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**SINS OF THE WHITE FATHER
WOUNDS OF MY BLACK MOTHERS**
**Tracing the Historical Roots of Oppressive Violence
Experienced by Black Women in Intimate
Heterosexual Relationships**

by

Michelle A. Walker, B.A. Honours

**A thesis submitted to
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Social Work**

**School of Social Work
Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario**

May 1999

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And Research acceptance of the thesis

**Sins of the White Father, Wounds of my Black Mothers:
Tracing the Historical Roots of Oppressive Violence Experienced by Black Women in
Intimate Heterosexual Relationships.**

Submitted By: Michelle A. Walker, .B.A. Hons.

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for

The degree of Master of Social Work

Dr. Bernice Moreau, Thesis supervisor

Allan Moscovitch, Director, School of Social Work

Date

ABSTRACT
Michelle A. Walker

This thesis explores the connections between the historical roots (slavery 1500s-1800s) of my experience of violence in an intimate relationship as a Black woman. Using my own abusive experience in a relationship as an entry point into the literature, I contend that the violence that Black women experienced in slavery had an impact on my own experience. I argued that African slave women's experience within slavery was derived from a 'Matrix of Domination' in which socially constructed race, class, and gender relations continue to oppress Black women. Furthermore, I contend that these social relations have shaped a historical 'education of violence' which has accumulated in the violence perpetuated against Black women. An alternative epistemology of Black feminist thought and self-defined standpoint were utilized to explore topics of relevance to Black slave women's experiences within an 'education of violence.' The significance for social work in this study was to begin a dialogue.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To take my life's experience and open it up for discussion and analysis was a painful and tenuous task but it also offered an avenue for self-reflection and growth. Utilizing the historical event of slavery to trace my own experience of violence was a phenomenal exercise of profound pain, for the voices of my Black foremothers were both heard and felt. However, this study has contributed to the healing I needed as an abused Black woman. Thus, I must acknowledge their sacrifice and my privilege. I would like to thank and acknowledge all the women that are currently in an abusive relationship, trying to leave one, or who were taken from us through violence. Their courage and strength urged this study on. I hope that this study offers knowledge of the peace and understanding that can be found if women were to seek the connections within "herstories".

My thanks and appreciation for my thesis committee Dr. Bernice Moreau my supervisor, Professor Rashmi Luther and Dr. Gillian Walker who were my second readers. The guidance, acceptance and support of my thesis when I wanted to give up go out to Dr. Moreau. Her encouragement provided the intellectual stimulation needed to pursue and write about this important topic. Pride and confidence are difficult characteristics to impart to a student, however, with all your hard work, guidance, praise and support I accomplished this monumental goal.

Special thanks to my mother Iocent Rankine as a strong Black female role model who gave me independence, love and support through it all. You have been responsible for imparting the value and strength that knowledge, education, and the academy in propelling me forward. I love you, Mom.

I extend my eternal love, devotion and gratitude to my sister Vanessa. Without her help, guidance, and belief in my ability, I wouldn't be the woman I am today nor would I have had the strength to persevere in the completion of this thesis.

I also have special thoughts of love, appreciation and friendship for Patience Togo and her family who also gave me the strength to finish. Throughout my life I have had the opportunity to meet, communicate, and connect with very special women and men who have influenced my life in ways I cannot express. A special "Thank you" to all of you.

VISUAL INTRODUCTIONS

Black people are a visual and oral group. Their ontological and epistemological understanding of the world comes from a visual and auditory cortex. This visualization enables them to convey the aesthetics of Black culture through imagery. Therefore, each chapter in this thesis begins with a visual introduction that is meant to summarize the contents of the text in the chapters at one glance. This approach also celebrates the ways in which we have survived, persevered and perpetuated our culture especially as the legacy of formal education was denied to Blacks for many generations. In the memory of where we come from, I would like, not only to add to formal education, but to continue our tradition of oral and visual methods of communication.

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CHAPTER 1- ON THE SHORES OF WEST AFRICA

The Sins of the white father began on the coast of West Africa where my foremothers were captured. Their subsequent enslavement, abuse and exploitation in the New World represent their wounding. The Matrix of Domination commenced as our lives and conditions as a Black race started within our mother's wombs and added to their suffering. Today, this suffering still permeates through our suffering as a race in our intimate relationships.

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CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION

The discussion of violence in heterosexual relationships within the academy in Western societies has been a relatively recent scholarly pursuit. As such, it has become an issue of ongoing debate for the last three decades (Walker, 1979; Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1980; hooks, 1993). These authors and many others have attempted to address a multitude of concerns around the issue of violence within intimate relationships.

These concerns and debates have ranged from the causes of violence to its historical origins. For instance, the historical occurrence of violence in intimacy is of major importance to Dobash and Dobash, who are among the first scholars to argue that violence in intimate relationships has been a historical weapon (patriarchy) utilized by men in most societies to maintain power and control over women as a universal group. At this point, the question arises, "Would it also be true that the violence experienced by Black women in their intimate relationships has its root in that particular history?" My contention is that violence in intimate relationships among Blacks does have its roots in history, but is located within a different contextual source other than that proposed in Dobash and Dobash (1979).

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to begin a discussion that would locate my current experience of violence in a historical, social, and political context. My reflection of my abusive experience in an intimate relationship has formed an important part of this study. Also, of significance was my inability to name or locate my experiences within a theoretical framework in the academy. This left me with no understanding of why I felt compelled to stay in an abusive relationship. I needed to understand whether my identity, role as a Black woman in Canada and location in this society had been shaped before I entered this abusive

relationship and why I had devalued myself because of my experience of violence. This process of locating myself was the missing part of the analysis that I believe has clarified my experience and given meaning to the understanding of the roots of violence in Black heterosexual couples' relationships today.

Needless to say, the discussion of violence in intimacy, among social scientists, has led to the development of ideas in an effort to explain this particular type of violence within a social context. Two of the most relevant ideas discussed in the literature are the Power Theory and the Social Learning Theory. The Power Theory posits that "woman abuse" is a societal problem because "male supremacy, combined with the historical acceptance of wife abuse, is responsible for an implicit permission that men can abuse their [female] partners as a means of control" (Rafiz, 1991: 39). Also, the Social Learning Theory claims that violence in relationships is a learned behaviour that comes from being exposed to an 'education of violence'¹ "[This] theory, now substantiated by research, states that violence is a behaviour which is learned in childhood. Boys learn that violence is an acceptable way to express anger and girls learn that being abused is an acceptable way for women who are in relationships with men; all children learn that violent behaviour is acceptable," (Rafiz, 1991: 39-40) and the behaviour easily becomes a way of life.

Thus, the commonly repeated phrase "violence begets violence" may be used to describe the socialization process of violence which is passed from one generation to another.

¹ This term 'education of violence' was originally defined as "a process of learning, training, socialization, indoctrination, "breaking-in" or "seasoning" that was brutally imposed by the dominant group (ie. whites) on the most powerless in a society (ie., Blacks) for the purpose of monetary and/or other gains by the former group...captures the devastating process and outcome of the violence that was used initially by slave traders, then by slave owners..."(Moreau, 1996: 2).

For instance, in most cases children witness and experience violence in their primary household or community and may perceive violence as a means to enforce power and control over women in intimate relationships. Therefore, my study suggests that the phrase “violence begets violence” is also an appropriate adage in describing the nature of the socialization and wounding of my Black mothers that was fostered through an “education of violence” during the period of Black² people’s (Africans) enslavement³ in North America and the Caribbean. It can be concluded that the current demonstration of violence against Black women is a perpetuation of Black women’s historical experience of violence. I would propose that with a violent slave socialization, that viewed Black people’s lives as worthless and cheap, a cycle of violence began and continues to be replicated in the lives of Black couples to this day.

LOCATING MY EXPERIENCES IN THIS STUDY

I began my quest for understanding the phenomenon under study through my personal experiences with social services structures in society and in researching the literature that was available to me in mainstream feminist writings (Pizzey, 1974; Walker, 1979; NiCarthy,

² “For so long our Black selves have been categorized, characterized and labelled more derogatively than positively, by others... Now we have chosen our names to clarify and portray the image we believe ourselves to be—a distinct racial and ethnic group. The capitalization of the term Black is a political statement made by some Black writers to signify the social change that is taking place in our existence in Canada and the United States. I am declaring that all Blacks have a common African ancestral root which must be recognized and respected.”(Moreau, 1996: 7-8). “ In the United States, for example, by law, people with any measurable degree of African ancestry are considered Black. As a result, since slavery, women of African descent, regardless of skin colour, have been identified, and often have identified themselves as Black . In this sense, Black symbolizes a cultural milieu, more than it does a colour” (Terborg-Penn, 1996: 29).

³ As a supplement to the topic at hand of slavery, I believe that it is necessary to state the period of enslavement as it pertains to the subject under study - The Slave Trade in the Caribbean took place from 1503 - 1803, in the United States from 1619 - 1864 and in Canada from 1628 - 1834. The actual practice of slavery continued in the Caribbean until 1834 and in the United States until 1864 (Williams, 1966; Curtin, 1969; Brizan, 1984).

1986), which explored the violence perpetuated by men against women in intimate relationships. This literature offered explanations of how and why women became involved in violent relationships, and the problems they encountered by staying or leaving the relationships. A notable absence, however, is an integrated analysis of how race, class, and gender interact within a system of domination to decrease my chances as a Black woman in understanding the underlying roots of my abusive experience. Society offers little or no explanation for the prejudicial treatment I received in my search for an understanding of my problem at the hands of social service professionals, after being identified as a Black woman leaving an abusive relationship. At any given moment I was uncertain in identifying which method or form of discrimination (race, class, or gender) that was disadvantaging. Mainstream feminist writings provide no historical context that can be applied to my experience. It is worth repeating that my issues and voice, as an abused Black woman, were missing from these dominant resources (eg. the media, the dominant literature, educational forums etc.) about abused women.

Despite the limitations of feminist writings I was able to glean from the information some historical understanding of the significance of gender. For example, the writings offered me a way of analyzing my experiences of violence from a gender perspective (Ramazanoglu, 1989; Walker, 1979). I also recognized the inherent value in the explanations of patriarchal practices and policies which tell us that as women we are “less than,” in both our private and public lives. These writings were also valuable in explaining how violence is practiced in a cycle that perpetuates and maintains men’s power and control over women in relationships.

However, I contend that the failure of feminist works (Del Martin, 1981; MacLeod, 1980; Walker, 1979) to deal with the origins of Black women's experiences of violence, beyond patriarchy, and in this case violence in intimate relationships, remains a serious problem. Moreover, in the Canadian context specifically, there is an added problem for Black women, like myself, who are experiencing abuse⁴ and violence⁵ in their intimate relationships⁶. They have little or no recourse in understanding the roots of the problem. Also, the gaps in current feminist literature clearly declare that no one feminist theory can inform every woman's experiences with abuse in absolute terms (King, 1990; Collins, 1990; Ollensburger, 1992).

Therefore, the problem may be identified as the consistent absence of a relevant theoretical analysis of Black women's present lives (hooks, 1982; Davis, 1982); the need to broaden the current analysis to include oppressions based on race, class and gender in intimate relationships (Moraga, 1981; Lorde, 1984); and the need for Black women to see their experiences reflected in the literature in a manner that enables them to understand the

⁴ The most adequate definition for this term is as follows: "... the loss of dignity, control, and safety as well as the feeling of powerlessness and entrapment experienced by individuals who are the direct victims of ongoing or repeated physical, psychological, economic, sexual, and or verbal violence or are subjected to persistent threats or the witnessing of such violence against their children, other relatives, friends, kin, pets or cherished possessions by their boyfriend, husband, lover, ex- partner or same- sex partner "(Macleod, 1987)

⁵ This term encompasses the above definition but acknowledges the impacts of these acts on a structural, social, cultural and historical level in regards to direct and indirect ways in which women as a universal group remain subordinate to men in terms of education, employment, and domestic responsibilities. This term acknowledges that our society perpetuates and maintains specific forms of violence against these marginalized groups according to one's race, class, gender, sexual orientation and ability.

⁶ Intimate relationships in this paper refer to the feelings of safety, love, growth, intimacy (sexual, spiritual and mental) and connectedness that one would normally experience and share in a close and private 'heterosexual' relationship with their partner.

historical roots of the problem (ie. capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, patriarchy, racism etc.) which may aid their process of healing (hooks, 1993). In light of this, I have argued that a Black feminist theory (Collins, 1990) does inform my experience of violence as a Black Canadian woman of Caribbean descent. Furthermore, Black feminist theory has provided me with the tool for my analytical exploration and location of my experience in a historical context.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

The significance of this problem evolves not only from the established structural inequalities of race, class and gender that exist in the dominant society, but also within dominant feminist theoretical analyses and literature that fail to address the occurrence of violence against Black Canadian women of Caribbean descent in intimate relationships. Thus, language and images of an abused woman became structured around a mainstream feminist perception. This omission, failure to address, or universal/inclusive application' of violence created a mobilization of resources without the input of Black or women of colour. Our women of colour, per se, later emergence in the discussion of violence in intimate relationships, came as a result of not having the freedom or the access to the necessary analytical tools to raise this consciousness of issues relevant to Black women. I believe that it was important to apply an alternative approach to mainstream feminist writings about violence against women, which offer a different way of locating the historical roots of violence experienced, particularly by Canadian Black women with similar identity politics to mine.

Therefore, my exploration of both mainstream and Black feminist literature has helped me to discover the connection, which I believe existed between Black women's past (slavery) and current experiences of violence within intimate relationships. There are many reasons for undertaking an investigation of the literature concerned with the roots of violence that Black women experience in intimate relationships. These include: 1) I, a Black Canadian woman of Caribbean descent, have experienced and survived an early adulthood abusive relationship; 2) I have begun a scholarly dialogue around the origins of violence in Black women and men's relationships; 3) with the aid of a Black feminist theory, I have explored a possible entry for Black women's history of violence; and 4) I have suggested an alternative analysis to that of mainstream feminism (patriarchy) about Black women's experience of violence which informs social work practice currently.

In practical and general terms, there is the need to have ourselves (Black women) reflected in the literature, for social work practitioners need to be educated and informed of the unique experiences within the diverse communities they serve. A generic "inclusive" approach is usually used and applied to all women in spite of our differences (in experiences, perceptions, origins etc). Most practitioners continue to provide racist, classist and sexist services without recognizing the inherent presence of these barriers which marginalize and block access for many of these women. The problem is rooted in the consistent societal rejections of Black women's issues (eg. violent relationships). It is also my contention that the answer to the questions of the roots of violence against Black women lies in the inherited

impacts of slavery,⁷ colonialism,⁸ imperialism⁹ and capitalism,¹⁰ the four major socio-economic and political systems that have dominated and controlled the Caribbean and North American societies. I also recognize that the development and influential characteristics of these four major socio-economic/political systems have differential impacts on Black women's lives and experiences depending on their country of origin, migration or immigration. Therefore, this study attempts to trace and link the four systems mentioned earlier in the two regions (North America and the Caribbean) where major dispersals of African women were enslaved, with the hope of understanding my experience of violence in a relationship as one single social phenomenon in a historical context of slavery. It was not an attempt to lay claim to any universal experience of all Black¹¹ women.

⁷ For the purpose of this paper slavery refers to the historical abuse, exploitation and forced labour perpetuated against the will of Africans in the 'New World' located in the Caribbean and North America. Slavery was a socio-economic and political system by which the dominant white master who capitalized on the Africans' labour through the consistent threat of physical, mental, emotional, social, sexual, spiritual etc. violence. While I can acknowledge that early African slavery did exist on the African continent, its practice will not be examined because I believe that it occurred in a different context and for different purposes not predicated on race, class or gender qualifications.

⁸ This term refers to the process in which a Eurocentric group sought to set up colonies representative of the old country on indigenous [Natives] land. In order to begin this process they must "seize from its original occupants all lands and all it [resources] and set up a new way of ... which excludes the original occupants...and by the ostentatious enjoyment by the victors of the proceeds" (Rowley, 1978: 54).

⁹ Imperialism refers to: "The dominating of another nation's economic, political, and even military structure without actually taking governmental control" (Avis, 1983: 533) (ie. European domination of Africa).

¹⁰ Capitalism encompassed a search for resources and markets needed to fuel the economic growth of industrial development in mainly European countries such as France, England, Spain and Portugal. In terms of my research it alludes to the mercantile exchange and sale of Africans, their offspring and their labour value as well as the growth and production of goods and services provided by African slaves on plantations.

¹¹ For this paper the term Black is used to describe my political stance and identity. However, the terminology such as Black, African, women of colour, Canadian Black women of Caribbean

RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS

The questions that emerged in my early thinking about the issue under study were: What part of my history could account for my current experience of violence? How had I, as a Black woman, been predisposed to an “education of violence?” Is there a way that women, like myself, can know where our experiences could be located within a historical context? Did my situation go beyond the historical mainstream¹² feminist analysis of women’s subordination originating as a result of patriarchy? If so, what are the origins of my abusive experience and other Black women like myself? Therefore, before undertaking this project, I made the following research assumptions:

1. Black women are still experiencing the impacts of colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, and slavery in their intimate relationships with Black men;
2. Violence in Black heterosexual relationships has its roots in the master-slave relationships in slavery;
3. Violence in heterosexual relationships of Black women, and more specifically Canadian Black women of Caribbean descent is a major social issue in a current context; Canadian Black women of Caribbean descent have in most cases had difficulty with not having their experiences linked to its historical roots and articulated in academic feminist literature; and
4. Black feminist theories offer the best framework for exploring and analyzing this conceptualization of the historical roots of violence against Black women and the current experiences of Canadian Black women of Caribbean descent.

descent, Afro-Canadian, African-American, immigrant women etc will also be used specifically in the analysis of the data, due to its utilization in the literature available to the researcher. These terms are not used to reflect my identity or political stance which was footnoted on page 3. “The term ‘Black’ has never stood literally for Black skin colour. It symbolizes the oppression of ‘non-whites’ by the white ideology of ‘racial purity,’ and at once puts brown, gold-coloured, and beige-coloured people together in the same category. Neither does the term ‘white’ stand for skin colour that is literally white.” (Essed, 1990: 29)

¹² The term white, dominant or mainstream will be used interchangeably and will not be capitalized because “as a rule, whites in Canada do not claim their colour as a distinctive heritage. It is in reality as identification of power, privilege, prestige and wealth” (Moreau, 1996: 9).

RESEARCH QUESTION

In this study, I used a Black feminist theory to guide my exploration of the literature and to make the relevant connections between my current experience of violence and my foremothers' experience in slavery. I examined how social structures such as socio-political of colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, and slavery contributed to my experience of violence in an intimate relationship.

Therefore, I argued that colonialism, imperialism, capitalism and slavery were the historical roots from which violence had evolved and currently impacts on Black women's experience of violence in their intimate relationships with Black men. The questions that begged my initial attention include the following:

1. Are there any similarities in the patterns of violence that I experienced and that of Black slave women?
2. Do these patterns of violence, have their roots in the master-slave relationship?
3. Based on my experience, are there any links between social service responses and the violence that Black women experience in their intimate relationships?

MY POLITICAL STANCE

When I left my abusive relationship, I searched for resources which would identify my feelings and experiences within that relationship, but I was unable to find these particular resources. Instead, I found only sources which discussed non-Black women's experiences of violence that did not reflect the totality of my race, class and gender. Unfortunately, some of the current literature document violence in intimate relationships as an "either or proposition" belonging to a dominant woman's perspective or as an immigrant woman. I am neither.

Therefore, my study is specifically directed at my experience as a Black Canadian woman of Caribbean descent who was caught up in the web of an abusive relationship. This process allowed me to use my experience of violence as a standpoint from which I traced the links between my experience and that of my foremothers from slavery to the present. It allowed me to narrow my study to relevant and available research of Black slave women's experiences of violence in slavery, in the Caribbean and North America.

During the course of gathering the data for this thesis, I found that many stereotypes about Black women continue to exist. For example, Black women are still thought of as matriarchal figures (Cade, 1970); violence is seen as a cultural norm for Black families (hooks, 1981); and Black women are thought to be able to endure violence and abuse beyond the stamina of non-Black women (Gordon, 1987). These and other myths and stereotypes affected, not only my self-worth and self-esteem as a Canadian Black woman of Caribbean descent, but the way society perceives and interacts with me. For instance, I found that the negative response I received from social service providers, and their low degree of sensitivity to my issues was abysmal.

Many stereotypes and assumptions are used by some practitioners and theorists in justifying who receives assistance or intervention by the police, child protection services or social services. The issue then ceases to be about me as a Black woman and the violence I experienced and becomes a way to categorize us and our situation as individuals who are representations of a culturally dysfunctional group. This shift in focus is problematic because it refuses to take the element of analysis further than the presumed pathological Black woman. In essence, my findings suggest that some service providers do not look beyond individual or

group pathologies, therefore, the interventions are not adequate or effective in addressing the issues that keep discriminatory dominant structures in place. Consequently, the 'education of violence' continues to perpetuate the stereotypes about Black women, thus, leaving the status quo unchallenged.

ORGANIZATION OF THE MATERIAL

Literature relevant to this project was analyzed and presented in a manner conducive to the thought process of the researcher and subsequent readers. The materials are organized in a chronological way that take the reader through my arguments and analysis as they were developed.

CHAPTER ONE introduces the social problem, and my efforts to trace the historical roots of violence experienced by Black women. This chapter outlines the significance of the problem, research propositions and questions that initiated the study along with my political stance which are all informed by my own personal experiences.

CHAPTER TWO describes the alternative epistemology (Black feminist thought) which directed and informed the subject under study. This theoretical approach that I selected introduces the concepts of race, class, and gender as social relations of oppressions and identifies how they are socially constructed and inter-related. Also they are defined in relation to the violence perpetuated against Black women.

CHAPTER THREE provides an overview of the methodology utilized in this project and identifies the data sources as well as the ethical considerations of conducting this type of research study.

CHAPTER FOUR presents the data and the analysis simultaneously to determine the impacts of the violence experienced in slavery on the current experiences of violence against Black women in their intimate relationships.

CHAPTER FIVE discusses how the findings from the data can inform future social work practice and research.

CHAPTER 2 - SISTERHOOD

I believe that through the creation and utilization of alternative epistemologies such as Black feminist thought that Black women can share a collective bond of sisterhood. A collective vision where our divisions pervade our consciousness needed to heal the wounds of our foremothers. "The ability to create our own definitions of healthy relationships...would grant us the ability to form solidarity within a cultural sisterhood that could bridge the gaps of class, educational status, homosexuality, ability, different skin hues, etc" (Walker, 1999: 43).

CHAPTER TWO - BLACK FEMINISM

WHAT IS BLACK FEMINISM?

Black feminism is a theoretical paradigm,¹³ which allows Black women to make sense of the social world in which we interact on a daily basis from our standpoint. Black feminism is a theoretical approach that acknowledges that we have a different and unique way of knowing and experiencing the world. Black feminism is comprised of both an Afrocentric and 'feminist' gender consciousness and standpoints. These two viewpoints allow Black women to access both in order to create an alternative epistemology which better reflects and articulates their experiences (Collins, 1991).

Black feminists assert this alternative epistemology is comprised of an Afrocentric standpoint that acknowledges and celebrates the unique values which characterize Black society through family structures, religious institutions, culture and community life (Collins, 1991). These values are reflected in their ability to survive and navigate in harmony among nature; and the passing down of culture and traditions from generation to generation to ensure the survival of that group (Tulloch, 1975: 48-49). "This Afrocentric consciousness permeates the shared history of people of African descent through the framework of a distinctive Afrocentric epistemology" (Collins, 1991: 206). These core African values are still very much present in Black feminist thought processes which has survived racial oppression

¹³

A Black feminist paradigm can be defined as "[A Black and female] world view, a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world...[it is] a constellation of theories, questions, methods, and procedures which share central values and themes. This constellation, which develops in response to historical and cultural conditions, provides a conceptual framework for seeing and making sense of the social world we create and live in" (Maguire, 1987: 10).

incurred from slavery through imperialism, colonialism and apartheid¹⁴. Therefore, it is our belief that all Black people of the Diaspora regardless of gender, share a common heritage of racial oppression (Collins, 1991: 206).

The site of gender consciousness in the context of a shared patriarchal¹⁵ history of gender oppression that is based on a collective women's standpoint is also within the nexus of this Black feminist alternative epistemology. Dominant feminists argue that these sexist experiences transcend all other divisions among women based on race, social class, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, etc. and "form the basis of a women's standpoint with a corresponding feminist consciousness and epistemology" (Collins, 1991: 206). However, Black feminists assert this gender definition of oppression is too limited in its scope and does not explain the inherent differences of race and class interactions between Black women and white women.¹⁶

14

Apartheid is defined as "The government's intention to maintain white political and economic power [of racial segregation] at the expense of the majority of South Africans. Africans are classified by race, and following on from that, how their lives are regulated. The laws dictate where they are allowed to live and work, and often under what conditions; where and how they are educated; and where and how they are governed" (Ormond, 1985: 11).

15

"Patriarchy is a form of oppression - a system whereby men maintain control and authority over women's lives [through gender oppression]...patriarchy...[is seen] as a relatively autonomous set of relations operating differently on different sites --domestic work in the household, paid work, the state, male violence and sexuality. At the same time patriarchy constantly changes as it intersects with capitalism and racism in different ways, at different times" (Williams, 1989: 61, 63).

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"Given centuries of cultural and economic imperialism, the ideology of white supremacy, patriarchy, and the concomitant oppression of certain cultures, 'races', classes, women and others, theories which pretend universalistic application must be discarded in favour of more complex, layered analyses which account for the multifaceted intersections of race, gender, class and other variables. Such theories must give space (though not necessarily primacy) to experience, subjectivity and political agency" (Jhappan, 1996: 22).

I can assume that both racial and gender oppression experienced by Black women in a capitalistic structure also influence the class status that we are able to attain. This component of class oppression is either excluded from the discussion or defined differentially by Black feminists. Therefore, I would like to use the Black feminist scholar Vivian Gordon's analysis of economics in relation to her study of Black women to define class oppression as:

subjugation and exploitation of the 'other' through differential opportunities maintained through discrimination seated in racism. Limited access to the rewards of the system. The earning and purchasing power of groups is limited by those in power through a control over the means [of] production and [the] distribution of the rewards. This control usually emerges from an internalized system of privilege and hierarchy based upon race and male gender which justifies consolidations and coalitions which block out others. There is, as well, the ability to maintain people control through local, state and federal military. A popular participation in consumerism enhances the power of those in economic control (Gordon, 1989: 17).

In this quote, the author supports my notion of class oppression which leads to an extension of violence in intimate relationships. Also, in her study of Black Nova Scotian women, Black feminist Bernice Moreau found that these Black women were exposed to an 'education of violence' and 'colour contusion.'¹⁷ These two aspects impacted negatively on these women's ability to gain a meaningful education which in turn impacted on their class status. One's relationship to the production or economic position in society will influence their income,

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"I have created the term 'colour contusion' to define and explain the process whereby mental, emotional, verbal and other non-physical injuries can be inflicted on an individual member or members of a visible minority group because of skin colour. The intent is to subtly destroy the ability of the person(s) of colour to access civil rights and opportunities without using physical violence. The everyday practice of colour contusion, by whites against the Black women in the study, was a form of racism in which [the] colour of skin was used as a way of excluding and thus preventing the women from developing fully their intellectual, social, economic and political capabilities" (Moreau, 1996: 226).

where and how one will live, what type of health care s/he will access, what education her or his children will receive and what choices of careers will be open to them as a result of that education (Ramazanoglu, 1989: 98).

Therefore, class differences occur in all levels of society, including at times within the same family. This has the potential of promoting silent acceptance of class divisions. These class values influence and enter all aspects of everyday activities from education obtained, the vehicle purchased, music, to the occupations which impact on Black women's life choices. In a dominant society one of the only ways to escape poverty is through education, which was denied many Blacks at the turn of the century in Canada into the late 1960s. As a result, Moreau says:

...The Black community as a distinct racially and socially disadvantaged group does not display the characteristics that identifies it as belonging to any one of the classified stratified classes in the North American society (ie., white elite, upper class, middle class and lower class) (Moreau, 1996: 27).

An alternative Black feminist epistemology attempts to respond to the complexities of differential access, opportunities and power. Traditional dominant grand theories have tried to establish a 'fundamental determinant of history' (such as class or patriarchy). However, this tends to create inflexible and static categories that try to explain the different social realities that exist in society. In rejecting these dominant grand theories, Black feminism attempts to offer Black women a means of communicating and attaching their own self-defined meanings to social constructions of race, class, gender, etc. oppressions. These self-defined representations examine social acts that are historically created (through biological and material images) which become reality (through actual lived experiences)

through language and discourse. Patricia Hill Collins begins this dialogue by stating:

Traditional epistemological assumptions concerning how we arrive at “truth” simply are not sufficient to the task of furthering Black feminist thought... the process by which we arrive at truth merits comparable scrutiny. Black women intellectuals create Black feminist thought by using their own concrete experiences as situated knowers in order to express a Black women’s standpoint (Collins, 1991: 17).

Furthermore, Black womanhood has been defined as deviant and abnormal and this lends itself to depictions of the mammy, matriarch, Sapphire, etc. images that can be internalized and externalized. These images have been and continue to be used to devalue Black women and justify societal rejections and ill treatment of this group of women. These images transcend any positive and acceptable actual images of many Black women who are successful mothers, teachers, engineers, scholars, etc. This understanding of material and biological deterministic images “offers us a more complex conception of power as exercised in all manner of social interactions” (Aziz, 1997: 75).

HOW BLACK FEMINISM EVOLVED

Black feminism emerged as a result of our exclusion and oppression based on race and class. This dialogue began as early as the 1880s by Sojourner Truth, in the first wave feminist movement and again in the early 1980s by bell hooks, during the second wave feminist movement. Both attempted to call attention to our unique experiences as Black women of violence in our everyday lives.

Black theorists recognize the need to critique the existing structures that have excluded, censored or omitted their voices. In recognition of our missing reality being shared within societal institutions, education, employment, domestic sphere, history, academia, etc.,

Black feminists make conscious efforts to call attention to our activism which advanced Black people. To a large extent Black feminism validates and celebrates the unique ways in which Black women see and live within the world. We have been on the forefront of the civil rights movement, slavery abolitionist movement, the women's movement, anti-lynching movement, etc. We have worked behind the scenes for centuries fighting for and advancing the rights and freedoms of women and the Black community. 'Third world' women continue to fight for basic human rights in their countries of origin (ie. Caribbean).

The major critique of Black feminism is that it operates in a conflictual relationship between being biologically determinant, only Black women can contribute and being idealistic, anyone can contribute to this epistemology. Being defined by biological determinants runs the risk of making race and gender static and fixed, which ignores the historical construction of these categories. On the other hand, being idealistic has the potential of developing a paradigm without the benefit of the actual people who actually experience the world in this way (Collins, 1991: 20-21).

Black feminism gives me the flexibility to place my experiences, as a displaced Canadian Black woman of Caribbean descent, to locate my legacy of oppression within a historical context. It also acknowledges the conditions my African foremothers and fathers survived chattel slavery with courage and perseverance in the 'New World.' I now have the opportunity to locate my experiences as a Black woman to this history of struggle and pride to the current events in my life. Collins advocates for my location within the Black history of slavery. She notes that this connection informs my Black feminist consciousness. According to the author:

...these concrete experiences can stimulate a distinctive Black feminist consciousness concerning that material reality. Being Black and female may expose African-American women to certain common experiences, which in turn may predispose us to a distinctive group consciousness, but it in no way guarantees that such a consciousness will develop among all women or that it will be articulated as such by the group (Collins, 1991: 24-25).

A salient danger that Black feminists face in working from within the center, instead of the margins has the potential of creating isolation from the Black community (Collins, 1991). We run the risk of oppressing and excluding other Black women who do not have access to the same material resources to vocalize their own self-defined standpoint. We may become too embedded within a dominant like-minded epistemology, which turns marginalized groups into objects. Therefore, we need to safeguard a process which continually supports and leaves space for these women to develop and express their own unique standpoints. We need to leave room within our theoretical framework that encourages others to critique and develop their own alternative epistemologies. With this flexibility our voices as Black women can and should continue to inform social and political activism. Both theory and activism are necessary components in exposing the 'truth' of Black women's true social and material conditions and producing actions which challenge and change these existing inequitable system (Collins, 1991: 29). I would conclude this section by agreeing with Collins in stating that:

In spite of these hazards contemporary Afrocentric feminist thought represents the creative energy flowing between these two focal points of history and literature, an unresolved tension that both emerges from and informs the experiences of [Black and] African-American women (Collins, 1991: 31).

STANDPOINT

The concept and application of a feminist standpoint is not a recent endeavour. Many writers advocate for its usage in understanding the everyday world of women. Its application is significant in that it allows women to express their truths based on where they stand in the world looking out. According to Moreau,

in most cases, these writers (Ramazanoglu, 1989; Collins, 1991; Smith, 1987 etc.) employ the standpoint of women to explicate conceptually and experientially women's location outside the white male centers of power, prestige, privilege and knowledge as evident in the socio-economic, political, religious and educational institutions of society (Moreau, 1996: 13-14).

Similarly, Dorothy Smith (1987) says that this lense allows her as a sociologist to examine the dominant (male) ideology¹⁸ which projects its images of reality onto others. Their (dominant men's) universal application of their ideology and values benefits the ruling class by means of its oppressive and violent domination over the means of production, and legally sanctioned authority which supports this domination. Therefore, she argues (dominant) women have historically been excluded from this power and knowledge base. Using a feminist standpoint allows her to:

... outside this frame (as an organization of social consciousness). To begin from such a standpoint does not imply a common viewpoint among women. What we have in common is the organization of social relations that has accomplished our exclusion. Taking up this

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“Robert Staples (1976) and Sylvia Hale's (1990) discussions of ideology...[argue that it] is a form of social control which is exercised by the white society to retain its privileges in a system partially sustained by this ideology. Similarly, Hale believes that ideology is a system of values and beliefs that justifies certain kinds of action or ways of life, which in most cases are detrimental to those people who are powerless in society. This belief system strongly influences the way we see reality. It tends to sensitize us in certain ways and blind us in others...” (Moreau, 1996: 226).

position for the subjects of a sociology, what is the critique? A critique is more than a negative statement. It is an attempt to define an alternative (Smith, 1987: 78).

As such, her contribution to feminist consciousness and theoretical paradigm is her ability to identify, through her own feminist standpoint, an alternative epistemology that attaches a material and social meaning to a patriarchal source of power. Therefore, the author defines this source of power as the ruling class which is the primary ruling apparatus. We are able to conceptualize and operationalize its societal domination and control of political and personal interactions within that context. She continues this discussion by informing us that:

A standpoint in the everyday world is the fundamental grounding of modes of knowing developed in a ruling apparatus. The ruling apparatus is that familiar complex of management, government administration, professions, and intelligentsia, as well as the textually mediated discourses that coordinate and interpenetrate it. Its special capacity is the organization of particular actual places, persons, and events into generalized and abstracted modes vested in categorical systems, rules, laws, and conceptual practices. The former thereby become subject to an abstracted and universalized system of ruling mediated by texts (Smith, 1987: 108).

In a similar manner, Black feminists utilize a self-defined standpoint to reflect the process of self-determination needed in academia. Moreover, Black women use this approach to explore issues of relevance to the Black woman's daily life experiences and other areas of Black oppression. Collins explains that:

Self-definition involves challenging the political knowledge-validation process that has resulted in externally-defined stereotypical images of Afro-American woman-hood ... that have been central to the dehumanization of Black women's labour (Collins, 1991 as cited by Moreau, 1996: 18).

Black feminists believe that the source of Black women's empowerment is derived from Black women's consciousness in defining our own reality. By utilizing a self-defined analysis we give credence to our ways of knowing which rejects dominant ideology which has traditionally silenced us and imposed systems of violent oppressive structures of race, class, gender etc. to further control us. In order for Black women to dismantle these destructive structures we need to redefine our self-worth in terms which challenge a 'power over' mentality replacing it with a 'power within' ourselves. This process will encourage Black women to say "No" to the violence and to develop a self-love which politicizes and validates our own strengths, worth and value. Moreau states that "Black women's self-defined standpoint permits us to reframe the entire dialogue of Black women's oppression from the past to present, from Black Africa to white North America" (Moreau, 1996: 19).

Black feminists assert that self-defined standpoints are necessary mechanisms in reclaiming our pride in our Blackness, femaleness and historical legacy of our foremothers. We need to conceptualize and reclaim this political process as a means of bringing our subjective and individual reality into a political and social context of Black sisterhood. Therefore, as Collins reminds us,

developing adequate definitions of Black feminist thought involves facing this complex nexus of relationship among biological classification, the social construction of race and gender as categories of analysis, the material conditions accompanying these changing social constructions, and Black women's consciousness about these themes. One way of addressing the definitional tensions in Black feminist thought is to specify the relationship between a Black women's standpoint--those experiences and ideas shared by African-American women that provide a unique angle of vision on self, community, and society -- theories that interpret these experiences (Collins, 1991: 22).

This process challenges the chains of domination that still bind us to a state of abject helplessness and victim-hood. Our subordination is inherent in a historical system that has violently forced us to comply with dominant ideologies and philosophies that project images and social and economic systems of inferiority on Black women.

Black feminist Bernice Moreau argues that a self-defined standpoint is “significant for two reasons. First, Black women need self-valuation and a Black female centred analysis of our experience ... Second, the declaration of a self-defined standpoint for Black women allows us to reject the practice of internalizing psychological oppression” (Moreau, 1996: 18).

My initial and primary utilization of my experience as the entry point into my thesis project which explores subject of tracing the historical roots of violence in intimate relationships is beautifully articulated by Bannerji who states:

But there is no better point of entry into a critique or a reflection than one's own experience. It is not the end point, but the beginning of an exploration of the relationship between the personal and the social and therefore, the political. And this connecting process, which is also a discovery is the real pedagogic process, the 'science' of social science (Bannerji, 1991: 67).

This critique and reflection is obtainable through the utilization of a Black feminist alternative epistemology which enables me to explore this subject through my own standpoint.

DIFFERENT APPLICATIONS OF BLACK FEMINISM

Black Feminist Theory has given rise to several Black feminist approaches or analyses purported by Black female scholars such as (Davis, 1983; Collins, 1990; bell hooks, 1983, 1984 and others). These many schools of thought within Black feminism attempt to explain the legacy of violence evident in the social relations of race, class and gender experienced by Black women, within the socio-economic capitalist systems.

Angela Davis (1983) posits “economic exploitation” of Black women as the site of exposure to the history of violence which impact on the issues of socialization for domestic labour, which obstructs the acquisition of formal education that enhances these women’s chances when entering the work force well informed. She advocates change of the systems that perpetuate these forms of oppression. She contends that the amount of time that work related activities predominated in a Black woman’s life were shaped by her socialization in slavery. Black women came to be defined by their status as property and as a ‘labour unit’ and not by their gender. Black women’s gender exposed them to oppressive and violent practices of rape, torture, physical and emotional acts of cruelty that could only be imposed on women. She believes that these “special abuses inflicted on women thus facilitated the ruthless economic exploitation of their labour” (Davis, 1983: 7).

Cecilla Green (1983) summarizes Davis’ application of Black feminism within a historical context as follows: “According to Davis (and most writers on the subject), the slave relation of production practically obliterated gender and made for a minimal sexual division of labour, since slave men and women performed essentially the same tasks in the field” (Green, 1993: 193). Thus, Davis sees class oppression as the most significant type of violence in the everyday lives of Black women. She believes that the gender roles that prescribe masculine and feminine behaviour were not as much of an issue in the intimate relationships of Black men and women because of the minimal sexual division of labour. Davis also claims that the liberation of Black women calls for their freedom from the double duty of experiencing race, and class oppressions within the abusive workforce as instituted in the historical period of slavery (Davis, 1983).

Gail Lewis and Pratibha Parma (1985) and Patricia Collins' (1991) analyses of Black women place their experiences of oppression as originating out of a matrix of domination based on race, class and gender, none of which have primacy over the other. Patricia Collins, in particular, believes the conditions in slavery have shaped the present relationships that Black women experience "within African-American families and communities, with employers, and among each other, and also created the political context for Black women's exclusion in intellectual work" (Collins, 1991: 6). She contends that Black women's violent oppression based on race, class and gender have been constructed by three factors: the exploitation of her labour (and her continued impoverished ghettoization in service occupations); the political denial of her rights to equitable treatment in the criminal justice system; political exclusion, racial segregation, denial of her educational rights, and the stereotypical images that feed the ideological justification for her subordination (Collins, 1991).

Collins' analysis of violence in the intimate relationships of Black men and women evolves from a conflict between the dominant gender ideology (that has never historically been our reality) and our acquiescence in playing out these dominant gender roles. Thus, the objectification and 'othering' process that has historically shaped stereotypical images of Black men and women play an active role in Black men feeling like they must dominate Black women in order to feel like 'real men'.

bell hooks (1982, 1986) argues for a "liberatory radical theory of socialism," which would address all the interlocking systems of sexism, racism, class imperialism, white supremacy and so on. hooks argues that racism, white supremacy and imperialism have

undeniably given both white men and women the erroneous assumption that they should be in a position of superiority in granting Black women privileges or 'rights' of citizenship such as the vote, education etc. "...feminism is a commitment to eradicating the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on various levels--sex, race, and class, to name a few--and a commitment to reorganizing U.S. [and Canadian] society so that the self-development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic expansion, and material desires" (hooks, 1981: 194). hooks believes that dominant feminists in the past have failed to make the connection between race, class and gender. She critiques this failure as:

[Their] refusal to draw attention to and attack racial hierarchies suppressed the link between race and class...it is only by analyzing racism and its function in capitalist society that a thorough understanding of class relations can emerge. Class struggle is inextricably bound to the struggle of ending racism (hooks, 1984: 3).

hooks also locates the Black woman's position of subordination in society in the margins. We are excluded from the centre where white men and women reside. Bernice Moreau (1996) refers to this margin location as a "'margin epistemology'.. [which] may be understood as the conceptualization of a Black woman's "folk wisdom" developed experientially over the centuries within their unique forms of oppression (eg., slavery and segregation). This folk wisdom or common-sense ways of knowing evolved through the imposed exclusion and alienation of Black women to the margins of white society" (Moreau, 1996: 20).

hooks defines the violence that occurs in intimate relationships as belonging to the capitalistic structure that socializes Black men to exercise power and authority over women in the private sphere (the home). This is a practice that benefits the ruling class because it

prevents them (Black men) from rebelling against the oppressive and exploitative practices of the workplace. Therefore, mechanisms of patriarchy and capitalism perpetuate, support and advocate for violence in the home.

Gloria Joseph (1981) and Vivian Gordon (1987) agree that greater attention needs to be paid to racism and its pre-capitalist roots in slavery. They also believe that Black women's experiences cannot be reduced to relations between classes and gender.

Gordon refers to the violent and oppressive social relations that Black women must face as the 'trilogy of oppression'. She argues that Black women have lost the support of Black sisterhood because of the issue of shadism (the dislike and distrust of Black people of darker or lighter shades of colour), which was introduced in the master-slave relationships (Gordon, 1987). Skin hue had an impact on a Black woman's perceived desirability, her work assignments as well as the prevalence of physical and sexual abuse she would have to endure. Their (Gordon and Joseph) approach is further explained through a Black British feminist perspective that also pays a significant amount of attention to the pre-capitalist roots of racism, sexism and classism.

British Black feminists differentially cite racially structured patriarchal capitalism,¹⁹ racism and imperialism, and patriarchy²⁰ separately, as being responsible for Black women's

¹⁹ "Capitalism is a system which survives by [class] exploitation, that is, making profit from the labour of [Black] men and women" (Williams, 1989: 61).

²⁰ British Black feminists have also argued for a more complex redefinition and examination of patriarchy since, Black men historically have been denied a shared social and political power that could ideologically and economically exploit women as a social group. Fiona Williams states this viewpoint using the arguments of various Black feminist theorists. She states: "By a similar token, it is argued that it is not possible to equate the patriarchy of white men with that of Black men. This is not to deny that Black men oppress women in patriarchal ways, but, as Joseph (1981, hooks (1982) and Carby (1983) have each pointed out: "Capitalism and patriarchy simply do not offer to share with Black males the seat of power in their regal solidarity.." (Joseph, 1981:

oppression. They reject biological explanations of race and gender inequalities in their application of a Black feminist analytical standpoint. Instead, British Black feminists emphasize the differential experiences and access to the social and material conditions of 'defined' biological and social reproductions of labour, education, etc (Williams, 1989: 83).

They maintain that:

Black feminism's contribution and critique of feminism is crucial, for it has highlighted the ways in which, subjectively and objectively, Black women's oppression is different and how not only the sexual division of labour, not only patriarchy and capitalism but imperialism too, have to be brought into the analysis of social policy to understand the relationship between the state, the family and women (Williams, 1989: 86).

The authors use illustrations of social policies such as the Domestic Scheme, immigration and other welfare and social policies to explore and explain the oppressive and violent nature of imperialism and colonialism. 'Developed nations' which were created and maintained through exploited, slave labour continue to exploit 'Third world' countries and their citizens. 'Third World' women and men are continually used to fulfill labour shortages and to perform menial jobs that 'First World' citizens are unwilling to complete. Globalization efforts facilitates (rather forces) the participation of 'Third World' countries and their citizens to engage in these continued practices of indentured servitude and slavery because their local economies rely on the remittances these workers. Thus, imperialism remains alive and fruitful in its global splendor and glory.

At different periods in our history, social issues, policies and interactions in mainstream society has been developed, shaped and implemented by using a dominant

101 quoted in Williams, 1989: 71).

ideology, which perpetuates oppressive social relations of race, class and gender. British Black feminists also warn policymakers, academics, scholars, etc to engage in the following exercise when they are examining issues of relevance to Black women. They begin this discussion by stating that:

[We] need to understand how racism, and its historical progenitors, slavery, colonialism, imperialism, are insinuated into the enmeshed fabric of patriarchal capitalism [as well as]...an internationalist framework of analysis which features imperialism, the role of third world workers in the international division of labour and the role of the state in controlling that labour through immigration laws, [needs to be understood] for all these aspects affect Black women and their struggles (Williams, 1989: 72).

Britain and Canada continue to be points of entry for the second migration of Black women and men globally. As such, Canadian Black feminists find similar issues of imperialism, colonialism, globalization, immigration, etc. of particular importance to Black women in Canada. Dionne Brand finds that:

With the recent exception of Makeda Silvera's Silenced, there has been no serious attempt to analyze the role of Black women in migration, settlement, and labour force, or in the struggles against racism which mark the everyday lives of Black peoples in Canada. Such analysis would necessarily show the race/class/sex construction which mediates the way in which they struggle. This dearth of literature has contributed to the invisibility of Black women's struggles... (Brand, 1993: 270).

Brand also examines the pre-capitalistic roots of Black women's oppression. She briefly discusses how the system evolved to define Black women's role in a system that oppressed and controlled her labour, her sexuality and denied her class status. The author warns us that:

As class informs our lives, so racism too is a historical determinant in our lives. For us, the relevance of any socio-political theory especially, depends on its understanding of the role of slavery, of

colonialism, and of the attendant racist culture in the development of capitalism. An understanding of slavery and colonialism reveals the ways in which institutions in the "new world" were fashioned --- Canada not excepted (Brand, 1993: 272-273).

Traditional imperialistic attitudes prevail to deny Black women education and a sufficient wage to escape poverty. Therefore, a majority of Black women in Canada continue to belong to a working poor group. The lack of citizenship for some Black women means that they can not upgrade or improve their education or job related skills which could improve their job opportunities or career advancements. "Taking its (racism) historical metaphor from the justification for slavery, it ascribes 'natural,' 'biological' inferiority to various times ..." (Brand, 1993: 273).

Just as slavery assigned an 'inferior status' to Black peoples as being attributable to their 'inherent biological inferiority,' their bodies, labour, and offspring were sold to satisfy market demands. In essence, by denying slaves the opportunity to own property, to gain an education or even receive pay for their labour, generations of Blacks would never be able to effectively compete with the dominant culture or change the oppressive structures which kept their subordination intact. A pattern had been created and established to 'allow' only a relative small number of Black individuals to succeed in a socially constructed and manipulated social reality. The ruling class continued to deny access to opportunities through their tight reir. on both the means and modes of production. Recent immigration strategies and policies continue to deny many Black women and men any real chances at altering their social or material conditions. Brand asserts that:

From the days of slavery to the present, our (Black women's) sexuality and our reproductive rights have been systematically denied

to meet the continuing need for the accumulation of capital. Where we once did not breed rapidly enough to meet the demand for enslaved labour, we are now told, along with other Third World peoples, that there are too many of us. Where we were once abused for not producing enough workers, we are now blamed when there are not enough jobs (Brand, 1993: 290-291).

Therefore, I would contend that both British Black feminists and Canadian Black feminists would define violence against Black women in intimate relationships within the context of state and familial structures. Thus, the racism and sexism evident in institutions, services and policies can be attributable in part to colonialism and imperialism that continue to impact on the violence Black women experience in their intimate relationships.

African feminists accuse many Black feminists of using a 'white filter' to describe and examine the everyday lives of Black women. They call for the removal of the 'white filter' in a constructive way that creates its own definitions of Black standards for interpreting culture, values, initiatives, activities and organizations (Terborg-Penn, 1996: 29). They argue for a uniquely all Black feminist consciousness which looks outside dominant definitions of gender and racial oppression. This is a worthwhile critique, in that it cautions Black feminist intellectuals to fully integrate theory into action. By calling for Black women to create their own definitions outside the mainstream the issue of empowerment for the community becomes a more salient reality. We need to continue to change by exchanging our ideas with the community to ensure the survival of a Black feminist paradigm.

African feminists acknowledge the progress and development of Black feminist theory and celebrate its impact on Black women's ability to act. However, African feminists take the analysis further to combine differential social relations of culture, tradition and its practice

within their own theoretical framework and application. They define African feminism as follows:

... racial, sexual, class and cultural dimensions of oppression to produce a more inclusive brand of feminism through which women are viewed first and foremost as human rather than sexual beings. It can be defined as that ideology which encompasses freedom from oppression based on political, economic, social and cultural manifestations of racial, cultural, sexual, and class biases (Terborg-Penn, 1996: 4).

I have found that in speaking with the Black Ghanaian feminist Patience Togo about her work on domestic violence against Ghanaian women she uses part of an African feminist analytical framework to explore the impact of culture, tradition and its violent practice. The social constructions of culture and tradition utilized by a capitalistic patriarchy because of its imperialistic and colonial predecessors continue to violently oppress Black Ghanaian women. Although, there is no discourse or language to define this violence the Ghanaian women in the study are able to name the experience and define the social relations of culture and tradition and its impact on their lives (Togo, 1998). This task is accomplished by removing the white filter and facilitating a process whereby the women name the structures which impinge on their experiences.

As Audre Lorde says “Black feminism is not white feminism in Blackface. Black women have particular and legitimate issues which affect our lives as Black women, and addressing those issues does not make us any less Black.” She would also support African feminists’ approach in removing the ‘white filter’ which in essence is like ‘using the masters tools to dismantle his house’. Using these strategies will only create minimal change, if any at all (Lorde, 1984: 60).

Marietta Morrissey (who chronicled Black Caribbean women's history) maintains that:

Patriarchy and slavery are not, of course, identical relationships of subordination, but they are similar in several ways: the isolation and separation of the subordinate population from the social life of the dominant group, the use of violence against the subordinate group, the provision of laws that confer ownership rights on the superordinate, and the difficulties of slaves and women in gaining access to goods through masters or through husbands and fathers (Morrissey, 1989: 165).

With this one statement, Morrissey effectively conceptualizes and connects the violence of slavery and the current violence experienced by many Black women in their intimate relationships. She is also able to describe how the State creates an 'education of violence' through power, control, legal sanctions, denying access to opportunities, choices, options, property rights, etc. I realize that her analogy of gaining property through husbands and fathers does not necessarily reflect the material or social reality of many Black women. However, she does effectively link the two social realities in a simple manner which has the potential to further discussion.

These different applications of Black feminism combined provide a well rounded analysis of the impact of the social relations of race, class and gender on the lives of Black women. They explain the relevance of differential intersections and experiences within a socially constructed society. They all highlight the historical legacy of struggle created within the socio-economic system of slavery.

THE LEGACY OF STRUGGLE/OPPRESSION

Although there are differences in the application of Black feminist theory there is also a common thread that can be woven throughout these different approaches to Black women's past and current experiences of violence based on a 'legacy of oppression.' This

factor acknowledges that a “common strand of history,...characterizes all Black women, oppression” (Ladner cited by Moreau, 1996: 6). This legacy of oppression encompasses a struggle to redefine and survive these social constructions of violence.

This legacy of struggle is one of the prevalent themes from a Black woman's standpoint. For centuries, Black women have made attempts to reclaim the Black feminist intellectual tradition, which reveals the interlocking nature of race, gender, and class oppression. We need to replace ‘deviant’ and negative images of Black womanhood with the reality of our own self-defined images. We need to celebrate our own abilities as activists, mothers, teachers, leaders, educators, etc and to share our values, beliefs, traditions, culture, etc with the Black community in ways that reflect our historical contribution to the advancement of Black persons (Malson, 1990; Collins, 1991; Moreau, 1996). We need to bring attention to our real social and material conditions which reflect the true violence we struggle with and acknowledge the ways we confront and challenge it on a daily basis. To not continue to call attention to our reality will leave the ruling apparatus/status quo intact and our lives as Black women will continue to be a daily struggle to be heard, to be paid our true worth, to advance in employment and education which is more reflective of our abilities, to be free to love who we want and desire, to mother our children, etc. (Collins, 1991: 23).

Collins continues,

throughout the history superiority has characterized the Black woman's reality as a situation of struggle--a struggle to survive in two contradictory worlds simultaneously, one white, privileged, and oppressive, the other Black, exploited, and oppressed. Black women's vulnerability to assaults in the workplace, on the street, and at home has stimulated Black women's independence and self-reliance (Collins, 1991: 22).

Like Collins, many of us experience similar struggles in this oppressive world in which we find ourselves.

Moreover, each woman speaks from her own point of reference and shares her experience based on her own situation of struggle. Collins (1991) refers to this point of reference as 'partial situated knowledge,' which represents a Black woman's self-defined standpoint. I would argue that Black women need to have a validated thought process that acknowledges their frame of references. Appreciating these unique differences in standpoints would allow a diversity of opinions to flourish and would not suppress or reject them.

Collins argues that partiality, not universality, is the cohesive component in bringing Black women together. She warns that no woman should put forth her knowledge claim or truth without identifying her identity-politics or situating herself within a context. To do so would make her less credible, like she was speaking from a point of reference she had never lived. Alice Walker links this 'partial situated knowledge' in creating a social grouping based on common experiences. She recognizes that there is a need to validate different ways of knowing, perspectives, voices, etc. to avoid the exclusion of many people define as 'others'. If we can identify a common knowledge among our diversity we can organize and direct our social change efforts more effectively. "Connections made, or at least attempted, where none existed before, the straining to encompass in one's glance at the varied world the common thread, the unifying theme thorough immense diversity" (Walker, 1983: 5).

In this thesis I have presented my standpoint using Patricia Hill Collins' (1991) approach to Black Feminist theory. Collins' approach focuses on the construction of social relations in terms of locating and explaining Black women historical roots of violence. I have

explored the socially constructed and oppressive social relations of race, class and gender and how they impact on Black women's experiences from slavery to their current experiences of violence in intimate relationships.

COLLINS' APPROACH TO BLACK FEMINIST THOUGHT

Collins' application of Black feminist thought is a more integrated approach in its analysis of race, class, and gender. She maintains that race and class cannot be interpreted in isolation from a gender analysis in the everyday experiences of a Black woman,

... it must be understood that the "interaction of gender and race produces a distinct result not captured by analysing race and gender separately. In other words, it is not only impossible to decide when one is being discriminated against or otherwise oppressed because of one factor over another, but the factors compound one another to produce a unique phenomenon (Jhappan, 1996: 26).

Moreover, Collins asserts that Black women's subordination under the auspices of violent oppressive structures of race, gender and class are all socially constructed.²¹ These social

²¹ **Gender** is a concept that defines what is known as "feminine or masculine and therefore, cannot be biologically determined. The feminine ideal is based upon the qualities of nurturing, passivity and being emotional which are socially constructed categories of prescribed behaviour or attributes. Simone de Beauvoir reiterates this definition by stating "one is not born, but becomes a woman" (Witting, 1992: 10).

Race refers to the "socially constructed" classification of human beings based on the historical and geographical contexts of individuals' experiences and is often the basis upon which statuses are conferred, groups are formed, agency is attained, and social roles assigned... An individual's race is determined socially and psychologically rather than biologically" (James, 1995: 34). Essed says the "the concept of 'race' is therefore referred to as a social construct. In essence, though it may seem to be about dividing people into groups with a characteristic appearance, it is really about associating specific racial groups with certain kinds of character traits and a certain kind of behaviour. This deterministic attribution of specific behaviour and specific human possibilities to different racial groups is at the core of racial thought" (Essed, 1990: 9).

Class is defined "...as generally [being] perceived as the location, in a hierarchally stratified workforce (society), commonly divided into a set of ranked categories, on the basis of relative income and level of education or skill required. Alternatively, the location within a bureaucratic organization as defined by job classification schemes. Marx defined class as location in relation to the means of production, mostly as owners and non-owners, with some intermediate classes.

constructions originate from a male, capitalist, and Eurocentric creation of oppressive distinctions which attempt to 'explain' the inherent differences among individuals based on stereotypical criteria. These criteria serve to maintain a power imbalance and block accessibility to opportunities. Race, class and gender cannot be perceived as unrelated, fixed or separate entities. Nor should they be seen as "mere abstract theoretical categories". Instead, these concepts must be presented and analyzed as being interconnected, intersected, interrelated, etc. and as salient social constructs that are embedded deep within every fibre of daily life experiences (Ng, 1993: 50).

Noted dominant feminist scholar, Gillian Walker (1990) applied the concept of social relations based on her location in the discussion of violence. She examines the discourse around the operationalization and definition of violence in terms of explaining the importance of language in shaping the women's movement 'mobilization' in wife battering. She states:

Concepts, when they operate in this 'technical way,' are not simply descriptive linguistic conventions; they organize the social construction of knowledge: ways of thinking about, defining, and giving abstract and generalized meaning to our particular experience. Knowledge, thus produced, provides for particular ways of taking action. They are part of a social relation (used here to signify an ongoing, concerted course of action, involving more than one person) that brings into being and organizes particular phenomena in specific ways, providing for responses to what has thus been identified (Walker, 1990: 101).

From my understanding, I could apply this analysis in my critique of the dominant feminist exploration of the historical roots of violence which was encompassed in a 'universalistic' dialogue about patriarchal oppression. Thus, the way we have been educated and socialized

Weber expanded Marx's definition to refer to differential life chances and the chance to use property, goods and services for exchange in a competitive market" (Hale, 1990: 561).

to relate to the terms and definitions of violence can be understood within the confines of the language used to express its significance and relevance. Without the input of Black women's voices, the construction of violence would fail to address capitalism, imperialism, racism, etc. inherent in the very language used to define the significance of their experience.

This would lead to the argument that the institutions and individuals who devise and attach these socially constructed meanings to define others are based on unequal oppressive social relationships. These individuals rarely challenge themselves on their theoretical origins or their validity are vehemently protected, taught, preserved and maintained within an 'education of violence' protected by the academy.

Social constructions are used to create images, perceptions and definitions that are set by the dominant ruling class. On a daily basis, Black women receive these subtle, but compelling, messages (perceptions or definitions) from the media, parents, partners and mainstream society about the cult of true womanhood which does not reflect their reality. These images transcend into all aspects of Black women's lives and have historically been negative. Black womanhood continues to be defined as 'abnormal' and 'deviant' because our voices have been excluded from studies, research and documentation of true Black womanhood. Black women continue to be blamed for a variety of social ills that are more reflective of these oppressive social and material structures which maintain inequalities. Dominant ideology creates a structural problem by defining the Black community as 'subjects' who are pathological instead of addressing the Black community's need to adapt their culture, perceptions of the world etc. These discrepancies in these depictions arise out of differences in material resources available which are rooted in oppressive social relations of an

interconnected matrix of race, class, gender, ability, heterosexualism, etc. Micheline Malson et al. (1990) identify the matrix as follows:

These relationships are [traditionally] interpreted as equivalent to the mathematical equation, racism plus sexism plus classism equals triple jeopardy. In this instance, each discrimination has a single, direct, and independent effect on status, wherein the relative contribution of each is readily apparent. This simple incremental process does not represent the nature of Black women's oppression but, rather, I would contend, leads to nonproductive assertions that one factor can and should supplant the other. An interactive model, which I have termed multiple jeopardy, better captures those processes. The modifier "multiple" refers not only to several, simultaneous oppressions but to the multiplicative relationships among them as well. In other words, the equivalent formulation is racism multiplied by sexism multiplied by classism (Malson et al, 1990: 270).

In constructing the social relations of race, class, and gender as tools of domination permits the dominant class to justify the differential access and enjoyment of benefits assigned to a highly valued social ranking. Unfortunately, this usually means the true way that the dominant class gains its privilege off the exploitation of labour, capital, subjugation of people defined as 'other,' etc. is rarely acknowledged. Sue Jewell (1993) argues that these social relations are given an ordinal rank with an assigned 'positive or negative' attached value. For example, men over women, white over persons of colour, upper class over lower class, etc. These values are further identified by characteristics or attributes, therefore, those who do not fit within a specified 'ideal' typology are seen and defined as 'deviant,' 'abnormal', 'inferior', 'lazy,' 'not worthy,' etc. Jewell (1993) claims that,

... this stratification system and related typologies are quite useful to the privileged who employ these models to explain why certain individuals, depending on their race, ethnic background, gender and class, have greater access to societal resources and therefore occupy higher strata because they possess certain qualities (belief, values, abilities, etc.) that those in lower strata do not possess (Jewell, 1993: 5).

These superior' values are supported through institutions such as the law, media, educational system, politics, policies, households, etc. which legitimize and define power and entitlements. However, these mistruths are usually replicated in these venues based solely on stereotypes and myths. Jewell further states that:

These entitlements refer to the rights of certain groups within society to have greater or lesser access to its resources and institutions. When the populace accept these beliefs about entitlements, they are accepting their predetermined position on a social hierarchy of discrimination. In doing so, they embrace the belief that certain artificially predetermined factors such as race, gender and class are responsible for the stratification of various groups within the hierarchy (Jewell, 1993: 9).

I have entered this dialogue on social relations because I feel that it is important to illustrate how these constructions (race, class and gender) are used by the mainstream to define, stigmatize, justify, etc. their discriminatory and oppressive actions. These social relations are part of a dominant ideology, which present concrete disadvantages or barriers to Black women trying to achieve a better life physically, socially, emotionally and spiritually. The perception of being engaged in a healthy relationship is part of this better life however when confronted with a negative socialization which tells us that we are ugly, emasculating, unfeminine, immoral, etc. we get entangled in abusive relationships.

It is hard not to internalize and absorb this daily diet of dominant culture's violence without our means to communicate and legitimize our own ideology. The ability to create our own definitions of healthy relationships would grant us the ability to form solidarity with a cultural sisterhood that could bridge the gaps of class, educational status, homosexuality, ability, different skin hues, etc. Recognizing the impact of divisions based on skin colour is necessary in remembering how it (skin colour) was and continues to be used to divide and

attach meanings of superiority vs. inferiority which slave masters implemented to avoid slave insurrections. And, although we are still caught up in living out this legacy as Black women, we rarely get the chance to name this experience and its origins.

With this said, using Collins's framework offers a more comprehensive approach to Black women's oppression, as she understand that empowering Black women also requires the help of allies in eliminating oppressive structures, which maintain and support a system of inequality. Therefore, she recognizes that the key to the eradication of these violent structures which maintain a power imbalance can be attained through the building of social consciousness and allies among other oppressed groups (Collins, 1991: 207).

Collins argues that her approach is derived from the everyday experience of the Black woman, that acknowledges that a classification system which places Black women in the 'Other' category denies them the protection that maleness, and wealth can provide (Collins, 1991: 207-208). Being a white middle to upper class male allows this elite group to experience white privilege²² and benefits that are not usually afforded marginalized groups such as Black women. This leaves Black women no choice but to establish a forum where their voices can be heard and where they can define themselves as opposed to being defined by white patriarchy, capitalism, imperialism, colonialism and racism. It demonstrates the importance of knowledge in deconstructing oppressive institutions as a route to

²²

White Privilege "Privileges are the economic "extras" that those of us who are middle class and wealthy gain at the expense of poor and working class people of all races. Benefits, on the other hand, are the advantages that all white people gain at the expense of people of colour regardless of economic position. But just because we don't have the economic privileges of those with more money doesn't mean we haven't enjoyed some of the benefits of being white... Benefits include police protection rather than harassment, attention, respect, positive representations of ourselves in the media, history books, news and music, and increased credibility and recourse in the legal system, social services and educational system" (Kivel, 1996: 28).

empowerment. Black feminism illustrates the need to change an individual's consciousness and to socially transform institutions as necessary for social change. In this, new knowledge becomes the major component in inspiring both mediums to make change (Collins, 1991: 221), to which I hope my study will make a worthwhile contribution.

MATRIX OF DOMINATION

Before I start this section I decided to define the terms of Matrix and Domination and to map out an understanding of how I believe Black women and men came to be entrapped within this matrix. Walter Avis defines matrix as "that which gives origins or form to something enclosed within it" (Avis, 1983: 707). The Concise Dictionary of Sociology operationalizes domination as:

Rule by coercion or non-coercive compliance. Individuals or groups may exercise power over others--domination--either by brute force or because that power is accepted as legitimate by those who are subject to it. Max Weber identified three pure types of 'legitimate domination', which today would probably be thought of as types of authority, classified according to the grounds on which their claims to legitimacy were based. These types are: rational-legal (legitimacy claimed from a generally set of rules and procedures); traditional (legitimacy based on continuity over time); and charismatic (legitimacy based on the extraordinary personal qualities of the leader) (Marshall, 1994:132).

In reflecting upon the meanings of these definitions, I thought immediately of the legal term "partus sequitur ventrem," which simply meant that any child born to a Black woman under the period of slavery would follow the conditions of the mother (the wounds of my Black mother) (Jacobs, 1861). Therefore, paternity of the father (Sins of the white father) was removed as the salient factor which was quite important in European households. Thus literally the child that was 'enclosed within it' (the womb) was follow the domination that was

perpetuated against its mother. Every Black person born in this period of slavery would be destined to have no status, was defined and identified by a dominant and exploitive class, and was denied access to opportunities for centuries to come. Therefore, the conceptualization of the 'matrix of domination' becomes very concrete and remains a reality for many Black women today, especially within violent intimate relationships.

Under the conditions of slavery it is not hard to image how some people felt helpless in such situations when forcibly removed from their country of origin, separated from family, stripped of their names, dignity, clothes and beaten and raped for the smallest infractions, etc. Therefore, this system of oppression derives much of its strength from the acquiescence of its victims, who have accepted the dominant images of themselves and are paralyzed by a sense of helplessness. Collins states that "Domination operates by seducing, pressuring, or forcing African-American women and members of subordinated groups to replace individual and cultural ways of knowing with the dominant groups specialized thought" (Collins, 1991: 229). Audre Lorde (1984) suggests that we can combat saturation of destructive thought by questioning the process, how and what we learn, who says its the truth, etc.

Since my experiences and identity have been constructed as 'other,' I believe that I should have the autonomy to name my own truths and historical influences relevant to my culture as a Black woman from the African diaspora. This freedom is part of a process that I believe is empowering, because it acknowledges my agency in reclaiming my history and cultural/ancestral legacies. This process also addresses the internalized colonialism, racism, sexism and classism which create the material conditions which have influenced my life chances. By acknowledging this I am open to questioning this system that unfairly distributes

material resources among the very people who create it (Amott, 1996; hooks, 1993; Davis, 1983; Collins, 1991, etc). This type of questioning is necessary in an empowerment process because as Clarke maintains:

Powerful people never educate you in how to take their power away from them, and their schools are not going to give you the kind of education you need. You have to make it, or take it. When you get the kind of education you need, you will discover the green fields of Africa and you won't have to go to Africa to improve Africa. Africa is where you are. You start with your community and with yourself and then you begin to see and understand revolutionary change. (Clarke, 1993: 108)

As an oppressed group we need to recognize that “the true focus of revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situations which we seek to escape, but that piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us” (Lorde, 1984: 123).

In order to be truly empowered, we Black women need to reject the elements of knowledge (whether personal, cultural or institutional) that perpetuate our “objectification and dehumanization” (Collins, 1991: 230). Therefore, as members of an oppressed group, we also need to not only be conscious of our sites of victimization, but also cautious of the ways our thoughts and actions uphold someone else’s subordination. We need to recognize that “a matrix of domination contains few pure victims or oppressors. Each individual derives varying amounts of penalty and privilege from the multiple systems of oppression which frame everyone’s lives” (Collins, 1991: 229).

Although, Collins cites race, class, and gender as the three most significant forces of oppression in Black women’s lives, her applications of Black feminism fosters a shift in our thinking about other oppressions based on sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, ability etc. “Other groups may encounter different dimensions of the matrix... but the overarching

relationship is one of domination and the types of activism it generates” (Collins, 1991: 226). These systems along with the economic, political, and ideological conditions that support them affect many more groups. Other people of colour, Jewish people, the poor, white women, gays and lesbians, the disabled have all had similarly socially constructed justifications made for their subordination (Collins, 1991: 225).

VIOLENCE IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS - COLLIN'S APPROACH

As previously stated, Collins' analysis of violence in the intimate relationships of Black men and women evolves from a conflict between the dominant gender ideology (that has never historically been our reality) and our acquiescence in playing out these dominant gender roles. Thus, the objectification and 'othering' process that has historically shaped stereotypical images of Black men and women play an active role in Black men feeling like they must dominate Black women in order to feel like 'real men'.

The process of 'othering' is also important to the understanding of how racism can be internalized in a violent manner. When we are defined as 'other' or 'abnormal' we run the risk of enslaving our minds as well (our 'otherness' becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy). The actual physical process of the historical enslavement and the physical violence perpetuated against Black women in intimate relationships necessitates an enslaved mind and spirit. The reasoning behind this assertion is that a breaking-in process which breaks down the essence of our (Black women's) humanity is essential to the continuation of violence as well as our (Black women's) acceptance of it as normal. Our (Black people's) 'education of violence' and 'colour contusion' is completed within a cycle of violence which justifies our mistreatment of each other as well as its acceptance as a normal means of communicating

with one another. Keith Boykin defines the impact of internalized racism as follows:

Internalized racism seeps deep into the psyche of Black people and their understanding of themselves. Nowhere is this phenomenon more evident than in our skin colour, which we mistakenly use as a measure of attractiveness, intelligence, sophistication, class, racial purity, and racial identity...matter of colour of one's skin so profoundly affects the way one is treated, so radically shapes what one is allowed to think and feel about this society, that the decision to generalize from that division is valid (Boykin, 1996: 58).

Although it is important that we (Black feminists) understand how relations of race play a role in violence it is also important to avoid the trap of excusing violent behaviours of Black men in intimate relationships against Black women as being an “inevitable consequence of racism [and classism] Black men experience” (Collins, 1991: 188). It is a necessary exercise to explore the impact of the social relations of race, class and gender oppression in creating violence perpetuated against Black women. However, it can never be seen in isolation out of the context of the dominant society's ‘education of violence’ (Collins, 1991).

One of the main purposes of this study is to provide an epistemological approach in understanding Black women's experience of violence in their intimate relationship in relation to their social, political and historical roots. In trying to make these connections, it is my desire to add, through this study, another layer to the analysis of Black women's experience of violence. Understanding this dimension is crucial to the expansion of current literature that address the violence experienced by Black women in intimate relationships. The structural social work approach would tell us to examine the structures and institutions which keep inequalities in place, thus encouraging, us to acknowledge the institutionalization of capitalistic roots of slavery and its lingering effects, we can begin this dialogue. We can begin to address this social issue based on a more holistic view identified and named by Black

women themselves and not by white and Black (male) social scientists.

“Through dialogues exploring how relations of domination and subordination are maintained and changed, parallels between Black women’s experiences and those of other groups become the focus of investigation” (Collins, 1991: 36).

CHAPTER 3 - BREAKING FREE OF MY BONDAGE

As Black women we have been trying to break free of the 'education of violence' and 'colour confusion' that permeates our lives. The chains of violence are represented in the threads of oppression which bind us, especially, to dominant ideology and abusive men in our lives. This thread is also woven within the fabric of a resistant system which contributes to Black women's subordination.

CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study, of the historical roots of violence in Black women's intimate relationships, used a qualitative approach in its data collection and analysis. A Black feminist framework was employed to inform the study. This research is exploratory in nature because of the scarcity of literature available on the subject of tracing the historical roots of violence against Black women in a current intimate context.

One such recent attempt at studying this subject is Margaret Vernon's study that explored "the perceptions, experiences and responses of a small sample [6] of Black Jamaican immigrant women regarding abuse from male spouses and partners" (Vernon, 1997: i). Vernon's innovative study attempted to explore the connection between slavery and the violence currently experienced in Black Jamaican women's intimate relationships. In understanding this link, she believed that social workers would be better able to identify more appropriate interventions for this group of women (Vernon, 1997).

DATA COLLECTION

Primary sources consisted of female slave narratives from diaries, etc and quotes used in secondary sources from characters within the literature who spoke of their experiences of violence within the master-slave context in slavery. These narratives served to accentuate my focus, on the content and analysis of their historical experiences of violence. Secondary sources consulted utilized resources, both current and past as well as accounts made by Black scholars, Black feminists analysis, etc. based on their observations of the oppressive structures (race, class and gender) that created inequalities as a result of our historical and political past

of slavery (ie. Darlene Hine Clark, Dorothy Sterling and Leith Mullings, etc.) This secondary data was collected from books, articles, narratives, etc. which discuss the issue of slavery and other socio-economic forms of violence in Black women's intimate relationships. In the utilization of fictional writing, I would like it understood that many Black female scholars were only able to record Black women's history in alternative formats than the academy. Thus, I feel that these works of fiction can still inform research projects on the lives of Black women.

ANALYSIS

A content analysis was utilized which assisted me in understanding the complexities presented by the data especially in relation to the social problem of Canadian Black women of Caribbean descent's current experiences of violence in intimate relationships. "...content analysis allows us to investigate research questions without needing to collect original data, we can formulate research questions about anything that has taken place and been recorded" (Grinnell Jr, 1997: 427).

My particular study was operationalized as an ethnographic content analysis. This method has a qualitative approach that is used to "document the communication of meaning as well as to verify theoretical relationships" (Grinnell Jr, 1997: 438). Therefore, I used the communication of language of words, ideas and concepts in the literature (written materials as mentioned earlier in the data collection) to verify the historical roots of violence in the intimate relationships of Black women. The reasoning for this lies in "its characteristic [which] is the highly reflexive and interactive nature of the relationship between the researcher and the study's concepts, data collection and analysis. . .the researcher is a central figure in

evaluating the meaning of the content” (Grinnell Jr., 1997: 438-439).

Therefore, the themes and concepts explored in the literature analysis were organized in a manner that was reflective of my own process of establishing the links between the historical use of violence against Black slave women and my own abusive relationship. The operationalization of an ethnographic content analysis and the Black feminist standpoint were effective tools I used to collect, sort, and analyze the data. Using these methods, I was able to introduce and provide descriptive analysis of important and relevant concepts as well as analyze the data that was significant to my study of connecting the historical roots to my current experience of violence.

As such, I acknowledge that this research was initiated because of my own experiences as a Black Canadian woman of Caribbean descent who was in an abusive relationship, as well as my observations of others like myself, with similar experiences. This approach is also synonymous with a Black feminist epistemological standpoint of appreciating a Black woman’s ability to produce and develop knowledge based on her way of seeing and knowing the world. In undertaking this project, I have decided to present knowledge based on my own lived experiences.

Utilizing my experiences as an entry point into the data was advantageous within this study for a variety of reasons: I was able to make the most of my resources, including the exploratory studies already completed by other scholars, who have examined the connection between slavery and violence in relationships; it continues to develop knowledge at three levels: the exploratory level which generates relevant questions and hypotheses (located in my research proposition); the descriptive level which describes a phenomena or characteristic

of a population (ethnographic and content analysis of slavery) and; explanatory studies which is the process of explaining social phenomena (Black feminist theoretical framework) (Grinnell Jr., 1997: 401–403). And finally, this method allowed me to write about a subject that can be replicated; meaning that other researchers will have a greater opportunity to analyze my data and add to my theoretical analysis.

LIMITATIONS

However, content analysis is not without its disadvantages. Its limitations stem from the fact that it can only be carried out on information already recorded. Many critics can still question the validity of the data presented in my analysis.

Needless to say, there are inherent weaknesses therein. First, I am not using human subjects, therefore, my only source of data is the information found in the literature already recorded (secondary data). This means that the literature has already been collected, written and filtered through the original researcher's lense and bias. Second, I could not check out the facts or interpretations with the original informants. I relied solely on documents gathered by others. Relying on secondary resources means that I had to technically check every piece of information against its primary source. However, time constraints in the sense of locating primary data to verify the facts is limited in attempting to accomplish this task. Third, the literature on the actual history of slavery were largely completed by male social science researchers. This means that a Eurocentric male bias or lense has been used to record relevant data, and Black women for the most part have been left out of the analysis. Only a few studies and books are written by Black women from a Black feminist perspective who paid particular attention to Black women's experiences of violence within the historical

context of slavery.

QUESTIONS OF INQUIRY

The most important and significant component of this content analysis presented in the study are questions of inquiry. This essential piece enabled me to map out an effective approach which conceptualized the issue of violence in intimate relationships of Black women. These questions did not initiate my research but instead guided my analysis of the subject. I asked the data the following questions:

1. What are some of the ideological/philosophical underpinnings as well as actions that can be defined as violence in the master-slave relationship?
2. What were the impacts of gender relations on the role of Black women and men during slavery?
3. What are some of the legacies (ie. identity, family, culture, spirituality, language, socialization, employment, education and relationships) left by slavery on Black people?
4. What is written within dominant feminist literature about violence? What are the gaps?
5. What are some of the factors that contributed to the violence that I as a Black Canadian woman of Caribbean descent experienced in my intimate relationship?
6. How were the economic and systemic institutionalization of slavery maintained? What were the social indicators in history that may have foreshadowed our current relationship issues in Black relationships?
7. What similarities can be found between my experiences as an abused Black woman in the 1990s that can be linked enslaved Black women of the 1500-1800s? What do they have in common?
8. What are the services that are available to Black women in violent intimate relationships? What are some of their typical responses to Black women involved in violent intimate relationships?

In reviewing the data provided by both the primary and secondary sources I identified

themes that emerged as patterns in the literature. Once these themes were identified, a comparison was made between them and my original research assumptions. After these tasks had been completed I reported the significant results and make conclusions. It is my belief that this process provided me with a more informed perspective of the problem. As well it as can inform and direct other practitioners of the practical considerations when in engaging in interventions with other Canadian Black women of Caribbean descent who have experienced abuse in their intimate relationships (Barnsley & Ellis, 1992: 60-62).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Since I did not use 'human subjects', I did not address the four specific concerns of confidentiality, informed consent, deception and risk to participants. However, I did have two ethical concerns when engaging in literature research: plagiarism and deception in terms of misrepresenting the data. I ensured against plagiarism by citing the source of words, ideas or concepts that were not my original thoughts. I used others' ideas only in a manner that they were intended. I made every effort not to purposely misrepresent or misinterpret any other researcher's initial ideas for my own benefit or gain. I ensured this by recognizing his/her perspective, and accordingly recorded this information within the study.

CHAPTER 4 - DISTANCE FROM SLAVERY TO SOLITUDE (Picture by Robert Ric Smalls)

As a community, we need to build healthier ways of seeing and communicating with one another. I believe by looking at our past history that we can rediscover an ancestral pride. We can begin to redefine our identities, history, experiences and look to the future with hope. I believe that the answers to our self-preservation lie in our past struggles and resistance.

CHAPTER FOUR - ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

Materials that discussed violence against Black women as rooted in slavery and other socio-economic and political structures was critically examined. In addition, I explored the ideologies, philosophies and societal practices evident in the 'education of violence' established for Black slave women and perpetuated against them through the identified socio-economic systems which are replicated in contemporary society against Black women.

It is my contention that in examining the links between an interconnected web of colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism, I understood how they mediated and defined the experience of Black slave women. I can make the links of a correlative relationship between the slave women's experience and my own experience of violence in a past abusive relationship. I would assert that the sub-human treatment of the slave woman predisposed her to have a devalued perception of herself which and that this has continued to be internalized and externally forced upon her. I am able to crudely understand that you (as a Black woman) were bought and sold as property for the purpose of advancing capitalism, which was in the best interest of someone else, and that this lends itself to the exercise of defining ourselves in terms of our labour/work value. Our involvement in intimate relationships bears an extension of this thought process (Collins, 1991).

If my worth is measured and defined by my labour value in the labour market, I know that I will aspire to prove my worth, often to the detriment of my health. The same holds true for my involvement in intimate relationships. As a Black woman, I believe that I can become caught in a constant fight to navigate between the expectations of others of myself as well as,

my actual knowledge of my abilities. It hurts physically, emotionally, and spiritually to continually engage in this process, but it seems that sometimes it is the only way I know how to function because of my socialization. This is representative of the social reality in which I live. Our social world is defined by the social relations of race, class, and gender which still allows me, as a Black woman, to be underemployed, underpaid, and economically exploited because I belong to the 'surplus army of labour'. My position in this economic hierarchy was created within a North American context which dictates that my labour production and reproduction will continue to benefit a dominant (business/capitalist) class.

It is my firm belief that these social relations of race, class, and gender were developed in this time period (1500- 1800) in an attempt to condition and educate Black women on what their roles would be in this social order. We became 'beasts of burden' (Fanon, 1963), super-strong, sub-human, unfeminine sub-species, etc. in a further attempt to justify our sexual and economic exploitation. Violence was the preferred method employed by slave masters to ensure that we kept our place in the social order as reproducers of the slave class. When we complied, we were given tokens, trinkets, and perhaps a brief respite from whippings and beatings, etc. especially upon delivery of a healthy child and the survival of that offspring (Hine et al., 1995; Bush, 1990; Jones, 1985).

In this enactment of our history, we bear witness to the cycle of an 'education of violence' (Walker, 1979) that is duplicated in our current intimate relationships. This 'cycle of violence' is comprised of differential experiences, yet they are similar to the "Matrix of Domination"²³ that mark the capture, middle passage, slave auction and 'breaking-in' patterns

²³

Please refer to Appendix A.

of violence against African slave women. This was done to force us to carry out the will of our abusers/masters. Acts of brutal cruelty and violence were used to keep us in place when we stepped out of bounds, and to ensure our submissiveness and docility. Next, acts of kindness and/or gifts are utilized to buy our trust/to buy us respite from continuous acts of violence, or to explain the violence. The cycle continued to repeat itself until the victims/slaves escapes, or the death of the abusers or victims result in the cessation of violence (Walker, 1979; Jones, 1985; Hine et al., 1995).

This violent construction of the social relations of race, class, and gender was crucial to the slave's education by the dominant class in slave society. Prior to colonial contact, I am unsure of the degree to which these relations predicted the life experiences of the African women. I can only ascertain that the relations between men and women appeared to be more equitable and with colonial contact the conditions of these relations were altered.

AFRICAN WOMEN BEFORE SLAVERY

To understand and determine what influences capitalism, colonialism and imperialism had on these early African women, a brief exploration of African women's traditional roles in Africa was undertaken. Many mistruths about Africa and its inhabitants have been retold over and over again until they have become embedded in European history of Africa as stoic truth. Based on the literature, I was able to glean that Africa before colonial contact was more egalitarian than authoritarian. The common myth is that African women were the sole cultivators of the land while men lazed about. In many tribes, the men were also known to cultivate the land, as well as tend to the animals because the survival of the family and the

community was the underlying foundation of their value and belief system (Hafkin and Bay, 1976; Loth, 1977; Terborg-Penn, 1996).

Before colonial contact, Africa relied heavily on a communal agricultural system, whereby women were respected for their contributions. The woman's place in Africa had a special meaning and purpose in the sense that matrilinearity²⁴ was considered to occur in equitable proportions to patrilinearity. Of course, variations in the status of women occurred from region to region in Africa, as their role was dependent on a number of factors such as the agricultural base (vegetation in area), religious belief system, urban vs. rural site, etc. Also, women on a whole, were respected for their ability to give birth which produced privilege and freedom for many women. Their ability was recognized as important and formed a community consciousness respecting of its significance. This community consciousness recognized that women played a valuable role in the maintenance of the family, extended family and the community. Loth reminds us that:

The fact cannot be ignored that with the development of towns and the patriarchal spread of Islam and Christianity the position of women changed for the worse, even though their actual social degradation occurred rather later, with the start of the colonial period, which had considerable impact on marriage and family life, largely through the overseas slave trader after the 16th century...(Loth, 1977: 66).

COLONIALISM, IMPERIALISM, CAPITALISM

With the colonization of Africa by Europeans, a patriarchal and capitalist belief system was introduced. African men were given more power as decision-makers that began the

²⁴ "In a matrilinear system, descent and inheritance follow the female line...In communities organized according to matrilinearity, the children belonged to the relatives of the mother and inherited material goods as well as economic, social and religious duties from the relatives on their mother's side" (Loth, 1977: 28).

dissolution of the village community. African males were granted more and more power in Africa as Europeans were only willing to engage in business transactions with men. This may have also been the genesis of an estranged relationship between African women and men.

By dissolving the village community (based on a communal ownership of the land and its resources) structures in most Black African countries, and replacing them with violent and oppressive systems of private property, wage labour, class stratification, introduction of European patriarchy (aided by some Black men), etc, women became further and further removed from the important decision making processes that acknowledged their strength and validated their contributions. Through the deterioration of the village community based on mutual access to the benefits of production, it is argued that women lost much of their status and power. In many villages, where agriculture was the basis of its economy, descent followed matrilinearity, and women were considered the primary leaders in the village because agriculture was known to be their speciality. In villages where animal husbandry and more progressive forms of agricultural production were introduced, men dominated as these forms of production were seen to be male oriented (Loth, 1977; Steady ,1985, etc.). From a European perspective, this male oriented labour division created divisions between African men and women. In turn, Terborg-Penn argues that colonial influences negatively impacted on African women's status. She states:

Colonial penetration in Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries produced the most profound changes in the lives of the African woman on the continent and disrupted the traditional system of production. It also reinforced existing systems [brought about by the initial penetration] of social stratification, including racial segregation, through the machinery of the state. Other devastating effects of colonial penetration included the disintegration of self-provisioning

agricultural systems, through the introduction of commercial agriculture and exploitative wage employment (Terborg-Penn, 1996: 9).

Similarly, Hafkin and Bay (1976) and Terborg-Penn (1996) agree that these two socio-economic systems (ie. colonialism, capitalism) created a class system that promoted industrial expansion. In turn, this expansion had a detrimental effect on early African women's traditional sources of power. African women's oppression became more necessary to create divisions in the population by class and gender using a colonial approach. Hafkin and Bay (1976) further argues that "colonialism often resulted in the differentiation of social and domestic labour, the introduction of large-scale production for exchange, and the transformation of productive resources into private property--processes that significantly altered the status of women" (Hafkin and Bay, 1976: 247). The introduction of a Eurocentric bias in the domestic lives of African women created different ways of perpetuating violence against women in Africa and in the New World (eg. the Caribbean, and North America).

As Africa was raped of its natural resources, so too were its indigenous peoples as the Atlantic Slave Trade (1500s - 1800s) gained international respect and economic support. Furthermore, the interconnected systems of colonialism, imperialism and capitalism were also used as justifications for creating the Atlantic Slave trade based on previous examples of enslavement. These included Aboriginal slavery in which indigenous peoples of Canada, the Caribbean, the United States, etc (called 'panis') were captured by the Europeans until they fled or died in captivity (Vernon, 1997; Clarke, 1993). Their enslavement was justified by the oppressor class by using Judeo-Christian doctrines that stated it was alright to enslave pagans. It is interesting to note that poor white European's labour (called indentured

servants) were also exploited until that market became less profitable to bear the costs of their purchase. Usually this group consisted of those who were poor and homeless, convicts of the State, political offenders, etc., considered to be repaying their debts to their country (Clarke, 1993).

When discussing the pervasiveness of African slavery, the literature connects imperialism, capitalism, and colonialism together in a symbiotic and parasitic relationship. In relation to slavery they all fed off one another to make the others stronger in their domination of Black women (men). In this case, the process of creating colonies on indigenous land by Europeans, without governmental control (see definition of imperialism on page 9) of the continent of Africa began the process of domination. Furthermore, the driving force of economics fuelled their own economies in Britain, France, etc. and was used to justify European interest and rationalize their total disregard for human life.

COLONIALISM

In defining colonialism, Ollenburger (1992) uses Robert Blauner's model which was based on the African-American experience to set a foundation for understanding class and race inequality. He asserts that traditional definitions of colonization do not reflect the African's experience in North America. He argues that:

racial oppression arises from the colonizing efforts of imperialism. For African-Americans, this initial colonization from the United States [and Canada] took place not as a classic colonization, or capture of home territory, but as a colonization of groups of peoples through capture and transport to a slaver system (Ollenburger, 1992: 27).

Furthermore, he claims that colonialism as it pertains to Black African slaves was accomplished in three stages: 1) the enslavement of a subordinate group by a dominant

group; 2) destruction of their culture; 3) assigning privilege based on a social and economic system (Ollenburger, 1992: 27).

The first stage required the violent capture and involuntary enslavement of Africans and the transportation of those persons to the colonies in the New World. This process of capture occurred within the country of origin and was predominately driven by capitalist (usually in conquest and territorial ways) motives (Ollenburger, 1992: 27).

The second stage occurred in the New World where the material resources of the indigenous peoples were “expropriated by the dominant group through force” (Ollenburger, 1992: 27). In the Caribbean, the indigenous Arawaks were annihilated approximately 100 years after the first European contact (between 1492-1600). In Canada, the Aborigines were relocated on reserve type blocks of land. Once this had been accomplished, the enslaved Africans were introduced to a ‘breaking-in’ process (in slavery²⁵) aimed at breaking their will. The dominant class were afraid that if they permitted the Africans to retain their culture, language, etc., that the Africans would attack, create resistance, or insurrection against them. The break-down of African cultural norms was facilitated by dispersing the Africans across North America and the Caribbean. A dominant ideology prevailed as African spirituality was replaced with Christianity, and education limited to skill was dispensed. Africans began to mimic their masters way in terms of practicing Christianity. However, when the dominant class realized that Christianity could be used as means of social control, they began to use the

²⁵

American slavery was a economic and political system by which a group of whites extracted as much labour as possible from Blacks (defined as the offspring of Black or mulatto mothers) through the use of threat of force. A slave owner thus replaced any traditional division of labour that might have existed among Blacks before enslavement with a work structure of his own choosing. All slaves were barred by law from owning property or acquiring literacy skills...(Jones, 1985: 13-14).

Bible to destroy the last vestiges of African spirituality. The traditional family was split up and altered to meet market demands of reproduction (Ollenburger, 1992; Bush, 1990; Reynolds, 1985; Brizan, 1984 etc).

The third stage was identified as the stratification of the economic and social system which assigned privilege based on race. Therefore, as Jones (1985) argues the rights of Blacks were restricted. They were barred from obtaining an education, their own housing units, wage labour, etc. Denying these rights to Blacks kept them in a subordinate position reliant on the dominant class to provide the basic necessities in a crude and violent manner. These barriers continued to have repercussions on the current social realities of Blacks in North America (Ollenburger, 1992; Collins, 1990; Jones, 1985 etc.).

IMPERIALISM

Imperialism continued to flourish as many institutions (such as trading companies, shipping companies, and banks, etc.) were established to move goods to and from the colonies to meet new market demands. Margaret Vernon (1997) called this transfer (between the colonies and Britain, France, Portugal etc.) a 'centre-periphery dichotomy' because it facilitated the manner in which the power domination of the colonies existed externally. Therefore, who (country) ever laid claim to the new land which later became colonies would be in the position to control and reap the benefits and rewards of its production (Vernon, 1997: 54).

European powers created a system of domination without the benefit of a military coup. Originally, Europeans were invited to visit Africa as guests. After they realized the wealth that could be had, they turned on their hosts and manipulated and swindled large

number of leaders. This ended in the forfeit of land, wealth, peoples and domination (Clarke, 1993: 60-61).

Both human and material resources were drained from Africa without European 'governmental control'. Filomena Steady (1985) maintains that the African economy was exploited "to develop countries outside of Africa and to make profits for people who belonged primarily to the Caucasian race" (Steady, 1985: 10). Europeans had expensive tastes for the raw materials they could not or did not produce. Not long after the European invasion new colonies were set up in the New World and Africans were being sold to supply the cheap labour needed to work the land. A vicious cycle of violence, perpetuated against the Africans, was introduced and maintained for centuries to come (Clarke, 1993; Brizan, 1984; Genovese, 1976; Mannix, 1962).

CAPITALISM

At the onset of the Slave trade in the Caribbean, payments consisted of rum, sugar, etc. in exchange for slaves. The transition to bills of exchange (monetary value) was caused by the increase in slave prices, and the quantity of sugar needed for transport to meet those costs. These bills of exchange (drawn from the account of the purchasing merchant) necessitated the creation of institutions such as banks to complete these transactions and to ensure their legitimacy (Reynolds, 1985: 64-65).

Capitalistic interests were developed and maintained through the appropriation of 'cash crops' seized by colonial powers as well as the slave trade which provided the forced labour that processed those crops. Clarke (1993) argues that the slave trade and slavery were the "first international investment in capital. It was the first large-scale investment that was

intercontinental. Many Europeans invested in ships and in the goods and services taken from these African countries and became independently wealthy” (Clarke, 1993: 87).

The cultivation of ‘cash crops’ especially sugar, increased the number of the planter class (furthering the class stratification). This endeavour was so successful that the Caribbean islands were responsible for supplying half of Europe with its sugar production. Those in the business of selling land in the colonies at the height of its production of sugar, cotton, tobacco, etc. were also engaged in a profitable enterprise (Reynolds, 1985: 65).

Moreover, the abolition of slavery came as a result of modes of production of “slavery, wage labour, small farm and artisanal labour competing for dominance.” Eventually wage labour (which was also connected to the escalation of the industrial revolution in the ‘New World’) won out as the Civil War put an end to the increasing costs of maintaining production on large plantation style parcels of land (Mullings, 1997: 40). Many capitalist modes of production survived because of its emphasis on competitive individualism. Unfortunately, many individuals believed and invested in a strong work ethic, believing that with this ethic, they can obtain liberty, freedom and equality. Similarly, most of the descendants of African slaves were still engaged in these capitalistic endeavours in the hope that they too would eventually access societal resources (Mullings, 1997; Jewell, 1993).

THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND SLAVERY

The underlying philosophy on which the African slave trade was established and maintained was one of power and control by violence. The Atlantic slave trade was more than an economic enterprise, it allowed Europeans to use advanced weaponry and other forms of deceptive tactics to conduct their trading of Africans as slaves, as well as to impose a

dangerous ideology (ie. Deception, power, greed etc) onto African countries.

Clarke contends that European imperialists held “arrogant assumptions ...that they are the only people who ever produced anything worthy of being called culture” (Clarke, 1993: 79). They (the Europeans) set Africans up to devalue one another enough to capture other Africans for sale. Clarke describes the process by which Europeans took sides in African family disputes, for example, supplying one side with arms to fight against the other side. The trade-off for the Africans in getting weapons and help from the Europeans, was that many Africans would acquiesce, accept and capture fellow countrymen for the slave trade. The idea was that conquering other tribes and acquiring their lands and wealth were associated with power. This concept of power was influential in controlling and compelling the Africans to sell and trade their countrymen to the Europeans. The Europeans, for their part, supplied the Africans with guns. African nations were educated to value oppressive means to maintain their own survival, and to do to others before it was done to them (Mannix, 1962). This created an ideology of white European superiority vis-a-vis African sub-humanity which became the foundation of white and Black interactions to this day. Consequently, patriarchy was fully endorsed with white men in control of all Africans, and African men in turn controlled African women for economic gains.

Steady (1985) argues that “capitalist modes of production and the concomitant value orientation resulted in the reinforcement of patriarchal systems in which command of women’s labour and children’s labour became absolutely essential” (Steady, 1985: 12). She also argues that the differentially attached values to male and female labour maintained a divisional partition between Black men and women which sometimes prevented them from

effectively coming together as a social group. The forced institutionalization of Eurocentric values and culture on the African population began the replication of the abusive and oppressive structures of Europe within the social relationship of Black slaves (Steady, 1985).

Reynolds adds his views to the debate on the philosophy behind plantation slavery by stating that the reasons were racist and economic. He asserted that the British were late to adopt slavery in the West Indies due to their ethnocentrism and “strong aversion to living among Black people” (Reynolds, 1985: 66). He maintains, however, that their change in attitude reflected the wage increase in England which also increased the prices of indentured servants, and decreased the African slave price. There was a need for free labour to work the land because the majority of the dominant capitalist class’ wealth was dependent on this cheap labour. An abundance of land with no one to work it was useless to property owners. Trying to maximize profits at minimal costs ensured that the Africans who were acquired at one price (and never paid again) could then be worked to death, never obtaining their freedom as indentured servants had (with their own parcel of land) (Reynolds, 1985).

Eric Williams, one of the first scholars to document the historical accounts of slavery asserts that economics was the reason that slavery became institutionalized. He states:

Here, then, is the origin of Negro slavery. The reason was economic, not racial, it had to do not with the color of the laborer, but the cheapness of the labor. As compared with Indian and white labor, Negro slavery was eminently superior (Williams, 1966: 19).

Furthermore, he argued that race became a rationalization for exploiting Black labour. He reasons that the money used to buy servants (white men’s services) for 10 years could ‘buy a Negro for life’ (Williams, 1966: 19). However, his insights on the previous page, where he weighed the differences between a slave and indentured servant are significant because I

think they have a bearing on the selection of Africans as slaves. He said:

The servant's loss of liberty was of limited duration, the Negro was a slave for life. The servant's status could not descend to his offspring, Negro children took the status of the mother. The master at no time had absolute control over the person and liberty of his servant as he had over his slave. The servant had rights, limited but recognized by law inserted in a contract. He enjoyed, for instance, a limited right to property. In actual law the conception of the servant as a piece of property never went beyond that of personal estate and never reached the stage of a chattel or real estate. The laws in the colonies maintained this rigid distinction and visited cohabitation between the races with severe penalties (Williams, 1966: 18).

Amott (1996) asserts that the philosophy that drove slavery could be found within the ideology practiced by a society which saw and defined Black Africans as sub-humans. Amott believes that theories of racial superiority were used to justify the sub-human treatment of African women (and men). Hine supported this view by stating:

the social context for the construction of race as a tool for Black oppression is historically rooted in the context of slavery...Race came to life primarily as the signifier of the master/slave relation and thus emerged superimposed upon class and property relations. Defined by law as "animate chattel," slaves constituted property as well as a social class and were exploited under a system that sanctioned white ownership of Black bodies and Black labour (Hine et al., 1995: 6).

The dominant sector of society possessed a race supremacist vantage point that they believed gave them unquestionable authority to define Africans as property, and legally sanctioned their hate of Blacks through a system of overt control (Mintz, 1976). Their monopoly of the power structures gave them, as they rationalized, the divine right to rape, torture, maim, disable, kill, punish, and sell African women, men, children and forcibly kidnap and separate African women from their partners, their country, as well as their families in the

New colonies. Genovese (1976) supports this viewpoint of slavery resting on the premise of property. He states:

Slavery rested on the principle of property in man--of one man's appropriation of another's person as well as of the fruits of his labour. By definition and in essence it was a system of class rule, in which some people lived off the labour of others. American slavery subordinated one race to another thereby render[ing] its fundamental class relationships more complex and ambiguous; but they remained class relationships. The racism that developed from racial subordination influenced every aspect of American life and remains powerful. But slavery as a system of class rule predated racism and racial subordination in world history and once existed without them (Genovese, 1976: 3-4).

The issue of property is salient in its perpetuation of racist philosophy which demanded the subordination and enslavement of Blacks as well as denied them the right to property and class privilege and status. This racist philosophy also gave Europeans the power to define Blacks in dichotomous terms in comparison with whites. Europeans saw themselves as Christians, cultured, refined, rational, and intelligent people, whereas Africans were 'perceived' as inferior sub-humans created for the advancement of white Europeans. Oppressive and violent language was used by white society to associate themselves with characteristics of purity, chastity, superiority and supremacy with the dominant (women) culture. Black women (and men) were associated with characteristics of impurity, stupidity, sexually deviant, immoral behaviours, etc. Bush (1990) argued that the oppressive stereotyping of slaves led to oppositional thinking in regards to the master. Slaves were viewed as possessing qualities negatively opposite to that of the master. This racist stereotyping allowed slave owners, overseers, etc. to justify their positions of 'superiority' and rationalized their sub-human treatment of Black slaves.

Amott (1996), Hine et al. (1995), Davis (1983) and others agree that the institution of slavery was built on a system of coercion and violence used among other things, to economically, socially and politically exploit Black women (and men) which resulted in the destruction of the relationship between Black men and women. The view that Blacks were 'sub-humans' and savages led to the erroneous belief that as a race, they would gradually die out. Their inhumane and intense whipping and lashing of the slaves appear to lend credence to this perspective (Gaspar, 1996).

SUPPORT OF THE VIOLENCE AGAINST BLACK WOMEN IN SLAVERY

The institution of slavery (and its mass economic, social, political, and sexual exploitation of Black people) could not exist without the sanctioned support of the government. In this situation an imperialistic and colonialist government supported and institutionalized the brutality, coercion and violence inherent in slavery. The citizens of these colonies elected a government that would represent their interests (to maximize production and profit) derived from slaves working their land. Therefore, Howard McGary concedes that the role of the government was paramount in creating the socially controlled conditions under which captured and enslaved Africans found themselves. He states that:

When we examine the role of the government, we find a better candidate for the mark of oppression during slavery. The effects of government sanctions, restrictions, and codes were everywhere. Individuals acted in ways that were cruel, harmful, and unjust, but the government played a crucial role in defining, enforcing, and maintaining the ways Blacks were subjugated (McGary, 1992: 8).

Violence against Africans was inherent in all the social structures of the New World upon their capture and enslavement. They were forbidden by law from all human and civil

rights. For example, they could not own themselves, their offspring, own property, marry, acquire an education or religious freedoms, etc. (Jones, 1985). The deprivation of these basic freedoms supported and perpetuated a violent culture which motivated Black men especially, to practice deviant ways of gaining power. This 'education of violence' was evident in the development of police services, legal sanctions (laws) etc which were used to circumvent the African slaves' sense of humanity and freedom. George Brizan (1984) chronicles the stages in preventing this from occurring:

First, a police system which was the main device for maintaining the status quo of plantation life. This mechanism was intensified parallel with planters' increasing preoccupation and paranoia about the slave insurrection. Secondly, an extensive body of slave laws emerges, aimed at circumscribing the slaves' every movement. Third, a rigid social class structure, and, as a product of that structure, the emergence of racism. Fourth, the monopoly of political and judicial institutions by the plantocracy or group of estate owners. Such control was considered essential to maintain and defend the economic interests of the planter class (Brizan, 1984: 79).

Gaspar contends that slaves were "desocialized, depersonalized and desexualized in order to maintain their subordination" (Gaspar, 1996: 7). He also states that the masters rarely, if ever, intervened in the domestic affairs of Black "husbands and wives," particularly in reference to the men's violence against the women. He argues that patriarchal values and beliefs dictated that the master control and determine the sexual unions of female slaves. European defined patriarchal power invested the men including Black men, on the plantations, with the power to directly determine the social reality of Black slave women, impacting on their interactions with those around them (Gaspar, 1996).

The institutionalization of violence was justified in the master-slave relationship and

the slave-slave relationship as a form of protection against slave insurrection,²⁶ and control over his property. Even the pseudo-family in slave quarters was used as a site for an 'education of violence' since it was also within this context that Black women cared for themselves and their "familial" obligations which also served to maintain the imperialistic, capitalistic and colonial interests of the ruling class by maintaining their productivity and health. The "family" ensured the preservation of slavery inherent in oppression (Jones, 1985).

THE BEGINNING OF AN 'EDUCATION OF VIOLENCE' - THE CAPTURE

As previously mentioned, Africans were hunted like animals in their country of origin by fellow countrymen and European traders. They had been enticed into the slave trade through the offer of wealth (beads, metals, alcohol, tobacco, etc.) which promised them the right to gain more power. Many Africans were captured while engaging in daily tasks of their community (Mannix, 1962; Brizan, 1984; Steady, 1985 etc.).

Once captured, they were traded to 'slavers' who brought the Africans to ships or slave fortress (the fortress housed the Africans under prison-like conditions until the slaver ships came to transport them) located near the shores or underground. This brief imprisonment also required many bodily checks to ensure the health of the African, and to examine the body for defects which would decrease their price, or result in his/her rejection from the sale. Rejection of a slave could also occur if the African was deemed too rebellious.

²⁶

"...labour was undoubtedly extracted in the main through coercion. Planters could only squeeze a respectable profit out of their slaves literally beating it out of them, an unsavory practice, used on men and women alike, which inspired strong resistance on the part of the slaves. The need to keep the slaves in line and suppress insubordination hence became the slave owner's main justification for habitual physical maltreatment, such as whippings and confinement in the stocks" (Bush, 1990: 40).

If a rejection occurred, the African would be severely beaten or put to death (Mannix, 1962; Brizan, 1984; Reynolds, 1985).

MIDDLE PASSAGE

The 'education of violence' began with the forcible abduction and removal of African women, men and children from their community and countries. On the Middle Passage²⁷ all the slaves' heads were shaved, brands (which identified ownership of the slaves) were impressed on their bodies, and they were chained together naked for the duration of the journey to the New World (Bush, 1990; Reynolds, 1985). Leg, hand, and neck irons were used to restrict the movement of slaves upon the ships, as well as decrease the chances of insurrection, and finally, to instill feelings of shame, fear and abject helplessness in the Africans' psyche (Reynolds, 1985).

Catholic slave traders also attempted to baptize the Africans before they were brought inland for fear that they would be ex-communicated. For the Africans, who were also deeply spiritual, this was also a frightening experience, since it held the potential that their souls may not rest in peace after death. Some enslaved Africans were afraid that their Gods would forsake them when Christian ceremonies or rituals were forced on them. Sometimes, their spirituality was the only thing they had to hold on to help them through the difficult times

²⁷

In this triangular trade England-France- and colonial America equally - supplied the exports and the ships: Africa the human merchandise; the plantations the colonial raw materials. The slave ship sailed from the home country with a cargo of manufactured goods. These were exchanged at a profit on the coast of Africa for Negroes, who were traded on the plantations, at another profit, in exchange for a cargo of colonial produce to be taken back to the home country (Williams, 1966: 51).

The Middle Passage refers to the journey that slave traders followed en route from Africa to the New World (Caribbean, America) across the Atlantic Ocean with the kidnaped slaves (commodities).

ahead. George Brizan refers to these forced practices as:

Mechanisms...brought into play designed to effect a total break with the inmate's past, and to destroy his personality, in order to establish a new identity, a new set of attitudes... For many slaves, once this new identity had been impressed on them, the more malleable and less prone to resistance, insubordination or rebellion, they became (Brizan, 1984: 84).

Often Africans (especially tribes) were pitted against each other at mealtimes as they had to compete for limited food passed around. Slaves attempting to starve themselves were severely whipped and punished. This Eurocentric practice substantiated Darwin's theory of 'survival of the fittest' (Reynolds, 1985). In the name of population control, to instill fear, and to minimize costs, starvation, throwing of the sickly, disabled, and diseased newborns overboard was routinely performed. African women were mercilessly raped, beaten severely and sometimes killed if they refused to comply with the white crew on the slave ship (Reynolds, 1985; Bush, 1990).

The Middle Passage facilitated the separation of families, and the denial of Africans practicing their language, spirituality, customs, culture, etc. Brizan (1984) describes the Middle Passage as the "first mechanism employed... to destroy the African's personality..." (Brizan, 1984: 84).

SLAVE AUCTION

The breaking of the African will and spirit began before the slaves even reached the New World. The constant reinforcement of their 'sub-humanity' and powerlessness to adequately subvert their imprisonment took an enormous toll on many Africans.

The slave auction became the third consistent mechanism to break the will and further the de-humanization process of the African. Women were openly displayed naked, poked, and prodded and fondled much like livestock. The women's stomachs and breasts were fondled to determine their fertility. Auctioneers would also invite potential buyers to feel the slave's ribs and examine their teeth to see if they would be fit for work. Both men and women were subjected to racial and sexual slurs and innuendos about their sexuality while on display for all. Shock and shame of their treatment was not an issue of concern to the buyers. The slave auction was often a public event in which the dominant class were 'entertained' by the 'antics' of the bewildered Africans on display (Wyatt, 1997: 14).

African slave women were denied respect, modesty and privacy at these very public slave auctions. Africans who acknowledged one another through their body language, or shared kinship ties or culture were intentionally separated during the selection process (Mannix, 1962; Brizan, 1984; Reynolds, 1985, etc.). Another variation to this public slave where auction was a method known as "the scramble" which George Brizan describes as a process that "...the slaves [were to be] herded into an enclosure and, at the sound of a bell, the buyers would rush in and scramble, whatever each person came up with was his" (Brizan, 1984: 84-85).

THE BREAKING-IN PROCESS

Brizan stated that the final stage in the "breaking- in process" involved the 18 hour workday training. Once purchased, slaves were taken to the plantation and prepared for field labour. The slave driver was the main agent in such preparation, and the 18 hour workday, was the main weapon in this final stage of the "breaking-in" or seasoning process.

Before long, the rigid organization of life on the estate and its oppressive discipline tended to destroy the individual personality of the African and created stereotypes of the Black slaves. The distinctive African identity gave place to plantation-type personalities: low self-esteem, self-hatred, inferiority complex, no cultural pride, contempt for others of one's kind, subservience, rejection of negroid physical features, and giving them the epithet of "ugly." The plantation and its physical and psychological violence recreated the African in its own image (Brizan, 1984: 85).

These oppressive actions he argued were attempts to destroy the African humanity, personality, and instilled fear and compliance in the process of enslavement (Brizan, 1984: 85). The Middle Passage, and the system of slavery also instituted a violent attack on African retention of cultural practices and customs in the New World. It altered the way of knowing and being in an African traditional sense. They were recreated, as it were, in slavery for a violent existence first, as sub-humans and after that as inferior beings.

Margaret Vernon (1997) defines this process as a means of educating the slaves on their new role as chattel or property, (they had been branded, had their names removed, and they were conditioned to accept their new sub-human treatment) they also had to "learn the ropes" of slave life. Usually, new slaves were placed with older, seasoned slaves who further indoctrinated slaves into a position of helplessness. The purpose of the "seasoning", Vernon argued was to ensure the death of their humanity by isolating them from their original heritage through brute force, manipulation, and the instilled notion of Black inferiority and sub-humanity (Vernon, 1997: 47).

Bernice Moreau (1996) discusses the impacts of all these processes that began the 'education of violence' against Africans. I can understand how difficult it would be for African women to be afraid of not understanding their masters language, instructions, and

culturally fit into the 'New World,' especially when their confusion led to physical abuse. These conditions became worse for those who attempted to escape and were recaptured because they did not know the terrain well, or could not out-run the hound dogs. Those who resisted were punished. When it was dangerous for the owner, overseer, or trader to beat the most rebellious slaves, the weakest or most docile slaves were selected for the punishment which was then enforced on them (Vernon, 1997; Moreau, 1996).

Conflicting messages informed slaves to ignore other slaves because they could be punished for communicating with them. On the other hand, their own perceived indiscretions could endanger another slave. Therefore, showing compassion or feelings of endearment towards a fellow slave, could signal potential violence for either of them. These factors of capture, middle passage, slave auctions, and the breaking-in process began an 'education of violence' for all slaves entering the New World, and would continue throughout their forced exploitation and enslavement in the New World. In combination with violence on the plantations, and within the institution of slavery, Black women and men learned new ways in which to communicate with each other. I believe that this conditioning or indoctrination trained the Africans to become compliant so that violence would not be used to control or overpower them.

THE PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ABUSE OF SLAVE WOMEN

Black female slave narratives along with Black female fiction offer some descriptions and analyze the acts of physical, sexual, emotional, cultural, spiritual etc forms of violence perpetuated against them as a social group during the period of slavery. Some of the literature written on the subject of slavery (Genovese, 1976; Mintz, 1976; Brizan, 1984, etc.)

describe 'an education of violence' process, but offers little or no analysis of the impact of this 'education of violence' on Black women's lives.

Physical violence was perpetuated against Black slave women on a large scale. It was both intense and frequent as it was for Black men. In this case, gender did not protect them from any extreme form of violence or abuse. Slave women were beaten, lashed and/or whipped if they didn't work fast enough, took a rest before completing tasks, conversed with other slaves, and for a variety of other reasons. Slaves who worked in the household of their owners were also physically abused with much more intensity by the mistress of the house. Sometimes they were observed to be "more crudely racist than their men" in relation to the treatment of house servants (Gaspar, 1996: 21-22). Physical abuse was seen as being warranted for slave women for the following reasons:

cooks who burned the bread and children who stole cookies or fell asleep while singing to the baby suffered all kinds of abuse, from jabs with pins to beatings that left them disfigured for life. For any one or all of these reasons, Black women might prefer field work to housework (Jones, 1985: 27).

Pregnant slaves were granted no reprieve in the sense of physical abuse in brutally being slapped, kicked, punched, or staked to the ground. If the pregnant slave was found guilty of an offence, for which punishment was death, she was permitted to live until she gave birth, and then was put to death. The punishment of death was meted out in cases where the slave was accused of the following crimes: theft; destruction of horses or cattle; wounding a white person; and "raising a hand against one of the children of her mistress" (Morrissey, 1989; Bush, 1990).

Female slaves were used as guinea pigs “...for physicians who were attempting to perfect gynecological surgeries during the slave era. For example, between 1845 and 1849, Anarcha, a slave, endured three hundred gynecological surgeries in a private hospital in the backyard of a physician who ultimately applied his techniques to wealthy white women” (Wyatt, 1985: 14-15).

One documented account made by a Black slave woman describes the punishment she received from the mistress of the house and her daughter when she ate a piece of candy off the bureau:

“Den ole Missus lif’ me up by de legs, an’ she stuck my haid under de bottom of her rocker leg a-pressin’ down on my haid. Nex’ thing I knew de ole Doctor was dere, an’ he was a-pushin’ an diggin’ at my face, but couldn’t do nothin’ wid it. Seem like dat rocker pressin’ on my young bones had crushed ‘em in de lef’ side. I ain’t never growed no mo’ teef on dat side. Ain’t never been able to chaw nothin’ good since. Been eatin’ liquid stews, an’ soup ever since dat day, an’ dat was eighty-six years ago” (Sterling, 1984:10).

Her punishment was severe in terms of the ‘offense,’ which would be considered normal for any eight or nine year old child to take candy left out. Her head was placed and held under the leg of a rocker by the daughter while the mistress rocked back and forth crushing one side of her skull. It is a testimony to her courage and strength that she actually survived.

Female slaves were stripped of clothing, lashed and whipped in the presence of other slaves (both males and females), as they served as an example to the others of what behaviour not to engage in. Female slaves would also be tied to a tree, or pinned to the ground, while the master, owner, overseer, etc. dealt out the punishment in lashes to their back and legs. The task of flogging was usually left to the Black slave drivers who were conditioned to look

down on the other slaves because of their elevated status (Bush, 1990). An example of being fearful of this type of violence also came from a slave woman's testimony:

She say, "For the love of God, you better larn it right, or Solomon will beat the breath out you body.' Old Man Solomon was the nigger driver." "De worstest whippin' I ever got was for playin' with a doll what belonged to one of marse's chillen..." (Sterling, 1984:8).

Having a male slave whip a slave woman must have caused extreme damage to her psyche. If the punishment was carried out by the owner, the mistress or any other member of the slave society, then it was somewhat more comprehensible, (in the sense, they were strangers) but when a male of her own group did it, she was given the message that all males and white women had the right to impose violence on her.

An extreme form of both physical and sexual abuse came from the account of Gayl Jones (1975) in her novel Corriegdora. The master in this case desired one married slave woman, so he had the husband shipped off to another activity off the plantation. When the woman rebuffed his sexual advances, and cut off his penis, he retaliated.

"...There were two alternatives, you either took one or you didn't. And if you didn't you had to suffer the consequences of not taking it. There was a woman over on the next plantation . The master shipped her husband out of bed and got in the bed with her and just as soon as he was getting ready to go in her she cut off his thing with a razor she had hid under the pillow and he bled to death, and then the next day they came and got her and her husband. They cut off her husband's penis and stuffed it in her mouth, and then they hanged her. They let him bleed to death. They made her watch and then they hanged her" (Jones, 1975: 67).

This example gave me an idea of the extent to which sexual violence predicted the life chances of both Black male and female slaves. Resistance was futile in the sense, that the slave's life was too easily expendable.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse, violence and exploitation were a few of the most prevalent forms of forced violence on Black slave women. In many ways forcing sex on a woman carries a types of shame that she can never explain. This experience impacts on her ability to resist this type of violence. The following are a few examples of the acts and the impacts of sexual violence.

Amidst sexual abuse of slave women, owners encouraged female slaves to form conjugal relationships with male slaves - sometimes by promises of clothing, food, or other incentives, and other times they were ordered to 'marry' (Amott, 1996: 148).

"My sister was given away when she was a girl. She told me and ma that they'd make her go out and lay on a table and two or three white men would have sex with her before they'd let her up. She was just a small girl. She died when she was still in her young days, still a girl" (Sterling, 1984: 25).

On the Blackshear place, they took all the fine looking boys and girls that was thirteen years old or older and put them in a big barn every Sunday and leave them there until Monday morning. Out of that came sixty babies (Sterling, 1984: 32).

...he took her [my mother] out of the field when she was still a child and put her to work in his whorehouse while she was a child. She was to go out or he would bring the men in and the money they gave her she was to turn over to him. There were other women he use like that. She was the pretty little one with the almond eyes and coffee-bean skin, his favorite. [Then it was my turn] he would take me hisself first and said he was breaking me in. Then he started bringing other men and they would give me money and I had to give it over to him (Jones, 1975: 10).

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

The pattern of controlling someone through their feelings, emotions and internal thought processes is the mark of emotional abuse. It made the slave feel that she was

worthless, scared to resist, make or demand change. It's characteristics can be found in verbally insulting, unreasonable demands, unpredictable responses, constant criticisms, and constant upheavals that, was all controlled by the abuser (White, 1994)

This psychological indoctrination was an essential ingredient to carry out mass domination of Africans during the period of slavery. Howard McGary calls this the “ defining mark of American chattel slavery. People who took this position most often claimed that psychological indoctrination lead to alienation and that this alienation was the mark of oppression during slavery” (McGary, 1992: 3). In Beloved, Toni Morrison's (1987) female character heard how her master was educating his nephews to see her as animal. This conversation had severe ramifications later on in the novel, when she murdered her child in order to free her from the institution of slavery. She describes this experience as follows:

Schoolteacher was standing over one of them with one hand behind his back. He licked a forefinger a couple of times and turned a few pages. Slow. I was about to turn around and keep on my way to where the muslin was, when I heard him say, “No, no. That's not the way. I told you to put her human characteristics on the left; her animal ones on the right. And don't forget to line them up” (Morrison, 1987: 193).

This experience effectively illustrates the mark of oppression, in that it demonstrates how Black slave women were set up to be alienated and isolated from their feelings, emotions and even themselves. They were assigned inferior and sub-human qualities as well as compared to animals. The internalization of this process signals the rejection of the dominant class of the Black women. This ‘mark of oppression’ (alienation) was supported by the forced loss of cultural traditions, rituals, family life, religion, and even names, which only added to the feelings of desolation and loss of self-respect (Akbar, 1984: 21).

The unpredictability of when the cruel treatment or punishment meted out by the master would take place, kept many slaves on the edge for fear they would bring abuse upon themselves. In time they began to blame themselves for the mistakes they made. These mistakes were used to humiliate, degrade, criticize or discount their own perspective of reality. Public ridicule and embarrassment meant that the slave community might alienate or isolate themselves away from the incident. Therefore, Black slave women's chances of communicating or sharing their stories were limited. In turn, they would start to set unrealistic expectations for themselves. Psychological abuse and threats ensured that they would be constantly at the mercy or the whims of their masters or mistresses and feel powerless to stop their victimization (McGary, 1992: 4).

In the case of the United States, one of the most significant laws passed during the period of slavery was the "Fugitive Slave Law" (1830s) for slaves who had escaped from the South to the North (where slavery was outlawed) and started a new life. This new law soon came back to haunt them. This law gave slave owners the right to go up North to search and hunt for their runaway slaves. There was no measure of security or sense of peace, since there were bounties placed on the slave's head for their return (Jacobs, 1861: 287).

ABUSED SLAVE WOMEN'S PSYCHE- A MOTHER'S TALE

Hine claims that the expression "Ar'nt I a woman?" laid bare the racialized configuration of gender under a system of class rule that compelled and expropriated women's physical labor and denied them legal right to their own bodies and sexuality, much less to the bodies to which they gave birth" (Hine, 1995: 7).

It is worth repeating that in all slave societies in the Western hemisphere the concept of “*partus sequitur ventrem*” was practiced. Since it meant that all children born to Black slave women followed the condition of their mothers, it caused many slave women immense grief. Putting a price tag on a child born to a slave woman guaranteed that she would be submissive in the hopes that she would keep her children as long as she could. In other cases, mothers would not form an attachment to their children because they did not want to be traumatized when they were taken away. It also meant that mothers could possess few dreams and hopes for their children since they would also be enslaved (McGary, 1992: 6).

Many women were denied the opportunity to mother their own children but were compelled to raise the master’s children into adulthood. The pain of being denied these opportunities are illustrated in the following narratives:

Humble *me*! Was I not already in the dust? But his threat lacerated my heart. I knew the law gave him power to fulfil it; for slaveholders have been cunning enough to enact that “the child shall follow the condition of the mother, not of the father; thus taking care that licentiousness shall not interfere with avarice (Jacobs, 1861: 117-118).

When Dr. Flint learned that I was again to be a mother, he was exasperated beyond measure...some months before, he had pitched me down stairs in a fit of passion; and the injury I received was so serious that I was unable to turn myself in bed for many days. He then said, “Linda, I swear by God I will never raise my hand against you again;” but I knew that he would forget his promise (Jacobs, 1861: 118).

When they told me my new-born babe was a girl, my heart was heavier than it had ever been before. Slavery is terrible for men; but it is far more terrible for women (Jacobs, 1861: 119).

When my baby was about to be christened, the former mistress of my father stepped up to me, and proposed to give it her Christian name. To this I added the surname of my father, who had himself no legal right to it; for my grandfather on the paternal side was a white

gentleman. **What tangled sins are the genealogies of slavery!** I loved my father; but it mortified me to be obliged to bestow his name on my children... She clasped a gold chain round my baby's neck. I thanked her for this kindness; but I did not like the emblem. I wanted no chain to be fastened on my daughter, not even if its links were of gold. How earnestly I prayed that she might never feel the weight of slavery's chain, whose iron entereth into the soul! (Jacobs, 1861: 121).

This final passage in Beloved (this story is loosely based on the Black slave named Margaret Gardener who killed her children) is the most potent imagery of the sacrifice that a Black slave mother made to save her daughter from a life of slavery. When she saw her former master approaching their house to reclaim her under the 'Fugitive Slave Law.' She ran to the barn with all her children to kill them:

That before Sethe could make her understand what it meant - what it took to drag the teeth of that saw under the little chin; to feel the baby blood pump like oil in her hands; to hold her face so her head would stay on; to squeeze her so she could absorb, still, the death spasms that shot through that adored body, plump and sweet with life - Beloved might leave. Leave before Sethe could make her realize that worse ... That anybody white could take your whole self for anything that came to mind. Not just work, kill, or maim you, but dirty you. Dirty you so bad you couldn't like yourself anymore. Dirty you so bad you forgot who you were and couldn't think it up... The best thing she was, was her children. Whites might dirty her all right, but not her best thing, her beautiful, magical best thing - the part of her that was clean... And no one, nobody on this earth, would list her daughter's characteristics on the animal side of the paper. No! Oh no! (Morrison, 1987: 251).

This example best illustrates the reality that Black slave women's psyche, sexuality and bodies were so brutalized that to kill her children would be better than living a life enslaved. Killing her child was the only alternative in a world where she would be unable to protect her daughter from the brutality and cruelty she had experienced.

IMAGES OF BLACK SLAVE WOMEN

The image that the slave society had of Sethe in Beloved mirrored the perception that she was an 'animal' with no feelings. All these images of Black slave women serve to denigrate and degrade Black women and Black motherhood. They serve to perpetuate Black women's silence. These images are problematic because I believe that Black women are likely to internalize and conceptualize their identities based on these processes that define the world we live in (Collins, 1991).

The white plantation mistress also shared in their partners' racist perceptions of Black slave women. The majority of them would not, or could not, acknowledge that they all shared a gender oppression. Black women were perceived by their counterparts as animalistic, savage, sub-human, etc. The more paternalistic mistresses referred to them as:

poor creatures," "wretched creatures," "the suffering females of their kind." In times of anger and revenge, those same white women referred to black slave women as "wenches," "libidinous whores," or "apt breeders." Thus, the stratification of slave women by skin colour and the so-called privileged position of the "fair skinned" among those same women was imposed upon the slave community (Gordon, 1989: 23).

Oppressive social relations of race, class, and gender have denied Black women the opportunity to escape one of the most pervasive stereotypical images of the mammy. The mammy is defined as the:

faithful, devoted domestic servant. [The] mammy is the ideal Black mother for she recognizes her place. She is paid next to nothing and yet cheerfully accepts her inferior status. But when she enters her own home, this same mammy is transformed into [another] image, the too-strong matriarch who raises weak sons and 'unnaturally superior' daughters. When she protests, she is labelled aggressive and non-

feminine, yet if she remains silent, she is rendered invisible (Collins, 1991: 166).

Black women were never seen as victims/survivors of rape, or even as women. They were seen by the dominant class as sexual commodities and objects. Therefore, the issue of mixed-race children only seemed to strengthened the perception that Black women were hypersexual beings not women capable of being raped. “The patriarchal construction of the cult of *true* womanhood made it imperative that white women and men view Black women as wanton whores and their offsprings as objects of jest” (Vaz, 1995: 5).

DEVALUATION OF BLACK WOMEN

Descriptive female slave narratives, Black women’s fiction and current discussions on the subject are used to make the links between their subjective experiences and the objective assessments of the correlative influences on the Black woman’s perception of her choice, definition of her social relations, and her self-image within the master-slave relationship. Moreover, every attempt is made to trace the presence the Black women’s devaluation in her relationships.

Jane Ollenburger (1993) suggests that Black women’s subordination under the system of slavery further contributed to her devalued status. Black women’s fertility was used as a means of controlling their lives, as well as the behaviours of enslaved men. Ollenburger (1993) cites the development of the Black woman’s devalued self in terms of their roles as producers and reproducers. Black women were forced through rape to reproduce for profit, and the perpetuation of slavery as an institution. Howard McGary (1992) cites Kenneth Stampp’s argument that cruelty was used as a method of breaking the Black woman’s will.

It reinforced her feelings of 'learned helplessness' within the slave community as she was unable to control the most intimate aspects of their lives.

The devaluation of the slave woman was reinforced daily in the cruelty used to break her spirit. In order for someone to devalue herself, a dominant mechanism was to make her believe that she was helpless to control even the most intimate aspects of her life. She was unable to choose her lover, own her children, or contribute to their development. Howard McGary states that:

As a consequence of the cruel behavior of slaveholders, a social etiquette of race relations developed which had as its sole purpose the social control of slaves. All of these actions were designed to make the slave "stand in fear" and to reinforce the position that slaves were chattel (McGary, 1992: 5).

The African slave woman was continually indoctrinated with messages aimed at her devaluation. The events that led to her capture, and her eventual enslavement, as well as the conditions she lived under during slavery all constructed a negative image of who the Black woman was. Therefore, her introduction to European patriarchal gender division of labour was simply an added burden for her to bear. At the discretion of the dominant master class, the Black woman was forced to work in the fields alongside Black males, labouring hard at activities that were considered 'man's' work, yet she was degraded as being unfeminine. Even the lifting of their skirts to facilitate their work in the fields was interpreted as their desire to exhibit themselves to men. This contributed to the belief that they (Black women) were hypersexual beings (Wyatt, 1985: 14)

The master also decided who would get the higher positions of status of artisans (usually only Black male slaves). Thus, positions of power and authority went only to men.

This meant that opportunities for freedom through escape or working to buy oneself, was a choice that Black slave women had little or no access to. Her means of escape seemed to be influenced solely by the discretion of the master (Gaspar, 1996: 22).

The only way a Black slave woman achieved a significant status was attached to household/domestic duties. Her duties ranged from wetnurse (breastfeeding the master's child, nanny (referred to as mammy), cook, laundress, etc., or a combination of all. This put her directly in the master's house where she was susceptible to sexual advances, assault, and rape on a daily basis. She was also under the watchful and often abusive hand of the mistress of the house, who could be just as abusive as her husband. Issues of race and gender was arbitrarily used to discriminate against her to prove that she had no control over herself or her life. Even the traditionally European defined feminine and appropriate female behaviour role of motherhood/wife was denied the Black slave woman. Like herself, her children were also chattel (property) to be bought and sold if she or they didn't tow the line assigned to them (Gaspar, 1996: 113).

SOURCES OF RESISTANCE

Spirituality/Black Community

Africans' traditional ways of practicing their spirituality was forbidden by law, and at the beginning of slavery, Christianity was also forbidden. When it was perceived that Christianity would aid in the indoctrination, and increase profits, slaves were encouraged to pursue a more Judeo-Christian religion. They were taught by an oppressive structure that their masters "were brothers in Christ" (Genovese, 1976). Genovese contends that a twisted interpretation of the Bible encouraged slaves to not pass judgement on their masters.

Judgement was reserved as the sole responsibility of God and the white man. This kind of spirituality dictated that the slaves be submissive and obedient in their subjugation (Genovese, 1976). I believe that these issues of submissiveness present in Black women and their current internalization of these feelings have their origins in the violent and oppressive slave experience. Scriptures in the Bible were used to justify the cruel punishment and treatment of dark-skin people. Na'kim Abkar says that:

Color-consciousness is the unnatural assignment of mental or moral traits based upon physical skin color. These traits can be either positive or negative, as long as the basis is assumed to be in the skin color. This led to the justification of slavery as a divinely authorized activity. The African's black skin was considered as evidence for his cursed state to serve as a slave. Some obscure Bible allegory regarding the "curse to Ham" was used to justify the inhuman treatment of the African who was wrongly assumed to be descendant of Ham (Akbar, 1984: 31).

In tracing Black people's historical roots of an 'education of violence', I believe that we still witness this legacy in the current demonstration of violence in Black women's intimate relationships.

Although, Africans were forbidden to practice their own spirituality, ceremonies and rituals, their indoctrination within Christianity was also their source of resistance. They were able to sing hymns to get through the monotonous tasks and the brutality of slave life on a daily basis. It was their devotion to these beliefs, and convictions in a superior being, that gave them hope to endure the conditions they were forced to bear. "The church has held a predominant place in Black people's lives. It was a deep, abiding faith in a "greater good" and a "higher power" that gave slave families their spiritual strength and unity" (White, 1994: 70-71).

The church has performed many functions throughout Black history, for example, it was part of the underground railroad during slavery and provided formal education for children when such an education was unavailable from any other source. The church also served the function of being a meeting place, where news could be passed around, business deals made and strength and support could be given without fear of repercussions (Logan, 1996: 183).

The strength and support of the church by the Black community can be attributed to the innate fact that it was one of the few institutions that was built, financed, and controlled primarily by Blacks. Where the larger society denied leadership positions to Blacks (usually Black men) the church offered that freedom. The church in the Black community also served the function of being the transmitter of the cultural history of Blacks. It is also the place where individual, family, and cultural identity were taught and learned (Logan, 1996: 183). Logan reiterates that the emergence of a Black culture could be seen as having a positive impact on the empowerment of Blacks after slavery. When describing culture she says:

Essentially, different cultures value common elements within a particular context, which includes region, polity, social class, age, gender, sex, language, and religion. This stream of life is also expressed in music, family patterns, language, love, religion, and numerous other ways of being in the world. Black culture refers to the characteristic lifeways of a people - the way they think, feel, and behave. As indicated earlier, empowerment is essentially an internal process that manifests outwardly. It implies a "goodness of fit" between individual internal resources and external environmental resources (Logan, 1996: 197, 200)

The church for some Black women was also the only place where their identity wasn't obscured by racist and sexist imagery (White, 1994: 70-71).

Another site of resistance in the context of slavery was the survival of the extended family. Issues of importance such as single mothers, and out-of-wedlock children were not stigmatized in the slave communities. For the slave owners, these social phenomena were welcomed because it was seen as increasing their wealth. For slave communities the continued tradition of African extended-family systems, even with “fictive” or chosen kin, became a matter of survival for the Black culture. Relations, friendships, ‘psuedo-familial’ bonds were created despite the violent separation of families by the dominant class. These extended-family relations provided a community regardless of country or cultural origin (Amott, 1996: 148-149).

BLACK WOMEN AFTER SLAVERY

The unavailability of Caribbean and Canadian literature on the conditions of Black women after the Emancipation (1834) prompted my utilization of American materials. I can only infer that the issues and conditions, although different, were similar in ways that the oppressive construction of race, class and gender relations were perpetuated against Black women.

After Emancipation, the only opportunities available to freed Black slaves from the South were sharecropping and tenant farming. While European women were working towards and fighting for family wages, the right to work and vote Black women were attempting to withdraw from the labour-intensive workforce. They wanted to emulate the dominant class (the ideal image they had witnessed for centuries) by having the Black male as the primary breadwinner. Of course, this mass exodus of Black women from the labour market worried the dominant class, as they felt they would be losing a large portion of their

profits from their (Black women's) labour. This prompted some landowners to charge rent to the non-working spouses of Black male ex-slaves, who were farming or sharecropping their land (Mullings, 1997: 45).

The withdrawal of Black women from the labour market was only possible for the wives of able-bodied husbands or partners. Unfortunately, Black men could rarely earn a sufficient wage to support a family, especially with a wife not in the labour force. Therefore, Black women were forced to continue working for wages (Amott, 1996: 165). However, women who were sole parents or supporters of their families had to take work when and wherever it was offered (Jones, 1985: 58).

When freed Black women opted to stay at home, employers/landowners could not hide their disgust. They viewed these women who tried to 'play the lady' as lazy.

To apply the term ladylike to a Black woman was apparently the height of sarcasm; by socially prescribed definition, Black women could never become "ladies", though they might display pretensions in that direction. The term itself had predictable racial and class connotations. White ladies remained cloistered at home, fulfilling their marriage vows of motherhood and genteel domesticity. But Black housewives appeared "most lazy", they stayed "out of the fields, doing nothing", demanding that their husbands "support them in idleness" (Jones, 1985: 59).

This shift to wage labour essentially meant that Blacks were caught between self-employment and "semi-feudal" conditions. Under these conditions, Black women experienced an awesome burden as discriminatory practices against Blacks were continued. Under these 'semi-feudal' conditions the land owner could evict families on short notice and without just cause. In her book, The Third Life of Grange Copeland, Alice Walker (1970) depicts the harsh realities of sharecropping and the destructive impacts of violence on Black

women in society as well as in their intimate relationships. Mem's husband felt better when his wife had no hopes or expectations because he perceived it as her expectations, so he should be the one to provide it for her,

each time she stepped into a new place, with its new, and usually bigger rat holes, she wept. Each time she had to clean cow manure out of a room to make it habitable for her children, she looked as if she had been dealt a death blow...Strangely, Brownfield could bear her hatred less than her desolation. In fact, he rather enjoyed her desolation because in it she had no hopes. She was weak, totally without view, without a sky. He was annoyed when she despised him because out of her hatred she fought back, with words, never with blows, and always for the children. But coming from her, even words disrupted the harmony of despair in which they lived (Walker, 1970: 59).

The powerlessness that Blacks (both women and men) felt came from their inability to own property, to set down roots, and from consistently being dependent on the dominant society. Rent and tithes had to be paid to the land owner out of the income for harvesting the crops, or farming the land, which was not sufficient enough to support the family or to buy property. This labour was based on the premise of family production. This meant that the whole family needed to be involved in the process of bringing the crop in for harvest. Therefore, this had a negative impact on trying to get the children of these families educated (Amott, 1996; Mullings 1997).

For Blacks trying to escape the violent conditions and economic poverty in the South, migrating to the North offered little reprieve. The only time migration was fruitful was during labour shortages connected to the war which allowed Black women to make inroads in the factories and office work (Amott 1996; Mullings, 1997).

After the emancipation it appeared to the white dominant sector that the conditions for Black women had improved and they could practice relative autonomy, as they now had opportunity to own property, make contracts, earn wages, and choose their spouses and housing. On the contrary, restrictions were still staunchly upheld though legally sanctioned inequalities such as:

Laws prevented them from starting schools or working as clerks or salesmen, restricted their ability to travel, and forced them to have a white guardian. Miscegenation, marriage between whites and Blacks, was illegal in most states, as was marriage between enslaved and free Blacks. Free Americans were denied the right to self-defense against whites and could not testify against whites. Free Blacks were also forced to pay special taxes (Amott, 1996: 149).

Freedom still came at a significant cost to Blacks who experienced discrimination and segregation in housing, schools, (when they could attend - if not working) labour market, etc. Dominant culture expressed jealousy and hostility in sharing their work environments with Blacks, thus, they were able to retain a monopoly on better employment opportunities. Therefore, access to the social and material conditions were still absent from Black lives. Their exclusion was upheld through threats, violence, expulsion, racial riots, etc. For Blacks trying to start their own businesses, these enterprises were burned to the ground. Neither did freedom exempt blacks from strict segregation both in housing and in the labor market (Amott, 1996: 149).

The Emancipation of the slaves granted few Black women respite from the violent conditions of slavery since they still wielded no real discernible power or control over their lives. They were still at the mercy of white landowners or dominant class members. Most Black women were still compelled to work for wages in the domestic sphere (for example,

work as servants, laundresses, or seamstresses) on behalf of the dominant class. Law and discriminatory practices barred them from entering other fields or occupations. Their subjugation still continued under the forceful hands of their many oppressors. In The Colour Purple, Alice Walker (1982) illustrates the lack of freedom Black women still had after Emancipation. When an upper class white woman asked Sophia to take care of her children, Sophia declines. Unfortunately, the woman's husband didn't like her response and proceeds to physically assault her along with the help of the police.

She say to Sofia, All your children so clean, she say, would you like to work for me, be my maid? Sofia say, Hell no. She say, what you say? Sofia say, hell no. Mayor look at Sofia, push his wife out the way. Stick out his chest. Girl, what you say to Miss Millie? Sofia say, I say, Hell no. He slap her. Sofia knock the man down. The polices come, start slinging the children off the mayor, bang they heads together. Sofia really start to fight. They drag her to the ground. They beat Sofia (Walker, 1982: 83).

After their Emancipation, many Black women reported that they were being subjected to rape, sexual advances from strangers, their employers, sons of their employers, etc. Legal actions or punishment for these perpetrators was never sought. Many Black men who tried to stand up for their wives were also subjected to great acts of cruelty such as hanging, castration, severe beatings, or they simply disappeared, etc. (Jones, 1985; Amott, 1996; Mullings, 1997).

Through this brief discussion of life after Emancipation, we are able to witness that Black women were still violently oppressed physically, emotionally, and spiritually in terms of their restricted access to the material and social resources through the social construction of race, class and gender. I support Leith Mullings (1997) claim that:

Powerful ideas of race, class, and gender are central to social policies, which by imposing constraints on reproduction according to race and class, replicate and reinforce structural inequality. Public policies regarding child care, women's work and compensation, rationalized by notions about appropriate gender roles, promote the male-headed nuclear family by reinforcing the dependence on women. For the working class, and increasingly for middle-stratum women who must work, these policies make their lives difficult (Mullings, 1997: 96).

Again, it is important to reiterate that both systems of slavery and sharecropping did not operate within a vacuum. They both existed as part of a larger context in which a capitalistic mode of production was considered superior to all forms of labour. The dominant ideology still maintained control though legally sanctioned support for private ownership. Male domination in the home can be seen in relation to other factors of race, class and gender on a continuum that sanctions his ownership and exploitation of Black women. The matrix of domination continues (Hine, 1995: 294).

In Alice Walker's (1970) The Third Life of Grange Copeland, the male character, Brownfield explains to his daughter, how he sees her in relation to himself. In this short passage, he also gives some indication of his reasoning for abusing her mother, herself and her sisters, as well as the murder of his wife as they were nothing more than his property. He yells at her:

"You belongs to me, just like my chickens or my hogs," he said "Tell that to your precious grandpa. Tell him he can't keep you; and before I let him I'll see you both in hell!"

"You said you loved me," she said, crying. "If you love me, leave me alone!"

"No," he said, pushing her away. "I can't do that. I'm a man. And a man's got to have something of his own!" (Walker, 1970: 220).

THE CONTINUED DEVALUATION OF BLACK WOMEN

Upon reading Calvin Hernton's Sex and Racism in America, I feel that his arguments still perpetuate violence against Black women. However, I was able to gain a sense of how some Black men's rationalization and internalization of racism and sexism can translate into violence. Hernton's analysis (from a Black male perspective) attempts to link the conditions of slavery to the Black woman's current devaluation of herself. His logic, however, duplicates the dominant image of the Black woman as inferior, animalistic and sub-human. His objectification of the Black woman is reminiscent of the continued denigration and degradation of her womanhood. He states:

Being torn from the sexual restraints of her native culture (Africa) and universally forced to behave like a "naked savage", the relatively restrained African woman was transformed sexually into a beast. Ultimately, after experiencing the ceaseless sexual immorality of the white South, the Negro woman became "promiscuous and loose," and could be "had for the taking." Indeed, she came to look upon herself as the South viewed and treated her, for she had no other morality by which to shape her womanhood, she had no womanhood so far as the white South was concerned... (Hernton, 1965: 124-125)

Furthermore, his arguments support a perspective that Black women should not be respected for their surviving the horrendous conditions in which they lived in slavery. His support of the dominant ideal of womanhood that Black women were denied displays a self-hatred that he manages to propel onto Black women. I contend that Black women were still judged in relation to this ideal which objectified them through their sexuality as if that were their only significant characteristic. For those who have been defined as 'others', their interactions with one another have been constructed, based on a narrowly envisioned standard to which we had no input. Its destructiveness forced Black people to operate between two

responses, absolute denial of our problems and the complete rejection of each other. Unfortunately, when either response was chosen, it meant that we still did not talk with one another. As a result, we spewed hate at each other. Evidence of this can be found again in Calvin Hernton's (1965) assessment of Black women's choice of self-reliance. He sees it as parallel to her sexuality and dependence on a male. He reflects:

The negro woman, then, is becoming economically self-sufficient. And this means, among other things, she is getting in a position where she, rather than the man, can do the choosing when it comes to what kind of man she is going to take for a husband or a lover. Of course, it is no mystery why society is now tending to accept the Black woman more readily than the Black male. First of all, the negro woman, like the white woman, does not represent to the white world as much of an aggressor against the present power structure as does the negro man... [if] the negro woman should marry a rich white man's son (or any white man), the power still remains in the hands of the white man. Not so, if negro males start marrying the bosses' daughters (Hernton, 1965: 167).

I contend that given the destructiveness of these images, it would be hard for Black men to ignore their potency in terms of aspiring to share that male privilege. Paula Giddings (1984) states that "historically, the stereotype of the sexually potent Black male was largely based on that thinking, of the promiscuous Black female. He had to be potent, the thinking went, to satisfy such hot-natured women" (Giddings, 1984: 31). Why wouldn't he want to control the Black woman's sexuality and spirit. That hunger for this expression of power was an awesome initiative to prove his masculinity. For in all our discussions of masculinity, this definition was not attached to the Black man, for if a Black woman did not represent the epitome of femininity, how did the Black man exemplify his masculinity/manhood. The most accessible avenue was through violence, thus the Black woman was easily the most attainable target.

Hernton's assertions appear to explain from a Black male perspective, why the Black woman needed to be rejected. The part of 'man' that was perceived as a weakness, needed to be controlled, this ideal 'femininity' was 'absent' from the Black woman. This exercise was defeatist, yet I knew that it existed. Paula Giddings (1984) reiterates this point when she states:

It is interesting to note that these Black men seemed to understand that their attitudes were at least as affected by the indoctrination of white values as by anything else. Yet they, and others, continued to rationalize their compulsions by projecting inadequacies on Black women...[This] lack of Black "femininity" was an often-used rationale ...In Soul on Ice, Cleaver used the term subfeminine (Giddings, 1984: 321).

I believe that a Black woman could be verbally and physically abused because she lacked these feminine qualities that the dominant culture 'possessed' because she acted in the only way she has been allowed to act, (strong, self-reliant, assertive) yet she was still abused. On the other hand, if she aspires to possess the ideal qualities of the dominant class, she is punished for hating herself as well. Being constructed in ways benign to us, forces us to achieve the ideal through cosmetics; lightening our skin, straightening our hair, dressing the part and altering our personalities (assimilation). These alterations, however, do not guarantee that we will not be abused. There are no alternatives, for in making either decision we are abused for trying to be who we need to be.

Living between the contradictions of who we are and who we should be is a tiring and self-destructive process. Being asked to be weak is not in our nature, historically we had seen our children sold, our partners beaten, put to death, and we had been economically, physically and sexually violently abused by the dominant master class along with our partners. We have

been educated to grin and bear it, to work hard to overcome our deficiencies, yet being seen as self-reliant and independent is perceived as being aggressive towards the male ego. As we were and are continuously externally defined, our wills can be broken and resistance made futile.

This lack of resistance Paula Giddings (1984) argues could be attributed to the internalized racism and sexism that abused Black women felt. Black women also felt that they played a role in buffering the disadvantages that Black men were subjected to. In fact, they also believed the dominant gender ideology that told them that Black men were at a greater disadvantage than they were. Therefore, they felt that it was their duty to absorb Black men's 'justifiable' anger and rage. Maybe, she reasoned, she could change her behaviour to accommodate his feelings of masculinity. Thus, she remained focused on the abuser's needs (Giddings, 1984; 324).

VIOLENCE IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS AFTER THE EMANCIPATION

Freedom from slavery did not signal our Emancipation from violence. As we moved away from a slave economy, the violence that Black women experienced on the plantation continued to be replicated in the street, the workplace, and in our homes. I contend that Black men brought these ideas of dominance and control into the household. They needed to define their masculinity and perceived any questions of their ideas as an attack on their manhood which caused them to strike back at Black women. In the following passage from The Third Life of Grange Copeland, Brownfield perceives his wife's signing of a lease on a new house (she made a downpayment using her own earnings) as an attack on his manhood. He yells at her:

"You *signed* the lease?" He was furious. He could not, even after she'd tried to teach him, to read or write. It had gone in with the courting and out with the marriage. "I ought to chop your goddam fingers off!"

"I'm real sorry about it," said Mem, whose decision to let him be man of the house for nine years had cost her and him nine years of unrelenting misery....."I just done got sick and tired of being dragged around from dump to dump. Traded off by white folks like I'm a piece of machinery."

"You don't surely think that I intends to move to town," Brownfield said slowly, turning his back as if he were about to fall off to sleep. He smiled at the wall. "I'm a man...I may not be able to read and write but I'm still the man that wears the pants in this outfit!"... (Walker, 1970: 86-87).

By identifying with the dominant class in the need to gain power and control over their 'subordinates,' Black men became complicit in reviving the master's role in their own domain (the household). As observers we emulated the traits and characteristics that were displayed to us, especially when we had been told generation after generation that our way was wrong. Therefore, the kidnapped Africans and their offspring were indoctrinated with this 'education of violence' and over time, these beliefs became embedded within our interactions with one another. Toni Morrison (1970) articulated this appropriation of our master's 'education of violence.' She states:

We in this colony took as our own the most dramatic, and the most obvious, of our white masters' characteristics, which were, of course, their worst. In retaining the identity of our race, we held fast to those characteristics most gratifying to sustain and least troublesome to maintain. Consequently we were not royal but snobbish, not aristocratic but class-conscious; we believed authority was cruelty to our inferiors, and education was being at school. We mistook violence for passion, indolence for leisure, and thought recklessness was freedom. We raised our children and reared our crops; we let

infants grow, and property develop. Our manhood was defined by acquisitions... (Morrison, 1970:140).

In The Third Life of Grange Copeland (1970) Brownfield continued to verbally abuse his wife in an attempt to indoctrinate her with feelings of hopelessness and hate in herself and her ability to escape him. However, within this exchange his wife challenges him to see the impact of his violence on her. He, then responds with an explanation of why he abuses her.

“You goddam wrankly faced Black nigger slut!” Brownfield said, besise himself. “You say one more word, just one more little goddam peep and I’ll cut your goddam throat!”

“Woman ugly as you ought to call a man Mister, you been telling me since you beat the ugly into me!” His wife said, and moaned.

“Mem, he whined, assuming weakness from her altered face, “you know how hard it is to be a Black man down here.” Tears and blood and vomit ran together down his shaking legs. “You knows I never wanted to be nothing but a man! Mem, baby the white folks just don’t let nobody feel like doing right.” “Lawd, Mem, you knows how hard I try to do the right thing. I don’t make much money, you know that. And the white folks don’t give us no decent houses to live in, you knows that. What can a man do? (Walker, 1970: 95).

In Zora Neale Hurston’s (1937) Their Eyes Were Watching God, Janie’s grandmother tries to caution and educate her on what the traditional role of the Black woman had been historically. She offers her analysis of how she defines the violence in the intimate relationships of Black women. She explains:

....de white man is de ruler of everything as fur as Ah been able tuh find out. Maybe it’s some place way off in de ocean where de black man is in power, but we don’t know nothin’ but what we see. So de white man throw down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he have to, but he don’t tote it. He hand it to his womenfolks. De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see (Hurston, 1937: 14).

Again, in Their Eyes Were Watching God, the author illustrates the process by which the Black man has been conditioned and socialized to see Black woman as property and as an object in terms of her sexuality and femininity. Tea Cake perceives the potential interest of another man in Janie as a threat to his property. It is interesting to note that he beats her and does not pick a fight with the man himself. It appears that he wants Janie to remember that she is his property.

Before the week was over he had whipped Janie. Not because her behavior justified his jealousy, but it relieved that awful fear inside him. Being able to whip her reassured him in possession. He just slapped her around a bit to show he was boss. "Uh person can see every place you hit her. Ah bet she never raised her hand tuh hit yuh back, neither. Take some uh dese ol' rusty black women and dey would fight yuh all night long and next day nobody couldn't tell you ever hit 'em. Dat's de reason Ah done quit beatin' mah woman. You can't make no mark on 'em at all. Lawd! Wouldn't Ah love tuh whip uh tender woman lak Janie! Ah bet she don't even holler. She jus' cries, eh Tea Cake?" (Hurstons, 1937: 140-141).

RESEARCH ON CURRENT BLACK HETEROSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Much of the literature written before the 1980s pathologizes Black women. Daniel Moynihan's 1965 report argued that due to the "number of female-headed families, divorce rates, percentage of families on aid to families with dependent children, illegitimacy rates and juvenile crime/delinquency statistics, the Black family was an inadequate pathological and dysfunctional social institution" (Nobles, 1984: 81). Furthermore, other researchers (Clark, 1965; Etzkowitz, 1965; Jensen, 1968, etc as cited by Nobles, 1984) all suggests that Black family breakdowns were due to the Black woman's super masculine characteristics; lack of sexual morals; and her inadequate socialization of her children; etc. Black women were also accused of emasculating Black men as well as their sons and de-feminizing their daughters

(Nobles, 1984). bell hooks tries to explain this issue within the context of the society we live

in. She offered the following rationalization:

Living in a sexist society, where mothers are often blamed for any problem that arises with children, it makes sense that black mothers have often felt the need to assert control over their children in ways that are oppressive and dominating. How else can they “prove” to outside onlookers that they are good parents? The desire, of course, is to be beyond reproach (hooks, 1993: 35).

Rogers-Rose (1985) and Nobles (1984) both state that social science researchers presented biased research data which used racist stereotypes and definitions to approach and analyze their data. The bias in the research on violence in the intimate relationships of Black women was typically constructed in problematic ways. Hampton argues that:

the issue of ethnicity [is dealt with] in one of three ways: by failing to mention the race of the women included (Flynn, 1977; Roy, 1982), by acknowledging that only European-American women are included (Bowker, 1984; Steinmetz, 1977), or by including some women of other ethnic groups but not in proportions comparable to their numbers in the national population (Hofeller, 1982; Walker, 1984) (Hampton, 1987: 91).

Nobles defines this process of introducing bias in the research as ‘scientific colonialism’ which refers to a “knowing [that] is distorted through the intrusion of political power and force in the scientific activity. That is the relationship between scientist and subject was governed by the political power the scientist possessed in the society” (Nobles, 1984: 68).

However, Nobles (1984) cautions us to be aware of ways in which Black people’s realities became constructed for them. Dominant ideology was also embedded in the research that was used to influence social work intervention, practice and policy. Thus, it was

imperative that as a researcher and as a social work practitioner, I became aware of the bias that influences research on the Black community Nobles states that by being aware of this bias we (as researchers) are in a better position to get:

... an accurate understanding of a particular group's belief system that the social scientist is able to accurately interpret the outcomes of that particular group's human process ... [We need to avoid the following traps] (1) Unsophisticated Falsification; (2) Integrated Modificationism; (3) Conceptual Incarceration. Unsophisticated falsification is a method where facts, information and ideas are simply destroyed and or suppressed. Unsophisticated falsification essentially, a raw lie. Integrated Modificationism is a method where original facts, information and ideas are distorted, falsified or modified in order to fabricate "new facts and ideas." Conceptual Incarceration is a method wherein the knower is given a set of "concepts" to engage in the process of knowing. The concepts themselves, however, inhibit the process of knowing and the knower becomes a prisoner in prison of alien ideas (Nobles, 1984: 68).

He argues that this process encouraged social science researchers to lie, misrepresent data or facts and feed participants concepts that were alien to their ways of understanding, which all managed to bias the research (Nobles, 1984). Also, follows an established pattern of reconstructing realities of Blacks based on racist assumptions and stereotypes.

Research on this subject, violence in Black couples' intimate relationships, differ in their analysis based on the perspective and gender of the researcher. Males (Hampton, 1987; Staples, 1994) tend to analyze violence from a class perspective which sees the issue as one of class. "One research approach which might be used to identify some of the factors would be to focus upon the structural factors such as the denial of job entry, job discrimination, underemployment and social exclusion in general. The 'carry home' effects of these deprivations and indignities are likely to have addictive consequences for violent behaviour among Black couples" (Staples, 1994: 110).

MALE PERSPECTIVE

When Robert Staples, attempted to examine the reasons behind violence in intimate relationships of Black women, he focused on class issues. His findings indicate that blue collar workers have a tendency to be more violent than white collar workers. The findings also indicate, that when the male had a lower occupational or income status than his partner, and had a history of violence in his childhood, etc. Other factors such as alcohol and drug addictions were also significant in his research findings (Staples, 1994: 106).

The prevalence of violence was found to be associated with a lack of constructive friendship ties in the community which was supposed to have alleviate stress. Another significant finding was that Black women were more likely to hit their partners back in comparison with white women (Staples, 1994: 108-109).

Robert Hampton (1987) discusses the impact of racial discrimination on the prevalence of violence in Black couples intimate relationships. He found that the failure of Black men to achieve the traditional breadwinner roles increased their feelings of impotence. As a male, he was taught to internalize these failures and express them in an alternative manner (violence) directed towards his partner. "The extent that African-American males internalize mainstream standards for appropriate masculine roles (the focus of some debate), they are confronted with the conflict between what they are and what they have been led to believe they should be" (Hampton, 1987: 96).

He observes that the alternative ways in which Black men expressed their masculinity are as follows: "hypersexuality, concern with expressive styles of speech, dress, and appearance, and toughness or violence" (Hampton, 1987: 97).

My problem with these approaches lie in the values they assign to income, define stress and environmental factors which do not include race or gender analyses along with class. If these male social science researchers use variables that are based on meanings derived from an dominant definition of what these terms mean, then they fall into the existing trap of missing the issues of importance to Black couples.

FEMALE PERSPECTIVE

Black female researchers (Hine et al., 1995; hooks, 1993; Davis, 1983) see violence framed within the context of the social relationship between Black men and women. The Black man's reaction to this had been, if he was powerless to stop what happened in society, he would at least control what happened in his home (White, 1984: 24). Audre Lorde further argues that these shared experiences with Black men and the fear of losing family have continuity conditioned Black women to ignore and endure violence perpetuated against them by their partners.

Because of the continuous battle against racial erasure that black men and women share, some Black women still refuse to recognize that we are also oppressed as women and that sexual hostility against Black women is practiced not only by white racist society but implemented wit in our Black communities as well" (Lorde, 1984: 119-120).

Black women's failure to recognize this placed them in a precarious situation as they fear that fighting against sexism will be interpreted as being anti-Black. However, the misogynist perceptions held by Black men towards Black women continues to threaten the identity of Black women as a whole (Lorde, 1984: 120).

Women of colour, including Blacks in Canada, were vulnerable to abuse because they were faced with sexism on both levels, individual and institutional (Canadian Panel on

Violence Against Women (CPVAW), 1993). It appears that mainstream society often uses the variable of culture as an excuse to ignore the issues and concerns of Black women.

Racism, cloaked in the more respectable mantle of 'cultural consideration,' results in stereotypes about violence being a part of a people. This can be an excuse for non-intervention within the legal system and other services based on the misinformed fear of interfering with the practices of another culture (CPVAW, 1993: 80).

Darlene Clarke Hine (1987) found that racial and sexual stereotypes that were usually utilized to extrapolate indifferent sexual norms were applied to Black women, especially in cases of rape. I also assume that this meant that they were less credible witnesses regarding the rape. She also found that it was hard to instigate any real comprehensive analysis on the violence perpetuated against Black women because of the lack of research on the subject. "However, historical evidence suggests that wife and child abuse by Black husbands was prevalent under both slavery and sharecropping" (Hine, 1987: 290).

Compared to the brutal treatment received by Black women when they reach out for help, staying in the relationship may remain the most viable option. In a way at least she could anticipate and predict the violence she receives in the home better than outside her home. Glenda Simms argues that:

Black women and other racial minorities have long perceived elements in police forces and social services as dangerous to their communities. They know, that by calling the police, they risk getting their men maimed, psychologically humiliated and often times killed. Systemic racism in Canadian society and in the institutions of justice place racial minority women between a rock and hard place. [The author continues] We have forced them to choose between their loyalty to community and their personal safety. These women will continue to choose silence until our social and justice institutions deal with racism and sexism (Glenda Simms as cited by CPVAW, 1993: 81).

Black women witness Black men receive lighter sentences when they rape and abuse Black women, as compared to their abuse of the white women, this may have something to do with white males, exertion of control over their perceived property. For centuries, Black women, have been raped, brutalized, and murdered by men, and have yet to receive justice. It is not outside our realm of reality to believe that we will begin getting it now. Once again, Hine reminds us that:

For example, inadequate legal protection of Black rape victims is reflected in the fact that "from emancipation through more than two-thirds of the twentieth century, no Southern white male was convicted of raping or attempting to rape a Black woman" despite knowledge that this crime was widespread. Given the complacency of the white legal system toward this violence and toward the flagrant lynching of Blacks - female and male - it is not surprising that the Black community placed a much greater emphasis on racism than sexism (Hine et al., 1995: 289).

Amina Mama found a reluctance on behalf of the Black community in Britain where her study was conducted to challenge the abuse of Black women. Instead, Black women chose to focus on police brutality as the pressing issue because it was administered by a racist British state. As a result, they did not focus on what was happening to them in their communities or their own homes because there were greater emphases on the racism and classism of the state (Mama, 1989:84).

Furthermore, Black feminist researchers and authors had made the connection between the historical roots of slavery and the current experience of violence in intimate relationships of Black women. hooks (1993) argues that it was hard for Black people to love one another due to their internalized racism and self-hate. She asserts that "systems of domination exploit folks best when they deprive us of our capacity to experience our own

agency and alter our ability to care and to love ourselves and others” (hooks, 1993: 130).

hooks argues that slavery had instilled a belief in Black women to internalize our neglect of our bodies. She notes that this inability to care for ourselves is derived from the fact that we are the children of slaves, educated to care for others before ourselves (hooks, 1993: 88).

These caregiving skills accumulated in our neglect to realize what physical and emotional toll the abuse of our bodies has had on our emotional abilities and spirituality. We have been socialized to see images of abuse and love simultaneously, to an extent that we are unable to separate the impacts of either on our lives. They become interchangeable in our minds. We have been conditioned to understand our identification and ability to love based on a system of domination, which sought to break our will. An education of violence has conditioned Black people to suffer in silence, since drawing attention to one’s suffering has usually resulted in our continued abuse. hooks also defines that “most abuse was life-threatening, whether it wounded our bodies or our psyches. Where love was, there was no disabling, disempowering, or life-destroying abuse” (hooks, 1993: 129-130).

Therefore, after reading the literature I find that it is not difficult for us, as Black women to gravitate towards ways of loving that we are familiar with and understand. In summation, hooks reminds of the historical implications of slavery on Black couples relationships by reiterating when she states:

No wonder then that many Black folks established domestic households that mirrored the brutal arrangements they had known in slavery. They created domestic spaces where there were tensions around power, tensions that often led Black men to severely whip Black women, to punish them for perceived wrongdoing...Black people were using the same harsh and brutal methods against one

another that had been used by white slave owners against them when they were enslaved. We know that life was not easy for the newly manumitted Black slaves. We know that slavery's end did not mean that black people who were suddenly free to love, now knew the way to love one another well (hooks, 1993: 131-132).

CHAPTER 5 - UNITY

"Powerful people never educate you in how to take their power away from them, and their schools are not going to give you the kind of education you need. You have to make or take it. When you get the kind of education you need, you will discover the green fields of Africa and you won't have to go to Africa to improve Africa. Africa is where you are. You start with your community and with yourself and then you will begin to see and understand revolutionary change" (Clarke, 1993: 108). My Africa begins with myself and the Black man.

CHAPTER FIVE - SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study, is an attempt to uncover the connection between my experience of violence in an intimate relationship, and that of my foremothers, and the historical roots within the period of slavery in North America and the Caribbean. Also of significance to this study, is the 'Matrix of Domination' consisting of socially constructed race, class, and gender relations. A Black feminist theoretical paradigm was utilized as a methodological framework to explore and analyze the data found in the literature. The data for this study came from books, journals, studies, narratives, fictional literature, novels and other forms of written materials, such as community newspapers, etc.

This study was informed theoretically by the writings of Black feminist scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, Angela Davis, Bernice Moreau, Alice Walker, etc. A self-defined standpoint of Black women (Collins, 1991) and ethnographic content analysis guided the interpretation of the data. In this study, I have identified that the sins of the white fathers contribute and impact on the wounding of Black mothers in both the master-slave relationship as well as our own intimate relations.

SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

The utilization of Black feminist theory as a methodological tool facilitated the process by which I explored the data from my own present location. It acknowledged and appreciated my own unique ontological and epistemological site of entry in the data, on social services, dominant feminist literature and the academy. As Black feminist scholars it is necessary to develop our own strategies that enable us to access social services and academic pursuits.

Therefore, when I initially began this project, it was with the understanding that my findings would somehow inform my experience of violence in an intimate relationship from the past. I felt that I would be in a better position to understand the dismissive way that I had been treated by social services. My findings suggest that a matrix of domination (the social relations of race, class, and gender) intersect at different points which have numerous implications for social work practice (Collins, 1991).

As a Black Canadian woman of Caribbean descent I hold a unique position in that I consider myself a Canadian due to my early immigration and my lifelong education by a dominant ideology about Black inferiority. However, I am still not accepted as a Canadian because I do not possess white skin privilege. In a sense, I had no specific connection historical roots. Through this project, I realize that I do have a connection to an experience that is rarely identified or discussed in Canadian history, society or literature. I am a descendent of West Africans enslaved in the 'New World'. My ancestors were stolen and forced to live under abusive conditions on the colonies in North America and the Caribbean from which my family originates. Thus, I am attached to this earth and to this existence through that connection.

My experiences of violence in an intimate relationship brought me into contact with mainstream social service agencies. I was perceived as an immigrant, unattached to the history of this country, though largely ignored and rejected. Thus, my contention is that if social service providers do not see my history, they will not understand my experiences, and if they do not know my experiences, their social service interventions will not help me. As such, my issues are not about access to language, integration, settlement, etc., but rather

about issues that stem from an everyday lived experience of race, class, and gender that has its roots in oppressive slavery (CPVAW, 1993; hooks, 1993; Collins, 1991 etc).

Also, it must be recognized that one monolithic approach (ie. patriarchy) cannot adequately explain the perpetuation of violence, my acceptance of it as normal, and the interventions that are utilized to strategize and inform policy. Many social services and interventions come from a dominant feminist perspective which cite male violence from a patriarchal point of view. The site of this oppression does not inform the totality of my current or past experiences of violence. Issues of concern to dominant feminists are not my concerns. Alienation, contempt, tolerance, non-acceptance, domination, rejection, isolation etc - these are my issues. I need to reiterate that patriarchy cannot be the sole factor to examine Black women's subordination and violent treatment in society (Brand, 1993; Malson, 1990; Williams, 1989 etc). They are embedded in my everyday life experiences which transcend into my intimate relationships. Therefore, my treatment and experience as an abused Black woman operated from an distinct image of who an abused woman was and as a Black woman, an image of immigrant as pathological.

The questions I was continually asked were based on a reexamination of my immigration status, the number of children, living or not living with me, my working status, my characteristics, my mother and father's contribution to my identity as an abused woman, etc. Lena Dominelli (1992) addresses the impacts of these questions found in her research with Black families and their experiences within social service agencies. Her findings suggest that these agencies reflect this pathological reasoning and interventions. The author further states that:

The high visibility of certain ethnic groups, particularly Black ones, makes it easier for them to be made scapegoats for the economic recession...makes it easier for them to be targeted as objects whose eligibility to services must be authenticated above and beyond 'normal' standards (Dominelli, 1992: 25, 29).

When social service providers apply a pathological model, my deficiencies are assessed and interventions directed at fixing them. When I did not agree, their response is that I am in denial or protecting my abuser, etc. The connections that remain constant from slavery to present day are those associated with isolation, rejection, alienation, etc that I experienced in the social services after leaving my abusive relationships. The 'education of violence' inherent in slavery kept my foremothers from accessing any type of services that could have kept them healthy (mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually) and empowered, thus human.

THE ACADEMY

This continuum of the 'education of violence' evident in the social services is equally inherent in the academy and continues to perpetuate the violence that I experienced in my intimate relationship. I have found that the issues that I defined as important to me ie. understanding of experiences in a historical context, which are replicated in barriers which resurface in academia as well. In the academy, there are processes, practices, policies, etc, that are used: to prove one's experience; to prove one's credibility; a lack of acknowledgment of different learning styles; differential access to these educational resources; and differential means to articulate these experiences contribute to these feelings of rejection, isolation, failure, non-acceptance etc. They are strategies which are derived from a dominant ideology of Black inferiority vis-a-vis white superiority in the area of formal education. These barriers and strategies exist on a continuum of violence that empower

different members of society located on the margins trying to bring our issues to the center. Social action, social work, intervention and policy analysis are reliant on research. If these barriers are not challenged and broken down, the healing of the Black community can never take place. We cannot change history, but we can use our knowledge of history to change the future. Black women's access to academia not only as students but as credible scholars also will facilitate this process (Moreau, 1996).

In light of these findings, I contend that my process of healing needed to include: tools to teach me to recognize how to survive in the academy; to name my experiences with my own words; and to identify the relevance of important issues. I needed a historical analysis of my position in society, how it came to be, and an acknowledgment of my complacency in that social order. I needed to have access to how Black women like me, before me, and after me, dealt with the issues of violence and how they survived. My entire race has endured due to the strength of the resistance of many slave women before me. There is strength in the knowledge that they resisted the institution of slavery and lived. Throughout their wounding, my mothers have passed on parts of themselves (eg. knowledge, courage, strength, community, culture, etc.) that must be recognized, analyzed, understood, and educated through me. However, the Black silence that is prevalent in white educational institutions continues the infliction of this wounding on us, their progeny. Through this omission, I am prevented from gaining access to this valuable tool, knowledge that can aid my healing, understanding, empowerment and growth.

In reflecting on my own experience throughout my formal education and especially at the University level I have found that there is an academic connection between violence and

Black women. For over four hundred years Black women were violently deprived of formal education (Moreau, 1996). As a result they were rejected from all civil rights, educational opportunities and material and social resources. They were doomed to illiteracy and ignorance by law. In contemporary society very little progress has been made for Black women to access the academy as students or as employees. For example, at Carleton University there is only one Black female tenured professor out of a faculty of approximately 700 professors.

Needless to say, the issue of formal education form a matrix of domination as revealed by Black feminist theory, which voices the rejection of my experiences by not giving me a site in North American history in which to understand this rejection and devaluation. The matrix allows me, a framework to understand my continued acceptance of this rejection within my violent intimate relationship that functioned on an external definition of myself.

DOMINANT SOCIETY AND ME

The Capture

My findings, acknowledge that slavery is the valid historical entry point for the understanding of my experience, as a Canadian Black woman of Caribbean descent, of violence in intimate relationship in a social, economical, and political context. As Black slave women, who were captured by white and African slave traders, we were socialized to think we were sub-human, hypersexual, immoral, possessed deviant character flaws, were animalistic, savage, out of control, etc. In a similar way, in connection to my foremothers, my capture was facilitated by the exposure of my vulnerabilities. Once these vulnerabilities were exposed and I was entrapped in an abusive relationship.

Middle Passage, Slave Auction and Breaking-in Process

My findings from the literature reveal that during the Middle Passage my foremothers as Black Cargoes were raped, beaten, punished, tortured, and murdered in the name of economic (colonial, imperialistic and capitalistic) advancement and development of Western societies. Our reproductive abilities were used to replenish the labour market, reproduce the slave community and blamed for the passing of social, moral, and economic inferiority onto our children (Hine, 1995; hooks, 1993; McGary 1992; Jones, 1985).

For my foremothers, the Middle Passage signifies an introduction of the indoctrination process and breaking of their wills. In my experience this middle passage in my abusive relationship symbolizes my abuser's ownership of my body, mind, and soul. My foremothers and I were both indoctrinated with messages of inferiority and sub-humanity in order for the abusers to gain our submission and acceptance of our fate of violence. The strategy used in the slave auction and the breaking-in process to accomplish this submissiveness was violence (eg. sexual, physical, emotional, cultural, spiritual etc). We, Black women were not only defined as subhumans, but as unfeminine. Also, we were defined as being the source of Black men's social angst. As a couple and a community we were robbed of our ability to love one another freely outside the confines of a predetermined reality constructed by a dominant ideology of Black inferiority (Morrison, 1987; hooks, 1993; Giddings, 1984, etc). This theft demonstrates the impact of the enslavement process on the breakdown of communal, individual and self- love.

Legal Sanctions, Devaluation, Dominant Ideology

The analysis of the historical origins of violence in the intimate relationships of Black women located their experiences beyond the context of a strictly gendered oppression. A matrix of domination more adequately addressed my foremothers' sites of oppression. This interconnected matrix encompass racism, (reasoning used to control us based on our 'inferiority' and the superiority of the dominant culture); classism, (legally sanctioned denial for us to access the material resources economically and socially because we only existed as property, not humans); and sexism (the definition of Black women outside the conventions of natural womanhood labelled as 'sub-human') which all significantly contribute to Black women's mark of oppression (McGary, 1992; Collins, 1991).

This mark of oppression symbolizes our alienation, rejection, non-acceptance, etc. which leads to our devaluation of ourselves as women and human beings. In my experience, I often wondered if it was my lot in life to endure the hardship of violence because I had lost my sense of self and needed to satisfy my sadistic partner. This action I perceive as part of the dominant ideology of domination.

The Dominant ideology (ethnocentrism) of our white fathers perpetuates the silence or the absence of our Black history, consequently it is not accounted for or acknowledged. This part is comprised of the sins of the white fathers which stem from the fact that they have yet to take responsibility for the 'entire race of people' they fathered. Nathan McCall discusses this issue and its correlation to, what the white fathers called 'illegitimacy.' He states:

...The historical connection is important to recognize because it provides context for understanding behaviours today...In truth, white

men have fathered almost an entire race of people without claiming their children. African-Americans, [Caribbeans, and Canadians] after all, evolved largely from whites like George Washington who were deadbeat dads. That means that colonial men handed down the legacy of illegitimate white and Black births that plague this country today...(McCall, 1997: 72).

Our present white brothers and sisters continue to ignore the reality that we, unwanted Black 'relatives,' share the same parentage. We are members of a society that is based on patrilineal lines and yet our white fathers have failed to acknowledge us as their children. We have been denied our rightful inheritance based on our mothers contribution as well as the wealth accumulated from her wounding. Our white fathers have also failed to take responsibility for the indoctrination and 'education of violence' they taught and forced upon us. Using dominant images of inferiority based on myths, storytelling and stereotypes, we have been denied access to material resources that are our birthright. Currently, we are still being pushed to the 'margins' because we challenge these images. Nathan McCall (1997), reminds us that:

For many Blacks, the widespread use of stereotypes against them is concrete proof that the promise of [North] American equality is an outright lie. The feeling is this: How can you ever expect fair treatment from people whose self-perception is rooted on lofty myths and whose opinion of you is based on distorted facts?
(McCall, 1997: 74).

In conclusion, this project successfully allowed me to link my current experience of violence to the historical violence that was perpetuated against my foremothers' during the period of slavery (1500s -1800s). I was able to identify from my experience that an indoctrination process inherent in slavery is very connected to the feelings of inferiority that were forced upon my person in my abusive relationship. These feelings of inferiority were

internalized through the process of degrading acts, enforced isolation from family and friends, violence, threats, intimidation, the belief in my partner's superiority because of the control he had over my daily living, and my feelings of helplessness (White, 1994; NiCarthy, 1986; Walker, 1979).

Therefore, in light of my findings, it can be concluded that, the sins of my white fathers contributed to the wounding of my Black mothers in the master-slave relationship. White fathers used an interconnected practice and ideology of capitalism, imperialism, colonialism and white patriarchy dehumanized and oppressed my Black mothers during the period of slavery and thereafter. They utilized an 'education of violence' in every stage of our development of 'sub-humanity' (which encompassed physical, sexual, spiritual, racial, emotional abuse, etc) inherent in various processes in the capture, the Middle passage, slave auction, breaking-in process and slavery as an institution to condition and indoctrinate Black women to feel inferior and to be subordinate. Finally, these findings locate my understanding of violence in my abusive relationship in a historical, social, political and economic context.

FUTURE RESEARCH

- A comprehensive research project using a representative sample of Canadian Black women as well as Caribbean women who have experienced violence in their intimate relationships needs to be undertaken. The focus of the study should address their understanding of violence in a current context. Possible research areas could include:
 - their definitions of violence;
 - discussions of their experiences of violence in their everyday life;
 - analysis of how race, class and gender in the everyday world impact

on their understanding of the issue of violence in their intimate relationships;

- how issues of sexual orientation, age and ability intersect within the matrix of domination (if this is possible).
- Further research also needs to be conducted on the exploration of different historical points of reference and/or entry points of Black women in linking violence to their current experiences. Possible research ideas include:
 - different historical origins of violence against Black women;
 - examine the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches;
 - acknowledgment of Black women's strengths in defining the issues and methods of resistance.
- Further research which gathers testimonies, and describe the complexities of violence (internalization process, perceptions of Black women and perceptions of violence, etc), which should utilize a self-help approach, and chronicle their journey towards surviving and processes of healing.
- An exploratory research and analysis with a focus on race, class, and gender should be completed with a representative sample of Black male abusers. Possible sites for investigation include:
 - their definitions of violence/abuse (internalization of racism, sexism and their

- impact on the violence they perpetuate against Black women)
 - their perceptions of Black women (does this factor contribute to violence?).
- An investigative research project should be initiated to analyze the treatment that Black women of the African diaspora experience in social service agencies, counselling and support services etc. Possible sites of exploration:
 - Do images/perceptions of Black women impact on their service utilization?
 - Do these impacts influence their decision to leave or stay in an abusive relationship?
 - How do services respond beyond attention to their material/emergency situations?
 - How do issues of sexual orientation, ability and age interact with a matrix of domination impact on service utilization?.

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National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada (NOIVMC)
Shelly Das, November 16, 19, 1993. (Ottawa)

Sistren Workshop on Economic Restructuring and Personal Empowerment October 28, 1993. (Ottawa)

Sistren Workshop on Violence Against Women. November 4, 1993. (Ottawa)

Women's Fair- Carleton University Women's Centre. November 11, 1993. (Ottawa)

Harambee Workshop on Violence Against Women. November 27, 1993. (Ottawa)

First Annual Women of Colour Empowerment Conference: Together We Climb.
February 19-20, 1999. (Toronto)

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