often studies of the situation of particular groups are based on incomplete and non - comparable domains. In order to accurately compare the sexual circumstances of different groups of women it is vital to address various layers of sexual information. Feminist research thus needs to appreciate the complexities of women's social identities and lives, whereby sexuality maybe considered and acted on differently according to age, class, ethnicity, physical ability, religion, region, sexual orientation and preference. It is important that feminist scholars reject a cultural system that regulates sexual differences in a hierarchy that protects and rewards heterosexuality, marriage and procreation through socio - economic incentives. Meanwhile, Vance states that, the acts and partners of forms of sexuality that are generally perceived as being less privileged are stigmatised and punished by the state, religion, medicine and public opinion (Vance, 1984).

Hence, Carole Vance argues that much feminist work on sex-

uality until recently challenged, either focused on the experiences of women who are white, middle or upper class, heterosexual, able - bodied and moderately youthful or assumed that their experiences were shared by all women. She advocates that researchers strive for an acute awareness of the extent that internalised cultural norms of appropriate sexual behaviour limits the validity of their data. Researchers need to also be mindful of the distinct group of women to whom their results apply (Vance, 1984).

Vance's work is useful for my research due to its implications for a critique of the ways in which sexuality is constructed within the institutions of a racist culture. Also Carole Vance's writings are important to highlight that a scientifically accurate understanding of dominant constructions of 'white sexuality' necessarily entails an analysis of Blackness. I want to argue that dominant representations of white women largely take their meanings from the contrast with Black women. I maintain that generally the pathologization of Black women as licentious contributes to an oppositional image of white women who are idealised as passive and domesticated. Thereby, I assert, Black women are stereotyped in ways that help to define 'normal' white female sexuality. The work of Carole Vance supports my contention that feminist research on sexuality needs to appreciate the racialisation of the social construction of sexuality. Vance's analysis indicates that failure to recognise the different experiences of Black women does not only

misrepresent their lives but also by implication those of white women. Vance's work is useful to me because it implies that a full understanding of the construction of white female sexuality necessitates an awareness of the construction of Black female sexuality. Furthermore I want to argue that it is not acceptable to merely add the experiences of Black women to mainstream feminist analyses of sexuality. Instead such research needs to be reconceptualised in order to analyse the specific experiences of Black women.

Orgasmic Oligarchy: racialised sexuality since
enslavement

'There is no slavery without sexual depravity.' (Freyre quoted in Hyam, 1990: 93)

The 'Sambo' image of intellectual inferiority was legitimised by 'scientific' racism. Peter Fryer argues that Africans were regarded as mentally, morally, culturally and spiritually inferior to Europeans (Fryer, 1984:9). Barbara Bush adds that:

Africans of both sexes were regarded as 'slaves by nature' - childlike, primitive, idle, and of a lower intelligence than Europeans.
(Bush, 1990:12)

My thesis will show that less attention has been paid to the fact that the sexuality of Black people was central to racist stereotypes. Historically the development of the concept of race has been connected to ideas about purity, sexuality and Christian virtue as well as notions of superiority. Race became the manner of identifying people and of

characterizing the kinds of behaviour that were to be expected of them. As Charles Husband asserts:

'Race' provided the theory which accounted for the consistency between sign of category membership, colour; and the characteristic behaviour of members of the category. (Husband, 1982:13)

Joel Kovel maintains that the history of race has initiated the white male fantasies and symbols of racism which have been supported by the rest of Western culture. According to Kovel racism is an integral part of a stable and productive cultural system; if eradicated it would generate anxieties, instabilities and counter - responses which threaten society. These fantasies portray Blackness as inherently bad and damned. Thereby Blackness is linked to impurity, the devil, dirt, malignancy, death and nakedness. Blacks are seen as sexually aggressive, bestial, untouchable and smelly. Kovel argues that racist psychology is sexualized as such secretive, guilty (whites project their guilt upon Blacks), fear and fascinated obsessions are tinged with sexuality. Sexuality, therefore, is at the core of racism as sexual fantasies encompass white views of superiority and demand the submission of the sexually omnipotent Black. Sexuality and racism are intertwined within the context of phallic and oedipal domination, status and power. Thus Blacks are dehumanized, debased and abstracted to a state of 'nothingness' (Kovel, 1970).

Africans are an example of British representations of the colonised Other. Over four hundred years Africa was involved in several different phases of British colonialism and so

representations of Africans comprise a pivotal part of British colonialism. Representations of Africans as the Other became linked with justifications for their enslavement. The African was associated with excessive and unrestrained sexuality (Miles, 1989).

The contribution made by the enslavement of African people to the rise and perpetuation of British capitalism has been well documented (for example, Fryer, 1984; Bryan et. al., 1985). Peter Fryer and Beverley Bryan et. al. argue that ethnocentric generalisations about African peoples and cultures pacified English consciences about enslaving Africans and thereby encouraged the Slave Trade (Fryer, 1984; Bryan et. al., 1985). Bryan et. al. argue that notions of white supremacy were used by the church and by politicians to justify 'civilising' missions (Bryan et. al., 1985).

Frantz Fanon discusses how Blackness represents the antithesis of the ideal of European sexual mores and beauty. He analyses the projection of Western anxiety concerning the skin colour of Black people which represents the forbidden and horrifying:

In Europe, the Black man is the symbol of Evil... the torturer is the Black man, Satan is Black, one talks of shadows, when one is dirty, one is Black - whether one is thinking of physical dirtiness or moral dirtiness. It would be astonishing, if the trouble were taken to bring them together, to see the vast number of expressions that make the Black man the equivalent of sin. In Europe, whether concretely or symbolically, the Black man stands for the bad side of the character. As long as one cannot understand this fact, one is doomed to talk in circles about the 'Black problem'. Blackness, darkness, shadow, shades, night, the labyrinths of the earth, abysmal depths, blacken someone's reputation, and on the other side, the

bright look of innocence, the white dove of peace, magical, heavenly light. (Fanon, 1967:188)

Winthrop D. Jordan adds that white and Black connoted purity and filthiness, virginity and sin, virtue and baseness, beauty and ugliness, beneficence and evil, God and the devil. In England, Blackness meant dirty, deadly, degenerate, baseness, brutish, beastly, venerous, lustful, danger and repulsion. Blacks were seen as lewd, lascivious and wanton as compared to the perceived chastity of whites (Jordan, 1977). From the Middle Ages there was an association made of Blacks with concupiscence (Gilman, 1885).

There were sexual connotations to several English accounts of West Africa : descriptions of lecherous, powerful and animalistic sexuality. Thus English voyagers when in West Africa from the 1550s, during the slave trade in the seventeenth century, observed Africans as racially and culturally different to themselves. English views connected sexuality with Blackness and the devil. This was a pivotal issue for Englishmen during the sixteenth century and early seventeenth century which interestingly coincided with the disintegration of social and moral controls in England. The English portrayal of Africans encompassed an exercise in self - inspection by means of comparison. Bourgeois English men used Africans as social mirrors. They discovered features in Africans which they initially found, but could not articulate, in themselves.

It was widely believed from at least the fifteenth century that every African male had an enormous penis (Jordan, 1977;

Fryer, 1984; Miles, 1989). Black sexuality was associated with earthiness, impurity, indecency and corruption. From the sixteenth century Blackness was perceived as a result of God's (Black) curse upon Ham - the (bad) son of Noah - and all of his descendants. This is allegedly referred to in Genesis 9 & 10 (Husband, 1982). From the sixteenth century English men in West Africa took it for granted that Africans had immense sexual powers and perverted sexual immorality (Walvin, 1973).

It is important to realise that sexuality serves as a powerful means by which whites dominate Blacks. As Calvin C. Hernton argues the race problem has a sexual aspect (Hernton, 1970). The belief that Africans were sub-human savages with uncontrollable sexual capacities was used to justify their dehumanisation since they were seen as 'less than human beings'. The myth of Black hyper-sexuality effectively excused the economic exploitation of African labour. According to Peter Fryer by the middle of the sixteenth century English people took it for granted that Africans were carefree, lazy and lustful cannibals. Peter Fryer describes racist and erotic fantasies about the animalistic sexuality of Africans:

...the Coromantees made no marriages, the men held the women in common. The Gamphantes were all naked. The Cynamolgi (dog-milkers) had heads like dogs. The Blemmyes had no heads at all, but eyes and mouths in their breasts. The last of all the Affriens Southwarde, according to another book of the time, were the Ichthyophagi, or fish eaters... (like animals [they would] fall upon their women, even as they come to hand, without any choice; utterly free from care they

are always sure of plenty of food).
(Fryer, 1984:6 - 7)

From the time of the earliest contacts between the English and Africans, the former noted the latter's skin colour and nakedness in order to signify negative differences. They also acknowledged that Africans were not Christian believers and so they were seen as 'heathens'. The English reported this in order to affirm difference which entailed phenotypical and cultural criteria. The African was defined as physically and culturally different (Miles, 1989). Thus, even before African slaves were brought to England from the 1570's onwards, the perception of their sexual degeneration was already deeply entrenched within the English psyche. These misrepresentations were largely of a 'scientific' and literary nature as the English received knowledge through these means. B. V. Street persuasively argues that such descriptions tell us more about the imperialists than about the people they claim to describe (Street, 1975). The African was portrayed as having a potent sexuality, that is, as being hypersensual. This is particularly pertinent in view of what some see as English society's repressed attitude towards sexuality. The image of Black sexual deviancy was reinforced by and confirmed white bourgeois standards for the control of sexual passions. Barbara Bush states that:

...with the rise of Christianity, sexuality came to be associated with the devil and the colour black to symbolize all the evil and sinful elements of life. As women in Europe were traditionally regarded as instigators of evil-doing, blackness was also associated with femininity; hence the link between the delights of a forbidden sexuality would

have easily (and possibly almost unconsciously) been made by European men during their initial contact with African societies. (Bush, 1990:14)

Consequently, Africans, by virtue of their skin colour were categorized as Satanic.

Later in this chapter I will discuss how 'miscegenation', the disapproved notion of racial mixing, has been developed and opposed as a social problem since the sixteenth century. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries 'miscegenation' was virulently discussed in England's colonies and was perceived as a great domestic problem in the nineteenth century (Mackie, 1987).

In view of the myths about wildness and monstrosity, Africans were seen as bestial and cannibalistic; in short less than human. Moreover, Black people were compared to - and it was maintained mated with - animals. Thomas Jefferson stated that the alleged combination of animal intelligence and human form in the Black race was the result of sexual intercourse between the orangutan and the Black female (Fryer, 1984:168). The French naturalist Buffon claimed that the so-called primitive, lascivious and ape-like sexual appetites of Blacks encouraged Black women to copulate with apes (Gilman, 1985).

The eighteenth century English writer Edward Long equated the allegedly 'excessive' sexual behaviour of Black people with monkeys:

...they are libidinous and shameless as monkeys or baboons, and the equally hot temperament of their women has given probability to the charge of their admitting these animals to their embrace.

(Long quoted in Fryer, 1984:159)

By the eighteenth century Blacks were supposed to have a deviant hyper - sexuality (Gilman, 1985). Savagery, barbarianism, and uncivilised manners were further charges. The African was also viewed as superstitious, ferocious and a coward (Miles, 1989). Additionally Africans were seen as promiscuous, licentious, irrational and immoral. Sexually promiscuous, anarchic, cruel, lacking laws and rules of sexual conduct have been other 'observations' (George, 1958).

The sexualization of Empire is cogently described by Ronald Hyam. He explains that sexual opinions and actions affected the experiences of both imperial elite and subjects. In fact sexual forces underpinned the dynamics of the British Empire as well as Victorian expansion. Imperial systems provided an easy range of sexual opportunities. Expansionist enterprises were sustained by sex:

...The expansion of Europe was not only a matter of 'Christianity and commerce', it was also a matter of copulation and concubinage... (Hyam, 1990:2)

As such, practice and the official theory of prudery, discipline and sexual restraint diverged greatly with libidinousness. Ronald Hyam further states:

Sex is at the very heart of racism. Racism is not caused simply by sexual apprehensions, and there are many other factors involved, such as fear of the unfamiliar, fear bred by memory of historic conflicts, fear of demographic swamping by the superior numbers of a culture perceived as alien and inferior, fear of disease, fear of economic competition for limited resources - but the peculiarly emotional hostility towards black men

which it has so often engendered requires a sexual explanation. (Hyam, 1990:203)

Walvin argues that white men's envy, jealousy, racial and sexual fears, of erotic competition, have been manipulated for political ends in order to maintain white control. These sexual apprehensions are 'the ultimate basis of racial antagonism' (Walvin, 1973:9,208 - 9). Walvin supports other academics claims that by the early nineteenth century English people believed that Africans were promiscuous and strongly sexed (Walvin,1973).

Eugenic policies in the nineteenth century highlighted prevalent beliefs in white middle class superiority. The belief in the supremacy of the English race led to the institutionalisation of racial progress. Through eugenics, the planned and selective breeding of the allegedly superior white race, also legitimated the elimination of Blacks who were seen as morally unfit and mentally inferior (Weeks, 1981).

In the later nineteenth century and early twentieth century the image of the African as 'primitive' in sensibility and sensitivity, savage and inferior, originated in science, literature and imperial politics. The study of 'primitives' was stimulated by the simultaneous influences of Social Darwinism (placing Blacks at the bottom of the 'chain of being' and asserting that the intellectual and moral superiority of the English enabled them to dominate the world), and by the acquisition of colonies in the 1880's. Imperialists used theories already devised by scientists which could

be manipulated politically to justify their actions (Street, 1975). For instance, they maintained that there was a hierarchy of stages of evolutionary development: the white man was highest in the scale of development and the Black man was just above the apes (Stott, 1989).

'Sexy "ladies"'

I want to argue that historically efforts to control the sexuality of Black women have been central to racial and sexual oppression. During slavery the stereotypes of the sexually denigrated Black woman was vital to the condonation of the use of Black women as sex objects for the pleasure of white men. African women were considered to be sexually available (Miles, 1989). Furthermore, all Black women in Britain and the 'ex - colonies' were defined as and ascribed to the role of whore. The myth of the Black prostitute provided the justification for the social control of Black women. The female slave was considered to be a woman governed almost entirely by her libido. Her sexual attributes were often sensationally exaggerated as offering the delights of illicit sex. Enslaved Black women were sexually objectified as voluptuous, lascivious, loose, lewd, more sexually intensive and wanton. The argument that Black women were lascivious and immoral was used to rationalise their oppression. This was often demonstrated by the brutal rape of Black female slaves. Barbara Bush discusses the British misconceptions about Black female promiscuity that were prevalent in the Caribbean:

...from puberty onwards it was assumed that slave women indulged in promiscuous premarital sex and that their subsequent lives were a constant quest for sexual pleasure and satisfaction. To a large extent, these beliefs were merely a continuation of the shallow preconceptions of Europeans about the sexual immorality of Africans in general, which are strongly contradicted by both contemporary and modern evidence. Promiscuity was by no means a natural trait of African women.

(Bush, 1990: 91)

Bush states that the nakedness of young slaves may have contributed to the notion that they lacked 'modesty' and shame and so were sexually 'incontinent'. Such racist beliefs contributed to the lack of respect for slave family life. Dominant English images of African women as 'hot constitution'd ladies' legitimated their sexual exploitation by white masters and overseers. Barbara Bush asserts that:

...the sexual subordination of slave women represented a natural extension of the general power of white over black, the sex act itself becoming, in Winthrop Jordan's (1968) words, 'a naturalistic re-enactment of the daily pattern of social dominance'. (Bush, 1990: 110 - 111)

The sexual violation of the Black woman by the white man symbolised a wider system of white male domination. As Angela Davis argues, sexual exploitation under slavery was an institutionalised method of terrorism that aimed to demoralise and dehumanise slave women as well as slave men (Davis, 1981). Attempts to control Black women's sexuality were connected to slave owners efforts to maximize the fertility of female slaves and profits. Controlling Black women's reproduction was fundamental to facilitating the continuation of the plantation system. Slave owners controlled Black women's labour and commodified their bodies

as units of capital. Black women's fertility produced the children who increased their owners' property and labour force (Davis quoted in Collins, 1990).

Since slavery, through the perpetuation of stereotypes, the notion that Black people are not only more sexually active than whites but also degenerate and bestial has been used to legitimate white perceptions of the inferiority of Blacks. Under enslavement the endeavours of slave owners to increase the fertility of Black women in order to maximize profits typified the systematic control over the sexuality of female slaves. The actual breeding of slave women served to label them as animalistic as well as to maintain their treatment, as less than humans, since only animals can be bred against their discretion. Within the breeding system the exploitation of Black women's reproductive labour was justified by the objectification of Black women as creatures of sex. Patricia Hill Collins argues that, the portrayal of Black women as promiscuous was used to gratify the sexual and economic needs of white male slavers. Therefore ever since the stereotype of the Black woman as a prostitute has provided the justification for the social control of Black women. Patricia Hill Collins validates the former point in her discussion of the economic advantages that accrued to the icon / image of the Black woman as breeder. Collins infers that:

...controlling Black women's reproduction was essential to the creation and perpetuation of capitalist class relations. Slavery benefited

certain segments of the population by economically exploiting others...Under such a system in which the control of property is fundamental, enslaved African women were valuable commodities. Slaveowners controlled Black women's labor and commodified Black women's bodies as units of capital. Moreover, as mothers, Black women's fertility produced the children who increased their owners' property and labor force.
(Collins, 1990:51)

However, it was maintained that Black women were conniving sexual temptresses who particularly encouraged sexual relationships with white men. Not only were Black women dehumanised as creatures of sex, but the belief in their heightened sexuality and immoral behaviour was used to justify their sexual abuse by white men.

In England the majority of slaves were household servants who were held to be exotic status symbols. The racial and sexual appropriation of their labour for most female domestic slaves entailed the performance of sexual duties for white masters. Beverley Bryan et. al. argue that in England:

...by nine or ten, they were put to work in the fields or given domestic duties in the master's house. Whatever their age, women slaves who worked as domestic servants lived under the whims of the household, attending to every needs and frequently satisfying sexual and sadistic urges as well. Rape and sexual abuse were a common experience for us, compounded by the sufferings associated with childbirth and motherhood under slavery. (Bryan et. al., 1985:19)

Many Black women were forced to become prostitutes for wealthy Englishmen and Dutchmen as the only alternatives to starvation (Fryer, 1984:76). Racist stereotypes about Black female sexuality were inextricably linked to Black women's oppression as labourers. The myth of the super - physical

strength of enslaved women meant that they were expected to work as hard as enslaved men. Therefore, Black women were doubly oppressed as exemplified by the brutal breeding system. Barbara Bush highlights the extent that erroneous beliefs about the sexual and physical capacities of women slaves were used to reinforce their inferior position:

...Hence stereotypes of Black womanhood can be seen to fall into two broad categories - those which are generally applicable to all slaves and those which have originated from the unique sexual functions of the individual woman. In contemporary accounts of slavery, the woman was often labelled 'promiscuous', cruel and negligent as a mother and fickle as a wife. As a worker she has been portrayed as passive, downtrodden and subservient, a resigned slave who contributed little to the cause of slave resistance. (Bush, 1990:12)

By the eighteenth century there were images of the ardent, crudely passionate and aggressive sexuality of African women; this was defined in terms of prostitution (Jordan, 1977).

Sexuality has been used to make a major distinction between Black and white people. Biological determinism has supported the ideological perception of Black inferiority and the preservation of white, male, bourgeois domination. During the nineteenth century, in particular, the reduction of the Black female to her genitalia was pervasive. It was argued that the inherent abnormality and pathology of Black female genitalia signified that Blacks were of a separate and lower race (Gilman, 1985). An anomalous female sexuality was identified. Allegedly, the genitalia of the Black woman indicated that she was diseased, bestial and unapproachable.

The contradictory sexualised figure of Blacks was linked to genitalia that was defined as complete, yet damaged, diseased yet attractive and poisoning yet potent (Gilman, 1985). Sander L. Gilman asserts that historically the fear and fascination of Black difference ensured that Black women were despised, forbidden but sexually exploited (Gilman, 1985). Sexual contact with Blacks was contradictorily regarded as debasing and also exciting. The writer Lawrence Durrell presented a British colonial fantasy of Black female genitalia as the representation of sexual pathology, corruption and death:

...the black is the embodiment of sexuality, her genitalia are the sign of decay and destruction, a marker against which the Western world can judge its own degeneracy and decline...
(Gilman, 1985:125)

The 'Hottentot Venus' represented Black sexuality as being inherently different from that of white. During the mid nineteenth century there was a perverse preoccupation with examining the genitalia of 'the Hottentot' for biological anomalies. This is shown in 1810 by the exhibition of the twenty year old Saartje Baartman - the 'Hottentot Venus' - throughout Europe. This exposure reduced her to her sexual parts until her death in 1815. The display of her protruding buttocks and genitalia were autopsied by George Cuvier in 1817. Cuvier compared her as a woman of the 'lowest' human to the orangutan. He described the anomalies of her 'organ of generation' (Gilman, 1985). Rebecca Stott argued that for the Victorians 'the Hottentot's' buttocks were

anomalies of the abnormal, degenerate and pathological genitalia of a separate and lower race. The lowest echelon on the evolutionary hierarchy was regarded as 'the Hottentot' female (Stott, 1989). Charles Darwin maintained that 'the Hottentot's' buttocks were a humorous indication of Black women's primitive and grotesque nature. Hildebrandt believed that there was a congenital error in 'the Hottentot apron' which indicated lesbianism:

Hildenbrandt links this malformation with the over-development of the clitoris, which he sees as leading to those 'excesses' which 'are called lesbian love'. The conspicence of the Black is thus associated with the sexuality of the lesbian. (Gilman, 1985: 89)

Theodor Billroth further argued that this 'degeneracy' was connected to the ill, the bestial and the freak. The physical anomalies of 'the Hottentot' were similar to those of the lesbian and the prostitute; all three regarded as representing sexual deviancy. Lombroso explored the analogy between 'the Hottentot' and the prostitute; thinking that both displayed primitive lasciviousness, unbridled and uncontrolled sexuality and as such they were outsiders (Gilman, 1985).

On the one hand, the feminized and homosexual image of Black sexuality enabled middle class English men, and working class men to a lesser extent, to reassert racial and sexual privilege. Such myths support white male domination. On the other hand, Black sexuality was also seen as threatening to the white patriarchal order. Sander L. Gilman argues that in

fin - de - siecle Austrian liberalism, the fascination with the sexual difference of Blacks led to the belief that they possessed an alternative and utopian sexuality (Gilman, 1985: 120).

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Blacks were linked to pathology like congenital leprosy and syphilophobia. The Black as sexualized female was seen as unclean and so epitomised corruption and disease. There was a fear of the difference in the anatomy of the Other (Gilman, 1985). The Black woman was also seen as sadistic, active and death threatening (Stott, 1989).

Therefore let me reiterate that the Black woman has been primarily caricatured as a racialised sexual creature and that this portrayal has been endemic to her subordination. The notion of the Black female as a racially sexualised being has been used to legitimate her inferior status.

The Desexualized White Female

The denigration of Black women facilitated the icon of white women as moral guardians who controlled male sexual vice. White women symbolised beauty, sanctity, delicacy, refined purity and virtue. Thus white men made unfavourable comparisons between Black and white women which in turn elevated white womanhood. In contrast to the defence of the icon of white female chastity Black women were assigned to the role of concubine. As Barbara Bush asserts:

...they utilised the alleged physical and moral inferiority of black women, in contrast to European women, to establish them firmly in the role

of 'the other woman'; one set of moral standards was applicable to white women, another less honourable set to black; the superiority of white women was stressed. (Bush, 1990:12)

During the seventeenth century the notion of white, middle class women's physical frailty, instability and inferiority was linked to the idea that their health was determined by stereotyped notions about their femininity. During Georgian and Victorian times this was further connected to a medical backlash, after there were attempts to improve women's access to secondary and higher education. From that time doctors argued that women's psychological frailty and problems of disturbed menstruation greatly restricted their aspirations and lifestyles. Women were defined as being predisposed to hysteria. Relatedly, by the end of the nineteenth century doctors argued that menstruation was connected to insanity and nymphomania. Such views obviously contradict the former stereotypes of women's timidity. Furthermore Victorian doctors argued that menstruation was linked to nervous and mental instability (Digby, 1989). Elaine Showalter asserts that these myths are associated with male psychiatrists' fear of female sexuality (Showalter quoted in Digby, 1989).

For Social Darwinism it is maintained that motherhood and reproduction of a healthy race were women's highest function and calling. In Enlightenment liberal thinking it was held that evidence was needed to justify the social and political inequality of women. Accordingly the pseudo - science of eighteenth century anatomists and nineteenth century crani-

otomists supported this by explaining that women were below men in the hierarchy of the species. Also gynaecologists and psychiatrists provided a biological rationale for gender discrimination in the Georgian and Victorian eras (Digby, 1989).

Since the nineteenth century the dominant social, economic and political ideology of womanhood has resulted in white women being smothered by their culturally enforced 'sexual strait jacket'. Middle class women especially were affected by 'the ideology of pure white womanhood'. They were imprisoned in the role of perfect wife and mother as well as idealised as sexually timid, weak, submissive, obedient and modest. The repressive 'cult of true womanhood' elevated white middle class women to a height beyond the reach of their male counterparts. White middle class women were expected to be chaste, virtuous, innocent and self denying. They were portrayed as pious guardians of male passion to 'restrain man's natural vice and immorality'.

The notion of bourgeois and race superiority entailed the view that the duty of white middle class women was to reproduce the race, and the class, as well as its social values. The complex linkages between white racism and the fear of Black sexuality was demonstrated by eugenics. The belief in the supremacy of the English race gave rise to eugenic policies for its planned and selective breeding. Ideas about white racial progress were intricately interwoven with the perception of Black sexuality as deviant and diseased. The racist implication of supporting the survival and the

fitness of the English middle class, was the elimination of Black people, who were seen as morally unfit and mentally inferior (Bush, 1993:17). Eugenicists such as Sir Francis Galton, Karl Pearson, Havelock Ellis and C. W. Saleeby believed that responsibility for taking care of the nation's morals lay with women. As Frank Mort asserts:

Such a vision was of course racist, patriarchal and anti-democratic. In practice, the philosophy of racial health involved laying down expert injunctions to the working-class and to women on the importance of preserving imperial stamina and physique. This was posed both against other competing 'civilized' nations and against those black and brown races who threatened to swamp the globe with their animal savagery. Britain would advance to a higher stage of civilization via favourable environment and sound heredity... (Mort, 1987:173)

Havelock Ellis maintained that the scale of beauty ranged from European to Black (quoted in Gilman, 1985). Ellis also argued that male sexual behaviour was innately aggressive and sadistic whereas (white) women were passive and masochistic (Ellis, 1948).

The projection of what has been suppressed in Western tradition onto Blacks as Other, (representing the antithesis of European values and morality), is linked to the projection of similar fears (of barbarism within civilization) onto white women. White women were perceived as a weak spot in civilization due to what was regarded to be their low position in evolutionary development. White women due to their smaller brain were seen as mentally inferior to white men; they were considered to be closer to children and 'savages'

(Stott, 1989).

Nancy Cott discusses the ideology of the 'passionless woman' during the nineteenth century. For the middle class white woman sexual self control was highly regarded. Female chastity and virtue was elevated (Cott, 1979).

Economics, society, politics and medicine have created contradictory stereotypes of the meaning of womanhood.

However:

Historians have represented the history of sexuality in the last hundred years as a story of gradual but regular progress from the darkness of Victorian prudery to the light of sexual freedom. From a feminist perspective the picture is very different. (Jeffreys, 1987:1)

The Black male's portrayal as a rampant sex beast

Promiscuous, sexually aggressive, lecherous, barbarous, virile and lusting after white women has been the dominant conception of Black men (Jordan, 1977). The belief that the Black man was an uncivilised, lascivious, devilish, savage, 'dark beast' in possession of uncontrollable and violent sexual urges, who craved for white women, helped to form the myth of the Black man as a rapist. Thus sexual violence against Black men was legitimised by racist stereotypes about their sexuality. Hence the myth of the Black rapist and 'the cult of pure white womanhood' provided the ideological justification for lynching Black men. Black men were portrayed as brutal, strong, violent and vengeful, tough, jealous and vindictive. However, the most urgent cause for concern was that Black men found white women especially

appealing. It was feared that Black men were intent on corrupting innocent white women. Therefore the Black male represented the dreaded personification of a Black threat to white womanhood, white racial purity and bourgeois morality. In 1778 Philip Thicknesse articulated the horror of the English nation:

...the frequent marriages of these men here with white women, and the succession of black, brown, and whity brown people, produced by these very unnatural (for unnatural they are) alliances have been better observed in France, than in this once country of greater liberty...I laugh when I hear...talk of the fidelity of these people. I never yet knew one who was not at bottom a villain...they are a bad, gloomy-minded, revengeful people, and in the course of a few centuries they will over-run this country with a race of men of the very worst sort under heaven...London abounds with an incredible number of these black men, who have clubs to support those who are out of place, and [in] every country town, nay in almost every village are to be seen a little race of mulattoes, mischievous as monkeys and infinitely more dangerous, and ...if they are to live among us, they ought by some very severe law to be compelled to marry among themselves, and to have no criminal intercourse whatever with people of other complexions. There is not on earth so mischievous and vicious an animal as a mule, nor in my humble opinion a worse race of men than the negroes of Africa.

(quoted in Fryer, 1994:162 - 163)

Such views show the force with which white supremacists were able to use racism, often resulting in the rape charge, as a tool of terror and control. Whilst there was an ambivalent sexual power relationship between Black women and white men; sexual relations between Black men and white women were strictly prohibited by law and by public opinion.

'Sexually Restrained White Men'

The desexualized white middle class woman was perceived to be the property of her father and later, her husband. For the white middle class man, the fear of the loss of power and control of such property also constituted the loss of his manhood. Images of the bestiality of Blacks portrayed Black men as raping and seducing white women in order to demonstrate their superior sexual potency:

From New Orleans to New Guinea, from Barbados to Bulawayo, from Kimberley to Kuala Lumpur, the quintessential taboo to be explained is the white man's formal objection to intimacy between black men and white women. Granting political equality was perceived as giving freedom for black men to go to bed with white women... (Hyam, 1993:203)

The fear of Black male virility was perceived as a threat which could be met by the white male asserting his own sexual prowess. Thus, white men sexually victimised Black women. The counterpart of these ideologies was the protection of white women from Black men through the threat of and actual lynching and castration of Black men. This argument is cogently elucidated by Paul Hoch's critique of the white hero, Black beast icon in Eurocentric discourse. Hoch argues that white masculinity is based on the inter-racial competition for women. Furthermore Paul Hoch asserts that to become a 'man', the white, god-like hero has to conquer the dark 'beast' by winning possession of the 'white goddess'. Hoch examines the implications for white male dominance:

...the notion of interracial conquest as an ultimate test of heroic masculinity was quite visible in the nineteenth century assertions that the struggle between white Europe and dark Africa represented only an inevitable competition between the races, male survival of the 'fittest'. In such struggle the most shattering (though rarely admitted) assertion of virility often lay in taking control of the other group's females - most obviously in the institution of slavery - and at all costs excluding them from access to one's own. Defence of manhood demanded, above all, the defence of the white goddesses of civilisation against the dark, sex-charged barbarians at the gates, and such fears provided the most explosive fuel for interracial hatreds, lynchings and war. (Hoch, 1979:47)

Initiation into the echelons of white bourgeois manhood characterised introduction into elite masculinity: that is - civilized, rational, strong, unemotional, self denial, repudiation of parts of self, self control and discipline. Boys were told that only 'primitives' experienced physical pleasures as animal lusts. Among whites control of mind over body raised sex (misogyny and sexual racism) to a sacramental act (Mort, 1987).

All of this shows white men's sexual insecurity about Black men (Jordan, 1977). There was an immense contradiction between private passion, sexual privilege, gratification of lust and public reticence. There was a projection of fear that the confrontation with barbarism in Africa of white male explorers could release primitive impulses in themselves (Stott, 1989).

In Britain dominant ideologies about sexuality have been influenced by the historically antagonistic relationship between racism, class oppression, sexism and heterosexism. George L. Mosse asserts that racism, as a heightened form of

nationalism, supported bourgeois respectability. During the eighteenth century the depiction of Blacks' lack of control over their sexual passion both threatened and confirmed European standards of sexual self - restraint (Mosse, 1985).

The French anatomist Cuvier during the nineteenth century put forward the notion of the existence of three major 'races' : the white, the yellow and the Black. He argued that there was an ordering from superior to inferior in this typology (Husband, 1982).

Joanna de Groot argues that during the nineteenth century the feminised image of Africans, characterised by inequality and incapacity, enabled European men to handle the ambiguities in their situation. There are links between the ways in which white men treated both western women and non - Europeans as inferior and subordinates. She stresses that white male authority and privilege was justified by images of subordinate, obedient and devoted 'non - Europeans' and women who were able to serve and nurture. The non - European was regarded as 'savage', 'decadent' and 'uncivilised'. These ascriptive characteristics of non - whites and women given by doctors, academics and other 'experts' not only devalued them but were based on an assumption of inequality. Commerce, government, writing, travel and art confirmed these images. Women and 'non - Europeans' were seen as lacking or failing due to their nature to achieve the qualities, cultural, political or social attainments, or the

potential held as 'normal' for bourgeois white males. Thereby 'natives' and women were regarded and treated as children in need of the guardianship, authority and control of imperial and male authority due to their supposedly inherent inadequacy, innocence and weakness. Joanna de Groot adds that:

...the use of a parental concept of authority combined a sense of care and involvement with the subordinate sex or race as well as power and control over them, and as such was equally appropriate for the definition of power of men over women or of the dominant over subordinate races. (de Groot, 1989:93)

Joanna de Groot argues that such male power, discrimination and cultural, legal and political domination over women and non - Europeans encompasses a process of defining the self and others. The images of Otherness and subordination were ways for white men to explore and deal with their own identity and position as sexual beings, as artists and intellectuals, as imperial rulers, and as wielders of knowledge, skill and power. The racial and sexual conflicts of reason and emotion, of desire, male integrity and duty, and of competition and harmony, manliness and desires, anxieties, friction and fantasies were also apparent. Yet European men restrained or controlled their emotion, weakness and self - indulgence. Self control and self discipline meant that the responsibility for emotional and personal needs were transferred to women, whose caring, nurturing, feeling role was to satisfy them. Men were, therefore, unable to deal with emotions, personal expression and intimacy. Male fantasies

of women repossessed this scenario, females stood for the Other which European men created and for aspects of their selves which they did not like to loose (de Groot, 1999).

As a result of this discussion I would like to make the point that an understanding of the sexualised image of Black women needs to be seen within the context of portrayals of their male counterparts as rapists and of white people as sexually inhibited. In Chapter Five I will continue the argument that white men justified their sexual and social power through the projection of their own sexual fantasies unto Black people. Whilst it was believed that white women epitomised sexual purity, white men were heralded as sexually controlled whereas Black women and men were regarded as the exact opposite.

The Twentieth Century And The Continuation Of Myths Propagated Since Slavery

I want to argue that contemporary representations of Black men's and women's sexuality are heavily influenced by stereotypes that existed since enslavement; they were one of a number of ways in which enslavement could be legitimated (Miles, 1999). The legacy of colonialism has fostered racist and sexist stereotypes about the rampant sexuality of Black people that contribute to their ideological, social, economic and political subordination. I want to argue that as Black women have been stereotyped as inferior and sexually available, their sexual exploitation is justified and therefore allowed (Davis, 1991). The effects of the historical

racialisation of sexuality upon 1990's Britain will now be discussed in relation to the issues of genocide, rape mythology, Black people and AIDS, 'miscegenation' and the welfare state.

Genocide

Racist myths about inferiority and the insatiability of the sexual needs of African people have, it has been suggested, resulted in the imposition of Western control over African populations (Bryan et. al., 1995). Beverley Bryan et. al. have claimed that many Western population policies are racist and classist because they enforce the salient threat of genocide to Black and poor people. They believe that the preoccupation with maintaining white racial purity has resulted in the prescription of dangerous contraceptive drugs such as depo provera to Black and working class women in Britain, the United States and throughout the so - called 'Third World'. Similarly Jeffrey Weeks asserts that racialist ideas about white supremacy and the need for control of the working class have been used to legitimise mass sterilisation, abortion and birth control programmes for Black and working class women (Weeks, 1995).

Rape Mythology

The racist myth of the Black rapist is still prevalent. The racist stereotype of the greater virility of the Black man as a sexual stud has been given legitimacy by feminist discourse. For instance, Shulamith Firestone transposes

Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex into racial terms to argue that the white man represents the husband / father and the white woman epitomises the wife / mother / private property. Meanwhile Blacks, in this analysis, symbolise the subservient children: Black women are public property / whores and Black men are pimps. According to Shulamith Firestone powerless Black men have an uncontrollable desire for sexual relations with white women. Firestone observes the Black man's relationship to the white woman, arguing that he is 'relating to her if at all only in a degrading way'. Shulamith Firestone states:

In addition, due to his virulent hatred and jealousy of her Possessor, the white man, he may lust after her as a thing to be conquered in order to 'get whitey'. Thus, unlike the more clear - cut polarization of feelings in white women, the black man's feelings about the white woman are characterized by their ambivalence - their intense mixture of love and hate; but however he may choose to express his ambivalence, he is unable to control its intensity. (Firestone, 1971:108)

Moreover, Susan Brownmiller claims that Black men are especially prone to commit acts of sexual violence against white women:

Today the incidence of actual rape combined with the looming spectre of the rapist in the mind's eye, and in particular the mythified spectre of the black man as rapist to which the black man in the name of his manhood now contributes, must be understood as a control mechanism against the freedom, mobility and aspirations of all women, white and black. The crossroads of racism and sexism had to be a violent meeting place. There is no use pretending it doesn't exist.
(Brownmiller, 1975: 255)

Angela Davis criticises the racism of Brownmiller's work due

to its role in the dangerous revival of the myth of Black men being rapists:

...In her very impressive study of rape, Susan Brownmiller claims that Black men's historical oppression has placed many of the 'legitimate' expressions of male supremacy beyond their reach. They must resort, as a result, to acts of open sexual violence... (Davis, 1981:178)

Blacks And AIDS

The link between Black sexuality and disease has been crucial as a source of racist scapegoating. Peter Fryer's first, well researched book on Blacks in Britain explains that, at the beginning of this century, charges such as 'primitive African barbarians' and 'spreaders of syphilis' were common (Fryer, 1984:317). Today, the connection between race, illness, hyper - sexuality and death is especially relevant in view of AIDS. R. C. and R. J. Chirimuta maintain that since racist ideology has erroneously designated Africans as ignorant, animalistic, incapable of sexual morality and sexually promiscuous this has been inevitably linked to a high rate of HIV infection. R. C. and R. J. Chirimuta demonstrate that the incentive for most research on AIDS and its subsequent media coverage has been racist and not scientific. For instance, they cite the selective bias of AIDS researchers who only looked for the origin of AIDS in Africa and so did not look for all of the possible facts and explanations which could be elsewhere. As a result the West is convinced that AIDS not only originated in

Africa but that Africa is also responsible for infecting the rest of the world. Therefore, fear, ignorance and extreme prejudice have characterised Western responses to the AIDS epidemic. Given sexualised racist stereotypes of Africans it was virtually certain that Africans would be attributed with the source of AIDS (Chirimuta & Chirimuta, 1987). Kobena Mercer and Issac Julien argue that the designation of AIDS as a gay disease also demonstrates the linkage between racism and homophobia (Mercer & Julien, 1988). The role of the mass media in reproducing such stereotypes should not be under - estimated. The degradation of Black sexuality during slavery has given rise to dominant mass media images of the Black woman as an exotic and amoral seductress and the Black man as a sexual brute (Bryan et. al., 1985). Kobena Mercer and Issac Julien assert that the Western press perpetuated racist ideas that Black people are dirty, diseased and sexually unrestrained by castigating Africans as the 'cause' of AIDS (Mercer & Julien, 1988). From soap operas to the pornography industry racist assumptions about Black sexuality provide a lucrative enterprise. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two, with a particular emphasis on British and American film.

'Miscegenation'

In his psychohistory of racism Joel Kovel argues that the 'race problem' is inextricably connected with sex. Kovel states that 'miscegenation' is the most forbidden of inter -

racial practices; it is the greatest taboo aimed at white women whilst legitimately accomplished by white men (Kovel, 1970). As I have explained earlier in this chapter white men have been hideously obsessed by the notion of Black men desiring sexual relations with white women, the latter have been regarded as the 'Guardians of the Race'. Yasmin Alibhai - Brown and Anne Montague argue that notions of racial purity, blood, culture, Englishness, Whiteness, protection of the English bourgeoisie and defence of the nation were used to prohibit 'miscegenation' (Alibhai - Brown & Montague, 1992). As we have seen sexuality has been a major aspect whereby differences, taboos, transgressions, moralities and meanings between Blacks and whites were made; and reproductive sex could destroy these. Also evident have been the contradictions between laws, restraints, taboos and conventions from the times of enslavement which prohibited 'miscegenation' and the hypocritical sexual exploitation of Black women by white men. Thus, there have been gender divisions in 'miscegenation' whereby white men's sexual relations with Black women were legitimated but white women's sexual relations with Black men were fiercely prohibited. As we have seen white women were held as virginal, reproducers of the race, keepers of its purity; preservers of the 'racial stock' who needed to be protected.

In the early twentieth century 'race mixing' was seen as a cause of riots and unemployment. This ensued into a crisis during 1919 and the 1950's when the English fear of sex

between Black men and white women created a traumatic 'moral panic' largely as a cultural reaction to Black migration (Alibhai - Brown & Montague, 1992). Yasmin Alibhai - Brown and Anne Montague argue that there were substantial Black and 'mixed race' communities in Bristol, Cardiff and Liverpool which white British people were hostile to. Consequently this issue contributed to the first large - scale riots against Blacks (Alibhai - Brown & Montague, 1992). Similarly there was a fear of 'miscegenation' during the nineteenth century and of the results of 'inter - racial' sexuality - namely the decline of the white population. 'Inter - racial' unions were perceived as synonymous to prostitution and were seen as being barren. The production of weak and doomed children was also noted (Gilman, 1985).

The myth of Black promiscuity has been used to oppose the increase in sexual relationships between Black and white people in recent decades. Today, as under enslavement, the notion of the Black woman as merely a sexual convenience for white men is publicly condemned but privately pardoned. However, Yasmin Alibhai - Brown and Anne Montague argue that the rise in 'stable' relationships and marriages between Black women and white men has become a cause of some concern within both Black and white communities (Alibhai - Brown & Montague, 1992). By marrying the Black woman, the white man offers her access to respectability dominant society maintains, and her new found position has therefore serious contradictions for her previously ascribed role as a prostitute. Moreover, and here lies the source of white male

fear, marriage between a Black woman and a white male - especially if he is of middle class background - is construed as a potential source of power for the Black woman concerned. As bell hooks has suggested, the threat of the emasculatory nature of Black women is a serious challenge to the established white male patriarchy (hooks, 1982: 64). This will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

The Welfare State

It could be argued that perhaps more than in any other area the institutionalisation of racist stereotypes about Black sexuality is exemplified by the Welfare State. Beverley Bryan et. al. certainly believe this. They suggest that the prevailing notion that Black people are inherently promiscuous and immoral has often been used to legitimise harsh social control by the police and social services. They claim that state ideologies incorporate popular perceptions of Black women as libidinous. There are common notions of Black women as major users of the Welfare State. These views conceal the fact that the subordination of Black families is the result of the systematic debasement of Black sexuality. Black women are perceived to be 'bad' mothers. Consequently their children are frequently separated from them by the 'caring' social services. Health visitors, child psychologists, the police and prison service, as agents of the State stigmatise Black women as libidinous. Furthermore, Beverley Bryan et. al. argue that this label is incorporated

within the foundations of State ideology. They maintain that this generally leads to the establishment of racist / sexist ideologies and policies based on a perceived need to restrict and contain Black sexuality (Bryan, et. al., 1985). Beverley Bryan et. al. explain that the more frequent State harassment of Black single mothers, to ensure that they are not co - habiting with a male partner, in comparison to their white counterparts testifies to this fact. Meanwhile, the existence of Black single mothers is used to reaffirm racist stereotypes about their promiscuous sexuality, Black debauchery and the need to control it. This is not to deny that white single mothers are not also terribly harassed but just to show the racialisation of this process. During the current recession the services of the State are desperately needed to ameliorate the socio - economic position of many Black and white women. Unfortunately the prevalence of racist views about Black sexuality and the character of Black people in general, has prevented many Black women from adequately being able to utilise the already diminishing resources of the Welfare State (Bryan et. al., 1985).

Some Further Considerations About Racialised Sexuality

Having discussed the existence of negative images of Black sexuality it is important to consider the rationale for their existence and continuation. In this section I want to address the views of some academics who purport that racia-

lised and sexualised images of Blacks are central to their subordination. It is imperative to assess derogatory portrayal of Blacks, as having unbridled sexuality, in terms of the contention that this constitutes the projection of white fears.

Sander L. Gilman maintains that Western stereotypes of race, sexuality and illness represent a means whereby the European male copes with his anxieties concerning his control over the world. He argues that a secure definition of self for the white man is maintained by projecting the loss of self control onto the Black, who is perceived to be sexually perverse, deviant, exotic, pathological, impaired, sick and diseased. Skin colour that is viewed as different is associated with pathology and concupience so that unbridled sexuality is linked to Blackness. Thus the Black is labelled as sexually degenerate, mad, infectious, corrupted and corrupting, degrading, dangerous, damaged, damaging yet attractive. Gilman argues that 'The White man's burden' - sexuality and it's control was transferred into the need to control the sexuality of the Other as sexualized female. This represents the projection of the white male's suppressed inner sexual and imperial anxieties and fears (Gilman, 1985).

As I have shown, since colonialism the image of Black men and women as licentious has been instrumental to the oppression of Black people. Consequently Paul Hoch asserts that stereotyping Blacks as sexually animalistic is a means of justifying subordination. Thus Paul Hoch states that by

relegating Blacks to their genitalia and by dominating them, white people in actuality aim to repress the aspects of their own personalities / sexualities that they are afraid of (Hoch, 1979).

Homi K. Bhabha maintains that the sexualisation of racial difference in colonial discourse is the result of ambivalence, fear and fascination. Bhabha shows that the categorization of savagery, cannibalism, anarchy and lust represent the transference of white anxieties which had been used to legitimise the exploitation of slaves. Hence the image of Blacks as licentious was instrumental to the exercise of colonial rule. This leads Homi K. Bhabha to assert that:

...the objective of the colonial discourse is to construe the colonial as a population of degenerate types on the basis of social origin, in order to justify conquest and establish systems of administration and instruction. (Bhabha, 1983: 23)

Patricia Hill Collins argues that white people fear in Black people those qualities that they project onto Blacks, that they most fear in themselves (Collins, 1990).

Amina Mama addresses the influences upon Black women's psyche of racial and sexual subordination. Mama uses conceptual tools that are borrowed from feminism, post structuralist thought, psychodynamic theory and discursive analysis to study the production of post - colonial Black female subjectivity. Her case study, of fourteen British based Black women in the 1980's and 1990's, re - theorises racialised and gendered subjectivities inscribed with sexuality as a continuous response to oppression. Mama argues that subjec-

tivity is psychodynamic, discursive and recursive. Amina Mama maintains that the processes of self exploration, self discovery, self awareness and self definition are multi-layered and creative. Struggles in identity formation often result in personal and social change in power relations. Mama explains the centrality of changing historical, social, cultural, psychological and political factors as well as individual and collective experiences in the construction of Black women's shifting consciousness. Theorisation of Black women's sense of themselves is generated from and refined by self reflective debates in participatory research on 'what it is to be a Black woman' (Mama, 1995).

Amina Mama develops discourse analysis of how racism simultaneously situates the Black woman as 'the pre-racialised self' and 'the positive racialised subjectivity'. She examines two crucial and oppositional discourses that influence the consciousness of Black women through the consequences of colonisation, imperialist and patriarchal systems. First, in 'colonial integrationist discourse', Black people conform to dominant notions of white behaviour, accept white hegemony and white supremacist values. Second, 'Black radical discourse' is a progressive assertion of Black defined identity, beauty, culture and unity. It proclaims personal development, creative and intellectual re-affirmation as well as liberation in the quest to redefine historically produced racial categories to 'become Black'. Black radicalism empowers Black people to survive psychologically, educa-

tionally, culturally and politically. It plans to resist and subvert the system of white domination (Mama, 1995).

Amina Mama assesses the multiple and dynamic positions of Black women who have been stigmatised by racist definitions of the 'damaged negro' and 'negative self concept' in imperial psychology as well as the Other in Western societies. The Eurocentric, conservative and empiricist paradigms deployed by racist psychologists subordinate Blacks as pathological and mentally inferior yet reaffirm, reproduce and legitimate white supremacy. In terms of the 'self hatred hypothesis' Black people are characterized as tormented by racist society and low self esteem. Therefore, it claims that Black people reject their own racial community and want to be white because they consider 'whiteness' to be superior (Mama, 1995).

Amina Mama explains that Black British subjectivity is fraught with contradictions, difficulties, ambiguity and ambivalence. Black British identities and cultures are scarred by experiences of historical and contemporary racism. This denies the rights of Black people to full citizenship in Britain. It is a problematic situation because it is dislocated and challenges prevalent white assumptions. Hence women re - negotiate their identities as Black and British by confronting their anxieties, predicaments and ideas about their roots (Mama, 1995).

Mama's analysis of Black female consciousness addresses the commonalities and differences between Black women in terms of the diversity of backgrounds, interests, situations and

experiences. Black women occupy an 'insider and outsider' condition which allows them to understand dominant society, new knowledges and 'truths' in order to succeed. The constitution of Black female subjectivity changes, resists and opposes dominant ideologies (Mama, 1995).

Amina Mama examines the discursive movement from colonial to Black radical discourses. The process of splitting is due to insecurities over one's circumstances as a Black woman. This is manifested in the repression of the bad Black self concept and the idealisation of the good Black object. Many of the participants defy mainstream structures of Black femininity whereby images of 'attractiveness' portray Black womanhood as ugly. They incorporate Black radicalism and feminist philosophy to create alternative definitions of Black femininity which combat racism and sexism. These Black women reconstruct Black femininity by referring to African and Caribbean cultures (Mama, 1995).

Lola Young discusses the reproduction of societal images about Black people in film. She decolonises and demystifies 'the look' to examine the impact of colonialism upon racist ideologies in contemporary cinematic texts. Her interdisciplinary critique of cinematic representations of racial, gender and class divisions as immutable is informed by cultural studies with psychoanalytical theories on Otherness. Young analyses how the historical, social and political context of the production and consumption of feature length British films, mainly between 1959 and 1986, con-

structs racial and sexual differences. Lola Young asserts that cinematic forms mediate, reproduce and articulate racist, bourgeois and patriarchal ideologies. This naturalises power relations between Black and white people, supports 'common sense' fears about Black sexuality and taboos about 'inter - racial' sexual unions, to which people become habituated (Young, 1996).

Lola Young explains that the film camera is largely a projection of the imperial and anthropological eye. Therefore, the film camera is an instrument of power to define, categorise and control the colonized Other whilst supporting belief in white supremacy. Predominantly white, middle class men have institutionalized access to the right 'to look' and examine prevailing ideas about Black inferiority. Black people are generally depicted as objects of primitivism, exoticism, fetishization and demonization (Young, 1996).

Lola Young argues that frequently films that are made by white people indicate liberal tolerance but fail to confront repressed racial and sexual anxieties. They do not depict the knowledge and experiences of Black people or acknowledge responsibility for racism. There are tensions because such films locate racism in deviant and pathologised individuals instead of the historical, social, economic and political context of contemporary Britain. The stability of the idealised white family is portrayed as being threatened by the presence of Black people. Racial opposition and antagonisms are due to white men's experiences being central to most narratives whereas other groups are confined to the margins.

These films provide fantasies of the Other to reaffirm illusions of a coherent as well as superior white, bourgeois and masculine identity (Young, 1996).

Cinematic representations mirror historical shifts in attitudes towards gender differences, sexuality and relations of dominance and subordination between white and Black people. Black women primarily occupy a devalued status whereby they are absent or insignificant in popular cinema. Often white, middle class and male film - makers reflect their unconscious expressions of transgressive desires. These film - makers use cinema as a vehicle to exercise their power to look at, name and control Black women's bodies as signifiers of excessive sexuality. Mainstream cinema usually conveys voyeuristic fascination, fantasy and repulsion regarding Black female sexuality. Black women are commodified, fragmented and depersonalised as stereotypes of primitive, wild and loose characters. For dominant society images of Black women are problematic because they constitute a racial and sexual negation of white masculinity. Subsequently Black women are frequently 'punished' for tempting white men as well as stimulating racial and sexual anxieties by the absence of satisfactory roles. Therefore, as Chapter Two stresses, it is necessary that Black film - makers and critics deconstruct and destabilise the politics of cultural production (Young, 1996).

Racism, sexism, class oppression and heterosexism are, according to Black feminists, independent yet also inter -

connected. The sexualities of Black men and women, working class people, homosexuals, bi - sexuals and lesbians have been subordinated to the material interests of men who are white, middle class and heterosexual. Racial and sexual minorities as well as the working class have been sexually stereotyped in terms that maintain their subordination. As in the case of Black people, the sexualities of gay people and working class people have been conceptualised as pathological and promiscuous.

Conclusion

The reproduction of historical and contemporary images about Black sexuality contributes to the ideological, social, economic and political domination of Black men and women in present - day Britain. For over four hundred years the belief that the sexuality of Black people was inferior to that of white people, has been reinforced by imagery of Black sexuality as animalistic, evil, diseased and licentious. Such beliefs are largely the projection of the anxieties of the ruling elite who are in control of the dominant ideologies. It is no mere coincidence that the stereotypes of unbridled sexuality that are attributed to Black people are also effective weapons against homosexuals, lesbians, bi - sexuals and working class people. Given the excitement of the permissive 1960's and the present preoccupation with more 'liberating' as well as safer sex, what is the dilemma? It is not that excessive sexuality in itself is regarded as a bad thing. A historical examination of the sexuality of

white, middle class, heterosexual men in relation to the subordination of women will clearly demonstrate this.

The real problem is that people who are defined as Other to the norm of heterosexuality that is white, male and middle class could attempt to exercise sexual freedom. If you are a woman, Black, working class, gay, or even worse, if more than one of these definitions applies to you, so the dominant ideology dictates, do not attempt to positively assert your sexuality. Yet the realm of sexual power is fundamental to the imposition of white male bourgeois power in all social spheres. The institutionalisation of heterosexuality as the dominant and only permissible sexuality, within the confines of a racist, sexist and classist British society supports the superior ideological, social, economic and politico - legal status of white bourgeois manhood. For Black people to subvert the socio - sexual power system, political alliances with other sexually, socially and economically oppressed groups is vital. A radical awareness of 'true' racial / sexual identity and the material basis of negative myths about Black sexuality is the first step towards personal and public empowerment.

CHAPTER TWO

SENSUOUS SCREENING

A DISCUSSION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE REPRESENTATION OF BLACK FEMALE AND BLACK MALE SEXUALITY IN FILM REPRODUCES THE EARLY REPRESENTATIONS OF BLACK SEXUALITY

...If, as feminists have argued, women's sexuality evokes an unconscious terror in men, then black women's sexuality represents a special threat to white patriarchy; the possibility of its eruption stands for the aspirations of the black race as a whole. (Gaines, 1988: 26)

The person who controls the image is the one who looks at it, creates it. And the reality is that the image created says more about the creator than about the people it is supposed to represent. (Attille & Blackwood quoted in Brunson, 1986:207)

Black writers have argued that the experiences of Black people have largely been ignored or misrepresented in British and American films (Yearwood, 1982). They criticise the tendency to either render Black people invisible on the screen or to negatively portray them as stupid, subservient and inferior to white people (Yearwood, 1982). In Britain, the rest of Europe and America Blacks have been portrayed in films as backward and uncivilised (Givanni, 1989). The Black person is portrayed ahistorically with contempt and fear (Holmlund, 1989). The lack of different images implies that 'all black people are like that'. The onslaught of stereotypes, simplifications and reductions means that Black people's lives are only depicted in fixed and narrow terms. This denies rich diversity and differences as well as giving each image the role of being 'representative' (Mercer,

1989). Negative figuration and fetishisation characterised the juxtaposition of opposing concepts of white / Black, superiority / inferiority, good / evil, civility / savagery, rationality / superstition and cultural / racial identity (Reid, 1988).

I want to suggest that stereotypical images of Blacks in films also incorporate a central focus on sexuality. Thus my main purpose in this chapter is to explore the various ways in which the sexuality of Black people has been and indeed continues to be portrayed in mainstream cinema. In view of the argument that the cinema is a forceful medium for transmitting ideas; I intend to demonstrate the significance of the fact that the Black person on film is symbolic of rampant sexuality. As such the image of the Black man as a potent 'super - duper stud', a horrifying sensual brute and pimp indicates, I want to explain, that Black men are licentious. Likewise I believe that the dominant depiction of the Black woman in films as a prostitute, vulgar and despicable, can reinforce myths of the promiscuity of Black women in general. Therefore, I want to argue that the representation of Black sexuality in film should be analysed as part of a historical process whereby the reduction of Black people to their so called hyper - sexuality has been used to justify the social, economic and political subordination of Blacks in Britain. Hence it is my intention to examine the historical context of the images of Black sexuality in relation to five films that have been both popular and conducive to this debate: I have chosen 'Imitation of Life' (1954) which is a

remake of a 1934 film; 'Sapphire' (1959); 'Shaft' (1971) is an example of a 'Blaxploitation' film that was popular in Britain; 'She's Gotta Have It' (1986) has been celebrated as a feminist sex comedy and 'Mona Lisa' (1986); in order to analyse the degree to which these films influence societal views about Black sexuality.

This brings me to examine the extent that contemporary portrayals of Black sexuality in film represent the continuation of the historical apprehension and ill treatment of Black people. I want to indicate that Black women are still perceived as being readily available sexual objects who are prone to prostitution. As a result, the icon of Black female sexuality as different from and more bestial than white females, has permitted the sexual exploitation of Black women as opposed to the public condemnation when white women are sexually abused (hooks, 1982). Further, today, Black men are still labelled as over - sexed and prone to aggressive behaviour. As such the colonial myth of the Black rapist persists, continuing to act as an effective tool of racist social control (Davis, 1981).

Moreover, it is within this historical context that the images of Black people in the film industry needs to be assessed. Representations of race are based on the organization of perception. How Blacks are represented is linked to socio - economic marginalization as the following general comments of Richard Dyer show:

...how social groups are treated in cultural representation is part and parcel of how they are treat-

ed in life, that poverty, harassment, self-hate and discrimination (in housing, jobs, educational opportunity and so on) are shored up and instituted by representation...How we are seen determines in part how we are treated; how we treat others is based on how we see them; such seeing comes from representation. (Dyer, 1993: 1)

I want to suggest that the roles that most Black actors and actresses are compelled to accept largely sustain prevalent racist and sexist mythology surrounding Black society. Additionally, films that include Black people are quite often erroneously identified as depicting 'true' Black culture. Barbara Smith explains that this tendency is strongly protested against by Black actresses such as Ruby Dee, Cicely Tyson and Hattie McDonald. Hence they state that:

'...the characterisations forced upon [Afro-American] actresses had nothing to do with Black or human reality.' American film, because it is 'essentially a medium for the promotion of fantasy' is conducive to exclusionary practices, these African-American actresses stress, and, for Afro-American women, this illusion arises from the fact that 'just the presence of a Black woman in a film negates illusion because she is not the blue-eyed, blonde-haired goddess that Americans have been trained to buy.' (Smith, 1975: 268)

Furthermore, dominant imagery of Black sexuality have been both reflected in and reinforced by mainstream cinema. Stereotypes of Black people in films as savage Africans, happy slaves, devoted servants and sexual super - beings have in effect moulded public opinion about the characteristics of Black people in general. Since the emergence of the film industry in the 1900's the manner in which Blacks have been shown on the screen has influenced the racist attitudes of most white audiences. Lawrence Reddick's comments illus-

trate this point as well as the sexist invisibility of Black womanhood:

...the treatment of the Negro by the movie is inaccurate and unfair. Directly and indirectly it establishes associations and drives deeper into the public mind the stereotype conception of the Negro. By building up this unfavourable conception, the movies operate to thwart the advancement of the Negro, to humiliate him, to weaken his drive for equality and to spread indifference, contempt and hatred for his cause. This great agency for the communication of ideas and information, therefore functions as a powerful instrument for maintaining the racial subordination of the Negro people. (Reddick)

I will later explain that this is especially evident in the representation of Black sexuality. In a similar manner Peter Noble investigates the propagation of images of Black inferiority in the cinema. However, he also ignores the specific effects upon Black women. Nevertheless, Noble indicates that films are powerful instruments for instilling ideology into mass audiences. He argues that the cinema has considerable influence on racist ideas. Thus he maintains that the depiction of Black inferiority and references to the historical position of Blacks as occupying a subservient position to white society in films, supports racist stereotypes. Moreover Noble suggests that the debasement of Black people on the cinema screen is fundamental to the ways in which the audience formulates its broader socio-political outlook. As such the categorisation of Blacks in films nurtures racial intolerance and contempt for Blacks in reality (Noble, 1949: 7). The impact of cinema is further supported by the motion picture pioneer Thomas Edison in his assertion

that:

...whoever controls the film industry controls the most powerful medium of influence over the public. (Edison quoted in Noble, 1949: 9)

In addition, the importance of understanding history as a means of knowledge upon which to build an analysis of the representation of Black people in film, is emphasised by the work of Pearl Bowser. Bowser succinctly demonstrates that historically images of Black women in American film have been characterised by sexually alluring roles and dependency. Pearl Bowser therefore examines the implications of the continued portrayal of the Black woman as a sex goddess. She maintains that the Black woman in film is frequently a mulatto mistress who is either unfaithful, a liar or a cheat. Furthermore, the Black woman is depicted as the devil's disciple. Consequently, the Black woman tempts the hero with her inherent animalistic charm. Despite her beauty, which is often objectified by 'European features' such as fair skin, straight hair and aquiline nose, Bowser highlights the frequency of roles in which the Black female as actress is usually unsuccessful in love - often she loses the object of her fancy to a lighter skinned or white female. Her ability to win and keep her man as well as her feigned status is inextricably linked to the Black woman's inability to pass as white. Hence the downfall of the Black woman is legitimised by the association of Blackness with evil. This view is extremely pertinent to the first film that I will be assessing - 'Imitation Of Life'. As Pearl

Bowser argues:

[the Black woman] was the character through which the ills within the race were conveyed.
(Bowser quoted in Yearwood, 1982: 45)

'Imitation Of Life'.LM 1.50"

I want to apply Pearl Bowser's observations to the 1954 American version of 'Imitation of Life' which is based on the novel by Fannie Hurst. This picture attempts to 'deal with' the popular characters of mammy, mulatto, and later Sapphire. The film is produced by Ross Hunter and directed by Douglas Sirk. I have decided to discuss this American film, which has been frequently shown on British television, because it so cogently illustrates the dominant images of Black women. Hence the Black woman is either portrayed as a sexless mammy - usually large, dark, combining humility and capability; or as a lascivious whore - often mulatto: misbegotten and tragic. The message is clear, attempting to define oneself as sexual subject leads to rejection and abandonment (hooks, 1982). Furthermore, negating one's ascribed racial role also leads to this dilemma.

In 'Imitation of Life', the first scene is at the seaside where a white striving but unemployed actress, Lora Meridith (Lana Turner) has lost her young daughter Susie. The latter is playing with Sarah Jane, the fair skinned daughter of a homeless Black woman, Annie Johnson (Juanita Moore). Steve Archer (John Gavin), an aspiring photographer who works in advertising, takes pictures of Lora, Susie and Sarah Jane.

Annie reports to the police that Susie is missing and they show Lora where her daughter is. Lora is shocked that Annie is Sarah Jane's mother. Lora offers them a place to stay, initially only for the night and then as her maid. Steve and Lora become partners. Steve asks Lora to marry him and she replies that she can not because she loves the theatre. Lora first stars in David Edwards' (Dan O'herlihy) comedy plays where she becomes rich and famous. Lora goes to Italy to star in a new film and asks Steve to look after Susie (Sandra Dee) who falls in love with him. Annie wants Sarah Jane to study at a Black teachers college, instead she sings and dances in white night clubs. When Susie discovers that Steve and Lora plan to get married she is so upset that she leaves home to go to a distant college. Annie dies from a broken heart because her light skinned daughter Sarah Jane refuses to accept her Blackness.

The main focus of this discussion will hinge on the character of Sarah Jane, but it is instructive to observe how the ever present mammy is also caricatured in a form which lends to the racial and sexual oppression of Black women. Hollywood's mammy is old, dowdy and menial. She is a surrogate mother - to white children - who enjoys her nurturing but essentially submissive role. Annie, the mammy figure, subsequently introduces herself to Lora Meredith as:

...a maid to live in. Someone to take care of your little girl. A strong healthy settle down woman, who eats like a bird and doesn't care if she gets no time off; and will work real cheap...
(Imitation Of Life, 1954)

True to Hollywood's depiction of her form, Annie is a mule,

stoically and uncomplainingly supporting the white woman and her child. She is subservient, extremely hard working and rebuffs offers of help from other Black servants who seek to help lighten her load. Annie is buxom, warm and earth brown. She is strong and dependable - like 'the Rock of Gibraltar'. Her concern for Miss Meredith and her daughter Susie earns her a reputation as a 'watch - dog'. She is respectable to her white employers, deeply religious and of course, always smiling. Interestingly enough, Annie's own attributes actually serve to highlight the seeming inadequacies of her daughter in rejecting this role. In terms of the latter Annie says to Miss Meridith:

How do you explain to your child she was born to be hurt? (Imitation Of Life, 1954)

Alternatively Sarah Jane is portrayed as beautiful and sophisticated. Yet this presentation is in no way intended to challenge or offend white America's social values since the role of Sarah Jane is played by Susan Kohner, a white actress. Sarah Jane is young, mischievous and deceitful. She passes as white everywhere, including at school. Sarah Jane is basically presented as a 'wicked Black bitch'. For Black and white audiences her constant attempts to pass as white are unforgivable. Furthermore the denial of her mother encourages Black viewers, who may identify with her aspirations for social mobility, to condemn her behaviour. Sarah Jane is not only ashamed of being Black, but she also hates everything which and anyone who reminds her of her own

Blackness. Consequently Sarah Jane tells the significantly blond, blue - eyed, innocent and virginal Susie about her first boyfriend:

...well, he's white and if he ever finds out about me, I'll kill myself; because I'm white too and if I have to be coloured, then I want to die. I want to have a chance in life. I don't want to have to come through back doors, or feel lower than other people, or apologise for my mother's colour. She can't help her colour, but I can and I will...
(Imitation Of Life, 1954)

Later in the film, Sarah Jane asks her boyfriend Frankie to run away with her. He disparagingly replies:

Is your mother a nigger? Are you Black?
(Imitation Of Life, 1954)

Sarah Jane vehemently denies that she is Black. Frankie accuses her of lying to him and is portrayed as being implicitly justified in violently assaulting Sarah Jane. Instead of directing her anger towards Frankie, Sarah Jane turns her wrath against her mother:

He found out I'm not white because you keep telling the world that I'm your daughter. Anything that you can spoil you do! (Imitation Of Life, 1954)

Whilst the audience may not share the view that Annie should in some way be held accountable, Frankie's actions are nevertheless seen as retributive. Indeed, this scene of male violence deserves special attention within the context of the wider social justifications of white male abuse when it is perpetrated against Black women. Since Sarah Jane is an immoral liar, a Black woman passing as white, Frankie is seen as being justified in beating her. I will return to the

point that violence against Black women is not only excused, but more importantly, is further encouraged by the representation of Black women in film. I shall develop this point later in a critique of Spike Lee's film 'She's Gotta Have It'.

Following her break with Frankie, Sarah Jane leaves home. She deceives her mother by telling her that she has a respectable job as a librarian. In reality, Sarah Jane leads a sordid life inhabited by white men and bright lights. Her talent for singing and dancing in nightclubs is rudely shattered by the appearance of her mother. Sarah Jane finally warns her mother to forget about her and not to search for her again. Sarah Jane worries that discovery of her Blackness will automatically result in dismissal from her job as well as the loss of her friends. When Annie asks Sarah Jane how she is Sarah Jane replies:

I'm somebody else. I'm white, white, white.
(Imitation Of Life, 1954)

She begs her mother:

If by accident we should ever pass on the street,
please don't recognise me.
(Imitation Of Life, 1954)

The audience is woefully aware that this is Annie's last journey since she is dying. In view of her portrayal as wanton and loose, Sarah Jane's regret, expressed at Annie's funeral that, 'I didn't mean it', 'Mama I did love you' and 'I'm sorry I killed my Mother' may seem rather dubious (Imitation Of Life, 1954). In any case we are assured that Annie as a 'good' Black woman - that is, she knew and ac-

cepted her subordinate place in life - will be justly rewarded in Heaven. Meanwhile, Sarah Jane, by not seeking to accept her place as a member of the Black under - class is eternally doomed. The indication to the viewer, as in many other films with similar messages, is that the only commendable role for Black women is that of the good, old, reliable and subservient mammy. I shall consider the socio - economic and political implications of the portrayals of Black female sexuality in 'Sapphire' and then offer an analysis of their relationship to images of Black men in 'Shaft'.

'Sapphire'

Images of Blacks in post - war British film, Evelyn Reid states, have related to colonial imposition and notions of white superiority (Reid, 1988). These have been seen as the 'cultural problems' of Blacks who were depicted as primitive, simple - minded, gullible, immoral, subservient and childlike. These films were heavily influenced by nineteenth century literature: 'adventure' and 'political - romance' novels. The colonial imagery contributed to the formation of Blacks as Other: as different and therefore alien. Consequently in the late 1950's and 1960's with the arrival of African - Caribbean 'immigrants' into Britain they were seen in terms of the racist mythology (Reid, 1988). As Franz Fanon explains, this is a knowing that objectifies, confines, imprisons and hardens (Fanon, 1970). Evelyn Reid maintains that Blacks are held to be the cause and effect of problems in the political system, imprisoned in a circle of

mass media interpretations which expressed white British responses to the Black presence (Reid, 1988).

The visible difference of colour lead to an effusion of fascination and fear during the 1950's. 'The colour problem' expressed in the themes of 'mixed race' relationships and 'miscegenation' was a hot bed of prejudice. This is powerfully displayed in the 1959 film 'Sapphire'. The other significant aspect of 'Sapphire', as Carrie Tarr explains, is inferior notions about 'the feminine' and unequal sexual debates (Tarr, 1985).

The British film 'Sapphire' was produced by Michael Relph and directed by Basil Deardon in 1959 as a 'problem' film. It was supposed to combine popular entertainment with an exploration of attitudes towards racial difference. Following the 1958 Notting Hill riots 'race relations' were topical the next year. In 'Sapphire', Dearden and Relph had a liberal aim of racial tolerance to 'show this (colour) prejudice as the stupid and illogical thing it is' (Tarr, 1985).

'Sapphire' is from an original script by Janet Green. It is a conventional 'whodunit'. 'Sapphire' also serves as a racialised picture essay on parts of London life. Locations designated as Black included stereotypical scenes of slums, racial violence, clubs, shouts of 'nig', 'nigger', 'dirty black bastard', the underworld and omitted images of family life. Alternatively white people are predominantly represented by student settings and the respectable home of

Sapphire's fiancé (Tarr, 1985). 'Race relations' are integrated in the story of a body unceremoniously dumped and then discovered on Hampstead Heath (Tarr, 1985). The death of Sapphire Robbins (Yvonne Buckingham), a 'mixed race' woman who looked white, and who was expecting a baby for her white boyfriend David (Paul Massie) leads to an inquiry. Sapphire who was described by some Blacks as a 'high yellow doll', and a 'lily skin' had learned that she could pass for white. During the investigation Detective Superintendent Hazard (Nigel Patrick), a model of liberal tolerance, and the bigoted Detective Inspector Learoyd (Michael Craig), uncover racism. They expose the violent racial hatred the white community feel towards Sapphire, as well as their own hidden racist beliefs (Reid, 1988). There is particularly racism in Inspector Learoyd's confirmed point of view that even if Sapphire looks white she is not and so there are different assumptions about her behaviour. His opinion exemplifies official liberal discourse undercut by sexuality, which is displaced onto Blackness. Learoyd tells Hazard:

These spades are a lot of trouble. I say we should send them back where they came from.
(Sapphire, 1959)

Hazard and Learoyd search Sapphire's dwelling place and come onto a locked drawer revealing pretty underwear and half a photograph of Sapphire dancing with someone. Next they search for the missing dance partner. They find a Black man who is called Johnny Fiddle who appears to be guilty. Sapphire's brother, Dr. Robbins (Earl Cameron) from Birmingham,

visits the police who are shocked that he is Black. Once the police realise that the twenty one year old Sapphire was Black passing as white the whole tone of the investigation changes to that of racialised sexuality. The family that Sapphire was going to marry into, who only knew about her racial identity a week before she was brutally murdered, is increasingly under suspicion. The family members suspect and try to protect each other. Eventually Mildred (Yvonne Mitchell), Sapphire's prejudiced would be sister - in - law confesses to the murder. The family of Sapphire's fiance, Sapphire's brother, and the police are reconciled (Reid, 1988).

Dr. Robbins makes two subtle comments about racism to Hazard:

You can get me at the Dorset hotel. They take us there. (Sapphire, 1959)

When I was a child another boy touched me. He then held out his hand. Look he said nothing's come off on me. Trouble is something came off on me. (Sapphire, 1959)

The film is problematic in relation to the representation of Black people, the status of race and race tolerance (Reid, 1988). Pines asserts that 'Sapphire' symbolically negotiates ideas about British and Black cultures. Appearing to threaten the sanctity of the British way of / family life; Blacks became the 'Other', the alien 'dark strangers', 'victims' or 'social problems' (Pines, 1981).

'Sapphire' is conventionally ascribed to traditional pre - New Wave British cinema which privileges a misogynist view-

point. The film is an investigation of Sapphire Robbins' sexuality. At first she seems the innocent victim (i.e. white female) of a violent knife attack. Then the mystery starts when underneath her respectable tweed skirt it is discovered that she is wearing a red taffeta petticoat. Detective Superintendent Hazard tells Detective Inspector Learoyd:

'Red tafetta under a tweed skirt,' who replies,
'Yes that's the Black under the white alright'.
(Sapphire, 1959)

When the police had believed that Sapphire was white she was seen as the faithful girlfriend. However, her Blackness leads to common notions of promiscuity. For instance, the discovery from the autopsy that Sapphire was three months pregnant leads Hazard to state that it was David's child, whereas Learoyd claims that one can not be sure now (they know that she's Black) it could be anyone's.

The police investigation defines Sapphire in terms of her sexuality - threatening because she was young, independent and Black. The suppression of the women's discourse appears extreme in this white male narrative. The film's concern with racism is centred around the controversial issue of female sexuality. Sapphire Robbins is an abstraction embodying the 'problems' of racial identity (Tarr, 1985). The film is racist in terms of stereotypical Black characters and a mise - en - scene which equates colour with 'tamtoms, slums, rackets, zoot suits, taffeta petticoats'. Thus 'Sapphire' fails to confront racism.

Hate killed Sapphire. I think she died because she was coloured. (Sapphire, 1959)

So observes Hazard in his notion of racial jealousy and anger. This is supported when David apologises to his father (Bernard Miles) for thinking he had killed Sapphire. His dad replies:

We all had hate in our hearts. (Sapphire, 1959)

Nevertheless David proclaims his love for Sapphire. Later Dr. Robbins equates racism with illness and tells Hazard:

But there I see all kinds of sickness in my practice Superintendent. I've never yet seen the kind you can cure in a day. (Sapphire, 1959)

It would have been interesting if the film had tried to suggest a 'remedy'. The last words are left with the 'tolerant' and 'openminded' Hazard who tells Learoyd:

We didn't solve anything Phil. We just picked up the pieces. (Sapphire, 1959)

'Shaft'

As I have previously pointed out, it is necessary to examine images of Black male sexuality in film within the historically specific ideological context. This assertion is clearly demonstrated in the so - called 'blaxploitation' era of cinematography between the late 1960's and early 1970's. The construction of the Black macho in these films is best understood by considering the racial unrest which characterised the period. The 'blaxploitation' phase in the United States represented the first time since the beginning of the film industry that the social conditions of Black people

were systematically addressed. I want to argue that it is essential to discuss this interest in the Black cause in relation to the growing body of evidence of urban rebellion, especially amongst Black youth.

Moreover the Black Power Movement was potentially a threatening force to the dominant white, male and bourgeois social order. In addition the emergence of seemingly Black orientated films enabled Black people to see a romanticised version of their lives. Thus the Black hero on the screen was a rebel who appeared to offer his people hope. What follows is an assessment of the limitations of such films. For this purpose I will discuss the exemplary 'blaxploitation' film 'Shaft'. It is based upon a novel by Ernest Tidyman, produced by Joel Freeman in 1971 and directed by the Black director Gordon Parks in America. Richard Roundtree stars as the tough Black private eye. He was the first hard Black hero in the movies within a pimp - hustler context which spawned a host of other 'blaxploitation' 'pix'. Whilst I do not seek to advocate the notion that there is a simple relationship between the portrayal of Black sexuality and the reinforcement of societal views surrounding this issue, I want to stress that the influence of film has nevertheless been of some importance. Thus sometimes for the Black man, the screening of his 'hyper - sexuality' is a means of offering him power within the sexual realm, in recompense for his lack of economic, social and political power in both the United States and Britain. Hence the Black hero figure is in actuality a super - stud. As an uncompro-

mising sexual being, he is indestructible, flippant, triumphant and essentially sensual. Moreover he is a romantic brute and a self confessed 'super spade'. Subsequently, in the film 'Shaft', the protagonist proudly styles himself as Sam Spade.

The audience is first introduced to private eye John Shaft in Isaac Hayes' definitive flare groove title music:

...who is the Black private dick, that's a sex machine with all the chicks? Shaft!
(Shaft, 1971)

Throughout the film, Shaft lives up to his libidinous reputation which is clearly defined within the framework of a Black Power rhetoric. When Shaft is not busy seducing women, he is engaged on a search for the kidnapped daughter Marcie of an infamous Black gangster, Bumpy Jones (Moses Gunn), a pimp as well as hustler who sells women, drugs and 'numbers'. Furthermore, he is involved in a struggle to break down prevalent white attitudes about his job as a private investigator, (a career role perceived by both black and white society as being a white man's job), by being a 'soul brother.' Hence his 'cool dude', 'leather cat' persona is demonstrated by his preoccupation with sex. For instance, during an investigation when a white police man asks Shaft where he is going, he replies:

To get laid, where the hell are you going?
(Shaft, 1971)

In keeping with the macho image, Shaft not only has several women but he also maltreats them. Therefore one of his sexual conquests, a white women called Linda, complains

after Shaft sleeps with her and then abruptly tells her that she has to leave. Linda remarks that he is good in bed but rather horrible afterwards. Concurrently Shaft's fair-skinned and supportive Black girl - friend Ellie, an underdeveloped character in the film, is largely depicted on her back. Indeed all of the Black women in the film are assigned the role of concubine. Subsequently they are presented as peripheral to the primary struggle for Black unity and the race war. This I believe supports Pearl Bowser's view that:

...The unformed or underdeveloped image of Black women in film persists, it seems, because we are still preoccupied with getting on with the revolution; and male bias does not rate as big as racism or colonialism at this time...
(Bowser quoted in Yearwood, 1982:51)

Thus the subordination of Black women in 'blaxploitation' films was, I think, symptomatic of the position of the Black female in the Black power movement. The portrayal of sexual, virile, tough, strong and dangerous Black men was, as Michele Wallace explains, pivotal to the movement. Moreover Black Power was in essence the pursuit of Black manhood (Wallace, 1979). Consequently within the process of seizing his manhood the Black woman was defined as the possession of her man (Wallace, 1979). Also a sexual relationship with a white woman was seen by Black men as a means of appropriating the property of a white man. Furthermore, Michele Wallace proclaims that:

To most of us Black power meant the woolly heads, big black fists and stern black faces, gargantuan omnipotent black male organs, big black rifles and foot-long combat boots, tight pants

over young muscular asses, dashikis, and broad brown chests; black men looting and rioting in the streets, taking over the country by brute force, arrogant lawlessness and an unquestionable sexual authority granted them as the victims of four hundred years of racism and abuse. The media emphasized this definition... (Wallace, 1979: 36)

Hence, in 'Shaft' a group of brave and 'hot - blooded' Black Power militants mobilise against white authority. A violent display of merciless massacres confirms stereotypical notions about Black men. After an extensive portrayal of courageous Black men against white bloodshed the Black revolutionaries help Shaft to overthrow the Mafia, who have kidnapped Bumpy's daughter, and so they rescue Marcie.

Furthermore, this image of the strong macho figure could be construed as being as much a white male fantasy / nightmare about the Black male as it was for the Black man himself. In view of the wider demands for Black Power that were made by Black men, I want to suggest that 'blaxploitation' films were a poor substitute. Thus the manhood that America conceded to Blacks was mainly on the screen. Whereas Black women in such films, I believe, serve primarily to reaffirm a 'positive' sense of Black masculinity. Therefore I want to go on to caution the reformulation of the Black man at the expense of the Black woman. As Gary Null notes in his critique of the depiction of Black women as whores in a Black man's world:

The role of black women in films, always previously confined to servant roles, with only white-looking women being allowed to be sexually alluring (and sinful), did not reflect their status in the Black community, in which women have always

been far more important and stronger than their white sisters. It is curious, then, that in most of the new Black films, women were treated as mere sex objects, part of the superficial fantasy lives of the haries... (Null, 1975: 216)

Thus we can see that 'blaxploitation' films were mainly the violent and erotic fantasies of Black and white men. Consequently, Thomas Cripps explains that such films appealed to urban youth by fulfilling their fantasies of revenge. Cripps maintains that almost two hundred 'blaxploitation' movies exploited the hopes and dreams of Black viewers; for they concentrated on teasing them rather than satisfying their needs. Furthermore, Thomas Cripps argues that the Black audience is given a titillating glimpse of Black sexuality, lust and power as a palliative for its historical impotence. The representation of the Black hero as a sexual outlaw is, according to Cripps, counter - revolutionary. Thus he argues that it is:

...a masturbatory flight rather than a germination. (Cripps, 1978: 130)

This view is given substance by Jim Pines' discussion of the sexual racism that he believes to be inherent in the popularity of the super - stud image. Moreover, Pines suggests that the cinematic depiction of Black women as vulgar and despicable contributes to this notion. Additionally Pines explains that the common theme of Black men raping white women was used to support dominant white fears about Black manhood. As such the messages of 'blaxploitation' films were predominantly conservative and racist. Pines concludes:

...One possible explanation for this derives from the social image of the black protest movement vis-a-vis the emergence of Black Americans as a force to be reckoned with i.e. symbolised by whites (subconsciously perhaps) as the stalking phallus. Black (social) progression, in other words, in white American cultural terms, is symbolised by erected Black male sexuality, 'threatening' as it does some of the deepest of 'obsessions' underlying that culture's race schisms. (Pines, 1975: 80)

I want to argue that 'blaxploitation' films reinforced the subordination of Black people. The Black man on the screen was a sexual animal and as such confirmed notions about Black sexuality that were prevalent in America and Britain. The icon of Black sexuality in opposition to white sexuality was evident in the role of Black women as prostitutes and of white women as sexually innocent. Moreover assertions of Black male power necessarily entailed the relegation of Black women. As such the image of the Black whore was a way of legitimising the actual sexual victimisation of Black women. This leads me to suppose that 'blaxploitation' films were at best reformist for they portrayed the Black hero as achieving minor goals, that were largely sexual. These achievements were within the confines of an unequal social system and they did not seriously challenge racism, sexism, heterosexism and class exploitation.

Despite the fact that the 'blaxploitation' era did not survive the 1970's I want to suggest that the same stereotypes persist today although often reconstituted in more subtle forms. Subsequently I believe that it is incumbent to examine the influence of these films as well as the extent to which this tendency has survived into the 1980's and

1990's. Hence what follows is an investigation of Spike Lee's controversial film 'She's Gotta Have it'. This assessment will consider the extent to which Black film makers may be either challenging or reproducing racist, sexist and homophobic assumptions.

'She's Gotta Have It'

Just as the 'blaxploitation' era was influenced by the socio - economic and political conditions of the late 1960's and early 1970's, I want to suggest that the work of Black film makers should also be analysed in terms of the particular historical context within which the films are situated. Thus 'She's Gotta Have It', directed, written and edited by Spike Lee in 1986 in U. S. A., must be viewed in terms of the history of representations of Black people. One of the first striking things about this film, produced by Shelton I. Lee, is that all of the characters are Black. It is relevant to query what difference this makes. It does not seem to be a problematic film in terms of 'race relations' discourse. It is a 'knowing' film, a sophisticated comedy. The characters speak to us, to the screen directly. Nola Darling (Tracy Camilla Johns) and others offer a view of Nola Darling.

As has already been suggested, Black exploitation films used themes of Black consciousness and revolt and set them against the emergence of the Black Power struggle. The romantic portrayal of mad vengeance in such films, ridiculed

Black resistance and consequently presented it as illicit. Thereby 'blaxploitation' films functioned as palliatives to Black and liberal audiences but in reality, merely reaffirmed the socio - economic and political structures of American society (Cripps, 1978). Jim Pines provides a similar critique of contemporary cinema. Hence I want to examine his claim that:

...what is absolutely wrong with this is that it represents the dominant racial image - theme today, whose dominance...exists because racialised mass media and its white and black agents are completely incapable of, or have no desire to, undermine cultural and psychological colonialism. Thus what we are left with is not so much as a vulgar picture of how whites work off their sexual fears and fantasies in plastic media terms, or, equally, how blacks in turn exploit these fears and take part in those fantasies for dubious economic reasons, but really with a penetrating complex of racial image-notions which are far more constricting and destructive than the very values they are supposed to be above... (Pines, 1975)

Significantly Black film makers such as Spike Lee have rejected the stereotypical depiction of Black people in mainstream cinema. For them Black films serve as a vehicle for challenging racism. Accordingly, Gladstone L. Yearwood argues that contemporary Black films incorporate a political commitment to the liberation struggles of Blacks and of other oppressed peoples. Yearwood further explains that the constraints of tight budgets, limited shooting schedules and community distribution efforts are major concerns for independent Black film makers. However, he maintains that Black film makers are not intent on ghettoising Black films, but rather, they attempt to address larger audiences as well as

to transform social expectations of cinema (Yearwood, 1982).

This is also supported by John Akomfrah's comments on:

...the moral imperative which usually characterises Black films, which empowers them to speak with a sense of urgency.

(Akomfrah quoted in Julien & Mercer 1988: 4)

Thus it is argued that Black film makers on both sides of the Atlantic confront the racist bias of mainstream cinema. Writing on the British situation, Judith Williamson describes the pivotal tensions for the Black film maker that surrounds the portrayal of Black experiences. She believes that this is primarily due to power conflicts, arguing that:

...the more power any group has to create and wield representations, the less it is required to be representative.

(Williamson quoted in Julien & Mercer 1988: 4)

Issac Julien and Kobena Mercer have argued that the marginalisation of Black film makers in Britain has led to tokenism. They examine how the demand that Black film be 'representative' is implicit in the rationing and rationalisation of access, opportunities and public funding (Julien & Mercer, 1988). Horace Ove explains that:

...here in England there is a danger, if you are black, that all you are allowed to make is films about black people and their problems. White film makers, on the other hand, have a right to make films about whatever they like.

(Ove quoted in Julien & Mercer, 1988: 7)

Subsequently, the Black film maker is burdened with an unreasonable demand that he or she articulates the opinions of Black communities as a whole. Hence Issac Julien and Kobena

Mercer maintain that the notion that a Black film could speak for all Black people legitimates more general forms of exclusionary practice (Julien & Mercer, 1988). The perceived inferiority that tokenism indicates to a 'minority' group is implied by the ensuing declaration by a Black lesbian actress:

What I was trying to say when I asked you if I would be the only black lesbian in this film is; do you know we come in all shapes and colours and directions to our lives? Are you capturing that on the film? As a Black lesbian feminist involved in the movement, so often people try to put me in the position of speaking for all black lesbians. I happen to be a black lesbian among many, and I wouldn't want to be seen as THIS IS HOW ALL LESBIANS ARE. (quoted in Julien & Mercer, 1988: 5)

Issac Julien and Kobena Mercer contend that the cinematic stereotype that 'all black people are the same' is essentially a political problem. Thus the denial of individual subjectivity also ignores the diversity and differentiation of the historical and cultural experiences of Black people in Britain. Furthermore they argue, due to the constraints of making Black films, there has been an inclination to extol the fact that they ever got made at all. Additionally, they stress that this factor has served to inhibit constructive criticism (Julien & Mercer, 1988). This argument is also supported by Judith Williamson's assertion that for Black films, the moralism of being ideologically correct prevents constructive analytical debate (Williamson quoted in Julien & Mercer, 1988). Following this theme, Stuart Hall goes so far as to suggest that the tendency to view all Black films as 'right on' is reactionary. Hall argues:

Films are not necessarily good because black people make them. They are not necessarily right on by virtue of the fact that they deal with the black experience. Once you enter the politics of the end of the essential black subject you are plunged headlong into the maelstrom of a continuously contingent, unguaranteed, political argument and debate; a critical politics, a politics of criticism. You can no longer conduct black politics through the strategy of a simple set of reversals, putting in place of the bad old essential white subject, the new essentially good subject. (Hall quoted in Julien & Mercer, 1988: 5)

In the light of Stuart Hall's warnings, I now want to turn to 'She's Gotta Have it'. I think that Black film makers such as Spike Lee are important in their efforts to give Black people a medium that has generally been denied. Thus the Black film maker tries to compensate for stereotypical images of Blacks that are present in mainstream cinema. The onus lies heavily on Black film makers to depict a more 'realistic' picture of Black life. Humour and a sense of struggle against oppression are used recurrently to convey the survival of Black people in Britain and in America. Optimism is frequently offered after an assessment of injustices against Blacks. It is no wonder then that this genre of Black film makers have challenged the misrepresentation of Black people as pathological, inhumane, subservient, disempowered and bestial outsiders. Conversely though, many have reproduced and reinforced negative images about Black women; in particular female subordination and heterosexism are regularly legitimated as I shall explain later.

I would therefore like to suggest that one way in which Black film makers such as Spike Lee, and to a lesser ex-

tent, Eddie Murphy have tried to represent Black interests in the sexual arena. The hero is usually epitomised as one with great sexual prowess. His revolutionary ardour is complemented by his ability to attract and procure women. Thus frequently in his films like 'Trading Places' [1983], '48 hours' [1982] 'Beverly Hills Cop 1 and 2' [1984 and 1987], Eddie Murphy's persona is that of the street wise loud mouth who is the quintessence of machismo. However I want to argue that in creating a Black hero who is essentially a sexual stud Murphy legitimates stereotypes of Black lasciviousness. Hence the view that Black film makers radically defy prevalent stereotypes of Black people as animalistic and ignorant is, I would argue, extremely contentious. Moreover the assertion is that the centre of Black male power, for example, in the ghetto as well as in the bedroom, is dependent upon the subordination of Black women. Thus, we see how both Eddie Murphy as actor, and Spike Lee, as film maker, both fall into the trap of depicting the Black male as a sexual stud who dominates Black women. Frequently the threat of, or actual violence is used as a weapon to oppress Black women. I will discuss this point in greater depth in relation to 'She's Gotta Have It'. It is worth while noting here that the image of the 'heroine', Nola Darling, as prostitute is effectively utilised to justify her subjection to male violence. The underlying message of Spike Lee's film is that male violence is insufficient grounds for a moral dilemma since Black women are merely whores. The main issue here is that of Black Libera-

tion. For Spike Lee, this necessarily incorporates the freedom of the Black male - both socially and sexually - in opposition to that of the Black woman.

Yet it would appear that this freedom is but a mere illusion, especially so in 'She's Gotta Have It'. Therefore self-gratification for oppressing Black women, whether it is on the big screen or in real life, prevents the Black man from using his energies against his real oppressor. Rather than challenging the white patriarchal system, I want to suggest that frequently the Black man, through his exploitation of Black women, is in fact potentially exploiting a great proportion of Blacks, and thereby helping to shore up the current system. This suggests that Black male film makers may actually inhibit Black progress in the same way that white film makers do; both offer Black people few sources of real empowerment. Thus I agree with Thomas Cripps charge that, the Black film genre is conservative. Cripps argues that:

...but because black film makers insist that black heroes win against the system, it can be argued that the Black hero symbolises a wish for things as they are - a permissive society whose libertarian political values allow him a temporary defeat of its elitist racist social system. (Cripps, 1978, my emphasis)

I am aware, however, that many would contest these views. It could also be argued that Black film makers such as Spike Lee have enabled Black people to identify with many social issues which are pertinent to them. Likewise such portrayals of the Black experience show real dilemmas in sexual poli-

tics. What I will now go on to discuss is the degree to which this has been done uncritically in 'She's Gotta Have It'. I want to take as my starting point an analysis of the justification of the icon of the Black prostitute. I will then go on to examine the glorification of the Black macho image.

In 'She's Gotta Have It', Nola Darling - the central character - is portrayed as a sexually assertive and liberated woman, who lives in a loft in Brooklyn. She has three lovers and has 'Gotta Have It', that is, be fucked. The lovers dislike each other's relationship with Nola but display male bonding when necessary. Meanwhile a woman - Opal Gilstrap (Raye Dowell) - is also interested in Nola sexually and tells her how good she can make her feel. Nola sends Opal away. Nola is raped by Jamie Overstreet (Tommy Redmond Hicks), one of her three lovers, and then she gets some female solidarity with a former female room - mate Clorinda Bradford (Jolie Lee). She rejects her other lovers, Mars Blackmon (Spike Lee) and Greer Childs (John Canada Terrell) and is temporarily reunited with Jamie.

I want to argue that this image of female emancipation is synonymous to a stereotypically racist and sexist view of Black female sexuality. Throughout the film definitions of Nola as a 'freak', 'nympho' and 'bogus', support dominant notions about the promiscuity of Black women (She's Gotta Have It, 1986). Nola revels in her sexuality, a fact demonstrated by her having three different lovers. Each of her lovers - and the audience - regards Nola as being somehow

peculiar, thereby reinforcing historical myths about the pathology of Black people. Nola's right to decide how to conduct her sexuality is denied. Instead her lovers - Jamie Overstreet, Greer Childs and Mars Blackmon - define Nola's sexual identity as well as the choices that are available to her. Furthermore, the audience, placed in the role of a male and heterosexual spectator, is also encouraged to determine the limits to Nola's sexuality. The seemingly warm and sensitive Jamie, the vain Greer and the witty Mars each try to persuade Nola - and the viewer - that she should drop the other lovers in favour of themselves. The personas of each of Nola's lovers is offered to the audience in such a way that convinces the audience that Nola should only choose one of them. Since the sexual desires and wider interests of Jamie, Greer and Mars are depicted, and not those of Nola, 'She's Gotta Have It' is reduced to nothing more than a male narrative, despite the fact that the drama centres around Nola.

I want to argue that since control over Nola's sexuality is given directly to Jamie, Greer and Mars - and indirectly to the audience - that the portrayal of Nola as a woman of liberated sexuality is merely superficial; her sexual assertiveness is clearly questionable. Nola is depicted as a woman who uses her ability to serve male sexual needs as a means of gaining male approval. This clearly demonstrates the superficiality of Nola's supposed assertiveness - she is not in reality the confident person that the audience is

seduced into believing her to be; rather, she is dissatisfied, lonely and frustrated. bell hooks examines Nola's objectification of her sexuality as a gesture to benefit men. hooks cogently argues that:

Superficially, Nola Darling is the perfect embodiment of woman as desiring subject - a representation which does challenge sexist notions of female passivity...Ironically and unfortunately, Nola Darling's sexual desire is not depicted as an autonomous gesture, as an independent longing for sexual expression, satisfaction, and fulfilment. Instead her assertive sexuality is most often portrayed as through her body, her sexually aroused being is a reward or gift she bestows on the deserving male... (hooks, 1989: 136)

Paradoxically Nola Darling proclaims that she is proud of being sexually liberated, yet she is afraid that this makes her in some way abnormal. She consequently seeks psychiatric help, after Greer calls her 'sexually sick', thereby confirming her persona as a pathological 'sex addict' (She's Gotta Have It, 1986). For instance Mars suggests to Jamie that he can sleep with Nola for four days of each week, whilst he himself (Mars) will sleep with Nola for three days over the weekend. Neither men consider Nola's wishes, expecting that she will naturally fall into line with their plans.

Nola's fear of being 'freaky deaky' is further illustrated by her vivid dream that she is set on fire by the other woman friends of her lovers. In her nightmare, these woman friends castigate Nola for being a 'home wrecking bitch' (She's Gotta Have It, 1986). For them Nola's ability to have three lovers is made worse by the fact that there were few

suitable Black men available, most being either in prison or homosexuals. They can not control their male partners, and harangue Nola for what they see as her 'fuck'em and leave 'em' attitude. At no time does Spike Lee challenge the sexist double standards which allow Nola's lovers to have other partners, whilst berating Nola for refusing to choose and settle down in a stable, monogamous relationship with one of them.

There is a sense of blatant sexual hypocrisy when Jamie, ostensibly the most stable and suitable of the three contenders for Nola's exclusive sexual services, forces Nola to renounce her other lovers whilst he is maintaining a relationship with another woman. That each of Nola's lovers all go out with other women is somehow a justifiable aspect of their lives - indeed, their promiscuity enhances their manhood. Despite Nola's honesty and desire to be non-exploitative in her multiple relationships, her perceived promiscuity remains the key on which the film rests. Nola's sexual freedom causes her to be labelled as emotionally insecure, lacking in self-discipline, and in Mars' words 'as unreliable as a ripped diaphragm' (She's Gotta Have It, 1986). Male bigotry permeates 'She's Gotta Have It'.

Not only does the film contain negative depictions of heterosexuality, but its treatment of lesbianism is also sexist and homophobic. This is evidenced, after several cheap pornographic shots, in the portrayal of Nola's lesbian friend Opal Gilstrap. Opal is described in stereotypical terms; she is manhating, threatening and predatory. She

'pursues' Nola who likes her merely as a friend. Opal appears to compete with Jamie over Nola. Her degradation is used to support heterosexist ideas surrounding lesbian sexuality. The isolated Black lesbian is discarded by Nola Darling who would rather be with a rapist. In a powerful critique of 'She's Gotta Have It', Felly Nkweto Simmonds states:

...what ensues is a male fantasy of what a lesbian relationship is like. Opal is portrayed in the same way as Nola's male lovers, in active pursuit of Nola's body, like a lioness about to pounce on her prey. The very words she uses to introduce herself confirm this image: 'from an early age, I knew what my preference was, and I pursued it'. Opal is also portrayed as more sexually threatening to Nola. Nola is more uncomfortable with her and feels that this is a situation that she might not be able to control... (Simmonds, 1988: 17)

Furthermore the ultimate male fantasy in Spike Lee's film is, I want to argue, the rape scene. This scene is particularly alarming because it downplays the actual brutality of violence against women. There is a general feeling that Nola Darling deserved it. Most of the people that I have spoken about it to, in fact, did not even notice that a rape had occurred. So how can such a violent sexual act perpetrated against a woman be so imperceptible to a cinema audience? How can one explain the attitude of those viewers who did notice the rape but argued that it was not in fact rape which had occurred? The answer is tightly bound up with the depiction of Nola's sexuality - since she is already defined as promiscuous and since the perpetrator is her lover - this cannot be construed as rape. Indeed, Jamie's frustration at

Nola's refusal to forsake other men serves to justify his actions. Even Nola is unable to condemn Jamie, believing that what she experienced was a 'near rape'. Clearly, Jamie's rape of Nola reinforces female subjugation as a legitimate tool for maintaining male domination. Felly Simmonds, who has been criticised for being hostile to the film and so her views have been contested, goes on to argue that the rape scene:

...justifies rape as a legitimate tool that a man can use to punish a woman. Nola Darling is punished for trying to define her own sexuality. She is punished not only because one man, Jamie, rapes her, but because the structure of the scene allows him to punish her for the other men, as he subjects her not only to physical but also to psychological rape...
(Simmonds, 1988: 18)

Jamie is undoubtedly teaching Nola Darling the lesson that he - and by extension, all men - ultimately control her sexuality. Nola, worn down by the constant attacks on her character and her sexuality actually accepts Jamie's opinion. This is powerfully depicted during the rape scene where, whilst in the very act of rape, Jamie demands of Nola 'whose pussy is this?' Nola replies 'it's yours!' (She's Gotta Have It, 1986). Eventually Nola decides to end her relationships with Greer and Mars, having concluded that it is Jamie that she loves. The superficial facade of her independence is exposed, stripped bare for all to see - clearly the message is that women cannot be independent beings, but need a man to support and nurture them. Spike Lee, perhaps unwittingly, has done little more than to

reinforce and perpetuate dominant notions about sexual relations. As bell hooks comments:

After the rape, Nola ceases to be sexually active, chooses to be in a monogamous relationship with Jamie, the partner who has coerced her. Ideologically, such a scenario impresses on the consciousness of black males, and all males, the sexist assumption that rape is an effective means of patriarchal sexual control, that it restores and maintains male power over women. It simultaneously suggests to black females, and all females, that being sexually assertive will lead to rejection and punishment... (hooks, 1989: 139)

However, it has been suggested that it can not be assumed that Jamie represented Spike Lee's 'voice'. Mars Blackmon, due to Spike Lee performing his part, because of his name and persona, may have expressed Lee's actual character and opinions. Significantly Mars is the one who does not try to control Nola and in the end she does not give in to stay with Jamie. Nola Darling, after deciding that she only wanted Jamie, was celibate for a while but it did not last long. She believes that she should not have resumed her relationship with Jamie because he wanted an old fashioned wife. Nola says that she is not a one man woman and she has to control her own body. Her rejection of the role of traditional female is not necessarily increased by the amount of lovers that Nola has.

Undoubtedly, Spike Lee's aim was to challenge what he perceived to be the subordination of Black men by Black women writers such as Alice Walker. I want, therefore, to briefly discuss the relevance to this debate of the portrayal of Black men and lesbianism in Alice Walker's book "The Color

Purple". It was transformed into a film directed by Stephen Spielberg in U. S. A. in 1986. First I want to suggest that in addition to analysing the work of Black film makers in relation to the exploitation of Black experiences by the mainstream cinema, it is also necessary to consider the influence of Black feminist politics. The development of Black feminisms during the 1980's and 1990's has challenged sexism within Black radical organisations as well as within society generally. Moreover, the proliferation of Black feminist consciousness in America and in Britain has refuted stereotypical ideas about Black womanhood that were prevalent amongst white society and amongst Black men. Black feminism has increased awareness of racism, male dominated heterosexual relations as well as homophobia within Black communities and dominant culture.

However, many Black men have argued that the emergence of Black feminist literature and films actually served to support racist notions about the Black male (Diawara, 1988). This has, according to Mantia Diawara, led to the resurrection of the image of the 'castrated' Black male in contemporary Hollywood film. Diawara criticises the film 'The Color Purple' for disparaging Black manhood, arguing that the portrayal of the character Mister as evil, lustful and inhuman suggests that all Black men are sexist and bestial. Moreover, the treatment of two shaving scenes in which Celie, the protagonist, contemplates cutting Mister's throat, is tacit collusion with the belief that the cruel

and barbaric Black man deserves to be killed. Consequently, Mantia Diawara argues that when Celie hits Mister - who has been subjecting her to physical and mental abuse for many years - in his genitals, her action is intended to support Black male castration. Furthermore, Diawara contends that Walker's implicit message is that the castration of Black men is justifiable. Thus, Diawara accuses Walker of colluding with white male society because it absolves white men from sexism. More importantly, Mantia Diawara implies that this encourages the audience to demand that errant Black men should be severely chastised (Diawara, 1988).

Thus the white supremacist myth of the Black rapist is maintained by the brutal images of dominating, brutish and animalistic Black men. The film is a white male interpretation wherein Black masculinity is depicted as threatening and dangerous. These images are political because they maintain the racist social control of Black men (hooks, 1989). Racist caricatures and depictions of Blacks as savage and exotic primitives mark the many differences between the novel and the film, which as Barbara Christian believes:

Speilberg 'de-radicalized' Walker's vision, which showed how a group of people, specifically Celie and the other characters in the novel, could transcend the abusive conditions of class exploitation, sexism and racism - with their perverse manifestations of incest, wife-beating and rape - to forge a sense of Black nationhood that is dependent on a healthy Black family. Christian felt that Speilberg sentimentalized the novel, made it less harsh, and made 'the purple pink. Sentimentality replaces the passion for living.' (quoted in Bobo, 1988:46)

Maud Sulter confirms that the film 'The Color Purple' objec-

tifies Black culture and renders lesbianism invisible and de
- sexualised:

Controversial in its unsympathetic treatment of Black men, the reduction of Africa and her Africans to mere exotics, and the marginalisation of the sexual relationship between central character Celie and her lover Shug. Although sensitively treated as far as it goes, it simply was not an adequately rounded representation of the women's intimacy. (Sulter:31)

In the same way Spike Lee has attacked Alice Walker, and others of that ilk, for gaining profits from the oppression of Black men, arguing that:

...within recent years, the quickest way for a Black playwright, novelist or poet to get published has been to say that Black men are shit. If you say that, then you are definitely going to get the media, your book published, your play done... that's why they put Alice Walker out there. That's why she won the Pulitzer Prize. That's why Hollywood leaped the pond to seize this book and had it made.

I want to discuss the extent that Spike Lee's criticisms may be valid. Lee accuses Walker of portraying Black men as 'one dimensional animals'. However, I believe this charge to be more applicable to his depiction of Black women. As bell hooks empathically argues, Nola Darling is:

... 'pure pussy', that is to say that her ability to perform sexually is the central, defining aspect of her identity. (hooks, 1989: 137)

Unlike in 'She's Gotta Have It', the complexity of Black sexual politics is explored in the book "The Color Purple". Indeed, it is my opinion that the film version does not do justice to Walker's realistic assessment of racism

and heterosexual relationships. Nor does Spielberg adequately show Walker's beautiful treatment and promise of lesbian love as a possible source of female self - empowerment. In spite of this the screen depiction of autonomous female sexuality, woman identification and female solidarity, the film 'The Color Purple' stands in marked contrasts to Lee's images of 'sexually assertive' women and of lesbians as deviants.

Unfortunately Alice Walker's treatment of the problems caused by abusive Black men has exposed her to censure. Notwithstanding, I want to suggest that an investigation of Black male violence does not necessarily entail the support of racist stereotypes about Black men. I believe that Walker chose to depict Mister's abuse of his wife Celie in order to open the way to constructive debate about male sexuality, and was not intended to identify male violence against women as a trait peculiar to Black men. Indeed, it is clear that Walker wanted this to highlight a universal problem; at no time does she intimate that Black men are inherently more prone to violent behaviour than white men. However, as a Black feminist, or womanist, she is committed to analysing the specificity of Black sexual politics, in order to discover the potential for sexual relationships that are a possible source of enrichment for both Black men and women. Yet Spike Lee does not appear to share Walker's vision of liberatory sexualities for heterosexuals, bi - sexuals, homosexuals and lesbians. Accordingly, I think that it is appropriate to direct the following observation of Alice

Walker to Spike Lee:

...at the root of the denial of easily observable and heavily documented sexist brutality in the Black community, the assertion that Black men don't act like Mister, or if they do, they're justified by the pressure they're under as Black men in a white society - is our deep, painful refusal to accept the fact that we are not only descendants of slaves but we are also the descendants of slave owners. And that just as we have had to struggle to rid ourselves of slavish behaviours we must as ruthlessly eradicate any desire to be mistress or 'master'.

(Walker quoted in Collins, 1990: 186)

Black film makers such as Spike Lee have contested images of Blacks as the embodiment of evil, inferiority and otherness, yet dominant notions about Black sexuality still abound. Thus I hope that I have demonstrated that subsequently, the sexual objectification of Black women has served to gratify both Black and white male spectators. In what may seem to be a contradiction to what I have said so far, I must admit that overall, I enjoyed 'She's Gotta Have It'. Were it not for the rape scene, I would applaud Spike Lee's humour. This poses problems about experiencing pleasure in a film which is at heart 'politically incorrect'. Whether the fact that I liked this picture, despite its sexism and homophobia, is due to my own sadomasochistic tendencies is beyond the scope of the present inquiry. Nevertheless I acknowledge that Black male directors like Spike Lee, in all Black cast films such as 'She's Gotta Have It', have exploited Black women's sexuality for their own benefit (Manuel, Fani - Koyode & Gupta, 1989). As bell hooks asserts:

The contemporary film that has most attempted to address the issue of black female sexual agency is Spike Lee's *She's Gotta Have It*. Sad to say, the black woman does not get 'it'. By the end of the film, she is still unable to answer the critical question posed by one of her lovers as he rapes her, 'whose pussy is this?' Reworded the question might be: How and when will black females assert sexual agency in ways that liberate us from the confines of colonized desire, of racist / sexist imagery and practice? Had Nola Darling been able to claim her sexuality and name its power, the film would have had a very different impact. (hooks, 1992:75)

'Mona Lisa'

The script of 'Mona Lisa' is about innocence and experience, fantasy and reality, male and female, Black and white. It was written by David Leland and Neil Jordan. 'Mona Lisa' was directed by Neil Jordan in 1986. This British film was produced by Chris Brown, Patrick Cassavetti and Steve Woolley. The main characters are the Black high class call girl, Simone (Cathy Tyson), in glamorous sexy gear, and George (Bob Hoskins) who plays as her dense 'minder' - the cheap chauffeur and escort. The character of Simone is a white, heterosexual, male, erotic fantasy of a tragic mulatto, lesbian prostitute, who George describes to his best mate Thomas (Robbie Coltrane) as a 'tall thin Black tart' (Mona Lisa, 1986).

George is fresh out of jail after seven years which he claims he did for Mortwell (Michael Caine). He visits his wife and daughter (Zoe Nathenson). George's wife tells him off and throws him out. He finds that his patch has been 'swamped' by Blacks. Referring to the Black people in his wife's street he asks Thomas 'Where'd they all come from?'

(Mona Lisa, 1986). This racist comment negates our awareness that Black people have been in Britain long before his release from prison. He is full of fear and incomprehension as he finds an unfamiliar scene of vice, violence and corruption propagated by the grubby and objectionable gangster Mortwell.

The mystery of Simone's sexuality is observed, manipulated, dominated and eventually annihilated. Mortwell asks George to find out what sexual antics Simone gets up to with her Arab client. George asks Simone what she does with the Arab, she replies that they drink tea together and she supplies a photograph. Once George commented to Simone on the Arab taking a long time with her. He added: 'you never know with these darkies do you?' (Mona Lisa, 1986). This statement obviously reinforces racist ideas about the greater sexual capacity of Blacks.

George slips into the same desirous and emotionally attached trap as Simone's clients. About this she comments that they are; 'falling for what they think I am' (Mona Lisa, 1986). Simone persuades George to search for her lost friend Cathy (Kate Hardie), who is a teenager, junky and prostitute with a vicious pimp. George later realises his naive misconceptions. Cathy is childish, dependent and needs Simone's constant care.

George finds and then kidnaps Cathy. George later runs away with her and Simone to Brighton where he discovers that Cathy and Simone are lovers. George is upset by what he sees

as Simone betraying his feelings. Mortwell, who is in charge of the vice network for which both Cathy and Simone work, is angered by their escape. He follows them with Anderson (Clarke Peters), Simone's former and Cathy's present cruel and crazed Black pimp. Anderson is described by Simone as 'a piece of meat'. Simone shoots Mortwell and Anderson. George grabs Simone's hand with the gun pointing at him as she is about to shoot. The last scene depicts George reconciled with his estranged teenage daughter and his strange friend Thomas working as a car mechanic and strolling together as one happy 'family' (Young, 1990).

In the film the audience is projecting aspects of itself onto George and situations in the film. As Claire Pajaczkowska and Lola Young observe:

The film *Mona Lisa* is a vehicle for the split off aspects of a White and middle class identity. (Pajaczkowska & Young, 1992: 204)

George's feelings of inadequacy and guilt are projected onto Black people who are defined as Other and impinging on 'his' space. George is portrayed as the ineffectual and gullible working class criminal, devoid of guilt; whereas violence is displaced onto Black people, as well as dirtiness, crime, chaos, disease, immorality and illicit sex. Difference: perversion, sexual deviance, punishment, threat, disorder, fear, anxiety, disgust and pathology are connoted by Blackness. Therefore Claire Pajaczkowska & Lola Young maintain that:

...Simone's colour becomes a metaphor for all that is 'bad' within George, and because she represents

a split-off part of him she is also represented as being hopelessly involved in a symbiotic relationship, a caricature of lesbianism. (Pajaczkowska & Young, 1992: 206)

bell hooks asserts:

...In *Mona Lisa*, one scene serves as powerful commentary on the way black sexuality is perceived in a racist and imperialist social context. The white male who desires the black prostitute *Mona Lisa* is depicted as a victim of romantic love who wishes to rescue her from a life of ruin. Yet he is also the conqueror, the colonizer, and this is most evident in the scene where he watches a video wherein she engages in fellatio with the black male pimp who torments her. Both the black man and the black woman are presented as available for the white male's sexual consumption. In the context of post modern sexual practice, the masturbatory voyeuristic technology-based fulfillment of desire is more exciting than actually possessing any real Other. (hooks, 1992:74)

The historical definition of Black people as animalistic, especially as monkeys / gorillas, also persists in '*Mona Lisa*'. Simone describes her former pimp as 'an animal born in a butcher's shop'. Furthermore animalistic images, sexual deviancy, danger and the icon of a voracious, cannibalistic Black woman are evident when George and Thomas watch a video of Simone and Anderson having oral sex. Thomas says 'you used to tell a joke about a randy gorilla' (Young, 1990: 195).

Simone is pathologised as a Black, as a lesbian, as a prostitute and as a woman (Young, 1990). She represents the isolated Black female as a victim of Black sexual exploitation and violence. bell hooks states that movies like:

...*Mona Lisa* also portray the almost white, black woman as tragically sexual. The women in these films can only respond to constructions of their reality created by the more powerful. They are trapped. *Mona Lisa*'s struggle to be sexually

self-defining leads her to choose lesbianism, even though she is desired by the white male hero. Yet her choice of a female partner does not mean sexual fulfillment as the object of her lust is a drug - addicted young white woman who is always too messed up to be sexual. Mona Lisa nurses and protects her. Rather than asserting sexual agency, she is once again in the role of mammy. (hooks, 1992:74)

Simone's and Cathy's relationship is seen through a patriarchal and homophobic lens:

...Bob Hoskins, in the central male character's main speech, makes it quite clear that lesbians will not be tolerated, will not be allowed to live, that woman's role is to fuck with men and have babies - there is no alternative. (Sulter:33)

Lola Young remarks that lesbianism, in this film, is seen as a consequence of women suffering from the men who control their lives. This is an 'acceptable' reason for their difference, 'perversity' and 'deviance'. It is otherwise prohibited that Simone and Cathy would have decided to have a lesbian relationship because this disrupts the norm of white heterosexism (Young, 1990). Supporting this point the white male writer and director Neil Jordan states:

The idea was that this was the only relationship left open to them. I just wanted to make that statement rather than any statement about their sexuality. (Sulter:33)

Such a portrayal misrepresents and depoliticises Black lesbianism. It suggests to the audience that the most the Black lesbian will get is misery and / or death. At the end of the film George describes what happened and tells Thomas that Simone liked someone else:

She was trapped like a bird in a cage but he couldn't see it. Well he liked her too much...There she was in pain. (Mona Lisa, 1986)

The Way Forward

Whilst the inclusion of Black women film makers would help towards ameliorating the negative imagery of Black female sexuality, this is but one solution. It is also necessary to challenge the prevailing racist / sexist assumptions about Black women which the film industries in Britain and the United States continues to fill our screens with. Since dominant images which devalue Black women and Black female sexuality have far reaching socio - economic and political implications, I want to argue that it is essential that we begin to deconstruct them. The contributions of Black women film makers, such as Pratibha Parmar in Britain, are putting forward positive portrayals of African - Caribbean and Asian women's sexuality. I believe that it is imperative that Black feminist thought is made more readily available in the mass media. This is a view shared by Martina Attille and Maureen Blackwood who argue that:

As Black women, we must be the ones who define the areas of importance in our lives: we need to work towards the breakdown of the 'mainstream' conventions and popular assumptions perpetrated by existing forms of cinema and television.
(Attille & Blackwood quoted in Brunson, 1986:203)

Martina Attille and Maureen Blackwood further discuss the need to change the fact that Black women have always been prisoners in their own bodies:

By being black and female a whole set of hist-

orical values come into play, imposed on us from the outside...Mothers and children have ended up living out colonial histories on each other. (Attille & Blackwood quoted in Brunsdon, 1986)

Black women have been dehumanized since enslavement; they have been dehumanized in white psyches and often in their own. Black women are doubly objectified: under white supremacy as Blacks and under patriarchy as women. Black women artists transform this objectification in order to become the subject. As bell hooks states Black women need to:

...confront the old painful representations of our sexuality as a burden we must suffer, representations still haunting the present. We must make the oppositional space where our sexuality can be named and represented, where we are sexual subjects - no longer bound and trapped. (hooks, 1992: 77)

Maud Sulter remarks:

...it seems that if a constructive use of film is possible, i.e., the realistic representations of our experience within our multifarious communities, we must look to the promise of more trained Black lesbian film-makers leaving courses and passing on their skills to create a radical Black women's film genre. This process can also be facilitated by crewing on other people's films. However, if that participation means an unreconcilable loss of integrity, it cannot be condoned. Actresses and writers need to address themselves to the creation of roles; the need for feminist response and critique must be filled. (Sulter:35)

Black independent filmmaking in Britain, America, the Caribbean and Africa incorporates a deep awareness of self. It is rooted in individual and collective memory, vision and aspirations. This is embedded within the artistic, imaginative, cultural, social, political and economic context of experiences. It is an individual and societal challenge connected by a common history of struggle against similar or

the same oppressive and dominating forces. Black critical practice is conceptualized as dialogic, nomadic and transient (Cham & Andrade - Watkins, 1988). Hence June Givanni discusses Black and 'Third World' filmmakers' challenge to U. S. and European domination of the medium as a quest for the reassertion of their dignity and culture:

Their common historical experience of slavery and its after birth of oppression under democracy could be said to have shaped their response to the media values concerning Black people for many decades now. (Givanni, 1989: 54)

This significant point is supported by Lynne Jackson and Jean Rasenberger. Black filmmakers privilege the historical and political background of the Black 'under - class':

...Their main political statement is that their racial identities grow out of their social and political histories: they call for a recognition that these racial differences are multiple and complex but also insist that the experience of race cuts across cultures of origin and must not be allowed to fragment them. They interrogate their own images to confirm their histories. (Jackson & Rasenberger, 1989: 24)

James A. Snead queries whether whites can learn to perceive Blacks and themselves from a Black, and not a white, perspective that integrates the methods and messages of Black cinema. He maintains that Black practice is oppositionally positioned to Hollywood's production norms and racist uses of the medium (Snead, 1994). As Robert Cruz explains:

What is needed is a new theoretical practice developed with and through our audience, addressing issues specific to ourselves. This is done with an acute, immediate and constant awareness of the dominant traditions always in the foreground - traditions not easy to ignore, too dominant

to dismiss. But we have at least made a start at the revolutionary process by identifying the 'existence of (their) rules, the facts of their meanings and the reality they embody'. With this awareness we undo their 'rules', 'meanings and realities' by making / re-making films for ourselves. (Crusz, 1985: 156)

Kobena Mercer is concerned about the escalation of the struggle to de - colonise and de - territorialise film as a site of radical political intervention and re - construction. Mercer refers to 'carnival' or 'creole' aesthetics, an acutely critical voice, an awareness of combined histories and cultures:

...the creative contradictions of the clash of cultures by critically appropriating elements from the master-codes of the dominant culture and creoliz[ing] them, disarticulating given signs and re-articulating their symbolic meaning otherwise. (Mercer, 1988: 12)

For Kobena Mercer, critical dialogism expresses the personal and political. It shows the Other inside us, that Black identities are plural and non - unitary; and that divisions like gender, sexual, race and class are to be transformed. Mercer states that 'the liberation of the imagination is a precondition of revolution' (Mercer, 1988). Resistance to racial and sexual marginalisation and exclusion is vital. The development of independent Black film discourses which specifically relate to and articulate the diverse experiences of Black societies, histories, politics and cultures is, as Jim Pines purports, also important through Black identified oppositional imagery. He discusses the increased viability of Blackness in both cultural and commercial terms whereby Black and 'Third World' owned and produced films

have a wider circulation, distribution and exhibition in Britain. Pines adds:

...And though the pervasive power of dominant representation, along with that of institutional marginalisation, has tended to impose serious constraints on Black film practice historically, e.g. by pigeon-holing it in 'race relations', the signs today are that these constraints are gradually being whittled away by Black cultural practitioners themselves. Moreover Black film / video practice clearly has a cultural dynamic of its own which cannot (and should not be reduced simply to the exegesis of oppositional practice ... (Pines, 1988: 36)

Bennie Bunsie argues that this struggle against racist images must be linked to the fight for equal opportunities (Bunsie quoted in Wadsworth, 1986). Marc Wadsworth supports 'integrated casting' whereby Black actors and actresses are cast in all roles, those commanding respect and not those that are stereotypical. Progress depends upon Blacks exerting greater political, social and economic pressure (Wadsworth, 1986). Also as professor Bhikku Parekh states:

Media must be more sensitive about what they present, become more self-critical of their assumptions. We are operating today within the larger historical context of the history of racism. Given that back-cloth one must be particularly careful to avoid those unconscious stereotypes that one is bound to have imbibed through language, through words, through comics, through literature. (Parekh quoted in Wadsworth, 1986)

Conclusion

I would like to conclude this chapter with the caution that the celebration of the work of Black film makers as an accurate depiction of Black experiences needs to incorporate Black feminist thought. This will have to take on board

Black male criticisms of a few Black women's depictions of Black manhood which I mentioned earlier. Moreover, within mainstream cinema the portrayal of Blacks has largely reflected negative white inspired representations of Black sexuality. Therefore I maintain that since enslavement the image of licentiousness has been used to legitimise the exploitation of Black people. Consequently, the 'blaxploitation' era manipulated perceptions of Black promiscuity, masculinity and hyper - sexuality. Furthermore, the depiction of the Black man as 'super - stud' and Black woman as a 'sensual slave' needs to be analysed within the context of the assertion of Black male power in the late 1960's and early 1970's.

However, rather than challenging stereotypes of Black sexuality since the late 1960's, I believe that often Hollywood simply chose to project white fears and fascination. Thus frequently during the 1980's and 1990's images of rampant Black male virility and female libido continue to support dominant white ideological, sexual, social, political and economic interests. Hence the majority of contemporary films are influenced by a view point that is white, male, middle class and heterosexual. Thereby, the film industry has supported the socio - sexual, economic and political concerns of those who control it. Subsequently, by reproducing the prejudices of most white people in Britain and in the United States, mainstream cinema has generally attempted to strengthen and justify historical myths about Black sexuality and so contributed to oppression in the 1990's.

CHAPTER THREE

TOWARDS A BLACK FEMINIST METHODOLOGY

This chapter explores the problems of developing a Black feminist methodology within dominant models of social research. By consolidating feminist and African - centric politics, my study is essentially a critique of the racist tendency of academia to either distort knowledge about Black womanhood or to render it invisible. My research offers a tool that Black women may utilise so that they can give their own accounts of the impact of racialized sexual imagery upon their identities and their relationships. Advocating a self - reflective approach, I examine the multiple ways in which my racial identity affects feminist research.

The decision to do a Ph.D, the search for a supervisor, the choice of an academic institution and the selection of a topic is problematic for everyone who wants to do doctoral work. For the Black feminist, I intend to explain, both racism and sexism contribute to this dilemma. I argue that given the racist and sexist environment that most Black women researchers endure, it is extremely pertinent to create Black feminist paradigms. Constructive criticism of mainstream sociological and feminist research methods that do not sufficiently examine the experiences of Black women is, I will assert, central to my work as a Black feminist researcher. As a pioneering area of investigation, Black feminist research leads to exciting redefinitions of sociological thought.

For a year before I started my research I considered the notion that a Ph.D should explore unknown territories in order to push the horizons forward. In relation to the experiences of Black women, so little is known about the complexity of their lives that I initially found it difficult to concentrate on one area. Since research on racism has tended to analyse a Black male viewpoint, and feminism has until quite recently focused on the interests of white middle class women, there was an immense vacuum that needed to be filled. Knowing that there are few Black women who are privileged enough to be in a position to do research, and feeling accountable to the general needs of Black women, I deliberated over the selection of a research topic.

At the time that I started doing my doctorate I felt alienated in a predominantly white, male, middle class and heterosexual academic setting that failed to address the needs of those like me who do not conform to the image of a typical Ph.D student. For months I wondered whether my thesis could be considered to be 'an original contribution to knowledge', in view of the fact that epistemology is mainly defined by white scholars. Also, if my work was acceptable I feared that it would be the result of compromising my Black female identity. In this chapter I want to discuss the ways in which these concerns influenced my experiences throughout my research.

My lack of power! I query the use of my research. Is it for Black women? I am weary of having to engage in a white and male dominated intellectual framework. I am worried about my

lack of control. I see myself from outside my own body. So, how do I deal with this dilemma? I will not do research that is detrimental to Black womanhood or to Black people. I want to guarantee that my research benefits the women that I interview. That I do not get lost.

My interest in the degree to which racialised sexual myths prevail as well as the effects upon Black women's self-perceptions and interactions influenced my research strategies. These are divided into three areas: First, I tested my hypotheses by formulating them in questionnaires which I distributed to men and women from different racial backgrounds. Second, building upon the questionnaire data I conducted a pilot study. Third, I interviewed a number of Black women to discuss the issues that were raised by the literature review, questionnaires and pilot study in more depth. Speaking on their own behalf within the context of in-depth, semi-structured interviews, twenty one Black women explain the effect of racialized sexual images on their lives. Their testimonies challenge the marginalization of Black women as sexual animals.

Black Feminist Methodology

The research process has been inextricably and often painfully linked to my subordination as a Black woman. Traditionally excluded from the creation of sociological and feminist thought, the position of the Black female researcher is unique. She is aware that Black women have been pa-

thologized by sociological and feminist literature that has adopted popular stereotypes that exist in British society. For example, notions of powerful Black matriarchs and Sapphires who emasculate their men have been given academic credibility. This awareness is extremely alienating as the (so - called) 'angry Black woman' struggles to tackle the negation of her experiences by theorizing about the complexity of Black womanhood.

As a Black woman doing research in a British university I often wish that I was in a more supportive Black feminist arena. Most of my inspiration on Black feminist methodology and epistemology is gathered from American literature. Although this is relevant, there is a great need to develop specifically Black British feminist frameworks. So for me the main problem of constructing a Black feminist methodology is that there does not as yet exist a British Black feminist methodological tradition from which to draw strength. Whilst the pioneering works of African - American feminists have been a source of encouragement, they can not be applied indiscriminately to the historical and contemporary experiences of Black women living in Britain (Dill, 1987). Notwithstanding, Black American feminist literature has revealed the limitations of mainstream sociological and white feminist research.

I want to expand upon Sandra Harding's erudite critique of sociological analyses that attempt to just 'add women' to sociological and historical accounts, since I wish to also explore the specific problems of research with Black women

in Britain. Sandra Harding argues that traditional methodologies systematically exclude women; it can also be argued that feminist attempts to rectify sociological methodology does not go far enough as it is based on the experiences of white, Western, European women, and takes no account of Black women in the West or within the so - called 'Third World' (Harding, 1987). Thus feminist research, whilst rejecting the patriarchal bias of the majority of social science has tended to reproduce its own racist paradigms. Since mainstream feminism has usually marginalized the distinct racialization of gender by generalizing from the situation of a minority of white women who are middle class, middle aged, heterosexual and able - bodied, there is an urgent need to rectify this. Accordingly, Joyce Ladner urges Black women researchers to confront and transcend the limitations of oppressive white concepts and thereby develop new frames of reference (Ladner, 1971). The prevalence of negative images about Black women both in 'common sense' thinking and in academia is a central concern for Black women researchers as well as people generally.

Due to our isolation and the fact that our own training has encouraged us to be disassociated from Black female subjectivity it is very difficult for us to transcend this scenario. In my own work, as I will later discuss, I have attempted to build upon Patricia Hill Collins' theory of an 'Afro - centric' feminist epistemology. Before I address this issue I will outline Collins' analysis of Black feminist

thought. It is worth noting that Collins regards definitions of Black feminism to be ambiguous, problematic and contradictory (Collins, 1990).

Patricia Hill Collins defines Black feminism as political activism against the suppression of Black women's knowledge by Eurocentric masculinist epistemology. The ideas, experiences and culture of Black women are integral to the analysis. This is in order to reconceptualise the tensions between negative ideologies that are used to justify Black women's oppression, the actual discrimination of Black women and activism. Black women's subjugated knowledge of subordination, which is both everyday and specialised, represents a culture of resistance to oppression, independence and survival. Black women create an alternative, specialised, partial and situated perspective that 'decenters' the dominant group so that it gives up its power. Black feminist consciousness acts as a precursor for freedom (Collins, 1990).

The epistemological framework of Black feminism, according to Patricia Hill Collins, scrutinises and negotiates competing knowledge claims as well as explains how individuals 'discover the truth'. African - centric feminist epistemology rejects what is presently seen as 'the truth' and how this attempts to justify racial and sexual dehumanization. Black feminists use an alternative, substantiated and self - defined knowledge validation process that refutes standpoints that are white, bourgeois and male. This threatens white middle class men because it challenges their rational-

isation of stereotyping Black women so that their own interests are met. Collins stresses the importance of a humanist and holistic epistemology which explores the complex links between history and biography within society. Autonomy and solidarity with coalitions as well as intellectual and political dialogues with other groups are also relevant (Collins, 1990).

Patricia Hill Collins suggests that the process of conducting research is especially difficult for Black women because they occupy an 'outsider within' status. Collins maintains that the widespread negation of Black women's ideas and experiences by mainstream, feminist and Black thought gives rise to immense radical insight. Black female academics use their scholarly and personal backgrounds but are unable to fully assimilate in either realm. For instance, Black women in academia are both participants and observers of the struggles of Black communities to survive. The marginalisation of Black women is a great source of strength because it creates an African - centric and feminist world view which is central to Black women's activism. Although Black women creatively use this 'outsider within stance' to produce African - centric feminist theory this also includes several sacrifices. Black women develop a critical perspective that demystifies the many contradictions that exist between the theories and practices in dominant, feminist and Black cultures. Patricia Hill Collins explains that:

...Black women's both / and conceptual orientation,
the act of being simultaneously a member of a group

and yet standing apart from it, forms an integral part of Black women's consciousness...

(Collins, 1990: 207)

Subsequently Black women are marginalised by theories of knowledge that subjugate their subjectivity (Collins, 1990). The Black feminist academic or researcher therefore simultaneously experiences feelings of frustration and empowerment, due to the tensions of struggling to articulate a unique Black feminist standpoint (Collins, 1990). Western hypotheses, concepts and tools belittle Black women's lives and restrict their potential to critically examine the position of Black women in contemporary Britain. For Black female researchers creating new frameworks is vital to counteracting their experiences of isolation, frustration, powerlessness and rage. The development of Black feminist standpoints transcends the limits of elitist, sexist, heterosexist and racist research strategies and constitutes a vital form of empowerment. This is a political process because it necessarily entails a revolutionary challenge to the interface of racism, sexism, heterosexism and class oppression in Black women's lives.

Thus Black women are marginalised by theories of knowledge that subjugate their intellect and their identity. Meanwhile Black women academics concurrently feel frustrated and empowered by the tension of struggling to articulate a unique Black feminist standpoint. As my study shows, it is imperative to legitimate the defiance of Black women's positive self definitions.

Similarly, I see my research as validating, affirming and

strengthening my interviewees as well as myself. The situation of being both inside and outside the role of Black woman / researcher is a personal, academic and political concern. My rationalisation for doing my research is that as a Black woman I have a specific awareness of the connections of racism, sexism, heterosexism and class oppression in Black women's lives, an understanding that white women, Black and white men are less likely to have. However, it is necessary to problematise the degree to which I have integrated into a white dominated system, and to ask whether this assimilation makes me less Black identified, i.e. reduces my affinity and commitment to Black women. At the same time I feel anxious, isolated and misunderstood in academia. Historically defined as inferior, trying to prove myself is sometimes an exciting challenge, but mainly a draining process.

There is a lot of creative tension in my position as an 'insider / outsider' which contributes to the knowledge validation process. The shifting boundaries of 'insider / outsider' are confusing yet this role encourages self reflection and analysis of the diverse experiences of the interviewees. The 'insider / outsider stance' enables me to problematize the unique role of Black women's experiences as well as the process of interpretation. Thus I go beyond citing experiences and make connections to understanding. As an 'insider / outsider' I reconcile subjectivity (understanding, shared experiences and consciousness as Black women) and objectivity (academic training as a sociologist)

in research.

Patricia Hill Collins maintains that the unique 'insider - outsider' position of the marginalized Black feminist researcher allows her to recognize ramifications that those who are a part of the dominant culture are unable to comprehend. Black feminists have the advantage of a special African - centric and feminist insight, whereby they can assess the great contradictions of the familiar world from the perspective of the unfamiliar because they are 'outsiders'. Black feminist researchers utilise their consciousness of the diversity of Black women's experiences as well as their knowledge of dominant social structures. As Collins observes:

On certain dimensions Black women may more closely resemble Black men; on others, white women; and on still others Black women may stand apart from both groups. Black women's both / and conceptual orientation, the act of being simultaneously a member of a group and yet standing apart from it, forms an integral part of Black women's consciousness. (Collins, 1990: 109)

The double perception of the Black woman researcher is, according to Amina Mama, complicated by the immense difficulty of trying to both step out of and also draw on one's subjective awareness of the social, economic and political subordination of one's own community. Sharing a common experience with other Black people of being objectified by white culture; conflicts with her role as a researcher who has been trained by Eurocentric social scientific models. This conflict is resolved by developing research practices that challenge existing knowledge and prioritize the values,

issues and problems that are defined by the participants. Thus the Black woman researcher has to deal with her dual status as a researcher in the Western academy and as a member of a community that is marginalized and oppressed by racism. For Amina Mama this necessarily entails a holistic, historical and community - oriented approach that supports the struggles of Black women. Amina Mama developed a methodology that rejected the reproduction of dominant power relations and augmented a greater understanding of Black women's experiences of domestic violence. Mama states:

Conducting social and policy research on oppressed groups - in this instance - black women, requires that the cultural, social and economic position of both the researchers and the target group be taken into account. This applies to all social groups, but in doing research on oppressed groups it becomes vitally necessary if we avoid the tendency of research to reinforce and contribute to the plethora of stereotypes and derogatory myths that prevail in the dominant society.
(Mama, 1989: 28)

By placing Black women's ideas at the centre of analysis, Black feminist research negates and replaces dominant definitions that objectify, dehumanize and control Black women. Furthering our understanding of the interlocking nature of racism, sexism, heterosexism and class subordination it contributes to the struggle against internalized and wider oppression. Such research examines how Black women cope with the simultaneity of oppressions, resist external definitions and assert our subjectivity as fully human beings. This is more than an academic endeavour since the validation of Black women's self - definitions is necessary for Black women's survival (Collins, 1986). Amina Mama's research

empowers Black women as human subjects. Mama contends:

This meant treating women who are traditionally treated as 'passive victims' (Asian women) or 'aggressive criminals' (women of Caribbean descent) and who are often blamed for their situation by institutions and services, as credible informants and whose accounts are valid data. In this research their experiences are given credibility, and as research subjects, black women are given the status of citizens who are assumed to be entitled to basic human rights. (Mama, 1989: 29)

Thus Black feminists have to create new frameworks that refute Western theories, concepts and tools that restrict the potential to critically examine the position of Black women. It is therefore significant to question, how I as a Black feminist researcher, reject the denial of my reality. I believe that more than a rejection is required. I need to develop an analysis that moves beyond resisting racist, elitist, heterosexist and sexist frameworks so that I can put forward alternative methodologies and epistemologies, that are by Black women, of Black women and ultimately for Black women.

Patricia Bell Scott exposes stereotypes of Black women in social science scholarship and advocates anti - racist and anti - sexist research strategies that are action - oriented. She argues that social science either ignores Black women or focuses on their 'problems' and uses them as evidence of what dominant society perceives to be their inadequacies. Asserting the necessity for Black men and white people to also be involved in developing radical theoretical frameworks and redefining concepts, Scott maintains that these investigations would be beneficial to implementing

public policy that meets the needs of Black communities.

Patricia Bell Scott explains that:

These research priorities must be coupled with some very practical, action - oriented strategies. These strategies should involve the sensitizing of members of this society to the 'roots' and workings of overt, covert, and institutional racism and sexism. Black men must be made aware of the fact that sexism is not only a white problem, and white feminists must also be made aware of the fact that racism and class bias are not peculiar to white men only. (Scott, 1982: 90)

Elizabeth Higginbotham argues that empirical studies must examine the sources of Black women's oppression and reflect the diversity of their experiences. It is important to explore the multiple roles of Black women as opposed to recreating the notion of the 'super - woman'. A historical and analytic framework which focuses on the varied and complex experiences of Black women not only gives an inclusive view of Black womanhood but also pinpoints areas where change is essential. Elizabeth Higginbotham maintains that:

In our eagerness to counteract the negative stereotypes, we must not create a different one, which also fails to reflect accurately the varied lives of Black women. Even though many Black women are able to overcome difficult situations, Black women are not 'super-women' devoid of needs and emotions. (Higginbotham, 1982: 96)

By opposing the trend in academia to pathologize and dehumanize Black womanhood, I support a process of self - actualization, whereby the Black woman as the researcher or as 'the researched' is an active subject. She is able to define what is essential to her, she has the ability to articulate her own self - perceptions and she has the power to change her status as the Other. The development of Black feminist standpoints transcends the limitations of sexist, heterosex-

ist, elitist and racist research strategies and constitutes a form of empowerment. This is a political process because it necessarily entails a revolutionary challenge to the interface of racism, sexism, heterosexism and class oppression in Black women's lives.

Patricia Hill Collins states that a Black feminist standpoint comprises four main criteria. First, concrete experience is important as a principle of meaning. Awareness of Black women's shared conditions of racism, sexism and class oppression represents the foundation of Black feminist knowledge and wisdom. Connectedness is the basis of the knowledge validation process and it is integral to Black women's well - being. This is demonstrated by institutional support for Black women's experiences in families, relationships, 'sisterhood', churches and community groups. Black women examine the contradictions between their actual experiences and negative controlling images of them. This allows Black women to demystify influential ideologies, to challenge and deconstruct the dominant notion of Black womanhood. Consequently Black women find a strong voice so that they can cope with and transcend their subordination (Collins, 1990).

The second principle that Collins identifies is using dialogue in assessing knowledge claims. She discusses a holistic and harmonious perspective that is based on dialogue about Black culture, Black values and women's experiences. In this analysis Black women's subjectivity is central. The third criteria is the ethic of caring. The knowledge valida-

tion process is centred on personal expressiveness, emotions and empathy. Mutuality, unification with other Black women and shared interests empower Black women. The fourth principle that Collins describes is the ethic of personal accountability. Black women take responsibility for knowledge claims, values and ethics as pivotal to the knowledge validation process. Black women accept responsibility for personal empowerment, collective action and social transformation (Collins, 1990).

'Afrocentric feminist knowledge', Patricia Hill Collins contends, generates collective consciousness that transforms social, political and economic relations. Collins' assertion that it is imperative to legitimate the defiance of Black women's self - definitions is, as I will later show, central to my research. By extension, I hope that my study will bear out Patricia Hill Collins' contention that:

Afrocentric feminist thought offers two significant contributions towards furthering our understanding of the important connections among knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment. First, Black feminist thought offers a fundamental paradigmatic shift in how we think about oppression. By embracing a paradigm of race, class and gender as interlocking systems of oppression, Black feminist thought reconceptualises the social relations of domination and resistance. Second, Black feminist thought addresses ongoing epistemological debates in feminist theory and in the sociology of knowledge concerning ways of assessing 'truth', offering subordinate groups new knowledge about their own experiences can be empowering. But revealing new ways of knowing that allow subordinate groups to define their own reality has far greater implications. (Collins, 1990: 222)

My analysis is influenced by Patricia Hill Collins' par-

adigm of Black feminist methodology and epistemology, the 'insider / outsider' dichotomy and the four principles that I have assessed earlier. For me, a Black feminist theoretical framework examines the multiple ways in which racism, patriarchy, heterosexism and class oppression are both independent and interlinked. I use this perspective to explain the material basis of the subordination of Black women. I investigate the questionnaire data, pilot study information and interview transcripts within a wider Black feminist conceptual framework. This allows flexibility by giving room for data that challenges the tools and negates the hypotheses that are to be tested. I want to stress that the data in itself is also theory generating, since the existing research on imagery and identity has limited relevance as it fails to consider racialised sexual stereotypes. My research dispels prevalent myths about Black female sexuality. Encouraging Black women to re - define their sexuality, this works towards the liberating re - creation of racial and sexual consciousness.

This approach disrupts the existing power relationships by taking Black women's ideas seriously. Using my personal and political understanding of Black women's lives due to common histories and situations, my study is relevant and beneficial to Black women's empowerment. Therefore I reject, challenge and deconstruct dominant definitions of the 'truth' about Black female sexuality.

My research embraces the four principles that are adopted by Patricia Hill Collins. I utilise the first criterion that

experience is the foundation of meaning by giving primacy to the opinions of the research participants. The extent that racialised sexual imagery influences the interviewees' identities and relationships are documented, assessed and validated. I reinforce Black women's positive self perceptions and support their opposition to experiences of racialised sexual mythology. Such awareness of myths about Black female sexuality contributes to a better understanding of the oppression of Black women. Interviewees' accounts refute white, male and middle class descriptions of Black sexuality.

Second, dialogue as a means of analysing knowledge claims implies that my interview transcripts validate Black feminist literature on subordination and struggle. Discussions in interviews assess the range of racist, sexist and heterosexist images of sexuality, the impact of these images on Black women's self concepts and relationships, the ways to debunk myths and the necessary process of re - education.

The third principle of caring is evident in my support of Black women's beliefs and positions. I am doing this research due to my deep concern about negative portrayals of Black sexuality. I am extremely interested in such stereotypes because I believe that it is very important that they are changed. Since I maintain that Black feminist research that is rooted in personal experiences can achieve this goal I provide a platform for Black women to negate stereotypes. This is empowering for myself, the participants and other

Black women whose knowledge is increased by reading my work. Fourth, personal accountability is shown by the manner in which I take responsibility for examining Black women's situations and representing their views. I protect the interviewees' interests by clearly explaining the purpose of my study and by using pseudonyms. I am committed to perpetuating honest and reciprocal relationships with the research participants. I respect, support and help to justify Black women's definitions of 'truth'. Sharing similar experiences and values with the interviewees, I feel profoundly obligated to represent their interests. I see my thesis as a tool that can be implemented to support Black women's struggles for freedom from derogatory stereotypes. Thus I feel responsible for insuring that the participants' attempts to resist denigrating images of their sexuality are examined, in order to contribute to the improvement of Black women's status in contemporary British society.

Research methods

[I have to sort out how to select my sample...e.g.access as a result of working in a pub or a factory...I could advertise in a paper or a magazine and then follow up the questionnaires by selective interviews...what about geographical location, socio - economic background, gender, race and sexual orientation?...How do I match up questionnaire and interview schedules with my central research questions?]

(Research diary, March 1991)

This quotation shows my concerns about the process of designing questionnaire and interview schedules as well as finding a 'representative sample'. I have decided to combine qualitative research methods such as participant observa-

tion, questionnaire surveys and semi - structured interviews because I believe that this is the best way to test my theoretical hypotheses. Due to the sensitivity of issues of racism and sexuality I think that the use of various techniques is constructive, since I maintain that people respond differently to anonymous questionnaires and to taped interviews.

Primarily examining how dominant models of Black female sexuality affect Black women's lives, I am confronting and transcending the limitations of oppressive white models and concepts. Thereby I am developing new frames of reference that legitimate the defiance of Black women's self definitions. However, this work is not in isolation. Carol Smart's argument, that because a study is for women does not necessarily mean that its entire subject matter has to be women, is pertinent to my research (Smart, 1984). Thus the next two sections highlight the questionnaire data and a pilot study of men and women of different 'ethnic' groups. These research strategies enabled me to initially assess the impact of racialized sexual images.

Questionnaires

Whilst recognizing that the intimate character of the topic limits the viability of this type of data collection, I also believe that the anonymous questionnaire is useful for gaining personal and confidential information that a respondent would be reluctant to tell an interviewer. In terms

of my interest in the extent to which people's perceptions of their sexual identity are influenced by racism and heterosexism it is important to consider the problem of bias. For instance the validity of the data would be disputable if my presence as a Black and heterosexual female affected the response to questions about race and sexuality.

The main purpose of this investigation was to assess the inter - relationship and social implications of racist and heterosexist images. For this purpose, I designed the questionnaires to address four areas: The first part asked about sexual identification and societal pressures upon sexual behaviour. The second part addressed the extent to which the issue of race influences sexual identity, opinions about the sexual proclivity of Black and white people as well as 'mixed race' relationships. This included questions about the existence and significance of mass media portrayals of Black and white sexuality. Attitudes towards homosexuality, the ways in which it is portrayed by the mass media and how this influences the treatment of bi - sexuals, homosexuals and lesbians was the third area of focus. The last section considered views about the relevance of changing racial and sexual imagery. (The questionnaire schedule is shown in Appendix I).

The socio - political nature of my research influenced my sampling techniques in the following manner: Issues of racism and sexuality are very sensitive and respondents need to be assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Subsequently I have chosen a student - based sample for as a fellow

student common experiences are shared that facilitate acceptance and trust. Nonetheless I have written to the students to assure them that the information that is given is completely confidential. I have also asked them not to disclose their names. I distributed five hundred questionnaires to students at a university at the beginning of the Spring term of 1991 and I requested they return them as soon as possible. Approximately a third of these were sent to listed members of the African - Caribbean society. The rest were distributed at random to student accommodation on campus.

By the end of term I had received seventy eight questionnaires. These had been completed by forty four white students, twenty three African - Caribbean students, six Indian students and five Chinese students. The low response rate means that the results are illuminative rather than generalizable. Thus the fact that only 15.6% of the potential sample actually returned the questionnaires necessitates an acute awareness that people who did not complete the questionnaires could be substantially different from those who did. Additionally, since this in itself raises the problem of a distortion of results, what I can claim from this data is not general relatability but rather a hypothesis that needs to be elaborated. This is further supported by my awareness that a student sample represents a relatively privileged educational and socio - economic group.

Pilot study

My interest in further exploring the links between racist and heterosexist stereotypes encouraged me to conduct a pilot study. Due to this being a delicate issue and the potential vulnerability of the interviewees it became imperative to design the interviews as exchanges of ideas. Since this was an exploratory exercise I conducted unstructured interviews with two white men, two Black men, two white women and two Black women. This group were selected from people who had filled in the questionnaires and volunteered to give additional information.

I asked these people their views about images of race and sexuality in the mass media and in British society generally. Then I questioned the influence of these images upon their self - concepts and experiences. Some of the aspects of doing this research, during April 1991, are shown by the following extract from my research diary:

[I was suffering from an anxiety attack. The interview with a Black woman, a Black man, and a white man made me wonder to what extent there actually were distinct sexual images about Black women. As we approached Baker Street, I thanked my two male companions for taking part in my research.

Whilst leaving me on the train, the Black man jocosely remarked,

'Don't talk to any strange men.'

Moments later a white man, who seemed to pounce from nowhere grabbed me and proclaimed,

'I can tell that you're warm and friendly. You talk to anyone, Black or white. You're a very sexy Black girl'.]

This example illustrates well the tendency of the researcher to worry about one's theoretical hypotheses. During that controversial interview I queried whether my concern about

the significance of images of Black female sexuality was indeed relevant. It shows that the researcher's autobiography frequently influences the choice of a research topic as well as the process of doing research. My own experiences and those of other Black women of being defined in sexual terms led me to investigate this issue further. Such encounters have encouraged me to interview Black women in order to ascertain the extent to which my experiences may be regarded as typical.

Are all Black women viewed mainly in sexual terms or is it just me? This question, among several others, first led me to conduct the pilot study. However, it soon became evident that I was not merely interested in exploring the prevalence of sexual images about Black women. More importantly I wanted to assess the extent to which these images impinged upon Black women's lives. Thus while I believe that the opinions of white people and Black men can significantly contribute to an understanding of the racialised sexual imagery, my primary aim is to conceptualise the social, economic and political relevance to Black women's reality. Hence I endeavour to validate Black women's perceptions of racial and sexual imagery within the wider context of their experiences of racism, sexism, heterosexism and class oppression. As Bonnie Thornton Dill argues, it is necessary to develop a Black feminist framework in order to examine the various ways in which the dominant model of Black womanhood affects Black women's self images and relationships (Dill,

1987).

Thereby I further explored the material generated from the questionnaires and the pilot interviews by conducting semi-structured interviews with Black women. Interviewing Black women about the impact of racialized sexual imagery upon their experiences, I am able to discuss additional questions and unifying themes. I intend to explain the political significance of my research in documenting Black women's struggles against these images.

Interviews

Believing that a theoretical account of racialized sexual imagery that is supported by empirical data is central to challenging the oppression of Black women, I conducted the interviews with the purpose of gaining further information. Whilst the questionnaires and the pilot study had explored views about images of Black female sexuality in British society and in the mass media, I wanted to examine this in greater depth. Given these concerns and the delicate aspect of my project I contemplated which research method would best suit my aims. It is due to the emotive nature of my project that a 'snowball' technique of selecting a sample was employed. In April 1991 I contacted family, friends, acquaintances, academic colleagues and Black women's organizations. I informed them of my quest to interview Black women about images of race and sexuality. Understandably, the reactions of some of those who were approached were tinged with some misgivings about the degree to which my

intentions were honourable. In view of the tendency of academia to either ignore the distinct experiences of Black women or misrepresent them, some women were justifiably cautious.

After being assured that neither I, nor my study were perverse; after being persuaded that my study would not be exploitative, twenty one Black women eventually consented to being interviewed. Undoubtedly, my own biographical details have influenced the kinds of Black women that I could gain access to. Hence rather than presenting a representative cross section of women from whom generalised data can be gathered, I offer instead an exploratory and tentative case study. Nevertheless, I maintain that this research has fundamental implications for further analysis of the racialisation of sexual imagery, identity and relationships.

From June until November 1991 I interviewed women mostly in their own homes, but some women also came to my parental abode in London or to my student dwelling in Coventry. Whilst being interested in the degree to which racialised sexual images prevail, I am also concerned in the existence and social implications of racialised beliefs about sexuality. I am curious about their effects upon Black women's identity and intimate relationships as well. To explore these issues I devised a semi - structured interview schedule which was based on open - ended questions (refer to Appendix II). Thus the interviews were structured on probe questions, that encouraged us to talk about a wider range of

issues than would have been gained had I relied on a more formal approach. Since I thought that there could be additional issues that I had not considered I utilised this method. This approach also incorporates a rejection of the unequal power relationship between the 'dominant interviewer' and the 'subordinate subject' (Roberts, 1981; Stanley, 1990).

Semi - structured interviews facilitated exploring the impact of racist and heterosexist images upon Black women's sense of race, gender and sexual identity. This allowed the interviewees and myself to enquire about opinions on relationships with Black and white men. We discussed debates in Black communities about bi - sexuality, homosexuality and lesbianism as well as their own views. Through these interviews we became conscious of the potential to resist and to transform the prevalent social construction of Black female sexuality. The interviews were taped and lasted between thirty minutes and four and a half hours. The average time taken was ninety minutes.

Realizing that they would probably be cautious about sex and race research I had been concerned about the interviewees' reactions. Thus I had been afraid that it would be difficult to have a good rapport. However, I was pleasantly surprised not only by their willingness to talk but also the interviewees' ability to manipulate the situation. Indeed, my efforts to be as unobtrusive and non - threatening as possible led to occasions whereby the supposedly powerful position of the 'detached' participant observer was denied

(Westwood, 1984). In particular, some women felt more at ease in a group interview with friends that they had asked to accompany them. On one level the solidarity of two or three friends, given the potentially exploitative nature of the interview setting, confirms my objective to enable interviewees to control the research situation. However, on a more personal level, I felt vulnerable as a lone sociologist entering unfamiliar territory.

I was afraid of meeting women who would be offended by what may well have been interpreted as 'rude' questions. When one woman indicated her reluctance to give her age on the grounds that the question was rather delicate and intimate, I worried about their reaction to the rest of the questions. However, I greatly respect the respondent's caution about answering questions around sex and race. As I have previously commented, in view of the tendency of academia to either marginalize the distinct experiences of Black women or to misinterpret them, such prudence is justifiable.

The vulnerability and feelings of being defenseless that I frequently felt when interviewing is minor in comparison to the general subordination and exposure to attack that some of these women confront daily. Due to a moral and ethical responsibility to protect their interests I have maintained a promise of confidentiality. This entails anonymity and a commitment to giving as truthful as possible an account of their arguments. Twenty of the sample chose their own pseudonyms. One woman rejected the need for anonymity and in-

sisted that her real name be used.

Overwhelmed by the level of trust that we achieved I also became aware of the potentially exploitative character of the interview situation (Stanley & Wise, 1993; Harding, 1987; Harvey, 1990). I realized that a common racial and gender identity between the interviewees and myself facilitated a greater responsiveness to my research than I had previously envisaged. Although this was beneficial to me, it also increased their own vulnerability, as they were extremely open about their perceptions of the effects of racialized sexual imagery upon their experiences. Their relatively powerless position as respondents was increased by their willingness to trust me - a trust that could be betrayed. As has been advocated by several researchers, accountability is especially necessary when the subjects of research are from groups who are in the lower echelons of society.

Sharing a similar identity with these women I am able to offer an 'insider's' awareness of the complexity of their conditions. Having documented the historical and contemporary significance of racialized sexual imagery with reference to primary and secondary sources, films, questionnaire data and a pilot study, I am also able to place this awareness within a broader Black feminist framework.

The search for a 'representative' sample, as well as the time and monetary constraints of being a self - financed, part - time student, inevitably structure the choice of methodology employed in the research process. This led to

the selection of twenty one Black women for interviewing. Three are nurses, three are university students, two are housewives, and two are secretaries. The others include a machinist, a catering assistant, a temp, an unemployed woman, a teacher, a trainee solicitor, a trainee environmental health officer, a housing officer, a research worker, an office supervisor and an artist.

What follows is a biographical sketch of twenty one Black women. Their homelands are Africa, the Caribbean and, especially in the case of the younger women, Britain. In terms of self definitions of their sexual identities, eighteen are heterosexual, two are bi - sexuals and one defined herself as a lesbian. Their ages ranged between twenty and sixty five. Through learning from their rich range of experiences, my own thoughts about my sexuality and my identity as a Black woman have been challenged in numerous ways. In no particular order I shall introduce these women with their own words. They are not simply 'research subjects' but rather they are friends, sisters, mothers and generators of knowledge in their own right.

Although I was slightly distressed when Hilary Davies declined to tell me her age, I did enjoy talking with her. Hilary claimed (eventually) to be 54 years of age. She is an ambitious nurse who owns two houses. She views herself as an achiever, who despite having survived a difficult divorce and singlehandedly raising three children, continues to succeed in her aspirations. Hilary says that:

I feel that people see me as an independent, forceful person.
Mrs Welltodo is 65 years old. She is married to a Black man and they do not have any children. Her job as a machinist requires a lot of hard work, often at home. She has an acute wit combined with a caring disposition. Mrs Welltodo believes that:

If I wasn't strong I'd be dead already.
Beverley Marsden is a 47 year old, single nurse who lives in the Caribbean. She was on holiday in England with her daughter when her friend Maria invited her to what ended up as a controversial joint interview. Beverley suggests that:

I don't think that what people think of me is important. I think that what is important is what I think of myself.
Maria Campbell is 50 years old. She is married to a Black man and she is the mother of six children. She is employed as a catering assistant. Maria holds that:

Another thing they always put on T.V. is this 'mixed race' thing but it never works. They never show you one that really could work. They do it to put it in your head, especially the younger ones that you should either stick to your own race or forget about this 'mixed race' business.

Zora Day is currently temping for British Telecommunications. She is a graduate who intends to teach in Africa. Zora is 29 and engaged to be married to a white man. In relation to her belief that Black women are either viewed as excessively sexual or motherly she sees herself as closest to the latter due to her physique and gestures. Zora considers that:

I suppose I define myself in the kind of mother role because it's safer for me; because if somebody says 'hey, Zora, you're a sexual being' I

just want to tell them to 'piss off'. It's not like anything has happened to me - it's just the way I react. Perhaps I feel threatened by it and I just don't want anything to do with it. Patricia Ford is 52 years old and is a nurse. She is married to a Black man and has two children. She is affectionate, generous and considerate. According to Patricia:

I'm a nurse and when I go on duty people don't wait to see how I'm going to react. They just see my face and right there they judge me from the colour of my skin. They don't give me a chance to see if I'm going to be nice to them, or as they would say, be cruel to them. Once you are Black you're rough and ready. The slightest thing you say to them they're upset.

Yvonne Stewart is a 39 year old legal secretary. She describes herself as being happily married to a Black man who shares her joy of life and alcohol. Yvonne rationalizes that:

Maybe it's a bit of a power thing with me being Black and on top. I think it must be. A bit like Margaret Thatcher actually. I think maybe that has been what has made me strive so hard although I haven't really thought about it too much.

Susan Brown is a 28 year old secretary. She is very family oriented. Susan is engaged to a Black man and plans to have children. When I first met her she seemed quiet and shy but through the interview I discovered that she is a talkative, warm and friendly person. Susan informed me of her theory about the cause of AIDS:

Probably they went with the monkeys out there in Africa. I wouldn't be surprised. That's probably why. That's what I've been hearing. Not the people, well they do some of them, they say they go with animals. Not Africans but the researchers and people like that; and maybe they caught it from them and they blamed it on the Black people.

Marva Taylor regards her children as the two most important

aspects of her life. She is a 45 year old housewife who is married to a Black man. Marva is full of affection and bountiful. When I asked her about the significance of racialised sexual images, she replied:

Well, I haven't really thought about it so to me it's not really important in my life.

Tammy Ryan is a 24 year old housewife. She is living with a white man and they have two children. Tammy states that:

I don't think that Black women are seen, full stop. Not in a sexual way, anyway.

Bernice Watts is 30 years old and unemployed. She is extremely hospitable and frank. In terms of my question about images of Black female sexuality, Bernice responded:

It has nothing to do with Black or white. It's just women.

Fiona Ferguson is a 25 year old teacher. Articulate and witty, she is single and considers herself to be sexually liberated. When asked if race affects how she feels about her sexual experiences, she replied:

Not really. I don't think so. I've never really thought about it. You know sex is sex!

Sian Lacy is 24 and a trainee solicitor. As a dedicated Pan - Africanist, she is looking for an enlightened Black man. Moreover, she comments about white people:

Given my way, if it were possible, they wouldn't be around apart from the few friends I have. I suppose what would happen would be you'd have to speak for a European. They'd have to have these, say, two non - Europeans to speak for them in order to survive.

Sharon Smith is also 24. She is presently unattached but unlike Sian she wants a white lover. Sharon is a trainee environmentalist health officer. Reflecting her deeply religious convictions she argues:

We as Christians do believe that homosexuality is wrong because when you go back to the beginning, God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Adam or Eve and Eve.

Sally B let me spend the night in her home after the heated dispute between herself, Sharon and Fosuwa lasted until the early hours of the next morning. Sally B is single, assertive and independent. She is 32 and a housing officer. Whilst rejecting the claim that men are afraid of her, Sally B warns against internalising negative images about Black masculinity, indicating that:

There's a danger of doing that, and also the danger comes from all this. We're all talking about images and we're all talking about stereotypical ideas and views from the media and all that. And we also fall into that danger as well because we tend to believe. Or we see a negative portrayal on the television about Black men. We immediately take that up. We suck them into our subconscious and use that.

Yvonne Ayoka Wilson is 20 and a student. She is living with a white man. Although, from her own experiences, she believes that 'mixed race' relationships are positive she recognises that this is not a general view within Black communities. Yvonne states that:

Its more acceptable in the Black community for Black men to go out with white women than for Black women to go out with white men. Its all about control and power. A Black man is seen as the one who controls the relationship and so his race is not being downtrodden and trampled. But if a Black woman does the same thing, she is being submissive.

Tracy Ross is committed to feminist struggles. She is 32 and a research worker. She is married to a white man. Tracy is weary of antagonism against 'mixed race' relationships. Asked about the impact of racial and sexual images upon her identity, Tracy retorted:

I certainly don't see myself as being a sexual temptress or as a molten volcano.

Carol Snowdon is 21 and a student. She is involved with a Black man and does not think that she would go out with a white man. Carol states that by Black male standards:

A Black woman is a bottom. You measure a Black woman by her bottom.

Melisa Jones is living with her white partner and they have a daughter. She is a 26 year old office supervisor. Melisa argues that for British society:

Black women are something new and different like an exotic fruit you want to bite. You do not want to try an apple because everyone has had one. Try a Kiwi fruit, once one person's tried it and spread the news, then others will have a bite; scared at first but will try it.

Fosuwa Andoh is 31 and is an artist. She is a politically active lesbian feminist who also works in a women's refuge. Fosuwa condemns the power of racialised and homophobic sexist myths because as a result of them:

You are not allowed to just be.

Lastly, Roseanne Park is 22 years old, a student and single. She is hyperactive, funny and somewhat outrageous. Roseanne implies that:

Race affects how I feel about my sexual experiences in the sense that being a Black woman I have to compete with the challenging myths that exist about my sexuality.

I am adopting a self - reflective Black feminist methodology which gives primacy to the opinions of the interviewees. However, research that challenges negative images of Black femininity is not only the prerogative of Black women and as

such needs to be conducted across racial and gender barriers. In other words, the methods that I have been discussing are not exclusive to Black feminism but rather characterize good praxis. Such research incorporates personal and political objectives from a perspective of gender, class, race and sexuality.

My hope is not to attempt to make amends for the failure of research on gender, race, class and sexuality in Black women's lives in Britain. Rather my aim is to indicate the necessity of such research by starting a debate that is long overdue. If through this limited work, those who read it not only try to understand the extra burden that racist sexual stereotypes represent for many Black women, but also help to overcome it, then I will have achieved my goal.

Now that I have set the scene in the chapters following this brief encounter the reader will be able to envisage a more detailed portrait. I intend to examine these women's views about images of Black female sexuality in British society and in the mass media. I will query the impact that such portrayals have on their sense of race, gender and sexual identity; then I want to analyse their opinion on relationships with men. This debate will be followed by an assessment of their ideas about bi - sexuality, homosexuality and lesbianism. These chapters will consider the implications of this data to self - definition, resistance and transformations after addressing the questionnaire and pilot study data.

CHAPTER FOUR

QUESTIONS OF RACE AND SEXUALITY

This chapter is divided into two parts: these are a questionnaire survey and a pilot study. The first part of the chapter is based on the results of seventy eight questionnaires. These were filled in by African - Caribbean, Asian, and white students at the University of Warwick. The original purpose of the questionnaire sample was to ascertain the impact of social issues on sexual identity. In particular the questionnaire was used to test the salience of issues. The issue of gender is very important; it can not and should not be ignored especially in view of the information that the questionnaires produce about white / Black and male / female relations. However, whereas in most cases respondents indicated their racial background they frequently did not write down their gender identity. As such it is difficult to assess the data across gender lines, although I am aware that gender obviously matters and that it would be interesting to have a male / female breakdown of the results. Therefore a crucial setback relates to attempts to make a thorough gender analysis, as some of the respondents did not state if they were male or female, although the questionnaire clearly asks this question.

Reviewing the existing literature suggests that there is a correlation between images of race and sexuality, yet the actual inter - relationship and social implications have

until now been unexplored. Nonetheless, I endeavoured to rectify this situation. For this purpose I distributed five hundred questionnaires on a random basis to student accommodation on campus. Since the response rate was 15.6% I do not attempt to generalise from these findings. Whilst recognising that the sensitivity of the topic limits the viability of this form of data collection, I also believe that the anonymous questionnaire can represent a vehicle to obtain confidential information, that would not be made available in a face - to - face interview.

In relation to perceived racial identity, thirty two of the sample described themselves as being white. Of course I do not want to claim more of the results of thirty two white respondents than is warranted. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note, as I will later, that there are significant differences to the thirty four of non - white sample of twenty three Blacks, five Chinese and six Indians. However, as the question 'How would you describe yourself 'racially'?', for twelve respondents give rise to answers such as 'non - racist' which did not specify an 'ethnic group'; again an attempt to differentiate attitudes to sexuality according to ethnicity is problematic.

In view of these constraints, I want to argue that although racial identity influences perceptions of sexuality the actual extent is difficult to specify. The distinct racialisation of sexuality in relation to Black women is explored in semi - structured interviews - these are discussed in the following two chapters. What follows is an assessment of

four areas of the interface of race and sexuality: First, I explore self perceptions of sexual identity. In particular I examine societal pressures upon sexual behaviour. Second, I query the extent that the issue of race influences personal sexual identity as well as opinions about the sexual proclivity of Black and white people. By discussing stereotypes of promiscuity and sexual restraint I consider their effects. Views on 'mixed race' relationships are also noted. The third source of interest is attitudes towards homosexuality, the ways in which it is portrayed by the news mass media and how the respondents believe that this contributes to the treatment of homosexuals, bi - sexuals and lesbians. Last, I analyse recommendations to change racial and sexual imagery.

How do you perceive yourself sexually?

The majority of the sample, seventy - one people, defined themselves as being heterosexual. The rest claimed to be homosexual, lesbian, bi - sexual, celibate and one was 'un - sexual'. Unfortunately the precise meaning of the latter category was not made apparent. Of these more than half, forty one of the group, argued that they were secure and confident about their sexual identity. Over a third, twenty six, felt comfortable and fine. The rest were either worried, insecure or exploring their sexuality.

When asked if they felt pressure from their families and friends on how to behave sexually there were noticeable differences amongst Black and white students. Indeed, whites

were more than four times more likely to feel pressurised than their Black counterparts. Thus, nineteen white respondents, as opposed to four Black respondents, state that the attitudes of their relatives and peers influenced them. Moreover, eleven whites and three Blacks further suggest that this circumscribes their sexual behaviour.

Although seventy five of the sample state that they did not have a sexual relationship with a person of the same sex; twenty three whites and eleven Blacks, had deep and intimate non - sexual relationships with someone of the same gender. As previously stated, one can not place too much emphasis on differences between Black and white perceptions of sexuality with such a relatively small sample.

Nevertheless, I want to suggest that for some Black people a low level of pressure from friends and family about personal sexuality and sexual orientation, and relatively lessened effects on sexual behaviour may in part be due to wider social pressures. The rejection of the notion of the family and friends influencing sexual activity is evident in the following quotes from Black students:

No, I do what I feel is right for me. It's my body. My family don't pressurise me as they believe I'm sensible enough to know how to behave and to choose what I want. My friends and I hardly talk about our sexual behaviour.

I feel quite confident about my sexuality and I continue to work through what is good for me. However, others maintained that pressures exist, particularly with regard to being heterosexual:

It would be pressure if I had sexual tendencies different to those they expect me to have.

There is pressure towards conforming to heterosexual stereotypes.

I feel it has denied me the choice between heterosexuality and homosexuality, as heterosexuality is portrayed as being inevitable.

Similarly, some white respondents argued that the homophobic attitudes of their family and friends could influence them on subconscious levels:

To a certain extent there is pressure. People would be 'shocked' if I was in anything other than a 'normal', heterosexual relationship.

I feel restricted by moral standards of society. I adjust to a certain extent to the expectations of my family and friends.

They expect me to be heterosexual. Luckily I am heterosexual, I suppose.

Thus an awareness of the stigma against homosexuality may implicitly contribute to the repression of bi - sexual, gay and lesbian tendencies. Despite this, some whites argued that their sexuality is not at all restrained:

I try not to let my family and friends influence my decisions.

This does not affect my sexual behaviour as I feel that it is entirely my own choice.

I don't show any signs of sexual behaviour at all with my family.

'Sleeping around', my family may not like but it's none of their business, so I wouldn't tell them.

It is extremely difficult to understand the extent to which social forces affect sexual identity and behaviour. Feminists have shown that instead of being the most natural thing in the world, the realm of sexuality is determined by patriarchal systems and the institutionalisation of hetero-

sexuality. However, the additional impact of racism on the social construction of heterosexism is generally neglected. It is this dilemma to which I now turn:

Do you think that the issue of race affects your sexual identity in any way?

Whilst whites were more likely than Blacks to assert that their families and friends influenced their sexual identification, this finding was reversed in terms of the effect of race. Accordingly, Black people were more than two times as likely than white people to think that their sexuality was affected by race. Thus fifteen Blacks as opposed to seven whites maintained that racial myths about sexuality determined their self perception, behaviour and choice of partner. For most Black respondents this means that the likelihood of being in an 'inter - racial' relationship was reduced. The following statements were common amongst Black students:

Race affects my choice of partner.

I feel at peace only when I'm going out with a fellow Black person.

I do not believe a white person can truly be attracted to me. I think they despise Blacks.

I tend to be drawn towards Black people as partners more than white.

As a young Black man there is social pressure to be promiscuous. I'm sure most people are likely to have sexual relations with their own race; and sex with other races may be considered kinky or 'something different'.

But I guess as a Black woman, I do not freely

consider relationships with white men. It poses a whole host of personal and political issues.

There may be a tendency to stick with your own, because you know where they are coming from. You can also become presumptuous and this may affect decisions relating to mixed relationships.

I am more attracted towards people of the same ethnic background as myself. Race serves as a limit upon your choices.

I feel comfortable with women of my race.

It is important to me to seek sexual fulfilment within my race and ethnic grouping.

Well, there are certain myths surrounding the sexual prowess of Black women, which makes me weary.

I think that Black people are socialised so that sexual matters are not a casual thing. As an example then, I think the culture of a race does affect the way people view their sexual identity.

Therefore culturally defined views rather than familial and peer group pressures are seen as determining sexual attitudes and practices. This is most clearly shown by the notion that a romantic attachment with a white person was synonymous to 'going to bed with the opposition'. According to one Black respondent:

As for mixed race relations, they do not work and will not work for a long time to come. For them to work, a whole range of issues concerning the manner in which races relate to each other (and especially to the Black race) will first have to be sorted out. A marriage of unequals usually has tragic results.

Hence six Black respondents expressed hostility and disgust for 'inter-racial' relationships. For the six who were against these relationships such views were evident:

Mixed race relationships in this century (may be even further back) have been (and still are) an extension of politics and psychological subjugation.

They are dangerous and I believe they can only work out where the individuals involved decide to detach themselves completely in every way from their respective races.

Nevertheless seventeen Black respondents argued that they were in favour of 'inter - racial' liaisons. Of these seventeen people, fourteen had been involved in such relationships. Ten of them believed that they were no different from 'same race' relationships. Nine people had not been involved in 'mixed race' relationships. Four of these would consider a relationship with a white person, four would not and one was not sure. Due to the cultural differences and social constraints there was scepticism about the potential for 'inter - racial' relationships to survive long term. Although being aware of these difficulties, it was asserted that 'mixed race' relationships were not only acceptable but necessary for a greater understanding of different races. In terms of their own experiences of these relationships, a fear of negative responses led four people to hide their involvement from their family and two people to not tell their friends. The majority of people had favourable reactions. Eleven explained the happiness of friends whilst eight of them said that their family were supportive. Only two of the fourteen described disapproval from their families and one of friends. Therefore, most of the Black respondents thought that 'mixed race' relationships encourage openness, contribute to bridging cultural disparities and so reduce racial tensions. Although it was believed that these relationships should be promoted, this was on the precondi-

tion that those concerned needed to be strong willed and willing to make compromises. Thus it was suggested by some Blacks that:

Everyone has the right to become intimately involved with a person of their choice.

I am not against it, however there are factors which need to be taken into account by the couple concerned. If they are comfortable with it then its fine. But there has to be an understanding of both cultures.

It is the individual's personal choice: a person is a person regardless of the colour of their outer skin. It is the clash of different cultures which causes socially created problems.

A certain amount of bravery is needed by both partners to cope with societal pressures / hostility and their preconceptions.

It was argued that an awareness of cultural differences and trouble due to taboos against 'inter - racial' sexual relationships was necessary. For some, emotional attachment was only possible with someone of a similar political, ethnic and cultural background. Discussing the differences that they thought were apparent in a 'mixed race' relationship a few Blacks claimed:

It was very different. It was a nightmare. My family and friends were scandalised. Never again would I go out with a white person.

You have to be aware of white people causing trouble because you are with a white girl friend.

My family never knew; there would have been an uproar.

It is significant that most white respondents did not appear to see an obvious connection between race and sexuality. Whiteness is predominantly defined as the norm and so Euro-

pean sexuality is viewed as the model against which non - Western sexualities are reified as Other. Therefore it is not surprising that most white people do not perceive their sexual identity in racial terms. As such white sexuality is more than rendered invisible as it subconsciously influences beliefs and practices. Consequently several whites stated that:

There is a lot of curiosity, as for everything that is new, not known.

One cannot but help being influenced throughout one's life by stereotypes. All subconsciously.

My parents would not appreciate or approve of my marrying a coloured person. You are brought up, so your subconscious seems to guide you away from racial relationships as you know your parents would not approve.

Perhaps subconsciously, the older generation in family is a bit racist.

The family, social and cultural expectations could limit behaviour and choices.

Not on a personal level, but the way society conceives a person's sexuality on the basis of race or culture could affect one's behaviour or choices.

Eleven white respondents had been involved in 'inter - racial' relations. Given how small the sample is this is quite a lot. Of the twenty one who had not, seventeen said that they would consider it, three were not sure and only one would not. Most whites claimed that:

I believe they are healthy; can promote better relations.

It is difficult to have them, but very necessary and I admire people who have the courage to keep them up.

It does not bother me. I do not think people

should pressurise anyone - you can not choose who you fall in love with.

Love should be based on personality and attitude not colour.

Mixed race relationships need to be accepted in society. It should make no difference what ethnic group a person is from.

I find it absolutely normal and natural. It would be anti - natural to argue that love between people of different races can not exist or be allowed.

Of the eleven white respondents who have been involved in a 'mixed race' relationship, four said that their families did not know, three that there was indifference, two were encouraged by their families and two mentioned resentment. Likewise four were supported by their friends, three rate indifference, for three there was animosity and one person kept the relationship a secret.

Recollecting the disapproval that was encountered two people said:

I have no problem with mixed race relationships. I just got the impression (and a bit of experience as well) that they are harder to succeed. I often feel hostility and judgement from both whites and blacks. My family did not know since they live in another country. My friends did not mind, but my impression was that they did not believe that the relationship could be very long lasting. Well, I did not believe that either.

Some family and friends voiced their objections, 'advice', etc. or put it down to being a 'phase'. Some people were openly or complicity racist on both sides (from people I knew to complete strangers); and some people, friends and family were not bothered.

Dominant portrayals of race and sexuality

When asked if Blacks or whites were more likely to be pro-

miscuous or sexually restrained, most respondents, irrespective of race seemed to reject such gross generalisations. However, Blacks were more than twice as likely than whites to argue that the mass media perpetuates derogatory images of sexuality on the basis of race. Therefore twenty one Blacks compared to nine whites believed that the mass media is biased in its portrayals of Black and white sexuality. Whilst only two Blacks rejected this claim, twenty whites thought that the mass media depiction was fair whereas three were unsure. Additionally twenty one Black respondents believed that negative images of Black sexuality necessarily determine general perceptions whilst two disagreed. Twenty nine white respondents conceded that the mass media influenced racial ideas about sexuality whilst three white people denied this claim.

Therefore most Blacks felt that the mass media presented whiteness as the global standard of correct sexuality. In fact white people were seen as being more inclined to be involved in sexual politics and romance. Whereas whites are depicted as sexually restrained or unsure, rational, safe and domesticated, the opposite applies to Blacks. Thus, the respondents replied that, Black people are largely shown as bestial, aggressive, immoral yet exciting. As an exotic novelty the Black male is the icon of a stud with large genitalia. The use of Black females to flaunt sexuality relegates them to the status of prostitutes. Moreover, images of uninhibited and unsophisticated Black sexuality have a significant impact on audiences. It was suggested by

various Black respondents that:

Black men are portrayed as sex maniacs. Black women are a mystery to white men.

Blacks are portrayed as promiscuous. Black men are often defined in terms of violent and savage sexuality.

The media is all too ready to show us the 'Mandingo Man', and the Black whore.

When Blacks are shown in a sexual context, they are shown as unrestrained and unscrupulous. This is reversed for whites.

These stereotypes were seen as mainly affecting white people who did not have experiences of being with Blacks. In such instances Blacks are merely perceived as willing and ever ready sexually. Subsequently, it is believed that Blacks are only involved in physical and unemotional relationships for they are incapable of going beyond the physical. Suspicion, prejudice and discrimination are often the result. Thereby most Black people in this sample claimed that in the mass media:

Blacks are generally disrespected and treated as sex machines while whites are 'respectable'.

Perpetuates theories on Black men being better in bed by white women. Possibly makes white men resent Black men.

Black men are seen as being well endowed, which some white women presume is true.

...see Black men as stealing white women.

Black men get treated as though they are sex gods.

Media images help to emphasise and confirm the stereotypes people have about races.

These portrayals have led to people holding misconceived ideas about people.

Its another weapon that some white people can use to try and keep Blacks down.

The majority of white respondents believed that there was not any differentiation between the portrayals of Black and white people in sexual terms. Furthermore it was argued that due to the minimal representation of Black people as well as the multiplicity of stereotypes it is difficult to pinpoint sexuality as a definite site of categorisation. These whites state:

To be honest I had not considered this but now that it is mentioned its made me think a bit more.

Blacks are hardly portrayed at all, especially sexually or mixed couples.

Blacks are discriminated against in so many ways it is difficult to distinguish one area in clear terms.

Others think that the mass media specifically depict Blacks and whites differently in sexual terms and so powerfully reinforce myths. Thus such white students maintain that:

Blacks are often portrayed like sex machines - virile, promiscuous; the assumption is that they have bigger penises. This often affects the way they are treated. Whites are often portrayed like having more brain and less body.

Generally Black women are portrayed as sensuous and lascivious and Black men as raunchy.

Many people will treat racial minorities in the manner that they are portrayed in the media, perhaps in a detrimental way.

Black actors notoriously play pimps, prostitutes and junkies.

The complexity of racialised sexual imagery is demonstrated when two white respondents mention the influence of social class. Indeed it is too simplistic to claim that all Blacks

are stigmatised as promiscuous and all whites are sexually restrained. Instead it is more likely to suggest that there is a tendency to define Black people, the majority of whom are working class, in derogatory sexual terms as a result of negative images that have existed since enslavement. To a certain extent similar stereotypes are applied to non-indigenous groups such as Irish people and to working class people. Subsequently:

Working class women in general will be stereotyped often equally as slags, prostitutes etc. It perpetuates certain myths. It does not make for common sense rational thinking i.e. Black men are rapists (along with thieves, pimps, drug dealers). Of course on occasion one of these will be true, but it is equally likely to be true of an Asian man or a white man.

Blacks are often portrayed as promiscuous, through the stereotype of the 'exotic' or 'simple'. The portrayal of whites is usually linked to class as in the working class 'scrubber' or the middle class 'lady'. People often internalise these stereotypes. Men and women may believe that an individual will act as they perceive they would and therefore treat them accordingly.

Having established that the issue of race contributes to the discourse of sexuality, it is pertinent to assess views on heterosexuality and homosexuality. In the same way that white sexuality constitutes a yard stick against which Black sexuality is castigated as the Other, heterosexuality is also seen as the norm. Consequently, I will address the degree to which white heterosexuality is institutionalised, and Blackness as well as homosexuality considered to be abnormal.

What are your views about homosexuality?

When asked if they considered homosexuality to be abnormal, the same amount of Black respondents agreed as disagreed. In response to the question 'do you think that homosexuality is abnormal?' eleven said 'yes' and eleven said 'no'. One person did not know. Whereas eleven Blacks thought that homosexuality was wrong, this applied to only ten white respondents. Moreover, compared to eleven Blacks, twenty whites claimed to accept homosexuality. Relatedly, one of the Blacks compared to two of the whites were uncertain about their feelings towards homosexuality. On one level, it could be argued that the fact that Blacks in this sample are slightly more likely than whites to think that homosexuality is abnormal, actually supports the contention that Blacks appear to be more homophobic than whites. However, to reiterate, this sample is not widely representative and so generalisations are made with caution.

A minority of people are indifferent about homosexuality. They tolerate homosexuality and neither encourage or discourage it. More people disapproved of homosexuality because they considered it to be unnatural. Heterosexuality was viewed as normal due to reproductive processes. Homosexuality was regarded as unacceptable because it was defined as 'unhealthy', 'terrible' and 'sinful'. Some argued that homosexuality could not be helped since it was the result of hormonal and psychological imbalances. Others considered bisexuals, homosexuals and lesbians to be driven to their

sexual preferences as a consequence of 'a revolting incident such as rape or child abuse'. Furthermore, they maintained that homosexuality had contributed to the spread of AIDS. The majority of respondents explained that homosexuality, if amongst consenting adults, was fine. They stressed that equal status and the right to choose one's sexuality was important. In relation to a wider vision of liberation, respect and the freedom to live up to one's own desires is paramount. Thus it is stressed that 'each person's sexuality is their own business'. Similarly, others consider that 'people are who they are regardless of their sexual activities'. These university students express typically liberal opinions about homosexuality. Such tolerance and open mindedness lacks awareness of homosexuality as a political identity.

Arguing that homosexuality is normal some Blacks state that:

Everyone has and must have the right to dignity and respect for the way they express their sexuality, without fear of persecution. Society's attitudes towards homosexuality is unacceptable to me.

It is an individual's choice and the way a person feels. Nothing can change that feeling.

In the same way that heterosexuality is reinforced and legitimised by society, so homosexuality and the freedom to choose sexual partners and define your own sexuality should be respected.

I believe that everyone has a right to choose how to express their sexuality. I also feel that this is only one side to a homosexual's being and so it would not prevent me from talking to them or being friends with them.

It does not bother me in the slightest. What other people do in their bed with a consenting adult is their own affair (whether homosexual or heterosexual).

I have nothing against homosexuals. They are entitled to feel attracted to a person from the same sex if that is how they feel.

I am respectful of those who adopt it as an alternative lifestyle.

Homosexuals constitute some of the minority groups whose right to exist as such has not been socially accepted on a wide scale. Society has to be educated as to the rights of these people.

However other Blacks disapproved of homosexuality, yet asserted the right to choose one's own sexual persuasion:

I feel its wrong as I use the Bible as a mandate. However I also believe in everyone having a choice. So I do not condemn, neither do I condone.

It is totally unnatural. However gays and lesbians should not be ridiculed or discriminated against.

The rest of the Black students considered homosexuality to be 'sick':

It is pretty nauseating.

It is immoral, disgusting and strange.

It reflects a malaise in society in general.

For two Black respondents, opposition to homosexuality was connected to a dismissal of 'mixed race' relationships as well as arguments about a commonality of oppression. Although I am not suggesting that all types of discrimination can be the same, I believe that a lot can be learnt from recognising the comparability of the subordination of homosexuals, lesbians, bisexuals and Blacks on a sexual basis. Resistance to this idea is, I will later argue, quite interesting. As one Black person claimed:

God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve so homosexuality is wrong. Racial interbreeding maybe good for parents but their children suffer from it. So why visit the sins of the fathers on the children?

Religious arguments have been used both to define homosexuality as abnormal and to justify the subordination of Black people. The term 'inter-breeding' reflects the racist depiction of Black people as animalistic and Black women in particular as breeders. Although racialised images of sexuality are denied the prevalence of homophobia totally negates the experiences of Black lesbians, bi-sexuals and homosexuals.

The following comment, from another Black respondent, highlights the refusal to acknowledge the commonality of different oppressions:

Its painful that you should equate the two. Are you saying that Blackness is a form of social deviance like eg. being gay? Shame!!! I feel very strongly that the whole basis of your questionnaire is centred on the humiliating white middle class liberal attitudes of referring to 'blacks, gays and other minorities' as a single 'problem' area for society. I refuse completely to accept the notion that in order to advance my lot as a black person, I have to take on board gay rights, and lots of other issues which might not even begin to equate to the magnitude and depth of what black people have had to face over the past five hundred or so years. Gays were never shipped abroad as slaves, murdered in their millions, whipped, hanged, colonised, humiliated at every turn. Even now there is not a million gays facing starvation (as in Africa). As it stands, we have got enough problems to tackle rather than sitting around taking on board, small essentially white man's (woman's) problems which in themselves are more or less 'thrown our way' to try and confuse us.

The minority of white people who expressed disgust about homosexuality mainly used religious reasons. For instance:

I believe it to be outside of God's will for relationships. I believe the only proper place for sex is in an opposite sex marriage.

Homosexuality is abnormal. Because I am a Christian, it is just not accepted in the Bible, so I would not agree with it in that respect. Even though I respect who people are and what they are, I can not actually agree with it, certainly not in any sexual way, anyway.

However most white people wrote, in supposedly liberal terms, that homosexuality was not seen as a threat but as just a fact of life. Hence it was argued that:

I have nothing against homosexuals. They should be allowed to live as they want with no pressure.

I believe it to be the individual's choice and their right to express their own sexuality.

I think it is terrible that homosexuals are not treated like heterosexuals, that they 'have' to conceal aspects of their life, and that notions of homosexuality being sinful are still so widespread.

I do not think that there is anything wrong with homosexuality and it should be accepted instead of carrying such a social stigma.

I personally do not understand it, but I believe that each individual has the right to do what they want, as long as it does not harm other people.

I feel quite strongly that homosexuals should be completely accepted in society. I feel that it is a perfectly normal, acceptable way of expressing emotion.

On a personal level, I do not see it as an issue; socially homosexuals are repressed, victimised and politically treated appallingly.

I accept people's right to partake in other sexual activities other than heterosexuality.

I have no objections. Just because I am not a homosexual does not preclude me from accepting it.

It is a right to choose one's sexual preference.

Homosexuals should have the same rights as other people.

I look to the future in the hope that one day all people's sexuality will be one of individual choice.

Although half of the Black respondents considered homosexuality to be acceptable, most Blacks conceded that there were negative portrayals of homosexuality that also needed to be changed. Therefore eighteen Blacks criticised the mass media for depicting homosexuality as deviant, four believed that the mass media was fair in its representation, and one respondent did not know. Moreover twenty nine whites argued that bi - sexuals, homosexuals and lesbians are wrongly objectified as being interested only in sex. However, three white respondents suggested that due to increasing awareness of gay rights, myths about homosexual perversity are less likely. In general it was believed that homosexuality is still portrayed as a taboo. Subsequently, the mass media helps to amplify prejudices and distrust, as well as the verbal and physical abuse of bi - sexuals, homosexuals and lesbians.

As with the case of the treatment of Blacks, the mass media was seen as emphasising and confirming the erroneous ideas of people who did not have personal experiences with bi - sexuals, gay men and lesbians. Thus most Black respondents thought that the mass media perpetuates negative stereotypes of homosexuality. As such:

Homosexuality is seen as something to be ashamed of.
In general most people will not want to get

involved (as friends) with gay people, especially if they are of the same sex.

It makes people even more uncomfortable with gays if they are straight.

The media promotes heterosexuality as normal and devalues homosexual relationships. This is reflected in society's hostility and contempt shown towards the gay community, both publicly and informally.

The parallels between derogatory images of Black as well as homosexual, lesbian and bi - sexual sexuality is illustrated by the following quote from a Black person:

The media has the effect on people's perceptions in that people actually believe what they read and hear from the media. As such people perceive homosexuals as being promiscuous which is not the case; and also that they brought about AIDS. If you are heterosexual you should act in a way which is acceptable to the majority. The media has a great impact on people's perceptions and it tries to regulate people's lives into acceptance and conformity.

Black people, homosexuals, lesbians and bi - sexuals are castigated for their alleged promiscuity and are largely, it is claimed, responsible for the spread of AIDS. The fact that this inter - relationship between the dominant social construction of racialised and homophobic sexuality is generally ignored greatly contributes to the maintenance of derogatory myths. However some Black respondents were optimistic about the potential to challenge negative images, attitudes and treatment of bi - sexuals, lesbians and gay men. It was therefore widely believed by Blacks that:

People are beginning to accept homosexuality as another function of normal behaviour; the idea that it is in all of us.

The fact that there is now more media coverage of homosexuality is making people more aware (even if they want to ignore homosexuality). So hopefully eventually the impact will be a positive one

(about 1,000 years!)

Gay people seem to be frowned upon in society. However, gradually the situation seems to be getting better, especially compared to decades ago, they seem to be slowly being accepted. Whether a bi - sexual, homosexual or a lesbian would share this vision of an enlightened liberalism is debatable. I would guess that they would be as willing as Black people to think that their sexuality is portrayed in more favourable terms or that prejudices are slowly being eroded. For most white respondents the stereotype of respectable heterosexuality as characterised by the nuclear family, the male breadwinner and the female at home, implicitly implied that homosexuality was wrong. Consequently some whites claimed:

We are given the conception that the heterosexual nuclear family is the only 'right' and 'normal' system and anything that deviates from this is destructive and dangerous. People often have the belief that all gay men are effeminate or even paedophiles, and that all lesbian women are 'butch' and aggressive.

Heterosexuality is seen as the norm, fitting into the politics of the state, family and church. The media reflects the state's dominant influence of divide and rule i.e. picking on and generalising from differences between people and not the similarities. Therefore, instead of challenging ignorance, the mass media is regarded as a major tool in the reinforcement of curiosity, fascination and fear of homosexuality. Consequently a lack of understanding about homosexuality in wider society is reproduced by the mass media. The results, some white people argue, are devastating:

It must affect many people in a negative way. Hence sexual harassment of women by men and 'gay bashing' and persecution of gays.

It probably is not the sole cause of 'gay bashing' but it is a contributing factor. People will always try and injure the unknown or what scares them. The media simply acts as a catalyst.

Straight people are not thought about, however gays are felt sorry for, as if it was a disease they have.

Heterosexuals have very little press for they are seen as normal. Homosexuals have bad press. It is seen as very weird and wrong to love someone of the same sex. I think that the portrayal of heterosexuals, homosexuals and lesbians leads to their being treated accordingly to the strong media coverage. Very often gay couples are seen as outcasts and are the centre of abuse whereas straight people are not even a consideration. Whereas both Black and homosexual sexuality are stigmatised the former generally appears to be more acceptable in dominant society than the latter. Since the existence of negative depictions have been established as well as considered to give rise to discrimination, it is important to examine how this situation can be altered.

Do you think that racial and sexual
media portrayals should be changed?

In response to this question, 78% of both Black and white respondents argued that the mass media needs to transform its representation of Blacks, bi - sexuals, homosexual and lesbians. However, Blacks were twice as likely as whites to be unsure about the degree to which the mass media needs to promote a more balanced approach. Thus four Black respondents in comparison to two white respondents said that they did not know whether greater open mindedness was necessary. Meanwhile, whites were five times more likely than Black respondents to argue that racial and sexual depictions do

not need to be altered. Thus five whites and one Black were satisfied with the present mass media.

Whilst recognising that changing mass media images in itself would not reduce racism and homophobia unless linked to wider struggles to increase equal opportunities, it was principally maintained that change was necessary. Therefore greater information about the sexual realities of Blacks, bisexuals, homosexual and lesbians is necessary. Accordingly, some Black respondents argued:

In my opinion, the only way to eliminate any myths which may exist is to educate each race about the other. If the realisation is reached, that under the skin we are all different, this may help eliminate the idea of a 'superior' race, and all that goes with it. There is definitely a connection between race and sexuality, but its been founded on opinions, and not facts. 'Respect' plays a great role in this connection.

Of course, if we want to effect change in people's attitudes, there needs to be a concerted media campaign to redress the entire issue.

The truth would be the best way to start. Homosexuals are not all promiscuous. Show the loving nature involved. Its not an easy discovery to make. Education through the media is essential. Heterosexuals also have a difficult task as they have to go along and portray what the media claims heterosexuals do.

Any attitude that purports to attest certain behavioural patterns of individuals or groups to races or tribes must be changed. If I am bad, not all Blacks are bad. If a white man in Suffolk is sexually restrained, it does not mean that all whites are as such.

The acceptability of homosexuality should be promoted in the same way that heterosexuality is. In the present political climate and the influence of the New Right, it is highly unlikely that such changes will occur.

Social as well as sexual education.

Change the position of media portrayals of only Black men and white women or white men and Black women; and treat gay and lesbianism as acceptable as heterosexuality.

Yes, they are powerful and persuasive. The media therefore should be more responsible. Maybe more documentaries on Black families or Black courtship or exploring why people choose to be homosexual or lesbian.

The media plays an important role in shaping views on race and sexuality. It has a responsibility to show positive images in order to combat inherent prejudices within British society.

By not portraying racist images, and by accepting and not frowning upon gay people; and showing both of those in a positive light.

By following media policies that are culturally fair.

More informed, liberal attitudes eg. in advertising etc. Blacks are appearing now but still in stereotypical guises.

By removing Black and white stereotypes and by refraining from creating a matrix for racial conflict.

By simply portraying people as people and not just 'Black', 'White', 'gay', 'straight', etc. ie. the bit about Black men basically as studs. Black men are not only sex symbols or maniacs, they have brains too.

Racially there should be no difference concerning homosexuals and lesbians, simply say what they are (if at all), and no more.

For the five white respondents who opposed the notion of changing mass media images, the main reason was the belief in the promotion of free speech. Thus it was asserted that:

I believe in freedom of press and in making your own mind about things. Therefore I am absolutely opposed to society tampering deliberately with the media. Let them exist as they are. You are not forced to buy the papers whose views you dislike; or watch T.V. channels that transmit ideas different from yours. If you were to tamper

with them, their absence would conflict with other people's rights to make their own minds up, because indirectly you would be imposing your views on them, denying freedom of expression to ideas different from yours. It is a kind of intolerance, though skilfully disguised. So I absolutely oppose the idea of tampering with the media.

However most white people rejected this view and stressed that, as a powerful medium for the formation of cultural attitudes and political agendas, the mass media should be more accountable to the interests of 'minority' groups. Therefore it was believed that the distinct viewpoints of Blacks, bi - sexuals, homosexuals and lesbians should be encouraged by giving them greater access to the control of the mass media. The eradication of negative stereotypes was seen as part of a process of educating the general public; so that folk realise that Black and gay sexuality is not inherently different and abnormal. Likewise increased representation of 'mixed race' relationships in a positive light has great potential for the future. Thus possible suggestions, made by whites, to changing current portrayals were:

To encourage acceptance of individuals, not generalise about groups.

By not using negative stereotypes continually and derisively.

Becoming more libertine in their tolerance of particular issues. By not persecuting people using characteristics they can not change. By accepting that everyone is different and not portraying a norm that they press on the population.

Yes, every person, no matter what race or sexual identity, gender, religion etc. should be treated with the same respect, tolerance and understanding. It will take another hundred years to change all that!

Through true and positive images with harder line taken on 'comedians', programmes and documentaries that are offensive in their racist, sexist and homophobic portrayals and attitudes.

Putting pressure on the media and by changing society and the world we live in to one of need and not greed. By freeing our world of the profit urge, we liberate ourselves.

They have become part of social constructions of sexuality. So although they should be changed, is that a solution? If the media interacts with society then changing the media requires fundamental changes in society.

Conclusions

The questionnaire data demonstrates that popular perceptions of sexual identity are influenced by stereotypical notions about race and homosexuality. As I have argued, 'common sense' ideas about Blacks, lesbians, homosexuals and bisexuals, in terms of sexual perversity when compared to a mythical 'white heterosexuality' influence how these groups are treated in British society. The connections between racialized and homophobic images of sexuality have been explored in this chapter. Recognizing the importance of theorizing the inter-dependence of racism and heterosexism I consider the potential to transform images of unbridled sexuality that are attributed to Blacks, homosexuals, lesbians and bisexuals. Further research is needed to analyse these initial insights into the connections between myths of Blacks, lesbians, homosexuals and bisexuals as abnormal, licentious and diseased. It would also be interesting to explore the links between these stereotypes and derogatory

ideologies of working class and female sexualities. White heterosexuality is defined as the only correct racial / sexual preference. This not only regulates white heterosexual's behaviour but also entails notions about the need for protection. Thus 'mixed race' relationships, Blacks and homosexuality are seen as a threat. By reinforcing stereotypes about the sexuality of Black and gay people the mass media contributes to the maintenance of an unequal racial and sexual hierarchy. For this reason a major way of challenging the oppression of Black people, lesbians, gay men and bi - sexuals is to make the mass media more responsible in acknowledging their interests. However, this can not be done in isolation. Consciousness of the necessity of challenging derogatory racial and sexual theories is vital in all social spheres. The education system, employment practices and the provision of social services need to incorporate anti - racist, anti - homophobic and anti - sexist strategies so that the racialisation of heterosexuality is combated.

Pilot study

The pilot study was essentially a vehicle that I utilised to elaborate upon the issues that were raised by the questionnaire data. Therefore, the pilot study was fundamentally an exchange of ideas about race and sexuality between myself and eight other people. I interviewed four women: two Black and two white. I also interviewed two Black men and two white men. All of the participants chose their own pseudo-

nyms. With these people I first asked them their views about race and sexuality in the mass media and in British society generally. Second we debated the influence of these images upon their self - concepts and experiences. Thus, we discussed the prevalence of racist and homophobic myths and established the links between racism and homophobia.

In this section I want to offer an indepth view of a proportion of those studied - namely half. I have chosen one white man, two Black men and one white woman as representatives of the group. I am concentrating on these people because they gave the most relevant and interesting information. Their responses, along with the questionnaire data, give sketches of examples of the views of white males, Black males and white females. The other white man and the other white woman expressed views which had already been made evident in the questionnaire survey and as such it seemed less necessary to repeat these. The two Black women's opinions were somewhat similar to the interviewees that you will be read about in the next two chapters, and as such it did not seem appropriate to mention such views prematurely. Thus some of the opinions of Black women are discussed in the rest of this work.

Larry Devereaux

Larry Devereaux, a white male heterosexual, offered some thought - provoking information. Larry is a twenty six year old clerical officer who works for British Telecommunica-

tions. He believes that generally white men see Black women as a taboo; they are seen as something different, as sexually experienced with a lot of stamina. According to Mr Devereaux, sexual prowess is associated with Black women, which some white men would like to experience.

Larry claims that Black men also put a sexual image across about Black women, by saying if they see a white man with a Black woman, that he must be up to certain high sexual standards whereby he can deal with her. There is also an old fashioned notion which equates (young) Black women with having many children; as Larry argues Black women are seen as 'how many kids has she got?' Furthermore, Black women with children are subconsciously labelled as unmarried and therefore promiscuous.

Mr Devereaux says that at the moment Black women in general are very dominant in society as far as the mass media is concerned. However, it is the sexual sides of Black women's characters that are being promoted to a white market. This is exploiting Blacks which represents a fad. Black women have a sexual stigma but this is not seen by Larry as being promiscuous i.e. sleeping around. Black women have a sexual aura which, he thinks, is a big difference from promiscuity. Black females are sensuous - sexually talented. In the mass media, with products women generally are stereotyped as sexual e.g. stockings adverts. It is not necessarily a race issue. All women are seen as sex objects as the same. Black women are new; they are starting to become a bit more prominent in the mass media. White people start to take more

notice of Black women whereas before they were a taboo.

Describing his perception of the male psyche Mr Devereaux exclaims:

I suppose men being supposedly in control;
running things they don't have to really look at
themselves.

He adds that perhaps men should start to look at themselves whereas women have to look at class. Working class men are more secure about themselves and images of men because they are the underdogs. Whereas middle class men, 'yuppies' and those aspiring to be upwardly mobile are unsure of themselves as if they have to fit into a certain role. In such a precarious position clothes are equated with status.

Larry Devereaux thinks that he is able to try to see himself 'objectively'. However he reckons that:

As a white person I do not think I have got anything to live up to: I do not think I am set in specific stereotypes or specific roles. I am just myself.

As a white person Mr Devereaux believes that he is the norm and everything else has to relate to him. Therefore whatever he does he can get away with anything. As a white man Larry is not seen sexually in a particular way, he maintains. Meanwhile Black men live off the myth of being great lovers. This is an ego boost. Black men keep the image going.

Other sexual stereotypes, he mentions, are that the working class like 'a bit of rough'. Working class men and women are therefore unequal as the former are dominant and the latter are submissive. Whilst among the middle class there appears to be more sexual equality.

Larry Devereaux adds that men and women are generally more equal in a relationship but it's difficult getting there because the process is slow. Women can get more out of a relationship once they are in the bedroom. There is also a double standard whereby women are wary of initiating a sexual relationship. E.g. a woman is seen as 'slack' if she goes up to a man i.e. thought of as 'a slag'. Such a woman can be seen as 'a slapper'. The man feels threatened because he is caught off guard / unaware.

Marcus Stephens

Marcus is twenty three years old. He is Black, male and heterosexual. Mr Stephens is a driving instructor who is concerned about the particular ways that Black men are seen in society. He argues that these images need to be fended off. In terms of sexual images, Marcus maintains that white women see Black men as being good in bed. White women desire / go for Black men. Certain other Blacks and whites think the same but there is no gain from it. For Black men, Mr Stephens believes that maybe benefits can be gained sexually but not beyond e.g. it is difficult to rise in employment. Marcus would rather see professional gains: power. He argues that the sexual image creates obstacles which prevents Black men from gaining power in other areas:

I feel these images are harmful because society in general allows the Black man to think of himself as being powerful in that way, as good in bed; but at the expense of not excelling in other areas, which are more profitable in my opinion. I would like to see Black men rise in a professional way.

More professional Black men and not professional in bed. I am talking about seeing more Black professional people (e.g. lawyers) rather than Black men as being superior sexually.

Mr Stephens suggests that white men want to go out with Black women as it makes them feel proud like its a great achievement. For white men this is a subjective challenge within themselves. However it is more common to see a Black man with a white woman and more acceptable (to Black communities), than seeing a white man and a Black woman.

Marcus Stephens vehemently argues that Black women give Black men a hard time. Thus it is very difficult for many Black men to approach Black women because of the latter's hostility and 'attitude problem'. He maintains that a lot of Black women are hostile because they think that Black men are trying to get them into bed and because of the 'white woman / Black man thing'. Consequently several Black men go out with white women. Mr Stephens considers that Black women have to deal with the problem themselves. Hence Black women should not shift the blame onto Black men because Black women are not being noticed by them.

Marcus sees the person he meets as a person, not in terms of race / prejudice, but whether they are compatible. Mr Stephens believes that it is wrong to compare Black women with white women. He discusses a familiar Black male problem that says, 'I will get my 'tings' off a white woman but I will marry a Black woman'. The problem is created by people with 'chips on their shoulders'. Black women are seen as good in bed by white men. Marcus asserts that Black women do not see Black men in the same way that white women do. There is an

emphasis on how Black men look at (white) women but Black women know that the myth is not true. There is envy because white men feel that Black men are taking 'their' women. Marcus Stephens suggests that:

The Black man becomes convinced that he is seen as being 'the stud'. It can be advantageous for him to live up to the stereotype. If he feels that he can not see any other way out then he will use that but there is a problem.

Mel Estes and James Rene

A joint interview between Mel Estes and James Rene raised further significant topics. Mel is twenty seven years old. She is a white and heterosexual woman. In addition, Ms Estes is a postal officer. James is also twenty seven and heterosexual. Mr Rene is a Black man who is a reprographic technician. Both Mel and James provided fruitful contributions to previous debates:

James asserts that race affects one's sexual identity, how society treats you and your reaction to different things. There are more sexual images of Black men as being better in bed. Blacks are portrayed as promiscuous. White men feel threatened when a Black person is around and resent Black men going out with white women: White men feel 'what is she doing with him when she could be with me?' When Black men see Black women with white men they feel the same way.

Both James and Mel argue that sexual images of Blacks and gays are not changing. However, they think that sexual images should be changed e.g. more positive images in the

mass media.

Mel states that white people are supposed to be conquerors and civilisers. Whites are not seen sexually. Negative images do not affect her because she knows Blacks and gays. If she lived in an enclosed environment and did not know Blacks and gays then she would get her information from the mass media. Mel does not think that there is a link between images of Blacks and gays. She suggests that if a person is confident sexually then s / he will be confident in other ways as well. Once you feel good about yourself you portray a positive image. What is seen as immoral is often a 90's liberated woman. As a white person Mel is not treated sexually in a particular way. The image of a white woman who goes out with Black men, a white woman that Black men like, is a loud 'tart'.

Mel's dad is racist because of his ignorance. He was a police man who was patrolling a predominantly Black area. Therefore the people who were arrested the most were Black. Consequently he thinks that all Blacks are criminals and upstarts. It is the way he has been brought up.

Mel maintains that racism is not changing. There is prejudice because people are ignorant. They do not understand a culture therefore they dismiss it.

James adds that people's attitudes are better towards 'mixed race' relationships but these are not perfect.

Mel argues that it depends on where you live. If you live in London then there might not be any grief but if you reside

in a predominantly white area then there might be. She suggests that it also depends on class. If a rich Black person lives in a white environment then it might not matter. Money talks and whites might not look down upon you and be so resentful. Also some Blacks might bear resentment if a Black person goes out with whites because they see it as wrong. It all has to do with the way they have been brought up socially and sexually: education, who you mix with and family attitudes. For instance, Mel moved from Southall because her mum did not want her to marry an Indian. Her mother worried that the cultures are different and so it would not work e.g. people put things through their letter box. Hence it is easier for Mel to marry a white man than a non - white man.

James declares that Black men are seen as studs and Black women are good at 'it' (i.e. sex). Gays are treated as second class citizens, a bit like Blacks, maybe a bit worse - due to AIDS gays are treated like 'shit'. These stereotypes are generalisations whereby the majority of people hate gays more than Blacks. Other people expect a stereotype of Black men: strong, masterful, powerful and virile. Black women are seen as a threat, good at sex and more sexually responsive than white women.

Mel adds that Black women are seen as being more mouthy.

James claims that Blacks are not shown sexually today as much as during the 1970's, when there were more blatant stereotypes e.g. 'Blaxploitation' films. Some images are still around e.g. last year in 'East Enders' a Black man was

a pimp. But images of Blacks are not perfect yet improving. The mass media is trying to treat people as normal people rather than treating them as a separate entity. In 'Blaxploitation' films Black men are screwing, killing, making lots of money, wearing flashy over the top clothes and are drug dealers.

James suggests that now images are a bit more of a Black as a normal person. The images are improving. Sexual images of Blacks do not affect Blacks so much as put images of Blacks to whites. Therefore most whites think that Blacks are like that. So usually whites' perceptions of Blacks equal the stereotype.

Mel argues that these attitudes of whites towards Blacks affect many Blacks.

James asserts that this is because most whites do not know Blacks.

Mel (on a different tack), says that because of AIDS images of homosexuality are getting worse because it is predominantly a so - called 'gay disease'. People are more wary: people think 'I am not going near that person because they might have AIDS'.

James believes that people are blaming gays for AIDS so whatever kinds of freedoms they were getting since the 1960's / 1970's, since AIDS they have been knocked back down again. For instance, Clause 28 etc.: education. Since AIDS gays have less freedom or have not advanced as far as they would have done if AIDS was not about. Although people

dislike the idea of homosexuality they were beginning to be a bit more tolerant of it before AIDS, which has set them back. AIDS is also seen in terms of Blacks and Africa. There is an association between Blacks i.e. promiscuous and catching AIDS Eg. in Uganda a lot of people are dying of AIDS and images shown worldwide reinforce stereotypes of Blacks sleeping around because of so many people catching it. The argument is that people are sleeping around catching it and they are obviously promiscuous, this is seen as a fact. Mel intervenes that religion is significant when you can have as many wives as you want eg. Arabs - leads to promiscuity.

James sees a stage in years to come as AIDS seen 'as a gay plague' and Blacks will be associated with it as well eg. belief that AIDS came from Africa. So every Black person in Britain will be seen as having the potential to be an AIDS carrier. This leads to caution.

Mel states that her mum said that she should have an AIDS test because of the Africans she has slept with.

James says that if the AIDS thing gets worse and spreads more; the position that gays are in now might happen with regards to Blacks in years to come. He maintains that the position of gays and AIDS, there is more of a link at the moment than there is to AIDS and Africa / Blacks. If the AIDS thing in Africa gets worse or out of control...

Mel discusses a T. V. programme on AIDS in Uganda: Black men were not taught how to use condoms and they thought that it was not manly to use condoms.

James suggests that images of Blacks are better than before but they are not perfect.

Mel equates Blacks with education, upward mobility and so they know more about their rights.

James argues that we have to get rid of stereotypes of every gay / Black and he can not see that happening in the foreseeable future.

Mel asserts that we should get more Blacks in the mass media and thus change race / sex images eg. on T.V.

James thinks that people question the stereotypes that they see.

Mel maintains that people are gullible. The mass media affects them and they believe the mass media.

James does not see things changing vastly for Blacks and gays because the stereotypes are still around. James claims that he uses the images to his advantage. The Black male is depicted as being virile. He thinks that it is good to play about with the stereotype - use it or do the complete opposite to prove people wrong. In a way you are reacting to the stereotype whatever you do. You can not separate from being yourself and your position in a majority white society. It is different if you are living where the majority of people are Black. The idea of stereotypes does not pop up.

Mel talks about the images of white women. They appear to be prudish and frigid. This is also a stereotype. Class differences influence the way that whites are seen. White working class men are seen as lager louts. Middle class white men

are viewed as snotty, posh, snobby and sporty - hunting, fishing and shooting. They have to be seen in the right places. And 'yes dear let us do it in the missionary position' - very sexually inhibited. Working class white women are seen as being freer with their (sexual) favours.

James interjects that white working class women are seen as 'scrubbers' - i.e. as promiscuous.

Mel continues that white working class women are generally seen as being prostitutes e.g. they have many children, wear short split skirts, high heels and have dyed blond hair. There are class distinctions between Blacks but sexually all are seen the same. Blacks are portrayed as happy, jolly, can move and dance, free, they have got rhythm and are sexually free.

James states that the Black middle class are not visible to the majority of people.

Mel argues that West Indian 'immigration' did not provide opportunities in the 1960's but their offspring have some opportunities due to education.

James believes that for most Black working class people there is job improvement but discrimination continues and generalisations about sex.

Mel mentions oppressing the self; how stereotypes affect Black people's experiences so that they feel inhibited sexually.

James asserts that the sexual images of the Black man are to his advantage.

Mel reminds that the Black man has to live up to it.

James retorts that you should not worry or care about how people see you in terms of racist sexual stereotypes; they have a preconceived idea of what you are. You can play to it or not; or do the opposite or not give a damn.

Mel insists that you should give a damn because if you care about what these images are all about then do not play in to stereotypes. You should just be yourself. Do not use colour as a barrier eg. discrimination in employment.

James says that Blacks and gays are a minority who are discriminated against but do not necessarily link them together. Black gays are hated by other Blacks. Blacks are more likely to be discriminated against because of race eg. you can not see if someone white is gay unless they announce it.

Mel maintains that gays suffer more than Blacks. For instance, gays do not have the same opportunities eg. have children.

James replies about racial discrimination eg. segregation in a restaurant. There is racism in 'The Sun'. If you try to smash barriers there is opposition.

Mel adds to do this that you need to be strong.

James rejoins that he will not bother.

Mel says that he should bother because of Malcolm X etc.

James acknowledges that he is alive because of people like Malcolm X but through Hitler minorities were killed.

Mel repeats that it is easier for Blacks than for gays: the disadvantage is you can see you are Black but you can not

see you are gay. Gays can not live a 'normal' life.

James explains that he is not sure about what is the same for gays but because he is Black people treat him differently. He is seen as a stereotype but not if you know him. Some people see him as a Black man, as passive, but not anyone who knows him. There was a white man in the gym and James played up to the stereotype of being very good (sexually). First James denied it and then he said 'maybe you should introduce me to your girlfriend'. That shut him up.

Mel responds that until Blacks control the mass media things will not change. Blacks acting as ordinary working class and middle class people eg. in 'East Enders' with a Black family and not a Black man as a boxer. We need to find a balance, Black characters versus sex and to query the political as opposed to entertainment value.

James concludes that as a Black man he is seen as a stereotype but he does not adopt it. Black women are seen as craving for sex.

Summary

The pilot study raised some issues that had already been made evident in the questionnaire data and that will be reinforced later. Especially, the three themes of imagery, identification and relationships which will be assessed further with particular reference to twenty one African - Caribbean women. All of the participants in the pilot study were aware that there were racist stereotypes about the sexuality of Black people but they were ambiguous about the

racialised sexuality of white people. Both Black men, Marcus Stephens and James Rene, realise that they are regarded by mainstream culture as being promiscuous and virile studs by virtue of being Black. Mr Rene believes that he uses racist sexual images to his own advantage but I concur with Mr Stephens that this is extremely problematic.

The white man, Larry Devereaux, agrees with the other participants that Blacks are seen as being more sexual than whites; adding that Black men reinforce the 'lover man' myth. Mr Devereaux argues that men, and I would like to add most whites, symbolise the norm and are in control; they do not have to consider how society perceives them and as a result to analyse themselves. The white woman, Mel Estes, elaborates on Larry's point that as a white person she does not think that she is treated sexually in a particular way. Mel explains that racism is not changing due to ignorance. She agrees with Mr Rene that sexual images of Blacks and gay people are not changing. Ms Estes argues that for reform to happen these groups need to have more control of the mass media and so portray more positive race / sex images in the mass media.

CHAPTER FIVE

FROM SENSUOUS BEINGS TO SAPPHIRES: IMAGES OF BLACK FEMALE SEXUALITY AND THE IMPACT UPON IDENTITY

So far we have looked at the development of sexual imagery about Black women since the sixteenth century. These myths have been seen to be perpetuated in the British and American film industries. Roland Barthes argues that dominant myths are commonly changing stories whereby a culture understands something through naturalizing history and society (Barthes, 1993). He was not directly interested in gender, sexual and racial politics. My interest in the extent to which a respondent centred analysis would confirm the existence and prevalence of racialised sexual stereotypes, that had previously been revealed by the literature that I had reviewed, is first addressed by the questionnaire survey. This study laid the foundation for this chapter and the next by beginning to assess not only the significance of racialised sexual images but also their effects upon identity and relationships. However these two chapters, based on empirical data on twenty one Black women, go into these issues with more depth. For now, the relevance of these images and their relation to Black women's self perceptions will be explored.

Images of Black female sexuality in British
society and in the media

In this part of the chapter, I will critically reevaluate some contemporary literature on race and sexual images in view of the findings of my empirical research. These representations are generally responding to 'common sense' views about Black female sexuality. According to Clifford Geertz, 'common sense' is 'thoroughly constructed, comprising naturalized and consensual definitions' (Clarke, 1991). Stuart Alan Clarke maintains that the construction of 'common sense' is central to political debate. He points out that:

Common sense is an eclectic phenomenon. Its constituent symbols, images, and meanings are loosely assembled from diverse sources of political and popular culture. Partly for this reason it is not monolithic across a society or a culture - it would be a mistake to think about socially constructed common sense in terms of some absolute ideological hegemony... (Clarke, 1991: 40)

Of the twenty one women that I interviewed, nineteen discussed the prevalence of racist depictions of Black women's sexuality. The other two argued that Black women are rendered invisible in Britain, and as such there is not a particular focus on their sexuality. The general opinion among the interviewees was that Black women are either portrayed mainly as whores or less often as mummies. Moreover, in contrast to the existing literature on the racialisation of sexual mythology, the respondents gave detailed accounts of the prevalence of these myths in their lives. I intend to discuss the stereotypes that they believe to be the most common and significant. As such I will be examining

eight racialised sexual themes that these Black women mentioned: sensuous / sensuality, animalistic, good sexual performance, looseness, promiscuity, prostitution, breeding and Sapphire.

It is necessary to briefly re - analyse racialised sexual imagery in relation to the history of the social construction of race. Winthrop Jordan's study skilfully shows how, by the middle of the sixteenth century, four factors had already come into play to lend to the English re - definition of the African as a slave: First, according to Jordan, the African's skin colour was depicted in a negative manner. Blackness had come to be equated with all that was bad, sinful and dirty. Second, the African, lacking what were defined as Christian values, was considered to be a heathen and therefore, by extension, uncivilised. Third, Winthrop Jordan explains that the African was viewed as a savage beast. It was unfortunate that the Europeans first came into contact with Africans at the same time as they first discovered the apes, on the same continent. Thereby, the Europeans drew unfavourable comparisons, and imputed the animalistic behaviour of the ape to their pre - conceptions of African people's characters. Finally, and more important in the context of this work, Africans were thought to be in possession of unbridled sexualities. Jordan argues that the result of these early negative interactions between Africans and Europeans was a belief amongst Europeans that Africans needed to be disciplined and their morality redefined i.e.

strictly controlled (Jordan, 1977).

In the same way that these representations were used to justify the institution of slavery from the eighteenth century onwards, theories of Africans' inferiority, codified in emergent theories of biological determinism. This largely served to legitimate and entrench inequalities of status, power and wealth, firmly within the European psyche (Fryer, 1984). The pseudo - scientific arguments that sought to set apart and identify Black people as not only physically distinct in terms of race, but also in terms of their sexuality, were connected to white social, economic and political domination in Britain. Such views continue to the present day as the following testimonies of the interviewees show:

Sensuous / Sensual

The most common image that was mentioned by the interviewees is sensuality. Eleven women argued that Black women are predominately seen as sensual. Tracy Ross argues that this image also incorporates the idea that Black women are mystical, fiery and licentious. She believes that white men fantasise about Black women being oversexed. Tracy suggests:

I think that many of the sexual images are sensual images. Black women are seen as sensually appealing. Often there is this dark mystical woman. Often Black women's figures, their shapes are very different to white women and so they are much more ample both above and below. I think that that is seen as very sensual. I often think it is seen as off limits. It is seen as if it is hot; it is too hot to handle.

The argument that white men promote an image of Black women

as sensual, more sensual than white women, is further supported by Yvonne Stewart. Yvonne considers the contradiction between a portrayal of Black women that stresses their hyper - sexuality, and so does not allow for the many differences that exist among them, and her contention that Black women are in fact sexy. Yvonne Stewart indicates that these images are reproduced externally and internally:

They look better. Black women do look sexy. That is all there is to it really. They are very sexy women. They have this thing don't they? And yes, I suppose white men do find them sexy. I'll tell you a white man said to me 'you are all woman.' He had the hots for me. He drove me crazy. We have this image, I suppose, of being sexy and we are. It is really hard for me to say on a whole. I am just like speaking on a personal level because I really do not know. Sometimes I can not understand Black women themselves myself.

To what extent is the image of Black women's sex appeal merely an image? The internalisation of racist stereotypes and its connection to the sexual realm has been cogently theorised by Frantz Fanon. Accordingly Fanon reasons:

...if one wants to understand the racial situation psychoanalytically...as it is experienced by individual consciousness, considerable importance must be given to sexual phenomena.
(Fanon, 1967: 160)

As I have previously argued, research on racism has failed to adequately examine how racist ideologies and practices have a distinctly sexual dynamic. Lola Young provides a brilliant analytical framework of the dialectics of race and sexuality. In an essay about the film 'Mona Lisa', which I have mentioned in Chapter Two, Young explains the ways in which Black women are objectified and associated with sensu-

ousness (Young, 1990). Relatedly, Joel Kovel stresses that white people perceive Black people to be:

...warm, dirty, sloppy, feckless, lazy, improvident and irrational, all those traits that are associated with Blackness, odour, and sensuality... (Kovel, 1970: 195)

Animalistic

Lola Young further argues that since the eighteenth century, pseudo - scientific racism, associated Black sexuality with animal imagery (Young, 1990). In my sample, seven women maintained, in accordance with my literature review, that not only are Black women portrayed as lustful but also as animalistic. Hence Sally B states:

It is white men who see the Black woman as an unsatisfied mamma just to be used sexually. Black women are seen as sexual animals. For example, in the media they are seen as beasts. The Black woman is an unsatiated mamma who can satisfy you. You are just to be used any way and not to be seen as a person. As a human being you are used and thrown away like rubbish.

Good In Bed

Again confirming my literature review, nine women believed that Black women are seen as being good in bed, i.e. better than their white counterparts. Yvonne Stewart tries to ignore the myth that Black women have more sexual prowess than white women. The link between this stereotype and that of Black women's animal - like sexuality is explored by Sian Lacy. Thus, Sian suggests that within the notion of a zoo - like sexuality, is the belief that Black women are sexually

wild, strong and passionate. Moreover, the Black woman is primarily regarded as being 'a woman who can fuck'. Sian Lacy rejects the icon of the horny Black woman. She thinks that the view that Black women are very good at sex, giving as good as they get sexually dehumanises them to a sort of working animal:

I suppose we're seen as just there to do whatever is necessary. So if you meet somebody's services sexually, you will fulfil that role as well.

Loose

Inter - connected with ideas about Black female sexual proclivity is the concept of 'looseness'. Subsequently, seven interviewees thought that this notion was prevalent. They debated how the depiction of the loose Black woman influenced their lives. Their views are clearly articulated by Melisa Jones. Melisa thinks that white men are fascinated by the way that Black women look. However, she argues that the fact that Black women have a different skin colour from whites is also held to be an indication that Black women perform differently sexually. This supports Sander L. Gilman's excellent analysis of the correlation between race, sexuality and pathology. Gilman forcefully argues:

Sexual anatomy is so important a part of self image that 'sexually different' is tantamount to 'pathological' - the other is 'impaired', 'sick', 'diseased'. Similarly, physiognomy or skin colour that is perceived as different is immediately associated with 'pathology' and 'sexuality'.
(Gilman, 1985: 25)

Therefore, by virtue of their phenotypical characteristics,

Black women are seen as being inherently hyper - sexual, and 'sick' beings, at one and the same time. Consequently, there is the stereotype of Black women as sexually adventurous, 'laid back' with the ability to 'let themselves go'. This is predominantly construed as an indication of Black women's pathological deviation from the socio - sexual norm: that is the behaviour displayed, or assumed to be displayed, by white women. Melisa Jones discusses the prevailing view of Black women's capacity to 'roll about more, enjoy themselves, be livelier, more willing and able'. According to Melisa, white men's curiosity about Black women is aroused by their belief that:

Coloured girls are supposed to be more sexually aware. They let themselves go more. That is why I think that some white guys go out with Black girls. Now they all want to have a go. They want to know if it is really true. People want to know what the fascination is. I think they are fascinated by the hype that we have got...It starts off with the fascination and then it gets hyped up. And then the fascination just escalates and it stays there.

Promiscuous

Thus, as Sander L. Gilman argues, the concept of racial difference is ingrained with sexual meanings. Within a racist society the amalgamation of race and sexuality represents a great taboo. This gives rise to white people having fantasies about Black people (Gilman, 1985). Sander L. Gilman's perception is authenticated by the assertions of six women. They all identified the mass media as a source of propagation of racially and sexually charged myths and

stereotypes of promiscuous Black women. Whilst it was agreed that in general, white men also aid the propagation of these myths, there was some disagreement about the extent to which white women did so. There was also dispute about the degree to which Black men and women also - perhaps unintentionally - aid the sustenance of this mythology. Roseanne Park argues that Black men are also complicit in this view. Roseanne adds:

It is an image because it is untrue. It is a racist way of keeping Black women down. It has worked because the Black man uses the view that she is promiscuous; because it ties in with the whole idea of her being independent and head of the household. The Black man is almost led by the hand to believe this because he has already been told that she wears the trousers. He does not challenge that so he is not going to challenge that she is a slut in bed. It gives him an explanation as to why he is not doing so well.

Prostitutes

The obvious conclusion to the racist and sexist theory that Black women are promiscuous is that they are prone to prostitution. Discussing the manner that Black women are racially and sexually pathologised, Lola Young suggests that Black women are:

...constructed through a white male fantasy which sees female genitalia as evidence of an anomalous sexuality and Black female sexuality as a sexual and social threat to be subjected to control. The Black woman is not only the object of sexual perversity, she is also its source. Alongside that, the belief that female prostitution is somehow a natural consequence of excessive female sexuality still has currency...
(Young, 1990: 200)

However, it is argued that the devalued representation of Black women is also strengthened by the opinions of six women

in my sample. In terms of the 'mammy' and 'whore' dichotomy that I mentioned earlier, Fosuwa Andoh says:

I think that on T.V. Black women are asexual or they go to the other extreme and they are prostitutes ... Those are the two extremes where they have no sexuality or they have too much.

Breeders

The connections between the 'mammy' and 'whore' imagery is evident in the myth that Black women are blessed with fecundity, that they are good breeders. As previously mentioned, during slavery the portrayal of Black women as being more sexually active than white women, as well as being of a licentious nature, was used to legitimise the large scale forced breeding of Black slave women (Collins, 1990). The legacy of this mythology is demonstrated by eight women's conviction that Black women are still seen as being fit only for breeding purposes. They assert that the stereotype of the strong Black female, capable of producing many children, is not only pervasive amongst white people. It is additionally claimed that many Black men also internalise disparaging assumptions about Black women that have been conceived by whites. This in turn affects numerous Black men's treatment of Black women. Such a view is shared by Beverley Marsden. So, Beverley remarks:

Men just see us here as breeding animals. I don't think they see us as women who have a right to say what we want.

Moreover, it is argued that the sexualised representation of

Black women as breeders constitutes an institutionalised tool that is used to disempower them. Beverley Bryan et. al. confirm Zora Day's awareness that the image of the breeder severely influences Black women's access to state benefits (Bryan et. al., 1985). In concurrence with Bryan et. al., Zora argues that embedded within social policies is a stereotype of Black women migrants. The welfare system is affected by the incorrect assumption that Black women, being too lazy to work, and lacking a father for their abundance of children, rely on state handouts for support. They are thus identified as social scroungers, and furthermore, blamed for the destruction of their own families. Beverley Bryan et. al. take issue with this image of Black women as parasitic. Bryan et. al. note that:

...We are described by the media as 'scroungers' and depicted as having a child-like dependence upon a benevolent caring (white) society. Social workers are seen as the twentieth-century missionaries who come into our communities to challenge ignorance and poverty. This image does not, however, expose the extent to which social and economic factors outside our control have forced us into this cycle of dependency on the State; nor does it convey the true nature of our contribution to this society. Black women's labour has propped up this country, not only over the past four decades but for centuries. Far from draining its resources, we have been the producers of its wealth. (Bryan et. al., 1985:111)

Sapphire

The Sapphire image of Black female sexuality is also alluded to by eight of the respondents. Writing in *Ain't I A Woman?*, bell hooks shows how the use of the Sapphire stereotype to define Black women as assertive, tough and evil

serves to drive a wedge between Black men and women. bell hooks explains that:

Sapphire emasculates men by the aggressive usurpation of their role. (hooks, 1982:85)
As such it is believed by these women that Black womanhood is largely defined as sinful, powerful and dangerous. Thus, Black women are stigmatised as strong and predatory sexual temptresses, capable of mesmerising and bewitching men. The interdependence of racialised sexual imagery is indicated by Roseanne Park. Roseanne believes that:

The myths are promoted basically by white people, particularly the white male in his quest to dominate Black people. Myths such as the Sapphire, the promiscuous Black woman. There is the idea that the Black woman can sleep around. It all goes back to a loose woman concept. That myth is created by the white man to maintain the power hierarchy.

The significance of racialised sexual imagery

I want to argue that for Black women who are pathologised as sexually perverse and deviant; as sensuous, sensual, animalistic, good in bed, promiscuous, prone to prostitution, breeders and Sapphires, such myths may be understood within a wider socio - economic and political context. The racist and sexist stereotypes about Black female sexuality can be seen as part of Black women's subordination within British society. Analyses of racialised sexual ideologies and the multifarious ways that they are vindicated are pertinent to this debate (Miles & Phizacklea, 1980).

Frantz Fanon powerfully explains white people's fantasies

about Black people and the ways in which they are characterised. Fanon examines whites' phobic reactions to Black people. He concludes that such feelings are based in feelings of fear, revulsion and loathing. Frantz Fanon suggests that racial conflict is attributed to white society's own sexual insecurities. This in turn compels whites to attempt to control what they view as the overt sexuality of Black people. The supposedly superior sexuality of Blacks is actually regarded as a potential threat to white domination. As a result, Black sexuality has to be severely controlled (Fanon, 1965).

In this manner, Lola Young argues that white society's anxieties about their own sexuality is projected onto Black people. Young believes that the anxieties of whites may be attributed to the perceived loss of control over their own sexual desires. Yet these anxieties are repressed by white society, defining a secure image of themselves as being in control of their sexual needs and constructing the antithesis of this in Black people. Lola Young declares that:

For whites to see themselves as rational, ordered and civilised people, they have to construct a notion of irrationality, disorder and uncivilised behaviour which is then imposed on the object of their stimulus to anxiety. Elements of the culture which are repressed re-emerge in the despised culture. So that where whites may have fantasies about total sexual abandonment whilst living under a yoke of sexual repression, that fantasy is projected onto Blacks. (Young, 1990: 193)

Lola Young therefore maintains that a crisis in white sexual identities leads to a transference of anger, frustration

and loss of control onto Black people. Subsequently the icon of the Black is seen as symbolic of nature, dirt and decay. Hence Black people are seen as instinctual, diseased and tainted. By associating Blackness with alienation and chaos, Young asserts, white people attempt to cope with their own desire and pain. Thereby Black people, since they are seen as different and in opposition to whites, are identified as the source of disorder, corruption and violence (Young, 1990).

The contradictions between the idealised and the actual self - the former being the dominant image of white sexuality and the latter projected onto Black people - is extremely difficult to comprehend. A possible route out of this dilemma is to split the self into 'good' and 'bad'. Sander L. Gilman argues that:

The 'bad' self with its repressed sadistic impulses, becomes the 'bad' other, the 'good' self / object, with its infallible correctness, becomes the flawed image of the self, the self out of control. The 'bad' other becomes the negative stereotype; the 'good' other becomes the positive stereotype. The former is what we fear to become: the latter that which we cannot achieve. (Gilman, 1985: 20)

The degree that this is causally linked to socio-economic and political subordination is debatable. These issues have hitherto virtually escaped socio-political analysis. Mae C. King argues that the plight of Black women will continue to be distorted and suppressed under the present regime of unequal power relations. King states that:

In explicating the stereotyped images of black

women, we have shown that these images are basic and fundamental to a political system founded on racial oppression and organized on the caste principle...they serve ultimately as a means of institutionizing the 'power distance' between the white male powerholders and the lower caste victims of their action. Since the stereotypes symbolize system sanctioned degradation, the powerholders are, not only free to, but encouraged to exploit the black woman on an economic, personal and social basis, without incurring cost to their power position, status, conscience, or material well-being... (King, 1973: 22)

Furthermore, 'common sense' ideas about Black women as being 'sensuous / sensual', 'animalistic', 'good in bed', 'loose', 'promiscuous', 'prostitutes', 'breeders' and 'Sapphires' may influence whites perceptions of and treatment of Black women. The ascription of negative characteristics to Black people is taken up by, and entrenched further, by the mass media as shown by the discussion on film in Chapter Two. The negative representation of Black women in British culture may be directly attributed to this practice. Thus prevalent mythology surrounding Black female sexuality gives rise to fear and resentment among many white people. As such Black women's sexuality, and the connection that is automatically made to a high rate of fertility, is a source of racial antagonism and hostility. Since it is believed that Black female sexuality and fertility represent a threat to 'the British way of life,' attempts are made to regulate it, eg. by racist population policies. The alleged potential damage of Black women's sexuality to the British social order is controlled by reinforcing racist ideologies and the power to white people that they give. Mae C. King proclaims:

... it should be emphasized that although the stereotyped images of black women are generally

devoid of reality, this actuality hardly diminishes their effectiveness in achieving the political power purposes that they serve. The power of image - making is concentrated in the hands of white male castes and, therefore, their victims have little recourse to counteracting the negativisms that derive from this situation. (King, 1973: 22)

From Sexual Denigration to Self Respect:

Identity as a Source of Power

Previously I have explored the prevalence of negative stereotypes of Black female sexuality. In this section I intend to examine the complex ways in which these images contribute to Black women's sense of self. Through an analysis of the interviewees' definitions of their racial and gender identities, I want to assess how racialised sexual mythology influences their experiences. First I want to glance at some theoretical debates that are relevant to this issue.

Amina Mama theorises subjectivity as the historical, collective, and inter - relational positions of consciousness that individuals take up in discourses, that is systems of meanings and signification. Mama maintains that Black subjectivity is a multiple awareness of one's historical and cultural position in a different symbolic order which struggles against imposed inferiorization. Amina Mama questions the possibility of developing Black subjectivity within the contradiction between a 'positive' Black self and a racist white society. She argues that most Blacks living in Britain have a dual experience of racist domination and national

identification, having experienced both colonialism and racism here. The colonised Black is an object of the white colonialist's projections. Mama queries the extent to which Black people can feel subjectively secure in their relationships with either subjugated Blacks or dominating whites in racist societies (Mama, 1987). For many Black women in Mama's Ph.D. research on the racialisation of subjectivity, which is entitled 'Race And Subjectivity: A Study Of Black Women', the overthrow of racist subjectification to really 'become Black' entails the splitting or separation from the dominant racist society through a movement of power. This is achieved either by creativity and imagination, or radical politics, or lifestyles or the type of work that women are doing (Mama, 1987).

Avtar Brah asks:

...how the racialized 'other' is constituted in the psychic domain...how is the link between social and psychic reality to be theorized?
(Brah, 1992: 142)

Avtar Brah argues that subjectivity is perpetually occurring (Brah, 1992). As June Jordan observes identities are complex; they are in a state of flux and change (Jordan, 1989).

Amina Mama suggests that identity is created out of contradiction and exposure (Mama, 1987).

The most obvious person's work to address when looking at racialised sexual identity is the anti-colonial psychologist Frantz Fanon because he assesses the sexual aspects of racism. Fanon offers a scientific exploration of the problems of personal identity caused by the difficult race, sex

and class relationship that exists between African, European and New World societies. He analysed the connection between racism and class exploitation from the viewpoint of the subordinated. Frantz Fanon, through his psychological study of colonialism, criticised the notion of the under - development of the African's personality (McCulloch, 1983). Fanon thought that Blacks were alienated by the myth of racial inferiority about their cultures and traditions as well as economic subjugation, whilst whites felt superior. This he argues must be understood in socio - political terms (Fanon, 1965).

Frantz Fanon asserts that white people loath Blacks because, in Western culture, Black skin is connected with sexual potency, impurity, dirt, savagery and sin. Black Antilleans, in his assessment, concur with this belief and either despise themselves or feel ambivalent. This leads to lactification, i.e. the doomed and hence frustrating pathological desire to be white. Thereby Blacks identify with whites, Blacks imitate white's speech, dress and also look for white sexual partners (McCulloch, 1983). Thus the rejection of the Black self is a result of identification with the white Other. Therefore this represents a consequence of the acceptance of the white Other's image of the Black self as inferior. Due to the pervasiveness of this process of acculturation, Frantz Fanon queried the possibility of sexual relations between whites and Blacks without the consciousness about Blacks and whites that is propagated by a racist attitude and which for Black people involves the phobic white

culture (Gendzier, 1973).

Amina Mama maintains that it is white supremacy that necessitates Black consciousness (Mama, 1987). For Black people, Frantz Fanon believed, negritude - his quest for personal / racial identity and resolve to the problems of psychoexistential alienation by self understanding - signified as a step towards self respect (McCulloch, 1983). However nine years before his death Fanon dismissed negritude as an ideology of identity. By analysing the situation of being colonised Frantz Fanon created a unique and compelling psychopathology of colonialism (McCulloch, 1983). He shows the political implications of his belief that both the colonizer and the colonized depend upon each other in order to constitute the self (Gaines, 1992).

Frantz Fanon argues that the process of racial and sexual mythologising is so significant that a correct comprehension of racism cannot be achieved without examining sexuality. Blacks are primarily viewed in terms of an exaggerated sexuality so they are an obvious choice as the site of sexual ambivalence. He discusses the process of neurotic projection, and sublimation of aggressive and sexual drives, whereby Black people take the burden for white people's sexual guilt. Whites keep their emotional balance by projecting their sexual anxieties and sexual and moral depravity onto Blacks. Fanon assesses negrophobia in which Blacks provoke suppressed hatred amongst whites but are also secretly regarded as being attractive. The admiration, fascination and dread for Black people enables the phobic white

person to hide from their own sadomasochistic fantasies, sexual anxieties and sexual perversity. These criteria of scapegoating and sexual repression, frustrations, fears and fantasies create the psychological conditions for colonial racism (McCulloch, 1983). Frantz Fanon examined the historical and psychosexual beginnings of sexual relationships between Black and white people. Fanon argues that these relationships are not free of the racist conditioning society imposes whereby there is opposition to 'inter-racial' intimacy (McCulloch, 1983). Fanon adds that white racists need Blacks to hate, blame and fear as a means from hating, blaming and fearing themselves (Fanon, 1970).

Homi K. Bhabha also discusses the construction of the Other in colonial discourse. He states that we urgently require to reassess Frantz Fanon's powerful and subversive sense of identity as an agency of resistance. Bhabha is interested in Fanon's analysis of:

...identity as involving a split, precarious, contradictory relation to the Other, the upshot of which is a radical ambivalence, destructive but also potentially empowering. (Bhabha, 1983)

However Frantz Fanon's work is limited in terms of his problematic representation of women, female sexuality and homosexuality. Amina Mama criticises Fanon's definition of the colonised woman as psychologically damaged and with white aspirations. She argues that his case study - Mayotte Capecia - is not typical of most West Indian women and so Fanon's findings can not be applied to most rural, working

class Caribbean women. Frantz Fanon gathered that the Caribbean woman's wish for 'beauty', security and status is the same as wanting to be white and to marry a white man. However this is indeed just a class aspiration. Amina Mama argues that Frantz Fanon inadequately examines women; as such gender is minor to his work (Mama, 1987). Homosexuality is portrayed as a cause and an effect of the psychosexual organization of racism.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues that the colonized is reduced to a state of silence, forced to collude in the colonizer's will to power, to be domesticated and to see themselves as Other (quoted in Mama, 1987). Homi K. Bhabha stresses the ambivalence of colonial discourse which faxes and assigns its place to the Black Other but tries to conceptualise an Otherness as wild, chimeric, excessive and unknowable (Venn, 1992). Bhabha examines racial hatred, white peoples' fear and colonial desire for Black people. Western sexuality is characterised by an immense cultural fear of Blacks. Homi K. Bhabha analyses transference whereby Frantz Fanon explains that:

What is often called the black soul is a white man's artifact,... (Bhabha, 1983)

According to the twenty one women that I interviewed, the dominant icon of Black female sexuality influenced the construction of self identification in six ways: First, it was argued by twelve women that the issue of race did not affect their own notions of sexual identity. Second, the internalisation of derogatory images was indicated by four

women. Relatedly, three women believed that collusion and encouraging such images represented the third aspect of identification. Fourth, most women, thirteen of the sample, maintained that they reject dominant images of Black women's sexuality. The significance of self definition was the fifth composite of identity to be pertinent to twelve out of these thirteen women. The last type of identification was discussed by the majority of interviewees. Nineteen women argued that they resisted and transformed their predicament in both individual and collective ways. Their responses to being asked about the impact of race upon their sexual identity are discussed next.

Race has no impact upon sexual identity

The extent that opinions about identity are diverse and contradictory, is illustrated by the fact that several women adhered to different aspects of identification. For instance, some women argued that race did not influence their sexual identity whilst also asserting that they resist racialised sexual imagery in their daily lives. As such, the articulation of self identities is subject to change, hybridity and conflict (Rutherford, 1990). Hence, Hilary believes that in the past the issue of race affected how she saw herself sexually as well as her sexual experiences. Although when she was younger race determined Hilary's ideas about sexuality, she now just takes people as they are, including herself. Meanwhile Mrs. Welltodo does

not know if race influences how she feels about her sexual identity. Maria and Yvonne Ayoka believe that images of Black female sexuality do not contribute to their sense of self. Instead they agree with Yvonne Stewart's description of her identity. Yvonne Stewart contends:

I have never thought about it really in that context. I just see myself as a woman. Black does not really come into it. It never has really in general. It is a strange question for me because having been brought up here in this country, I know I am Black and I am very proud to be Black, but it has never bothered me. I have never thought about it in terms sexually or in any other way at all. I have just thought of myself as a woman period... These images do not affect me in the slightest in any way or fashion, I just see myself as a person. I do not really think about my colour too much, because this is what I was born with and this is what I am going to die with... This is just me.

Similarly Tammy and Bernice stress that racialised sexual portrayals do not influence their self perceptions. Expressing their views Bernice explains that:

Sexual images about Black women do not affect me because I believe that I am who I am and nothing is going to change who I am.

These views problematise the ways in which theoretical debates on identity tend to explain people's sense of 'who they are' in terms of either the internalisation or the rejection of racial, gender and class divisions (Rutherford, 1990). Moreover the significance of being able to control what you are, what you want to be and what you want to become, is explained as a negotiable process that is far more complicated than many theorists realize. Consequently, Melisa thinks that the effects of the repre-

sentation of Black women as sexual beings, upon her own sense of self, operate on different levels. On a primary level the image of Black women as hot and sexy, Melisa contends, does not influence her, because she does not conform to it. However, the fact that she is aware of the image and actively tries to go beyond it, suggests that it actually does have an important impact upon her identity. However, this awareness does not automatically signify resistance, for she admits that sometimes, especially when she is depressed she finds the image amusing and maybe even complimentary. Then she thinks 'I am a nice Black number' and projects a sensual image. Generally Melisa chooses not to live up to the label. Melisa claims:

...I suppose I could take on that image of being a hot Black woman and I suppose my life would be totally different to how it is now. But because I do not then I think it does not affect my life.

This view is also supported by Marva's assertion that:

I see myself as being a sexual woman...I just see myself as an ordinary person.

Furthermore, Susan maintains that her perception of her sexual identity can not be explained within the context of racism:

I do not think colour matters in that respect. I think it is the way the person carries herself and how she respects herself. But colour, I can not see how it can affect a person. I think it is the individual... Well I have not really looked deep into myself as a Black woman. I just think neutral. If I do have to look at myself as a Black woman, I do not know, I do not see it as a colour issue... As I am getting older as well, now I am getting neutral. I think you can think too much about colour on a day to day basis but I do not.

Susan's notion of neutrality clearly undermines the argument that the marginalisation of Black women as the Other is integral to the formation of their identity (Rutherford, 1990). However given the historical and ideological foundations of racialised sexual myths, I want to query the degree to which a neutral position is indeed possible now. Therefore I hope to show that for Black women the articulation of identities is inevitably, although maybe only at times subconsciously, the product of images of Black female sexuality. In terms of the concept of identity in general, Jonathan Rutherford explains:

...Identity marks the conjuncture of our past with the social, cultural and economic relations we live within...Making our identities can only be understood within the context of this articulation, in the intersection of our everyday lives with the economic and political relations of subordination and domination... (Rutherford, 1990: 19 - 20)

The complex structuring of identities as contingent, dis-
placing and subject to transformation is shown by Fiona's
description of the impact of stereotypes about Black women's
sexuality. Fiona suggests:

You try and ignore the stereotype. You make it clear that the stereotype is not right. That is what I do ... These images do not affect me because I ignore them, because I think they are the wrong images. They affect me in that I am conscious of them, and I make sure that I do not get viewed in that way, and I do not pander to them in any shape or form...it does not affect me because of my attitude towards it and the attitudes of people that I meet / 'fuck'.

The internalisation of racialised sexual images

For some Black women, being stigmatised by racialised and sexualised stereotypes which flourish within white society, (and to a certain extent, within Black communities), results in the internalisation of these images. The force of 'common sense' ideas which surround Black sexuality, and their reinforcement by the mass media has impacted on the psyche of a minority of Black women who, perhaps unknowingly, fall into compliance with the dominant imagery. bell hooks asserts that the devaluation of Black women's role of resistance undermines attempts to challenge oppression as well as the colonial mentality which encourages internalized self hatred (hooks, 1991).

Roseanne argues that without strong support networks, it is not surprising that some Black women succumb to the pressure to behave and act in a manner which may bear some resemblance to the stereotyped portrayals of themselves. Roseanne mentions:

There is nothing to help the Black woman to challenge these stereotypes. She is left eventually believing them herself; believing deep down that maybe they are rampant sex maniacs...we have taken on board these stereotypes because we have had to accept certain images about ourselves, by virtue of the way our lives are restricted by stereotypes that are resistant to change. To challenge them actively in the way that actually rebukes what they are saying we can not; because they hold the key; they are in a position. We can not obtain the key. We can reach the key but the key is on the highest step and with that key you can open the doors and go anywhere that you want.

The pervading force of external definitions of Black woman-

hood and the suppression of identity to which this gives rise is analysed by Audre Lorde. She criticises the internalisation of negative portrayals of Black women's sexuality because it makes them docile, loyal, obedient and as such accept their oppression. According to Audre Lorde:

When we live outside ourselves, and by that I mean on external directives only, rather than from our knowledge and needs, when we live away from those erotic guides from within ourselves, then our lives are limited by external and alien forms, and we conform to the needs of a structure that is not based on human need, let alone on individuals. (Lorde, 1984: 58)

Collusion with the myth - making

Isolated from their true selves a minority of Black women not only internalise these images but actually support them. Zora contends that:

You can not be anything else. I think a lot of Black women have taken those things and then think 'O.K. we can not define ourselves out of it so we are going to be the best there is. Either we are going to be the best mothers or we are going to be the best sexual beings or if we can manage it all we are going to be the best mothers and the best sexual beings'.

Given the circumstances, it is extremely difficult for these Black women to develop a strong, positive sense of self. Moreover, the fear of exclusion and the need to feel accepted leads a small amount of Black women to conform to dominant myths. Fosuwa believes that:

You are not allowed to say 'look, I am just being'. It goes back to the myth of Black women and how they see Black women's sexuality. It is like she will always have somebody and if you do not want somebody, it is like there is something drast-

ically wrong with you...Until you conform...it makes people carry a lot of mental luggage.

Furthermore Fosuwa argues that Black women often collude with dominant representations and thereby encourage them. For instance, the way in which Black women dress and behave often has a hidden agenda. Hence Fosuwa suggests:

Sometimes we collude in that because we have not taken the myths on board. Sometimes Black women actually encourage, maybe subconsciously, a part of the myth-making...

Supporting this point, Beverley thinks that frequently Black women see themselves as men's servants and so allow themselves to be used as objects of sexual gratification. Thus, Beverley believes that:

You have to first love yourself before you can love anybody. If a lot of women would take control of themselves and of their bodies, and everything else, men would respect them. But women do not respect themselves so men would not respect them either; and I think that is the problem...I think white people paint a picture and we allow it to stick...

Whilst it is important to realise that some Black women internalise and even collude with controlling portrayals, it is fallacious to argue that they are consequently the willing participants in their own oppression. It is true that:

A system of oppression draws much of its strength from the acquiescence of its victims, who have accepted the dominant image of themselves, and are paralysed by a sense of helplessness. (Murray, 1987:106)

Rejecting images of Black women's sexuality

However most Black women, in my sample and according to the growing Black feminist literature, do not define themselves in terms of racist sexual myths. Instead they struggle to deconstruct and so reject these images. Of course this is not to deny that stereotypes of Black female sexuality restrict Black women's lives, sexually, socially, politically, ideologically and economically in ways that are often extremely difficult to reject. Fosuwa explains the difficulties in opposing racist, sexist and heterosexist representations:

Yes, I think it does for any Black woman regardless of what your sexual preference is. Society does not let you forget because of the myths about Black women's sexuality. It is either ignored or you are supposed to be this exotic woman who can not have enough sort of image. So I think it does. It certainly does for me in terms of who I have relationships with, white or Black.

In spite of the many obstacles most Black women recognise the falsity of dominant portrayals of Black womanhood and have discovered self - affirmation, strength and creative power through their rejection of these controlling images. Thereby they change their identities as victims of oppression so that they actively resist their subordination. By challenging such imagery Black women are empowered to define and to be themselves. Thus Sally B states:

In this country you need to take into consideration the negative views about Black womanhood and sexuality portrayed in the media; the television, the radio, and in the papers. So in that aspect you are constantly fighting what is being portrayed; and you constantly say 'look, I am a Black woman

and not a sexual animal'.

Part of this rejection entails projecting oneself in a way that negates the myths. Thus many Black women tend not to display their sexual side and so attempt to disprove the images. Fiona argues:

I go out of my way to negate the images...I think you go away thinking this is the image I have got on T.V., or I am portrayed in the media or in advertising and it is not true. Therefore it has to be made clear that it is the wrong image...If the image is that Black women are easy, then Black women are not easy. You make sure that you do not let people think that you are easy. If you think that someone has got the image of a Black woman then you make sure that you do not pander that image. If you meet someone and you think that this person thinks that I am a Black woman, and I fall into this category according to the T.V. image, then you make sure that they realise that it is the wrong image.

Self definition

The victorious creation of Black women's identities, in and for themselves, is examined by the Black filmmaker Pratibha Parmar. Acknowledging that 'Black British women are part of many diasporas', she analyses their historical and cultural situation. Pratibha Parmar assesses the articulation of positive Black female identity within the racist and sexist background of displacement, alienation and Otherness. Thus Black women's situation of marginality and resistance is a site of both individual and collective radical identity. According to Parmar:

This entails creating identities as Black British women not 'in relation to', 'in opposition to', 'as reversal of', or 'as a corrective to', but in and for ourselves. Such a narrative thwarts

that binary hierarchy of centre and margin; the margin refuses its place as 'other'.

(Parmar, 1990: 101)

As such Black women refute the negative imagery about their sexuality and construct a positive self - definition not just for the benefit of identification but rather as a precursor to activism. More than half of the women that I interviewed stressed the revolutionary potential of Black women defining themselves. They maintained that this is a right that historically has been denied to Black women. They defy the ways in which definitions of Black womanhood have been determined by white people and frequently by Black men. They argue that their own sense of self, their aspirations and conduct have been restricted by external definitions of Black womanhood in general and Black female sexuality in particular. They state that it is liberating when Black women reclaim their sexuality for their own and for no one else to pass judgement on. This consciousness can lead to racial / gender / sexual autonomy.

Zora discusses how Black women's own definitions of their sexuality are integral to wider struggles for Black women's equality. Zora thinks that:

It is to define yourself. I think that this is the most powerful thing that you can do - to define yourself, because so much definition has been done to us by other people; and then even our Black male counterparts can use you as something to define themselves against. None of that anymore. The time has come. If they do not like it, well tough. You have just got to keep on going and do not let anybody stand in your way...standing on your own two feet and on your own terms; and doing what you want to do, because that is the only way that things are going to change.

Yet awareness of identification also needs to incorporate a critical self evaluation of an individual's diverse personal and political personalities (Parmar, 1990). Hence the independence and connections between race, class, gender, and sexuality in the construction of our identities and experiences needs to be realised (Parmar, 1990). Yvonne Stewart mentions the importance of fighting against racial, gender and sexual stereotypes. She argues:

I am a Black woman but look at me. I am Black, yes, but I can do a hundred percent better than you. My skin is Black but it is not holding me back...a Black woman is a Black woman. She can do anything she wants. She is a woman and that is what she should know. Number one she is a woman. She can do it because we women are the mainstay. We keep the world going...

The power of self - definition as a means for Black women's rejection of externally defined images is analysed by Patricia Hill Collins. She explains how Black women resolve the contradictions between controlling mythology and their daily experiences. Hence, Black women demystify the stereotypes and define themselves. Moreover, Black women's empowerment through self - definition enables them to both cope with and transcends their oppression. Patricia Hill Collins asserts that:

...the controlling images applied to Black women are so uniformly negative that they almost necessitate resistance if Black women are to have any positive self - images. For Black women, constructed knowledge of self emerges from the struggle to reject controlling images and integrate knowledge deemed personally important, usually knowledge essential to Black women's survival. (Collins, 1990: 95)

Subsequently, in contrast to the stereotypes, Black women develop a sense of self in which sexuality is not necessarily the most important issue. According to Fosuwa:

My sexuality is very important to me. It is not the top of my list. I consider myself a Black lesbian feminist. A Black woman is much more important to me. It is not about who I sleep with. I mean that is the least of it and I sometimes wonder about people who make all of this gossip. That is not important at all sometimes.

Agreeing with this point, Zora explains how her own perception of her identity negates prevalent descriptions of Black female sexuality. Zora adds:

The problem with Zora Day is that I do not see myself sexually first and foremost...I am a woman in which sex does not play a major role in my life although it does. It is kind of like a two - edged sword. It does when I want it to, on my terms...I suppose my sex is a very personal thing ... and I suppose that is part of the reason why I get so annoyed when I think I am clearly not being sexual, and it is almost as if 'she is a woman, she is available, we have just got to try it, she can not go by without us actually having a go, having a try'. I am not some damned horse you can break in.

In stark contrast to sexual and racial stereotypes some Black women define themselves as decent, faithful and religious. Both Patricia and Susan stress the significance of old fashioned values. Patricia purports that:

Black women are close to their family. She gets married, brings up her children and tries to lead a quiet life. She goes out to work and brings in an honest pound to raise a decent family. She brings up her children in church. She takes them to Sunday school. She has a Christian mind. She does not have affairs because it is not her style. She tries to bring up her kids as nice and decent as can be.

Susan adds:

I believe in the family and family ties. I believe in marriage as well. I am old fashioned in that way.

These views support Patricia Hill Collins' brilliant analysis of Black women's independent self definitions. Collins maintains that the journey from internalised oppression to the creation of positive identities is vital to challenging stereotypes. Furthermore Patricia Hill Collins writes:

...Far from being a secondary concern in bringing about social change, challenging controlling images and replacing them with a Black women's standpoint is an essential component in resisting systems of race, gender, and class oppression...

(Collins, 1990: 104)

The most central components to a sense of self were identified by my sample as self love, self respect and independence. Beverley believes that:

A woman first has to feel for herself. A woman first has to love herself.

Relatedly Bernice claims that:

It is a feeling of self worth. You have to know how much you want. You have to put forth a positive image, more so I feel at this particular time. And you can not let other people influence you because otherwise you are not going to move forward.

Also Zora stresses:

Be your own person and you force them to accept you as you are... We are who we are and we should be proud of who we are and to blaze with anybody else. And we are who we want to be.

As Patricia Hill Collins argues, for Black women, self affirmation is created within the wider context of familial relations and Black communities. Consequently, self esteem

and self respect necessarily entails demanding respect from others as well as respecting them. Moreover self valuation is also resourceful. A positive sense of self provides the assertiveness, self reliance and independence that is pivotal to the liberation of Black women (Collins, 1990).

Indicating the force of being independent Beverley says:

I see myself as an achiever. I see myself as an independent liberated woman. I know what I am and I know what I want.

Fosuwa explains how an independent self perception challenges stereotypes:

...so you have to go through a process of yourself throwing some of those images. I walk deliberately. I take up space because I think I have a right to be in this world. I demand attention. For me that is a very positive thing to say: 'I am here; you will listen. If you will not listen then end of conversation.'... 'This is me as a Black woman.' If you just think of me as sexual then that is your problem... I see myself as a very positive strong Black woman.

Therefore most of the interviewees believe that it is vital that Black women define themselves, set their own agendas and so control their lives. Moreover, independent self definitions enable Black women to reject negative stereotypes and to resist their sexual, ideological, social, economic and political subordination. Hence Black women are empowered to know about themselves, to change themselves and their lives in ways that transcend the limitations of racism, sexism, heterosexism and class oppression (Collins, 1990: 110).

The Power of Resistance and Transformation

Racialised sexual imagery circumscribes Black women's identity and relationships. This last part of the chapter will continue to examine Black women's challenge to the negative portrayal of their sexuality. Nineteen of my sample argued that they fight against derogatory myths about their sexuality in individual and collective ways. They argue that for them a positive self definition of their sexuality is integral to the rejection of dominant stereotypes. The creation of their own racial and sexual representation not only reaffirms their sexual identity but also enables them to have self respect. Subsequently these women strive to take control of their sexual experiences and to define the types of relationships they want.

The importance of self-determination is indicated by Roseanne:

The white man is not going to understand why the Black woman is like she is sexually. The reason why she is why she is sexually is because of her history. She is an independent person and this transforms her and transfers sexually.

Moreover autonomy in the sexual sphere is connected to broader struggles for emancipation. For some Black women gaining the right of independence is a consequence of first suffering and then fighting against it. Yvonne Stewart believes that ending a detrimental relationship became a source of empowerment. Yvonne asserts:

I got rid of them. I had to go and end the rela-

tionship because there is no point in having a relationship like that. Maybe that is what has made me stronger as well. Being walked over and saying 'no, enough is enough'. You find you have the strength and then you can take on anything. You go out there, you are a Black person, and you say 'oye you white people this is me'. You can do it. Being ill treated, being bashed about we can overcome it but all we have got to do is say 'no, I do not want this anymore. I do not have to put up with it'...

Therefore Yvonne Stewart stresses that it is necessary for women to avoid the tendency to accept bad treatment from men. In her own relationships she has noticed that men will dominate her until she demands to be treated as an equal. Hence she believes that women's subjection can be transformed by their being assertive. Yvonne adds:

It can be changed simply by us saying 'no we have had enough of it. We are not going to put up with it any more'. And from the time you say that to anybody it will stop. It is just having the strength to say 'listen, on your bike', and you will soon see how things will turn around. But you see it is that question of power and domination again. If anybody has power over you or feel they have got power over you and they can dominate you, they will. But from the time you turn round and say 'no, I am not having this, this is not how I want to live my life', you will see a difference. I have seen it. The tables turn. I have done it twice in my life. Please God, I do not have to do it a third time. I have done it twice. I have said 'on your bike, this is not for me'. It is like a personality change. It is like I can not believe that this woman actually did this.

One step towards challenging the denigration of Black womanhood is through the promotion of positive images. Thus the denial of stereotypes of Black female sexuality could partly be achieved by putting forward alternative and 'realistic' portrayals of Black history, culture, and familial life. Sally B argues that Black people need to challenge stereo-

types in the mass media and so redress the balance. Similarly Susan suggests that more funding on films that recognise the contributions of Black people to British society is vital.

The ultimate aim is to increase knowledge about Black people that contradicts racist and sexist myths about their sexuality. Not only is it important for Black people to educate whites about the prevalence of misconceptions, but also increase the awareness of Blacks. Therefore Sian states that:

One of the symptoms, I think, on a broader plane which is far more important is how relationships between Black men and women would change if we were able to educate ourselves; or if we had not been denied the opportunity of educating ourselves to know about who we are and where we come from...

Relatedly Zora thinks that Black people have to reclaim their own language to prevent the use of colonialised sexual words that describe Blacks in animalistic terms. She argues that some Black people have appropriated the language of enslavement. Hence Black men are described as 'bucks' and Black women as 'breeders' and 'fillies'. Zora maintains that it is necessary to change racist and sexist language so that Black women can attempt to analyse and alter their circumstances. Zora states that:

Black female sexuality in a way has never been defined by Black people in their own terms. If they have tried to define it in their own terms, they are in fact using another person's language, another person's ideology, and trying to circumvent it and make it their own but they can not without realising where their words are coming from.

Thus it is vital to challenge the objectification and dehumanization of Black women in imagery and language. The articulation of a Black female standpoint can be achieved through radical re-education and dialogue. According to Sally B this is already beginning to happen in voluntary organisations and self-help projects. She argues that the emergence of workshops and courses creates space for Black people to construct their own portrayals. Support networks are also evident in therapy and counselling. Consequently Black pride, gender equality and self worth seem to be obtainable goals. Sally B argues that although more work needs to be done, forums on Black masculinity, homosexuality, violence, incest and 'mixed race' relationships are addressing and breaking down barriers. As Fosuwa argues, an acceptance of each other's differences is mutually beneficial. Fosuwa says:

I think that it can only be changed when Black people are much more tolerant of each other and stop being so frightened that they are going to lose their struggle. You can not sort that bit out after the struggle, you have to sort it out now...

The need for unity is urgent. Hence Sian claims that:

We have not fully come to accept and appreciate ourselves and realise that we have got to be unified. I think once we realise that we will come to appreciate the needs of all our people.

Relatedly, Roseanne reasons:

The Black woman has had such both sexually and non-sexually a bad time. That is why our relationships do not last. It is because they have been stereotyped. The way forward is getting ourselves together.

Obviously the transformation of such treatment of Black women can not be achieved in isolation. Therefore coalition work with white people who are conscious of and supportive in tackling issues of race, gender and sexuality is important. Such radicalism needs to also fight against stereotypes of Black men whilst mobilising with them. Moreover, in order to improve the ideological status of Black women it is imperative to also challenge their social, economic and political subordination. Yvonne Stewart believes that this is occurring:

Go out there and make it, which you can do. I have seen a couple of examples where women have gone from being battered mums to actually going and being something; taking courses and saying 'no'; gone into women's refuges and said 'no sod it, that is it. I am going to look after my kids, I am going to go to college, I am going to work hard, manage to get childminders and go on to become something'. If everybody could think like that it would be fine and lovely...

Bernice agrees that increasing Black women's educational and employment opportunities is important. Indeed she is quite optimistic about the future:

As long as you go for whatever it is you want to do in life.

In the final chapter I will discuss the ways that racialised sexual images and their impact upon identity influence Black women's relationships. I want to conclude this chapter by reiterating that since slavery Black women have resisted the objectification of their sexuality. In contemporary Britain a revolutionary icon of Black womanhood that is defined by

Black women themselves is desirable. Whilst recognising that the forces of racism, sexism, heterosexism and class oppression restrict this aspiration Black women still strive to control their racialised sexual identity. Thereby in the process these women fight against their sexual, racial and class subordination. As June Jordan poignantly says:

Like a lot of Black women, I have always had to invent the power my freedom requires; all my life I've been studying revolution. I've been looking for it, pushing at the possibilities and waiting for that moment when there's no more room for rhetoric, for research or for reason; when there's only my life or my death left to act upon... (Jordan, 1989:151)

CHAPTER SIX

'PROSTITUTES, PIMPS AND WHITE DEVILS'

This chapter explores the impact of racialised sexual imagery and identification on Black women's relationships. For this purpose, three types of sexual relationships are considered. These are Black women's relationships with: Black men, white men and other women. The difficult choices that Black women make in terms of their personal lives can not just be seen in terms of such issues as compatibility, companionship, communication, love etc. Instead history, society, politics, economics, ideology and in short power are significant to any relationship that Black women have. In terms of the three types of sexual relationship that I have specified I want first to briefly re - examine the social construction of Black women's sexuality under enslavement. I go on to consider the legacy of these stereotypes: myths of Black female sexuality in British society and in the mass media need to be seen in relation to their differential influence on various relationships. I will argue that the historical situation that has existed between Black women and others ultimately influences their intimate relationships.

'Prostitutes and pimps': Demystifying sexual

relationships between Black women and Black men.

In this first part of the chapter, I want to examine the various ways in which the widespread formation of Black masculinity affects relationships between Black men and women. Secondly, I address how the prevalent representation of Black women's sexuality influence intimate relations among Black men and women. I intend to assess the extent that these relations are antagonistic. As such, I will discuss the contradictions that are evident in sexual relationships that are characterised by love, strength, mistrust and anger. Black women's ability to challenge ideologies of appropriate Black female behaviour will also be considered.

Demasculinizing Black masculinity

In Britain and in the United States racial differences between men make generalisations about masculinity difficult. The popular identification of the cultural style of 'hypermasculinity' among Black males is problematic for theories and politics of masculinity (Ramazanoglu, 1992). Kobena Mercer and Issac Julien assert that politics entails struggles over representation for the marginalised and the isolated. In their assessment of the cultural construction of masculinity Kobena Mercer and Issac Julien state:

'Racism and the Politics of Masculinity' introduces ethnicity as a crucial factor in the social construction of manliness, suggesting that the racial dialectic of projection and internalisation through which white and black men have shaped their masks of masculinity is one of the

key points at which race, gender and the politics of sexuality intersect...

(Mercer & Julien, 1988: 99)

Racialised sexual mythology is apparent in repressive state policies which are used to justify surveillance and social control (Mercer & Julien, 1988). Kobena Mercer and Issac Julien argue that social workers, police and housing officers utilise the notion that Black males are bad fathers and that this is due to their sexual promiscuity. Indeed, they suggest that ideas about Black super-sexual studs reveal more about the 'repressed' propagator of these views than they do about Black sexuality (Mercer & Julien, 1988).

Connell asserts that the school as an institution develops the greatest effects on the construction of masculinity. For many Blacks, the institutionalization of academic failure through competitive grading and streaming means that:

The reaction of the 'failed' is likely to be a claim to other sources of power, even other definitions of masculinity. Sporting prowess, physical aggression or sexual conquest may do.
(Connell quoted in Ghail, 1994: 295)

Mairtin Mac An Ghail maintains that, white English researchers view young African - Caribbean males as representing a terrorizing Black under-class, which they analyse in relation to cultural deprivation theories. Ghail asserts that these hypotheses fail to comprehend the cultural meanings that influence young Black men's behaviour and world view. Processes of stereotyping, naturalization, objectification, and the essentialization of Black men are discussed by Ghail's study of a school where 'tough white teachers'...

were creating 'tough young black men'. For instance, the white male teachers' racist explanation of Black male students' over-representation in football and athletics is the Black males' assumed physical superiority and their assumed inferior academic ability. Furthermore, young Black men constantly experience degradation and violence when they are with whites which symbolizes a denial of their Black identity (Ghail, 1994).

The young Black men in Ghail's study, the Rasta Heads, constructed a collective Black masculinity which entails an adolescent psychosexual development. It is a survivalist culture against racial exclusion and security against state systems of white authoritarianism, as well as the resulting dominant cultural misrecognitions of Black history and culture. For the Rasta Heads Black masculinity encompasses physicality, solidarity, sexism, aggression, independence, territorial control and over emphasized 'toughness'. Rasta Heads query the legitimacy of achieving academic qualifications, in terms of their preconception of getting low-skilled work, due to most Black men's inferior position in the British labour force. Therefore they are conscious of the necessity of building a different masculine identity. The Rasta Heads are segregated from white culture and their resistance to state authoritarianism is fuelled by Africani- anism and Rastafarianism. Hyper-masculinity, contestation and resistance according to Mairtin Mac An Ghail are a challenge to Western institutions that Rasta Heads perceive as trying to 'emasculate them'. Mairtin Mac An Ghail is

concerned to show the power dynamics in an institutional formation of racist hierarchies of masculinities (Ghail, 1994).

Poussaint describes the Black masculine experience as 'life - threatening' and 'psychologically brutalizing' (Poussiant quoted in Franklin II, 1984). While Clyde W. Franklin II in his discussion of the subjugated and hazardous Black masculine sex role, states that from an early age Black males learn that in a dominant and hostile society they are not allowed to express dominance but passivity. Consequently, Franklin II argues that a lot of the dominance and competitive spirit in physical and mental terms that has been learned as crucial during Black male socialization is channelled against other Blacks (Franklin II, 1984).

Nathan Hare describes, what he considers to be, the 'frustrated masculinity' of Black men. Hare laments that larger society is responsible for Black men's usual inability to take on a provider - protector role in families because it creates barriers to opportunities. Thus structural barriers inhibit Black men in their attempts to attain a provider - protector role. Also white society and the Black subculture maintain the internalization of the work ethic as a main trait of masculinity (Hare quoted in Staples, 1971).

Clyde W. Franklin II argues that in a society where the work ethic determines the attainment of masculinity failure to excel in it badly influences the psyche of the Black man. Black male youth, aware that the majority will not achieve

work aspirations to express their manliness develop other masculine traits instead - such as, strength, aggressiveness, dominance, sexual conquest, conspicuous consumption and 'coolness'. In dominant society men are expected to show, what have been defined by mainstream culture as, masculine traits but Black men are disadvantaged because they express androgynous sex roles. This is a situation that is very confusing for young Black men. Clyde W. Franklin II writes:

...Black males are expected (both by society and the Black subculture) to exhibit dominance, competitiveness, aggressiveness, and so on. They also are expected to display submissiveness, passivity, cooperativeness, and the like. The larger society expects Black males to exhibit their 'feminine' traits in social interaction outside of Black subculture but expects (and to some extent encourages) the exhibition of their masculine traits within the Black subculture. The Black subculture (especially peer Black women) expects Black males to exhibit androgynous traits within the Black subculture and masculine traits outside of the Black subculture. Yet, the Black subculture's socializing institutions teach Black men to inhibit their 'masculine' traits outside of the Black subculture and to exhibit them within the Black subculture...
(Franklin II, 1984: 60)

Robert Staples illustrates the contradictory and conflicting nature of Black masculinity which is partly powerful, dominant and authoritative over women and children. However this construction of Black masculinity also opposes the norm as it is powerless, subordinate to and dependent upon white masculinity. Staples assesses the articulation between race and masculinity:

In the case of black men, their subordination as a racial minority has more than cancelled out

their advantages as males in the larger society.
(Staples, 1985: 20)

Robert Staples comments that dominant ideals of masculinity suggest power, control and authority but this role has not been permitted to most Black men since enslavement who have internalised oppression. Disallowed equal access to the other social attributes of manhood by white culture a lot of Black men resort to proving themselves by dominating the sexual realm (Staples, 1985).

However I problematise the extent that sex as described by Robert Staples is a haven for Black women as well as Black men. Since the latter are possibly venting out their frustrations about their inability to attain dominant notions of manliness and how this is constrained by racism on the former. For Black men such sexual authority is minor in comparison to the wider realm of ideological, socio - economic and political power.

Ann Phoenix laments that Black men are pathologised and devalued to accept dominant gender stereotypes whilst resisting racism. Black men lacking power and resistance are stereotyped as feckless, irresponsible, violent and criminal. Black men are predominantly held as aggressive, oversexed, bestial, rapists and dangerous. Thus they do not conform to the icon of the powerful Western man who supposedly controls these attributes (Phoenix, 1990). Lynne Segal argues that Black men's challenges to myths about their masculinity also decentralise white masculinity (Segal, 1990).

Sallie Westwood comments that Black 'hyper - masculinity' is part of resistant cultures against British racism whereby Black masculinities are created and recreated. She mentions that dominant images of Black men concentrate on the body: on physical strength and as a site for white sexual fantasies. However, Sallie Westwood asserts that, there are numerous Black masculinities as they are a shifting terrain (Westwood, 1990).

In general, the majority of Black men like many white men are unable to achieve the mythical image that the dominant male role is that of breadwinner. Instead of obtaining the goals of secure employment and providing for the family, Black manhood is defined by and compared to notions of white masculinity which is regarded as superior. As such Black masculinity is portrayed in mainly sexual terms. This definition negates the complexity of Black masculinities; these are beyond the sexual sphere.

The Merits of Black Manhood

Most of the women that I interviewed discussed how negative portrayals of Black manhood and the inferior socio - economic position of Black men in Britain in general created tensions in their relationships with Black men. Nevertheless, thirteen out of twenty one women in my sample argued that they prefer having Black male partners. Their explanations were rejected by seven women who were involved with white men and one woman with a white female partner. The main reason that Black women gave for having a Black male

lover was a mutual understanding due to shared histories and cultures. Thus Susan explains:

I am mainly attracted to Black men but I do not really think of the colour. Well I suppose when I look, I am not attracted to white men really. I am only attracted to my own because obviously I feel more comfortable with a Black man. I can relate more to a Black man because I am Black. Like when I am with a Black girl I feel I can relate more to her because we have experienced the same things really; like our families come from the Caribbean, and we sort of eat our food slightly different. We can talk about these sorts of cultural things whereas white people do not understand it. So when you have a Black man I can see that I feel a bit more comfortable because I can talk and relate a bit more in that respect. A similar culture brings you closer together I think, because I have not forgotten my cultural background because my parents, they have kept that home by eating West Indian food, going out to West Indian parties and all this sort of business. I have not forgotten so it is not like I have been brought up in European standards so I have forgotten that side of me. I have kept the West Indian culture so I can relate a lot more to a Black man in a relationship than what I think I would with a white man.

Therefore the commonalities in the histories, cultures and identities of people from Africa and the Diaspora is a vital foundation for relationships between Black men and women.

According to Sally B:

I would say as a Black woman ideally I would prefer going out with a Black man. Basically when you think of the cultural differences especially in this country. But that does not say that I would not or have any prejudices against white men.

In terms of the importance of cultural values three women maintained that historically Black men have respected their female counterparts. Sian argued that since slavery the icon of motherhood has commanded respect. Fosuwa agrees that

Black men respect their mothers and put them on a pedestal. She also thinks that Black men revere their sisters. However Fosuwa denies that such a deference extends to all Black women. Instead Fosuwa highlights a double standard whereby Black men do not respect their woman friends.

Alternatively Sally B describes how her own relationships with Black men have been positive. Moreover, the moment when Sally B suspects that she is not respected she ends the relationships. In general she believes that Black men have not seen her as a sexual object but rather as a Black woman who deserves respect. Thus Sally B states that Black men have treated her with respect and have been very romantic. Subsequently Sally B warns against the tendency to denigrate Black men:

Its alright saying that Black men are this, Black men are that, of course they are that, of course they are but we must not fall into this dogma of generalising that all Black men are bad, all Black men are no good, all Black men are whatever and we say O.K. they have got faults but so do white men as well. In terms of showing how wicked our men are, I would not try and fall into the danger of saying 'Oh Black men are more this, Black men beat their wives more than white men or Black men are more like that'.

Most of the Black women in my study argued that they preferred having sexual relationships with Black men. The reasons that were given for this preference were that shared histories from Africa and the Caribbean, African - Caribbean cultures and Black identities often meant a commonality of interests. Mutual trust, understanding and care were frequently forged against this racial background. These women

felt that white partners would lack an acute awareness of Black womanhood. According to these women they may not have the knowledge of white culture that they deemed necessary for a 'bi - racial' union. However they thought that they knew the myths as opposed to the realities of Black manhood.

The Enemy Within: Black male violence

In the same way that I have shown that portrayals of Black sexuality influence many Black women's experiences, the objectification of some Black men can constrain their capacity to be loving. Hence three women asserted that several Black men internalise dominant stereotypes to the extent that they emotionally and physically abuse Black women. Discussing how various Black men feel that they are not 'true Black men' unless they control Black women, Yvonne Stewart states:

I do not know where Black men have this thing from about the violence towards their women. I do not know where they get the idea from. It is a thing that seems to be instilled in them.

Much of Black male violence may stem from an unstated resentment toward powerlessness in British society. Given that Eurocentric gender ideology defines manhood in terms of social, economic and political domination the majority of Black men (and white men) are unable to adopt this masculine role. Furthermore, the myth of the super strong Black woman as well as the fact that Black women seem to have greater access to material resources than Black men contributes to the latter's inferior status. It is difficult to reconcile

the tensions that exist between the false ideology of masculinity and the actual position of Black men. According to Fosuwa:

Because of the racist thing Black men are seen as aggressive, pass it on, had to be strong; to some Black men that is the only way which they can show that they are men...Everything that happens we blame the system. It is racism or that man is working so hard the least you can do when he comes home from work is put his tea on the table. And when you do not its like he gets violent and blows his fuse because he has gone out there; he has taken all the racist crap and all he wants is his dinner and his slippers ready for when he comes home. So he can beat you and maybe two or three days later you go talk to your friend...

Moreover, Fosuwa explains that Black women who are abused contribute to a conspiracy of silence:

We Black women take that on and keep it quiet because of the fear of letting the community down or of giving the white man ammunition to put another nail in the coffin of the race.

Fosuwa argues that in order to survive Black women take on responsibility by trying to be independent and self reliant. Notwithstanding, Fosuwa maintains that the threat of violence is imminent due to the ideology of machismo and the need to challenge poverty, unemployment and coercive policing. Within this context of social deprivation, Fosuwa adds, the Black woman seems to represent a means to Black male power. Hence when rejected by Black women, a few women argued, the Black man's validation of his identity is denied. Sharon mentions the fear and insecurity that arises:

...If a Black man approaches a Black woman, he is trying to come on and she puts him off the Black man gets so annoyed and he thinks 'why don't

you want me?' He does not understand that the Black women just wants to be friends. Sometimes Black men tend to get a bit violent because he believes 'you must think I am really rubbish and dirty'.

But as Sally B suggests:

I am not saying that it does not happen, of course it happens. But it is not only Black men that beat up Black women.

I want to argue that violence against Black women is legitimated by the sexual objectification of Black women. Whilst this is the most extreme example of the acceptance of externally defined notions of Black sexuality; in the rest of this section on intimate relationships between Black men and women I will examine how this is also manifested in more subtle ways. Subsequently I intend to explain how the myriad manifestations of images about Black female sexuality can be just as devastating as physical abuse.

The fight against infidelity

Although they were aware of the myth that Blacks are more unfaithful than whites, due to ideas about promiscuity, four women talked about the problem of infidelity. Roseanne believes that, due to the historical legacy of the denial of monogamy since the Black family was constantly divided during enslavement, Black women are afraid of adultery.

Roseanne explains:

When you go to bed with a Black man it is a competition. You are not relaxed because there is always the fear that, going back to slavery, that someone could walk in. That is an unconscious fear that you could suddenly be broken apart. There is always the fear that there are other women.

The construction under enslavement of the Black man as a 'buck', whose role was to impregnate many different women, is still seen as pervasive today. Thus Sharon contends that, for some Black men status is derived not only by having several lovers but also by having children from different women:

I find that sometimes Black men reinforce that sometimes, especially when it comes to having children. They will go off from one Black woman to another and think 'yeah I can have kids with this person.'

Furthermore, Fosuwa claims that sometimes a Black woman blames the other woman rather than the unfaithful man. She sees this in terms of men gaining power by dividing women and thereby isolating them. Hence Fosuwa suggests:

The other thing about internalising that is the way Black men have found the cleverest trick of splitting up friendship between Black women; and women never ever doubt their men...

In spite of the possibility of infidelity it is vital not to generalise and so to reinforce the stereotype of the unfaithful Black man. Relatedly one should examine the extent that Black women are able to control this situation. Bernice stresses that in general both Black and white men are unfaithful yet white male infidelity is rendered invisible. Therefore Bernice believes that:

Men are dogs but women think that they can tame them.

The White woman as the main Enemy

The fear of infidelity is exacerbated by the opinion that a number of Black men prefer being involved with white women. Subsequently six women talked about Black men's relationships with white women. Roseanne argued that this is a major cause of anxiety and self hatred for Black women:

Black women feel undermined, ugly, threatened, frustrated and depressed because their Black men are not approaching them. So you have the idea of weave ons, contact lenses, skin lightening cream to try and compete with white women sexually, politically, socially and psychologically...Black women feel threatened sexually when they see a Black man going out with a white woman.

Moreover some Black women feel that, for Black men the white woman symbolises social mobility. Roseanne explains that this is the worst apprehension. She argues that a Black woman struggles to keep a Black man because if he goes out with a white woman she has lost everything. To a Black man, sleeping with a white woman, according to Roseanne, indicates freedom, entering the dominant social structure, acceptance and attaining the same level as a white man. Roseanne argues that while the Black man appears to become a part of the establishment the Black woman is humiliated and degraded.

Fiona believes that it is important to try to analyse this phenomena within the context of class. She maintains that it is usually middle class 'Buppies', who are often educated, that seek white female partners. Fiona believes that working class Black men tend to reject stereotypes of Black womanhood although they consider Black women to be challeng-

ing. However a lot of middle class Black men have internalised the myth of the sexually denigrated Black woman so they believe that Black women are lowly. Thus, Fiona asserts that in her experience ambitious Black men desire white women.

It was also argued that white women are seen as more accommodating than Black women. Yvonne Ayoka asserts that some Black men accept the fallacy of 'the aggressive Black woman' and so reject them. These Black men prefer white women since they consider them to be less difficult than Black women.

Similarly Sian suggests that, several Black men are turning away from Black women because having also suffered racial oppression, Black women are less likely to allow Black men to have the upper hand. Whereas Sian believes that white

women are more likely to look up to Black men and to be more lenient. Subsequently, both Yvonne Ayoka and Sian think that Black men can take greater liberties with white women than with Black women.

Relatedly, four Black women reverse the pervasive image by thinking that white women are seen as sexually freer than Black women. White women are perceived as being more sexually liberated than Black women; the latter are considered to be more repressed by traditional sexual roles. Carol argues that many Black women are restricted by notions about straight sex whereas white women are more adventurous. Yet this belief is restricted by the notion that Black men go out with both Black and white women but prefer the former

for greater sex and the latter for affection. Sharon says:

You know like sometimes you get some Black guys who will go out with both white and Black but they think 'if I want more good sex I can get it better with that Black girl; if I want to be stroked and caressed nicely I can get it from that white woman.

It was also felt that Black men, due to perceiving white women as tender and Black women as merely sexual beings, are more romantic with their white lovers. Sharon states:

They will sleep with that Black woman and they will have that white woman, but when it comes to giving a lot of gifts and things they give that white woman because they think they are romantic and sophisticated, and that Black woman is just 'boom boom.'

Fosuwa also explains how some Black men internalise derogatory stereotypes about Black sexuality:

They are much more romantic to white partners than Black. I mean that has a lot to do with, I think, always trying to prove yourself maybe; and trying very hard to show that you 'know,' when you have your white partner. So you will do the roses thing. And it is very rare, I have seen a Black man who...the first time I saw a Black man walking with roses, just to give his woman friend I almost choked because he was so uncomfortable doing it. He does not have to prove anything. He does not have to show he is normal.

My research shows that six Black women fear that Black men prefer to have relationships with white women. The predominant worry was that Black men maintained that going out with white women symbolised a climb up the social ladder for them. Various notions about the personal and sexual attributes of white women as well as the nature of these deep relationships were discussed. None of these women considered

freedom of choice so that one chose a partner because of characteristics such as their personality. Instead racial identity and relatedly social status are the main considerations for these women.

The struggle against problematic relationships

The influence of images of Black female sexuality upon relationships needs to be assessed within the context of an unequal racialised sexual division of labour. Marginalised in the public sphere, many Black men often find that they can only gain power by controlling Black women's domestic and sexual services. This is often justified by seeing Black women as the sexual territory of Black men. Furthermore, sexual relationships between Black men and women are circumscribed by the controlling myths about Black female sexuality. Thus Tracy contends:

I think that in terms of the kind of relationship that you are in or may hope to have they may affect the quality of your relationships; because if you are expected to be a particular kind of way and you do not it may create all kinds of other problems for you. For instance, if you are supposed to be seen as licentious and very willing but do not conform it will affect your relationships.

Sharon argues that the pervading notion of the hyper - sexual Black woman is oppressive since Black women are expected to comply:

I think that is one of the reasons why I am kind of afraid really to be with the Black man because he will expect that of me even more. I think Black women are looked upon as really sexy and groovy. We have it bigger, we have the big bums, we have the big breasts that are there for love making, to be felt and groped.

The contradictions between the imagery and reality of Black women's sexuality can give rise to antagonistic relationships. When Black women reject the stereotypes they are frequently accused of emasculating Black men. However rather than arguing about how Black men and women are oppressing each other, it is necessary to realise that white male standards of sexuality cannot be applied to Black people. Hence Roseanne says:

The white man promotes all of these images. He has created all of these images for himself to keep Black people down.

Consequently Roseanne believes that it is incumbent to be aware of the pervasiveness of erroneous beliefs:

There is the myth that Black women are promiscuous and dominant but in reality Black women are oppressed. Part of that oppression is that Black society has used European models against Black women to keep Black women down...It is a different set of values. We can not be judged by white values because we are not white. It is the same people who created these images as raped and pillaged us in slavery. These images are just to appease their conscience. 'They want it, they deserved to be raped'. I robbed a bag of sweets but they were out of date anyway'. It is the same principle. That is why they exist and we start to accept them because they are powerful.

This dilemma, according to Roseanne, creates additional burdens for relationships between Black men and women:

That is a vicious circle. The myths are created, they are unchallenged and in not being challenged, they are evoked, they are blown up. It is like a whole mish mash which can not be changed around and so it becomes bitter. The Black man becomes bitter towards the Black woman and starts accusing her of being what she is not, because he begins to believe in them because the power of the media

is so strong. So he becomes jealous and bitter to humble her even more.

The relegation of Black women to their sexuality enables many Black men (as well as white men) to control them.

Tracy argues that:

Black men see the whole essence of the Black woman in her sexuality and that is what they would like to capture. That is in essence what a lot of Black men who are approaching Black women in terms of a relationship are after...Black men see what is core in a Black woman is her sexuality, not just her personal individuality, her mind, it is the body. In relationships, men try to capture that part of you so they can say 'I have had that woman' and they really mean they have had access to your sexuality.

Furthermore Tracy maintains that regularly white and Black men primarily use sexual intercourse as a means to dominate all women:

When Black men are looking at Black women they are trying to weigh up the woman as a sexual being; and if they are saying they want a relationship with her, it generally means they want access to her sexuality. Men see women as bound up with their sexuality. It is women's supposedly chief possession and men can access women in that way because they enter into a woman's body. Therefore they feel they can take something off her. Men penetrating women is accessing women's bodies. They want to break the woman. A major way is to enter women sexually...men look at women as sexual vessels that they can enter into.

Despite these obstacles six women were optimistic about transforming racialised sexual imagery and the unequal sexual relationships that they can lead to. Yvonne Ayoka argues that Black women are rebelling against their ascribed sexual roles by demanding equal partnerships. Relatedly Tracy believes that Black women try to negotiate sexual

roles that allow them to regain self - dignity. Zora argues that Black women are empowered by setting their own agenda. Thus they assert the need for autonomy, justice and respect. Moreover the transformation of inter - personal relationships is seen as beneficial to Black communities as a whole. Hence the involvement of Black men and women in coalitions to examine masculinity and femininity is encouraged. Thus Yvonne Stewart asserts that from childhood Black men should be greater involved in domestic chores. She also believes that in general, Black men need to learn more about how to understand themselves as well as Black women. Sally B maintains that a major way of challenging the negative aspects of relationships is the portrayal in the mass media of Black people as loving as opposed to merely super sexual. Sally B explains that the propagation of progressive imagery is being introduced at a grass roots level:

...We are now setting up projects and realising that we have a problem here because our men are leaving us to look after the children alone; but we need to bring them back, to bring them together to work as a family unit.

I hope that I have indicated the ways in which derogatory ideas of Black women's sexuality can result in Black women feeling subordinated in their sexual relationships with Black men, and also with white men I will later show. Rather than asserting that Black women are the passive victims of unequal relationships I believe, based on the testimonies of the interviewees, that most Black women struggle against their oppression. Thereby Black women endeavour to control

their relationships by challenging myths about their sexuality. I think that inevitably the antagonistic nature of Black inter - personal relations constitutes a source of both suffering and empowerment for Black women. In the next part of this chapter I will explore the extent that these emotive contradictions are resolved in Black women's relationships with white men.

**'Sold to the white devil': Black women's
relationships with whites**

In view of the previous analysis of sexual relationships with Black men, the white male could appear to offer a more viable alternative. Yet the racialised social construction of sexuality makes this a difficult choice for many Black women. This section will explore debates about 'mixed race' relationships in dominant white society and Black communities. Through personal testimonies I intend to analyse Black women's views about sexual relationships with white men.

The bigoted reaction that greets several 'mixed race' couples who are perceived as being deviant and so problematic needs to be understood within a historical climate of paranoia. Since five hundred years ago when the first Africans arrived in Britain, arguments about the hideous contamination of Anglo - Saxon blood and mongrelisation of the purity of the British race, have augmented the hostile reaction to them. Now in the main metropolitan areas there are many couples in 'mixed race' unions although they are taboo in other places. However, it is also necessary to ask as Yasmin

Alibhai - Brown and Anne Montague do:

...is it really possible to overcome potent historical prejudices? Do age - old fears, taboos and fantasies still weave themselves around the private lives of those in interracial relationships? (Alibhai - Brown & Montague, 1992: 4)

Yasmin Alibhai - Brown and Anne Montague interviewed 'mixed race' couples and children in order to assess the phobia that exists against them as well as the deep hurt that this causes. They argue that in Britain sexual unions across racial and religious barriers lead to racialised fear, victimisation and isolation. 'Miscegenation' is seen as a problem by racists because it challenges the ideology of white superiority and appears to be a sign of equality - particularly if children are born (Alibhai - Brown & Montague, 1992: 6). Yasmin Alibhai - Brown and Anne Montague assert that:

...the overwhelming conclusion was that however mixed race couples and mixed race children choose to live their lives, they cannot shake off historical baggage or isolate themselves from the assumptions and bigotries of the outside world. These attitudes invade their lives. And for many it is the transition to parenthood that brings this realisation most profoundly.
(Alibhai - Brown & Montague, 1992:19)

The historically specific relationship between Black women and white men largely influences contemporary opinions about sexual involvement between them. My research confirms Patricia Hill Collins' assertion that most Black women perceive their historical relationship with white men to be characterised by rejection, objectification and exploita-

tion. Collins states that:

...For Black women the historical relationship with white men has been one of rejection: white men have exploited, objectified, and rejected African - American women. Because white male power is largely predicated on Black female subordination, few delusions of sharing that power and enjoying the privileges attached to white male power have existed among Black women.
(Collins, 1990:189)

Thus relationships among Black women and white men are restricted by the legacy of Black women's subordination to individualistic and systematic white male power. Patricia Hill Collins argues that:

The relationships among Black women and white men have long been constrained by the legacy of Black women's sexual abuse by white men and the unresolved tensions this creates. Traditionally, freedom for Black women has meant freedom from white men, not the freedom to choose white men as lovers and friends. Black women who have willingly chosen white male friends and lovers have been severely chastized in African - American communities for selling out the 'race', or they are accused of being like prostitutes, demeaning themselves by willingly using white men for their own financial or social gain.
(Collins, 1990: 191)

Subsequently myths about Black female sexuality that have existed since slavery largely determine how whites see and treat Black women. Sian believes that:

White people watch the programmes on television and they see the caricature. They are just happy to see the caricature because it confirms that things are in place. And it does not matter if nobody believes it. That is the positioning of power. That is the way it is and people can act accordingly whether they believe it or not.

Sian alludes to the contradictory nature of the perpetuation of myths even when they are not necessarily believed.

She argues that as a result of racialised sexual imagery Black women are denied the opportunity to assert themselves as real individuals. Instead Sian believes that the sexual denigration of Black womanhood is a tool that is used to oppress Black people as a whole. Consequently she maintains that in sexual relationships white men are unable to value Black women independently of the myths since:

I am just another mugger, with breasts, as far as they are concerned.

Similarly Sharon describes her own experience with a white man who had preconceived notions about the rampant sexual drive of African women. Moreover, Sharon found that he was under the impression that she would be used to physical abuse and readily accept it.

As I have mentioned in previous chapters Black female sexuality has represented a source of curiosity, fear and desire. Melisa thinks that white men are fascinated by the notion that Blackness is synonymous with unbridled sexuality. In some of her relationships with white men Melisa discovered that she was merely regarded as an object of sexual gratification. Therefore, rather than taking her seriously, these men just 'fooled around' with Melisa. Hence Melisa maintains that some white men do not respect Black women and due to societal pressures they are also ashamed to be seen with them. As a result it is thought that Black women are:

...nice to be had but not to be seen with.

Twelve women argued that relationships with whites are problematic due to the constraining expectations of both Black and white societies. In relation to the former these interviewees indicate that Black women with white partners are ostracised by Black communities. Moreover, these women are chastised for selling out the race or charged with prostitution for using white men to advance socially (Collins, 1990). Sharon and Tracy argue that myths about the sexual repression of white men are also used against Black women in 'mixed race' relationships. Consequently such women are devalued because they are defined as 'coconuts'- i.e. Black on the outside and white on the inside -, prostitutes and sexually frustrated.

Whilst it was accepted that given the history of Black women's abuse by white men caution was necessary, six women criticised the view that they could only have Black partners. Fosuwa and Sharon suggest that in general Black communities perpetuate the idea that Black women who have white partners are 'letting the side down'. Yvonne Ayoka adds that the contention that these women have 'sold out' by forsaking Black male partners is dismissive as well as incorrect. Hence it is too simplistic to accuse Black women who have forged sexual relationships with white men of introducing divisions within Black communities and by extension, sabotaging Black liberation struggles.

Not only are Black women in 'mixed race' relationships seen as marrying out of and so 'damaging the colour' but as also supporting white racism. Perceived as traitors their commit-

ment to anti - racism is undermined. This devaluation can be extremely painful. For Zora the burden of being accused of betraying her people is deeply painful. Although she is able to reject such views because they are regressive, they still have the power to cause her some upset. Zora defends her relationship with a white man for being positive; allowing difference, asserting pride in her own culture and respecting that of her partner. However she explains that, the clannish and conservative mentality of the theory that she should only consider relationships with Black men, also makes her both apologetic and defensive. Nevertheless she denies that she has been co - opted by the system of white domination:

I get angry when Blacks say, 'you have sold your sexuality to the devil'. That is, sold your sexuality to the other side...it is like invasion of the body snatchers, 'here goes one'. Blacks when they see you with a white partner complain that it is not right. First you want to shrink and split; and then you get mad and think they have no right to judge you.

Arguments against 'mixed race' relationships

Although it is common within Black communities to find resentment about Black women's sexual relationships with white men this is interpreted in various ways: Five out of twenty one women mentioned their reservations about 'mixed race' relationships. Three of them argued that despite their own rejection of white men they respected the right of other Black women to have 'mixed race' relationships. However they

themselves averred that they would not consider a white partner for physical and cultural reasons. One woman was opposed to 'mixed race' relationships for herself and other Blacks because of the political views she held.

Yvonne Stewart explains that the fact that she is not attracted to white men is not a form of or a reaction against racism:

...I mean, I would not go out with one, but it is not because they are white. I just do not find them attractive at all...they have never done anything for me. They have no sex appeal for me. I have had many white men approach me. I have been nice to them but I have never carried it any further. I find Black men physically attractive, as opposed to white men.

The most common reason given for not choosing a white partner is the significance of cultural differences. Due to a shared history and culture, it was argued that Black women feel more comfortable and relaxed with Black men as opposed to white men. Susan believes that the cultural barriers between Black and white society are so great that a white partner would have a limited appreciation of her habits as a Black woman. Therefore Susan claims that she would not go out with a white man because this would restrict her integration in Black culture:

There is a cultural difference. We do have a habitual difference. The things that we do and take for granted. Like there are things that we do at home behind closed doors. Like I said before, our hair, our skin, certain types of food. Those sorts of little things. They are subtle but they mean a lot to a person. I think white men might not be happy with that...

The last reason for non - involvement with white men was the

socio - economic and political context of racism in Britain. It was mentioned that the far reaching effects of the oppression of Black people has rendered 'mixed race' relationships to be inconceivable. Thus separatism was seen as integral to the assertion of Black consciousness, pride and progress. Moreover Sian sees 'mixed race' relationships as inherently negative, evil and detrimental to Black liberation struggles. She believes that:

Race affects how I feel about my sexual experiences completely. I would never consider having a relationship with a European because I see it as a sort of race betrayal. First, race betrayal because of everything that has happened to us in the past. And I see it as giving the wrong impression to other Africans who might see me with a European. And also just for my own feeling of self respect; because when I think of the things that European men have done to African women in the past and are still doing it just seems ridiculous. It would be like a Jew going out with a Nazi during the Holocaust! You know. What kind of fool would do something like that?

I want to argue that Sian's views allude to the distinction between individual and institutionalised racism. Arguments about the personal and social implications of sexual relationships between Black women and white men are inextricably linked to the extent that the latter are blamed for the subordination of the former. In view of this I think that Sian's critique of 'mixed race' relationships is worth quoting in more detail. For Sian, 'mixed race' relationships ultimately mean the genocide of the Black race:

I can not see anything positive coming out of it. Each time there is a mixed child, then that is part of the race sort of disappearing; and it does not

take much as we know to completely 'breed' the African race out...

Thus, Sian believes that sexual relationships between white men and Black women benefit white society and contribute to the oppression of Black women. However I want to argue that by dictating who Black women should be allowed to love, opinions such as Sian's circumscribe Black women's ability to realise their personal and political potential. Rather than placing a bar on feelings, in the next section, I will explore the need for Black women to challenge such taboos.

Dealing with 'Jungle Fever': Black women's relationships with whites

Ten Black women argued that in terms of sexual partners they were as interested in whites as in Blacks. They indicated that in spite of racism in British society love in itself does not have racial boundaries. However in order for a Black woman to consider a relationship with a white person, they would have to understand and respect Black history and culture. A few Black women as a result of negative experiences with Black men now prefer relationships with white men. Thus these women assessed the virtue of the relationship irrespective of race and choose partners who treat them as equals.

The importance of having the freedom to like who you want to was discussed. Fosuwa negates disapproval of her involvement with white women by giving primacy to her own self development. She explains that:

It is all about who you can grow with. The most important thing is who I feel I can grow with... It is all about who I care about and who gives me what I want. End of story.

Similarly Sharon maintains that the issue of race is irrelevant when one considers devotion:

If I go out with a white person I am only thinking in terms of who loves me and who I like.

For her part, Sharon believes that white men are less likely to display the macho tendencies that she has found in some Black men:

Well, at the moment I do not see a problem because of race. As far as I am concerned, as long as I like a person and he likes me then it is fine irrespective of their race. I think if I had to make a decision now I would go out with a white person. Simply since I do not want a Black man because they tend to go around with this big macho image. I am not quite sure if I can handle big macho men. I think in a way I want a feeble man. I feel that with a white man I would not get the problems in terms of violence and so forth.

Sharon's perception of Black men as macho and white men as feeble is worth noting. It is interesting how she denies racialised portrayals of submissive or aggressive womanhood yet supports racist notions about masculinity. Subsequently the extent to which Black women's desire for whites is influenced by dominant beliefs about the differences between them and Blacks is relevant. Sally B rejects Sharon's definition of Black and white men by arguing that both are potentially obnoxious. Instead Sally B states that although she would rather go out with a Black man; she would consider a white man who she felt to be genuinely sympathetic to the

Black cause. Thus Sally B claims:

First and foremost my first choice would be going out with a Black man. Before I used to have this idea that I would not go out with a white man but now I am not so prejudiced. And if I were at all to find myself in a position in which I was going out with a white man he would have to be mentally in tuned in terms of culture and personality. I am definitely not going to accept a racist white guy who would have a stereotypic view about a Black person. That is out of the question. That is why we have to be really mentally balanced and in tune. Because he has got to respect my beliefs. I have got to respect his views...If it comes to considering white men as opposed to Black men I would have to say right in every possible way and the relationship would have to be fifty fifty. We would have to be compatible. That is the only way I would consider a partnership with a white person.

Fiona agrees that compatibility is vital. Her own experiences lead her to reject separatism since she has only ever been involved with white men. She believes that the white men she has had relationships with were racially aware and abhorred racism. Fiona claims to be interested in men, regardless of their race because to define them solely in these terms would be narrow minded. Her partners have typically been middle class and educated men who have shown her respect irrespective of her Blackness:

With white middle class men that I have relationships with, it does not matter and I do not have to change my behaviour in any way...they probably do not have an image of a Black woman per se if they are in any shape or form 'right on', educated or politically correct. A woman is a woman regardless of colour...for the upwardly mobile white, it is not an issue.

Therefore these women believe that the argument that Black women who are involved with white men are contributing to

the downfall of Blacks is wrong. Instead they assent that this view operates in the interest of Black men for it dictates that Black women are their sexual territory and theirs alone. Moreover such notions contribute to the subordination of Black women. First, it restricts who Black women can be involved with. In view of the double standard that Black men are allowed to have white women as well as several partners it is frequently difficult for Black women to find a single Black man. Second, the scarcity of unattached Black men as well as attempts to compete for male attention further subjugates Black women. This state of vulnerability maximizes the control of Black women's sexuality.

Despite these obstacles more Black women choose to have white partners. According to Tammy the increase in 'mixed race' relationships in the 1990's indicates a change in attitudes. Although it is difficult to assess the extent to which this means greater equality, Tammy maintains that as Blacks and whites become more accustomed to each others' cultures there will be less ignorance. Consequently there should be more approval of these relationships so that they are accepted as everyday occurrences. Melisa adds that the more 'mixed race' relationships there are people will then get used to them and so consider them to be normal.

Yvonne Ayoka believes that there is a convergence of Black and white cultures due to the rise of 'mixed race' relationships. Moreover, she argues that the relationships between Black women and white men succeed, when they are both confident about their cultural heritage whilst recognising the

need for integration. Yvonne Ayoka states that:

A lot of the time with Black women and white men they do it because they genuinely like the person. There are a lot of differences between Blacks and whites but if you really love the person it will work out. If you are happy with your self and your culture and you do not have to prove how Black you are; if you really like the person then you would be prepared to make sacrifices.

Nevertheless these views do not necessarily indicate that 'mixed race' relationships offer hope for a utopian future (Pinnock, 1991). Instead it is incumbent to comprehend that these intimate relationships can only benefit Black women when the racist, heterosexist and sexist social construction of sexuality is acknowledged. Otherwise these unions can be dangerous as Black women internalise being castigated by both Black and white communities. Winsome Pinnock argues that 'inter - racial' relationships are particularly painful for Black women because they feel guilty and angry about being seen as conforming to the historical image of the 'black nympho - whore'. Pinnock asserts that:

By loving her historical enemy, she may feel that she has betrayed her foremothers who were raped by white colonialists. We're never quite sure whether people see us as we really are. In our relationships with them we may fear that crude stereotypes condition the way they see us...
(Pinnock, 1991)

I hope that I have indicated how racist images of Black women's sexuality restrict their potential to freely choose sexual partners. Black women in 'mixed race' relationships, I have argued, are forced to question their own reasons for having white partners, why their partners have chosen them

as well as to challenge the notion that Black women are using whites as a means of gaining power. Although I have mainly discussed relationships with white men, Black lesbians with white female partners are also condemned. In the last part of this chapter I will examine how Black lesbians contradict a dominant model of sexuality that is white, male, middle class and heterosexual.

The 'White Man's Disease': Homophobia in Black society

I want to discuss the issue of homosexuality within the context of various theoretical debates about homophobia in Black communities. Accordingly I intend to explain how some of the interviewees reservations about homosexuality reflect the opinions of British people in general. As such several Black women are opposed to homosexuality because they consider it to be pathological, dirty and perverse. Some of these women reject homosexuality for religious reasons. Others maintain that homosexuality is a 'white male disease' that is alien and detrimental to Black culture. These views are criticised by Black women who believe that historically in Africa and in the Caribbean the existence of bi - sexuals, gays and lesbians has been a source of strength to Black liberation struggles. They criticise the homophobic notion that homosexuality is retrogressive in that it takes energies away from Black struggles. Instead they suggest that homophobia is divisive because the labelling of inde-

pendent Black women as lesbians is used by several Black men to undermine them. As such the following observation is relevant to this debate:

Myth. Homosexuality is a White, male, upper and middle class, able-bodied phenomenon found in Europe and North America. When it is found anywhere else it is a result of colonisation.
Response. Much of the history of women, Black people, working class people, people with disabilities and people from Africa, Asia and South America has been lost - but where it exists there are many examples of same sex relationships.
(RISC 'Human Rights for All?' Reading 1992 p74 quoted in Mason - John & Khambatta, 1993: 19)

Audre Lorde argues that racism, sexism, heterosexism and homophobia are forms of blindness that are built on the notion that difference is a great threat. Lorde explains that the fear of lesbianism entails a false ascription of power to the concept of difference as well as an inability to realise its dynamic and enriching potential. She defines heterosexism and homophobia as follows:

Heterosexism: the belief in the inherent superiority of one pattern on loving and therefore its right to dominance.

Homophobia: the fear of feelings of love for members of one's own sex and therefore the hatred of those feelings in others. (Lorde, 1984: 45)

Moreover Cheryl Clarke, in her article entitled The Failure To Transform: Homophobia In The Black Community, argues strongly that for Black lesbians, homophobia is as oppressive as racism, sexism and class exploitation. She thinks that homophobia in Black communities is 'largely reflective of the homophobic culture in which we live' (Clarke, 1983: 197). Socialised by homophobic, misogynist and sexually

repressive values, Clarke maintains, Black people are in a contradictory position. As such Blacks compromise their sexuality to debunk racist mythology and in the process suppress their erotic desires. Consequently the notion that homosexuality is a threat to Christianity and the family isolates many Black lesbians and gay men. She explains that lesbians and gays have always been central to Black communities - part of politics, the church, music, literature and art. Clarke argues that it is necessary to challenge homophobia through dialogue and education because homophobic attitudes restrict Black liberation:

...Homophobia is a measure of how far removed we are from the psychological transformation we so desperately need to engender. The expression of homophobic sentiments, the threatening political postures assumed by Black radicals and progressives of the nationalist/communist ilk, and the seeming lack of any willingness to understand the politics of gay and lesbian liberation collude to repress not only gay men and lesbians, but also to repress a natural part of all human beings, namely the bisexual potential in us all. Homophobia divides Black people as political allies it cuts off political growth, stifles revolution, and perpetuates patriarchal domination. (Clarke, 1983: 197)

Adrienne Rich in her analysis of male controlled and institutionalized heterosexuality debunks the notion that heterosexuality is a preferred choice. Instead, Rich claims that heterosexuality is compulsory. She argues that heterosexuality is:

...something that has had to be imposed, managed, organized, propagandized, and maintained by force ...the failure to examine heterosexuality as an institution is like failing to admit that the economic system called capitalism or the caste

system of racism is maintained by a variety of forces, including both physical violence and false consciousness... (Rich, 1981:20)

Having defined heterosexism and homophobia I want to examine the ways in which they are erroneously justified. In particular I will analyse biologicistic and environmentalist arguments that are expressed by the interviewees. According to Susan:

...unfortunately some gays, they are like that because they have lived in an environment where they have just mixed with that one sex and they get attracted to them...it is not right because you have got two sexes. The purpose of two different sexes is to create, to produce...now sometimes things go wrong in nature and you get one sex liking the same sex, it is biological. It can not be helped. It is like being born blind. It is an illness and a disability because it is not biologically right, they are just interested in sex, basically fulfilling sexual desires. They just want to do it. It does not matter what it is. It could be an animal.

I find Susan's belief that homosexuals are 'sex freaks' interesting in terms of the notion of projection. Heterosexual privilege is usually the only form of power that Black women have access to. In dominant society Black women are denied social status on the basis of being both Black and female. Since being Black is defined as inferior to being white and being a woman is seen as subordinate to being a man the only aspect of most Black women that is deemed to be the norm is heterosexuality. As such their heterosexuality is asserted as many Black women's only means of belonging in mainstream culture. By denigrating homosexuality Black heterosexual women may be trying to re - establish their own sense of social and sexual dignity; heterosexuality being

the only source of dignity that is available to them. Patricia Hill Collins asserts, however, that this also indicates the suppression of their own strong feelings for women (Collins, 1990).

Another central issue is the belief in the existence of a hierarchy of oppression. Sian believes that racism is more oppressive than heterosexism:

My oppression as an African woman is dominant because a European woman would not suffer what I suffer as an African woman. It is my Africanness that tips the balance. And as an African lesbian - if I was an African lesbian - , my Africanness would tip the balance if it was a European lesbian. So I just think that sometimes people might not like it but sometimes there are certain issues, certain oppressions that are more weighty and have more far reaching effects. I mean we just have not had gays being slaves for 500 years, you just have not had gays being raped. You just have not had gays having their identity, their language and their culture taken away from them...we are not dying in our thousands because we are gay or lesbian. We are dying because we are African and the need for that comes first.

As a Black woman who is constantly asked which is more oppressive, being Black or being female, I criticise the competitiveness that is inherent in such arguments. I am unable to argue that either racism or sexism is the greatest oppression since both combine to determine my situation. Similarly Black lesbians are unable to rank their oppressions. Furthermore by attributing different moral weights to determine which form of suffering is greater, the commonalities in our circumstances are subsumed as well as the chance to transform them. I see the marginalisation and intolerance of sexual difference within Black communities as a form of conservatism that undermines Black unity. In order to ana-

lyse this issue further I want to concentrate on the arguments of one interviewee.

In my sample two women defined themselves as bi - sexual, one woman as lesbian and the others as heterosexual. In view of the fact that approximately 10% of the population in Britain are either gay, lesbian or bi - sexual according to statistics I consider my sample to be representative of wider society (Edwards, 1994). However I am aware that by only referring to the experiences of one lesbian, I could be accused of tokenism. I challenge this assertion by stressing that due to the specific subordination of Black lesbians as a result of racism, sexism, class oppression and homophobia, they are largely an inaccessible group. Given their marginalisation and the ways in which this restricts their participation in research, as well as maximises their vulnerability to exploitation, I intend to illustrate that the following testimony needs to be understood within this context.

Lesbianism as a challenge to repression

Valerie Mason - John and Ann Khambatta give a compelling assessment of Black lesbians' lives in Britain. They explain that in Africa, Asia, the Americas and the Caribbean Black women were engaged in lesbian activities from recorded time. Indeed, today in many of these countries of origin lesbian behaviour is not tolerated and there are oppressive regimes, cruel harassment or laws against their sexuality. Mason - John and Khambatta argue that Black lesbians have existed in

Britain for over five hundred years but racism, homophobia and isolation have rendered them silent, isolated and invisible. Regular immigration checks mean that many Black lesbians who flee the homophobia of their homelands still are afraid in Britain (Mason - John & Khambatta, 1993).

According to Valerie Mason - John and Ann Khambatta it has never been possible for Black lesbians to have a unified identity because of the expectation that they would break up their identities into acceptable fragments. Therefore it was demanded that they were only defined as, Black in Black groups, women in women's organisations and lesbians in gay groups. However in Black meetings issues such as racism, fascism and capitalism were regarded as more significant than sexuality. Also in the Women's Liberation Movement and the gay scene racism was not on the agenda. Until recently there has not been an arena to fulfil one's 'true' self (Mason - John & Khambatta, 1993). For the past twenty years Black lesbians have resisted this situation by autonomous mobilisation.

Black lesbians like all lesbians are faced with the dilemma of living a double life or Coming Out; which risks the trauma of losing a lot of their family, friends and a rich cultural identity. They also risk losing many Black men with whom they fight oppression and safe communities which protect them from racism. Yet to Come Out is empowering for women engaged in Black lesbian only events (Mason - John & Khambatta, 1993).

As I have previously argued, the racialisation of the social

construction of sexuality is largely ignored. When the ways in which Black sexuality is stereotyped are discussed this is usually subject to heterosexist bias. Thus debates on Black female sexuality tend to focus on heterosexual Black women and render Black lesbians invisible (hooks, 1981; Wallace, 1989). For Black lesbians the failure of Black communities to address the specificity of their oppression contributes to their dilemma. Whilst interviewing Forsuwa Andoh I became aware that this weakness could be elucidated in six areas:

Fear of independent women

Primarily the fear of Black women who appear to be independent has given rise to the charge of lesbianism. Fosuwa criticises the accusation for ignoring the historical legacy of women who have been both independent and fundamental to the bonding that is necessary to resist racism. Fosuwa exclaims:

I mean what hope is there for us as a race? And that is just a little thing about sexuality which is something the Black community needs to take on board. It is so frightened by that bit. It is so frightened by their women standing out and doing things. As soon as a Black woman starts getting her independence the first thing that she is accused of is that she is a lesbian. But if you look at history Black women have always supported each other even if they did not sleep together. When you have a problem who do you go to? You go to your best Black woman friend...

Furthermore stigmatising independent Black women as lesbians is seen as being an effective tool of male social control. Hence Fosuwa believes that many heterosexual Black women are

afraid of being regarded as lesbians and so also as anti - male and against the Black struggle. Valerie Mason - John and Ann Khambatta argue that Black men often call vocal Black women lesbians and hence use this as a weapon against them (Mason - John & Khambatta, 1993). The fear of other Black people considering them to be lesbians and man haters encourages these women to conform to dominant notions about acceptable Black modes of female behaviour. Fear of being labelled as lesbians, suggests Fosuwa, forces some Black women to submit to men:

I think it is probably because a lot of Black women hate the term and anything stronger when they are with their man. It implies that they are man haters basically. So they will take a lot of crap from their men.

Charge of a 'White Man's Disease'

Second, Black lesbians are chastised for having what is defined as a 'white man's disease'. As Valerie Mason - John and Ann Khambatta comment:

Lesbianism is known in many of the different Black communities as the White disease. The implication is that the arrival of homosexuality in our communities is the fault of White people and of colonisation. The notion of homosexuality as a White disease is reinforced by the absence of visible Black lesbians and gay men. Most media representations of lesbians and gays are of White people and fewer Black people are prepared to be Out. (Mason - John & Khambatta, 1993: 21)

The belief that homosexuality is a form of imperialist pathology that symbolises the destruction of Black society is also prevalent. Therefore Black lesbians are accused of supporting white values and subsequently taking energy away

from the struggle for Black liberation.' Although rejecting this argument Fosuwa admits that it hurts her deeply:

There is nothing as painful as somebody saying to you you have got 'the white man's disease', when every anti-apartheid march I am out there standing in the cold with my banner and supporting my race, and then to be excluded from it when it fits. You know it is when it fits people that you are excluded and that is really awful. And if you are not strong enough it can just finish you. It is not true when people say you get it from the West. If people just read their books and research, they will find lots of Black gay people who do not have anything to do with the English or with western society for that matter. So where did they get it from?

Consequently Black lesbians battle against the view that they are not only anti - male but also anti - Black. Fosuwa comments that:

I get accused of not being African. At first it used to hurt but if that is the way you think about it, that is the way you think about it. I have not got any more energy to fight. It is very draining.

Despite pressures to hide her sexuality because it is seen as both European and as an illness Fosuwa is defiant. She argues:

It sometimes makes me even much more aware of people's ignorance and makes me then decide that I will not for nobody, Black community or not Black community, whether I want to be accepted or do not, I will not put myself in the closet. I consider myself to be a very sexual woman in a positive sense and so whenever I want to display my sexuality it is up to me. It is my choice and it is not a question of being sick. I have not got 'the white man's disease'. I am not mentally disturbed. I just do. I am just me. Apart from the anger sometimes it is very sad.

According to Valerie Mason - John and Ann Khambatta there is

a worry amongst heterosexual Black people that an admission of the taboo of homosexuality would add to the oppression that they already suffer. The majority of the Black heterosexual community would like to think that Black lesbians do not exist but they obviously do (Mason - John & Khambatta, 1993).

Freedom to choose white partners

The third problem is related to the previous section in which I analysed debates about 'bi - racial' relationships. Recognising the societal privileges that accrue to white women by virtue of their whiteness Fosuwa concedes that this can influence relationships with Black women. She explains that a precondition for such relationships is white women being accountable for their own racism. Initially Fosuwa found that several white women saw and treated her as new, different, exotic and alien. Having crossed that barrier as well as being castigated for allegedly denying her Blackness, Fosuwa stresses the need for freedom of sexual choice:

You have to have relationships with people who you feel comfortable with regardless of race. I spent lots and lots of time deciding not to have relationships with whites because of power...There were times when I felt that I was letting the side down by having relationships with white women. It has taken years to actually feel comfortable enough to say 'look sod this, this has nothing to do with politics and power'. It has to do with how I feel and who I feel close to and warm to. Full stop. Whether you are green, pink or yellow. But I think those arguments come for every Black woman when you are having relationships with white men or white women. You must stop and think how other people view you. When I walk into this club are they going to say, 'oh, she could have done better. What is she doing with that one?' It just

boils down to what you feel comfortable with.

As a result, Fosuwa attempts to ignore these criticisms by being with white partners who are not only responsible for their own racism but with whom she can share confidence, love and caring. As such Fosuwa maintains that:

On the level of relationships it is no longer that necessary for me to make a political statement about having a relationship with Black women or white women; because I think that was very destroying for me, deciding that 'O.K., I am not going to have relationships with white women'. I found that it was a very narrow view and a very separatist view which I do not necessarily agree with.

The question of whether Black lesbians should have sexual relationships with white women is a heated topic. Usually Black lesbians who are romantically involved with white lesbians are either seen as being traitors to their community or confused about their cultural identities. This view negates the fact that both 'mixed race' and Black relationships are healthy and unhealthy. Black separatists, i.e. women who only have relationships with Black lesbians living and working with them when possible, either perceive this as a necessary episode of Black lesbians life or as a fundamental ideology and lifestyle. Meanwhile Black lesbians from different backgrounds who have sexual, platonic and working relationships with each other are on the one hand free of white racism but on the other hand prone to 'intra - racial' prejudices. Inter - personal, institutional, overt or covert racism hurts, angers, pains, frustrates and exhausts. Albeit racism by - omission, exclusion and tokenism, invisibility,

ignorance and fear or by guilt (Mason - John & Khambatta, 1993).

Black male ego

The degree to which lesbianism is deemed as threatening the egotism of most Black men, is the fourth issue highlighted by Fosuwa. Whereas homosexuality is an acceptable part of some African and Caribbean cultures, in Britain, it is perceived as a threat to the Black community. The relatively secure socio - sexual position of Black men in parts of Africa and the Caribbean, when compared to their status in Britain, means that homosexuality does not represent such a challenge in the former places. However the inferior social, economic and political situation of most Black men in Britain contributes to a sense of vulnerability whereby the lesbian epitomises their emasculation. Fosuwa suggests that:

...whereas here in England, it is much more of a threat because you have to deal with racism, you have to deal with having no economic power, you have to deal with having no housing. And then after you have struggled with all of that and someone will come and tell you that she does not want you; not because of you but because you are a man. It is like it is much more to take on but you are the bottom of the ladder anyway and so your self-esteem goes.

Male violence

These conditions give rise to the penultimate problem - the potential of violence that has previously been mentioned. Fosuwa explains that for some Black men the threat of the autonomous Black lesbian is so great that they could resort to violence:

For me I do not care about what violence I get from the white community, even when I balance it up with when I am feeling good about the world in general there is much more violence for me from the Black man. Not all Black men, but the Black man who feels threatened. His whole sexuality is threatened, when I am standing there telling him that, he has come onto me and I say 'actually, I am not into men'. Now I am not talking about Africa, I am not talking about the Caribbean. I am talking about here. He is very threatened.

Fosuwa thinks that Black women are also threatened by lesbianism but the threat of violence does not exist. However in a homophobic Black community a Black woman is regarded as a sister until it is realised that she is a lesbian. From that moment, according to Fosuwa, violence is potentially involved:

...But with the Black man I fear him coming to knock on my door because he is threatened. I also fear that with the white man but for me more I feel that from the Black community. The white man, I do not live with him; he has nothing to do with me so I have not got to worry about that. In the same way I can call a white man racist or anything, I could not call a Black man racist, when we are sitting down talking, after knowing me for a year and not knowing anything about my sexuality, we are best friends. And the day he finds out and it is not once, it is not twice, it has been lots of times - the day he finds out he tells me 'I need a good fuck'. And that is very very violent and very threatening. Just that one sentence because you can smell it.

Challenging homophobia

Lastly the need to challenge homophobia in Black communities was addressed on two levels: In terms of a personal scale Fosuwa believes that a positive self definition and direction of her energy is vital:

...For me, lesbianism is about sharing my energies, directing my energies and drawing strength with other women. That is all it is. So most Black women are lesbians in those terms because we do that.

This assertion is related to Adrienne Rich's analysis of a 'lesbian continuum' (Rich, 1981). As part of this positive sense of self it is central for Black lesbians to recognise their worth to themselves and to Black society. Fosuwa has this to say about homophobia in Black communities:

It affects me in lots of other ways, very deeply. There are things that I struggle with for myself because I have decided I am important in the midst of the community. If they do not want what I have to offer them, they do not want it.

On a political level it is essential that Black communities take the issue of homophobia on board. Thus the way forward for all Black people regardless of their sexual preferences is greater awareness of how heterosexism restricts Blacks. In order for Blacks to survive in unity, the fight of Black lesbians, bi - sexuals and gays needs to be supported. Moreover this strategy can empower all Black people. Hence Fosuwa discusses the significance of dialogue and education:

...What I try to do to people who I think want to know and want to understand we take it right back. Black women who just on a physical level how Black women have supported each other. And I break it down and say 'what are people afraid of? Is it only just the sexual act or is it the physicalness with other Black women? Because Black women have always been together so it must be then just the sexual act'. If you remove that and break it down and talk about it positively in terms of Black women who are writers; Black women who cover the issues that everybody assumes they are straight. For me what I try to do if I meet somebody my sexuality does not come into discussion. You take me for what I am...

The notion that Black communities are more homophobic than white ones is refuted by Valerie Mason - John and Ann Khambatta:

It is a racist myth that Black communities are more homophobic than White communities. First, this belief suggests that the many different Black populations in Britain are one homogeneous group with the same religious, cultural, class and social backgrounds. Second, homophobia is prevalent in most societies today, where heterosexuality is perceived as the norm and anything different as perverse, a type of mental illness that needs to be cured.

(Mason - John & Khambatta, 1993: 22)

Valerie Mason - John and Ann Khambatta suggest that any culture with a strong religious faith is prone to homophobia whether it is Black or white. In Britain religion is central to the lives of many Blacks. This may make them seem to be more narrow - minded, bigoted and homophobic than whites. It is necessary to fight both racism and homophobia. Thus the challenge against racism also requires that lesbian and gay communities develop ways to deal with it (Mason - John & Khambatta, 1993).

The ability to resist images of Black female sexuality and the struggle to transform them has been discussed in this and other chapters. What I have attempted to do here is to show that any analysis of the racialised social construction of sexuality that does not look at homosexuality is not only incomplete but also heterosexist. Whilst all Black women are influenced by derogatory myths about their sexuality; homophobia inhibits support within Black communities so that Black lesbians confront a distinct form of oppression. A

recognition of the similarities in the subordination of Black people be they lesbians, gays, bi - sexuals or heterosexuals would contribute to the consciousness that is integral to advancing the conditions of Black women.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the impact of racist representations of Black sexuality upon Black women's sexual relationships. The majority of Black women in my study have decided to have relationships with Black men. This is partly due to their perceptions of mutual African - Caribbean customs. They discussed the problems that arise from stereotypes of Black men and they compared these myths to how Black men behaved at home and in the community. These women mentioned difficulties that could be apparent in any partner irrespective of their racial background. In particular violence and infidelity, in the latter case especially if the other woman was white, were complained about.

For Black women with white counterparts the largest obstacle is the ostracism of society in general and other Black people. Their affection for their partner went beyond their being Black or white whereas both white and Black communities saw race as the main issue. The fear of 'mixed race' relationships and children comes from both white and Black cultures for different reasons. In dominant culture notions of survival of the fittest, racial purity and white superiority are threatened by 'bi - racial' unions and their

offspring. Whereas the majority of Black communities regard 'mixed race' relationships as diluting, weakening and ultimately destroying the Black race. This is seen as giving more power and control to the Western oligarchy.

Similarly both white and Black culture rejects lesbianism. Sharing dominant society's prejudices, most Black people reject homosexuality for pseudo - scientific and religious reasons. Additionally many in Black communities believe that homosexuality is a 'white man's disease' which was introduced to Blacks. Despite such opposition several Black lesbians challenge homophobia. They lead independent lives where they are free to love who they choose.

In Britain Black women's socio - sexual relationships with Black men, white men and other women are still greatly circumscribed by the history of racialised sexuality and male domination. In numerous ways Black men and women continue to share a commonality of oppression on the basis of racism. In general, white men and women can be regarded as the racial oppressors of Black folk. However, this approach is also contradictory as Black and white men share a common experience as patriarchs. Therefore, all groups are potentially exploitative of Black womanhood. Meanwhile both Black and white women are subjugated by men. Black women's relationships can only be understood within the complicated dynamics of racism, sexism, heterosexism and class oppression.

CONCLUSION

The meaning of 'orgasmic slavery' has been previously explained in my thesis, by referring to a social constructionist framework. This has allowed me to analyse how predominant historical images of Black women's sexuality, that originate from enslavement, influence the socio - economic and political circumstances of the majority of Black women living in Britain today. Racialised sexual labour severely restricts the portrayals, perceptions and relationships of Black women. My research examines the prevalence and consequences of derogatory racist, sexist and heterosexist images about Black female sexuality. Furthermore, I show that most Black women find the space to resist these images. Many Black women construct progressively self defined subjectivities. They reject their subjugation as 'slaves to the orgasm'.

It is a common fallacy in modern Western societies that the Black female is governed almost entirely by her libido. This thesis has worked towards questioning the validity of this assumption and its impact. Through a historical assessment of the development of images about Black female sexuality I discuss the ways in which this has constituted a source of racial and sexual subordination in contemporary Britain. By exploring the range of these racialised sexual myths in British society and the mass media I explain that they contribute to the oppression of Black women. The pervasiveness of stereotypes about Black female sexuality has been

examined using questionnaire surveys, a pilot study and interview data. This work is inspired by the following statement of June Jordan:

I am a feminist, and what that means to me is much the same as the meaning of the fact that I am Black: it means that I must undertake to love myself and to respect myself as though my very life depends upon self - love and self - respect...
(Jordan, 1989: 75)

My own experiences of racial and sexual denigration have motivated the present research. There comes a time for the Black female intellectual when her rage is transformed into creative energy. Channelling my anger about my own individual suffering as well as the collective oppression of Black women has involved utilising the research process as a political weapon. I use the 'insider / outsider stance' to interrogate the impact of racialised sexual imagery upon Black women's lives. The position of 'insider / outsider' necessarily entails striving to combat the offensive social construction of racialised sexuality (Collins, 1990). Addressing the need to challenge the prevalence of derogatory representations of Black female sexuality; my research shows that this occurs in the realms of identity and relationships. Recommendations for resistance on a broader institutional level are also discussed:

for the embattled
there is no place
that cannot be
home
nor is.
(Lorde, 1984: 75)

Therefore the principle objective of my thesis has been an

examination of the repercussions of stereotypes of African - Caribbean female sexuality since enslavement; upon Black women's self - perceptions and relationships in contemporary Britain. This radical undertaking has social constructionist thought as its premise. Ever since the sixteenth century the social construction of African sexuality as being inherently evil, promiscuous, pathological and diseased has been integral to racist and sexist ideologies and practices. The institutionalisation of images of Africans as sexually deviant, animalistic, licentious and lascivious were central to the rationalisation of their maltreatment during slavery. The icon of sexually denigrated Black women was used to justify the maximum exploitation of their reproductive labour and exonerated white men who abused them from guilt. My research assesses the myriad ways in which racialised sexist ideologies and practices persist in present times as well as restrict Black women's lives. To this end I consider how the representation of Black people, primarily in terms of their so called 'hyper - sexuality', in contemporary cinema reproduces myths that have existed since the sixteenth century. Reflecting the broader context of racialised heterosexism, British and American film industries perpetuate seductive stereotypes of the Black man as a super - stud and the Black woman as a prostitute. An examination of the portrayal of Black sexuality in 'Imitation Of Life' (1954), 'Sapphire' (1959), 'Shaft' (1971), 'Mona Lisa' (1986) and 'She's Gotta Have It' (1986), indicates that prior derogatory myths are reinforced and perpetuated.

Moreover, I explore the problems of creating Black feminist research within present sociological and feminist frameworks. For instance, I discuss how the four main principles of the Black feminist methodological standpoint that is outlined by Patricia Hill Collins effect my study. These principles are concrete experience as a criterion of meaning, the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims, the ethics of caring and personal accountability (Collins, 1990). In the questionnaire data, the strong influence of race upon sexual identity and experiences is evident among seventy eight people from different racial backgrounds. The results of the questionnaire surveys allowed me to address the inter - relationship, personal and social implications of both racist and homophobic myths in the mass media and in British society generally. As a consequence of the unstructured pilot study (of two Black men, two Black women, two white men and two white women) I was enabled to further analyse the connections between racism, sexism and homophobia in relation to images of race and sexuality. The opinions of twenty one Black female interviewees, about racist and sexist representations of sexuality, that frequently occur in mainstream British society and particularly in the mass media were addressed. Through semi - structured interviews they maintained that Black women are predominantly categorised as sensuous / sensual, promiscuous, good in bed, prostitutes, loose, Sapphires and breeders. According to these respondents, Black women are usually portrayed as

aggressive and oversexed temptresses who bewitch, mesmerise and emasculate men. The great contradictions between dominant images that define Black women as being exclusively creatures of sex and their actual self perceptions and experiences are evident. They argue that the notion that Black women are licentious and lascivious, that is held by many Black men and white people, reinforces the oppression of Black women and protects people who violate them from punishment.

There is a huge impact of societal imagery of Black sexuality upon these women's sense of self. Bombarded by these myths Black women adopt a range of self perceptions that serve as coping strategies. The majority of the women condemn what they see to be the power of racialised, sexist and homophobic sexual myths. They resist the dominant images and create strong self definitions. Acknowledging the need for change Black women create alternative models of sexuality.

Racialised sexual imagery circumscribes Black women's sexual relationships with Black men, white men and other women. The dangers of Black women internalising negative stereotypes of Black masculinity causes problems for Black women's relationships with Black men. Given the racist history of the sexual oppression of Black women by white men the decision to have a white partner is also difficult. For Black lesbians the racism, sexism and homophobia of British society in general and their ostracism by Black communities are the primary sites for their defiance.

The theoretical framework of my thesis is inspired consider-

ably by the social constructionist theories on sexuality by Michel Foucault, Jeffrey Weeks and Carole Vance. Foucault argues that historically changing social forces and definitions of sexual behaviour are connected to 'power knowledge' relations. Since the nineteenth century in Western societies 'a multiplicity of discourses' about sexuality glorify and control sex. During modernity racism is linked to political power and the devices of sexuality. Hence in the nineteenth century state racism was directed by evolutionism, eugenics, the medicalization of sexuality in psychiatry, jurisprudence, legal medicine and agencies of surveillance (Foucault, 1976).

I have previously discussed feminist criticisms of the inability of Foucault's patriarchal perspective to provide a gendered debate that scrutinises the system of male domination. Here I want to continue to consider the contention that Foucault does not adequately examine the issue of racism. Abdul R. JanMohammed accuses Foucault of being Eurocentric. JanMohammed affirms that Foucault discusses the white, European and bourgeois history of sexuality as universal without critically analysing how it is racialised (JanMohammed, 1992). Robert J. C. Young contends that Foucault's analysis is ethnocentric and restricted to France. Young assesses that although Foucault mentions the racism of eugenicism, the state and supervision of the body through 'biopower' the integral part that has been played by colonialism and imperialism is ignored (Young, 1995). Ann Laura

Stoler states that Foucault examines the links between biopolitics, racial and sexual technologies in the nineteenth century. However, Michel Foucault confines his modern hypothesis on discourses of race and sexuality to Nazi Germany. Stoler criticises Foucault for neglecting the important influence of colonialism and imperialism upon Western and bourgeois sexuality (Stoler, 1995).

Jeffrey Weeks maintains that Western industrial societies assign primary significance to the notion of 'sexuality'. Weeks explains that since the nineteenth century the construction of sexuality has been largely determined by socio-cultural factors, individual and collective histories. Familial backgrounds and the extra-familial forces of class, 'social regulation', political moment and cultures of resistance guide people's subjective interpretations of the sexual realm (Weeks, 1981).

Carole Vance expounds that sexuality is a social construction which is connected with historical, socio-economic, political and ideological forces. Sexuality is a product of the cultural and power relations of race, gender and class. She queries the complications of oppositional male definitions which portray women's sexuality as both restricted, repressed and dangerous as well as exploring, pleasurable and safe. Research on sexuality often wrongly generalises about the observations of under-studied and socially marginalised women. Vance criticises studies that simplistically compare the sexualities of women from different cultural backgrounds. She argues that researchers have to

understand the specific types of women that their findings relate to. Vance's work shows that a lot of feminist research on sexuality needs to be re-examined so that the distinct experiences of Black women are incorporated (Vance, 1984).

I want to stress the utility of theories on the social construction of sexuality in relation to my research. By giving a social constructionist analysis of white, European, middle class and male sexuality, Michel Foucault inadequately examines racism and sexism whilst totally ignoring Black women. Although Foucault does not address the relevance of the racist oppression of Black people to the social construction of sexuality, he provides a theoretical framework that contributes to this analysis (Foucault, 1976). Jeffrey Weeks' historical assessment of the ways in which society, culture, economics and politics form Western sexuality leads to an awareness of the contradictory conceptions of Black sexuality (Weeks, 1981). Carole Vance explains the historicity of socio-economic, cultural, ideological and political relations that shape sexuality. Her exploration of the influences of race, gender and class divisions on the social construction of sexuality confirms and broadens my study (Vance, 1984). I incorporate the models of Michel Foucault, Jeffrey Weeks and Carole Vance to examine the significance of racialised sexual mythology to British society, the mass media, subjectivity and sexual unions. The validity of my thesis lies in its reflection on theories of sexuality,

gender and race through a substantial example of the social construction and control of the sexuality of Black women in Britain during the 1990's.

My research demonstrates that for white people, a secure self definition is often achieved by projecting their own racial and sexual anxieties unto Black people. The repression of the racialised sexual desires and fears of such white people is used to describe and restrict Black sexuality. Dominant racist and sexist images of sexuality justify the subordination of the majority of Black people. The social construction of Black female sexuality continues to represent a form of social control that is racist, sexist, heterosexist and elitist. Often both white men and Black men have defined a model of Black female heterosexuality that serves their own sexual, socio - economic and political interests. The rearticulation of this history of racialised sexual subordination is demonstrated in this thesis.

Therefore I provide a theoretical analysis of racialised sexuality that is informed by the works of Michel Foucault, Jeffrey Weeks and Carole Vance. Based on their theoretical approaches I give a contemporary case of sexuality as an oppressively racialised and gendered construct. Arguing that the social construction of Black female sexuality has contributed to the inferior status of Black women I have suggested initiatives to combat this. The very fact that this has generally been ignored is a serious error for all those who claim to be aware of racial, gender and sexual issues. My main purpose has been to increase knowledge about the

existence of stereotypes about Black female sexuality in order to challenge them. Since these images, as I have shown, are central to popular ideas it is vital to fight against them.

It is only when the origins of racist sexual imagery are recognised, combined with an acute understanding of why it continues to exist that we can overcome racialised sexual subordination / 'orgasmic slavery'. The data that was generated by the questionnaire surveys, pilot study and semi-structured interviews clearly demonstrates that myths of Black sexuality place coercive limitations upon Black women's self perceptions and relationships. I am aware that my work only represents a stepping stone towards the eradication of such stereotypes. As such I stress that having laid the foundations for understanding this plight of Black women; wider anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-heterosexist initiatives in areas such as social services, mass media, education, employment, housing, The Arts and the legal system are vital. It must be appreciated that this is not only the work of Black women. Indeed institutional support across racial and gender barriers is a desired goal. We need to also work towards our own aspirations.

It is significant to consider the personal and public implications of this study for self definition, individual and collective resistance which can lead to the transformation of racialised sexual myths. When I started my research a primary aim was to assist in the de-construction of domi-

nant ideologies about Black sexuality and their negative effects. I have found that the personal and concerted defiance of Black women against perceptions of racialised sexuality, and the antagonism that is caused, supports this goal. The rejection of and challenge to white, middle class, heterosexual and male defined stereotypes of Black female sexuality is occurring. Black women are creating subjectivities that repudiate racist, sexist, heterosexist and bourgeois ideologies. Black female subjectivities subvert the sexual, cultural, socio - economic, ideological and political domination of white, middle class and heterosexual men. Black radicalism and Black feminism are central components to the development of more realistic portrayals of Black people and their sexual proclivities. Solidarity as well as new self defining and self empowering images of Black womanhood that truly reflect Black women's lives are necessary.

When will we seize the world around us with our freedom? (Jordan, 1989: 160)

APPENDIX I

Questionnaire Format

Dear Student

I am a 1st year Ph.D student in the Sociology Department. I am looking at images of race and sexuality. Part of my research involves a questionnaire about men's and women's views about sexual identity. The questionnaire is anonymous. All of the information that is given is completely confidential. Please contact me if you want to know more about my research.

I would be extremely grateful if you will fill in the questionnaire and give details of your gender, race and class background.

Please send the completed questionnaire through internal post to:

Annecka Marshall
Postgraduate Pigeonholes
Sociology Department

Thank you!

Best wishes,

Annecka Marshall

P.S. Please fill in and return as soon as possible

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How do you perceive yourself sexually? (e.g. heterosexual, homosexual, lesbian, bisexual)
2. Which (of the following) comes closest to describing how you feel about your sexual identity:
 - a. secure / confident
 - b. comfortable / fine
 - c. insecure / worried
3. Do you feel pressure from your family and friends on how to behave sexually? (e.g. they expect you to behave sexually in certain ways)
4. If so, how does this affect your sexual behaviour? (i.e. Do you change aspects of your sexual behaviour?)
5. What are your views about homosexuality?
6. In your opinion do you think that homosexuality is abnormal?
7. Do you have a deep, intimate but non - sexual relationship with someone of the same sex as you?
8. Do you have a sexual relationship with a person of the same sex?
9. How would you describe yourself 'racially'?
10. What is your opinion on mixed race relationships?

11. Have you ever been sexually involved with someone from a different racial / ethnic group?
12. If so, was that experience different to your other sexual relationships?
13. What did your family and friends think about that relationship?
14. If you have not been sexually involved with someone from a different racial / ethnic group, would you?
15. Do you think that the issue of race affects your sexual identity in any way? (e.g. your attitudes, behaviour, choices)
16. If so, how?
17. Do you think that black people are promiscuous? (e.g. yes, maybe, no)
18. Do you think that white people are promiscuous? (e.g. true, don't know, false)
19. Do you think that blacks are sexually restrained?
20. Do you think that whites are sexually restrained?
21. How do you see the media portraying blacks and whites sexually? (e.g. blacks portrayed as promiscuous and whites as sexually restrained)
22. What impact do you feel that portrayal has on people's

perceptions? (e.g. affect how blacks and whites get treated by others)

23. In your opinion, how does the media portray:

a. heterosexuals

b. homosexuals and lesbians?

(e.g. heterosexuals seen as being normal
and gays as abnormal)

24. What impact do you think that portrayal has on people's perceptions? (e.g. affect how straight and gay people get treated by others)

25. Do you think these racial and sexual media portrayals should be changed?

26. If so, how?

27. Any other comments?

Thanks for filling in this questionnaire.

APPENDIX II

Interview Schedule

1. How old are you?
2. Do you work? If so, what is your job?
3. How do you see yourself sexually? (e.g. as heterosexual, lesbian or bisexual)
4. Do you think that race, that being a Black woman, affects how you feel about your sexual experiences? If so, how?
5. What sexual images do you think exist about Black women?
6. In general, how do you think that Black women are seen sexually?
7. Do you think that the mass media shows Black women sexually in a particular way? If so, how?
8. In your opinion, do these images affect how Black women get treated by others? If so, how?
9. Do you think that sexual images of Black women influence our lives?
10. How, if at all, do you think that these images affect how you see yourself sexually?
11. Do you believe that these images influence your daily life? If so, how?

12. 'People see you as a Black woman sexually in a certain way'. What do you think about this statement?

13. Do you believe that as a Black woman you are treated different sexually? If so, how?

14. How do you feel about this treatment?

15. How is your behaviour affected?

16. Do you think that this treatment can be changed? If so, how?

17. As a Black woman how do you see yourself sexually?

18. Would you like to ask me any questions?

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