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## *I Love New York: Does New York Love Me?*

By Shannon B. Campbell<sup>1</sup>, Steven S. Giannino, Chrystal R. China,  
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### **Abstract**

This article seeks to highlight reality television's most popular rearticulation of the Jezebel and the Sapphire stereotypes while assessing its implications for African American women. Nearly eight decades after their inception in mass mediated culture, the Jezebel and Sapphire stereotypes have been reborn in the form of Tiffany Pollard, better known as "New York", and her mother "Sister Patterson" (respectively). Television acts as a powerful socialization agent, and thus plays a significant role in how audiences shape their racially stratified and gendered world. Researchers employed discourse analysis to provide the rich contextual data necessary to capture the effects of *I Love New York*; additionally, researchers will illustrate notions of patriarchy and hegemony. Further, the authors seek to provide readers with the motivation and materials to self identify, and more importantly, self-correct.

*Keywords:* television, stereotypes, African American women

### **Introduction**

This article seeks to highlight television's most recent rearticulation of the Jezebel and the Sapphire stereotypes and discuss its implications for African American women. Jezebel represents the bad (black) girl. She is alluring and seductive; her sexual prowess mesmerizes and ultimately overpowers men (of all races). Sapphire, a feisty, wise-cracking, emasculating, (black) woman is always eager to let everyone know it is she who is in charge. Mass media currently represent one of the most pervasive agents of socialization. It is the authors' contention that the way media frame the Jezebel and Sapphire impact the real lives of African American women. Mediated depictions represent a means for members of different social, cultural and ethnic groups to learn about each other, whereas framing is "the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation" (Entman, 2007). Framing works to alter an audience's interpretation of a given concept, thus leading the audience to feel or think in a particular way. The critical paradigm of framing suggests that frames act as tools for media to promote hegemonic values, or the ideologies of the dominant culture (McQuail, 2005). Because the American public consumes television with such voracity, the researchers presuppose that its framed messages represent a powerful socialization agent. Hence, television plays a significant role in how audiences shape their racially stratified and gendered world. This particular function of media is often described as the reinforcement of social stereotypes (Fujioka, 1999; Wilson & Gutierrez, 1996). Researchers will employ discourse analysis to provide the rich contextual data necessary to capture the implications and repercussions of *I Love New York's* rearticulation of the Jezebel and Sapphire. Research suggests that these caricatures are, at present, the stereotypes that dominate the media portrayals of black women (Jones, 2004; Givens & Monahan, 2005). Social reality is produced and made real through discourse, thus social interactions cannot be fully understood without references to the discourses that give them meaning. As discourse analysts it is our task to explore the relationship between discourse and reality (Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

The 1970s represent a critical era with regard to the mediated imagery of African American women. This period demarcates the end of the civil rights movement and the emergence of the black power and women's liberation movements. This unique era symbolizes a nexus of sorts for African American women, who were uniquely and intimately involved with/in all of these movements. This nexus of events resulted in a correlative shift in the expectations of black women. African American women were

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eager to engage in arena's that were previously off limits to them and their new found influence was not overlooked by the media. "The profusion of images of black female subjects in films in the 70s paralleled actual black women's burgeoning entry into the ranks of the middle-class" (Manatu, 2003, p. 115). No longer were African American female actors relegated to the pervasive roles of the mammy, tragic mulatto and picaninny. Indeed, this era ushered in a new genre of film—blaxploitation and a new image of the black woman; one who took control of situations, didn't tolerate bullshit from men, was sexually empowered and physically alluring. Blaxploitation was fertile ground for black action heroines, but despite the progress made by black women in the social, political and cultural landscape, it did not help black female actors become mainstream stars. On the contrary, it relegated them to the confines of the Jezebel and Sapphire caricatures. Once it became apparent that blaxploitation was the fixed star around which all black American cinema in the 1970s was forced to revolve, black actors found themselves facing the same predicaments that plagued their predecessors—type casting and limited opportunities (Manatu, 2003).

### **Introducing the Jezebel and Sapphire**

Negative stereotypes have been used to dehumanize and objectify black women since before the first kidnapped Africans disembarked onto American soil (Pilgram, 2002). The belief that Blacks are sexually lewd predates the institution of slavery in America. When European travelers to Africa found scantily clad natives, they misinterpreted this semi nudity as lewdness. White Europeans, locked into the racial ethnocentrism of the 17th century, saw African polygamy and tribal dances as proof of the African's uncontrolled sexual lust. William Bosman (1974) described the Black women on the coast of Guinea as "fiery" and "warm" and "so much hotter than the men." Similarly, William Smith (1744) observed African women as being "hot constitution'd Ladies" who "are continually contriving stratagems how to gain a lover." The genesis of anti-black sexual archetype emerged from the writings of these and other Europeans: the black woman, as Jezebel whore.

The black woman's position at the core of America's sex and race mythology has made it nearly impossible for her to escape the mythology (White, 1999). Throughout American history images of the hypersexual Jezebel; asexual Mammy and domineering Sapphire have all been effectively deployed by oppressors in an effort to bolster this nation's hegemonic hierarchy. In a society that is racist and patriarchal at its core, oppressors have continually worked to justify the subordinated social status of blacks as well as outline and enforce *their* definition of womanhood. The negative stereotyping of black women has served as a multifaceted and highly effective technique in this endeavor.

The Jezebel trope depicts black women as seductive temptresses with an insatiable and animalistic appetite for sex. Beguiling, voluptuous, lewd and lustful; the Jezebel's greatest wish is to be fucked to death. During slavery the Jezebel image served several functions for oppressors. However, it was primarily used to justify the sexual exploitation of black women. Because the Jezebel maintains a ravenous desire for sex; forced sex between master and slave was not viewed with disdain (by the oppressive class). The notion that Jezebels were immoral and desired sex, in general, and with white men specifically, served to justify the rape and subjugation of black women (Pilgram, 2002).

K. Sue Jewell characterized the Jezebel as a tragic mulatto – "thin lips, long straight hair, slender nose, thin figure and fair complexion" (1993, p. 46). However, this one-size-fits-all conceptualization is limited. Although the tragic mulatto and Jezebel share the reputation of being sexually seductive, it is fallacious to assume that only (or even mainly) fair-complexioned black women are sexually objectified by the larger American society (Pilgrim, 2002). From the early 1630s to the present, black women of all shades have been portrayed as hypersexual "bad-black-girls" (Jewell, 1993).

Black American culture and black women specifically have undergone innumerable amounts of change since the antebellum period, however, the characteristics of the Jezebel caricature has remained remarkably stable. She is still as opportunistic, one-dimensional and sexually deviant as ever. There are however subtle differences between the Jezebel of the years past and today's portrayal. The contemporary Jezebel can no longer be said to primarily desire sex from white men, she desires any man with

money, power and status (She takes what she can get, when she can get it, from whoever is giving it up, as long as they are getting paid!).

The portrayal of black women as lascivious by nature is an enduring stereotype and one that epitomizes the Jezebel (Pilgram, 2002). A half a century after the American civil rights movement, it is increasingly easy to find black women depicted as Jezebel's whose only real value is as sexual commodities (Pilgram, 2002). She is found prominently displayed in secular Afrocentric books and magazines and can be seen sashaying across the big screens of our neighborhood Cineplex as well as the small screens in our home.

The Sapphire (or angry sister) is another very popular stereotype promulgated by today's mass media. Sapphire originated "as a live television image in the person of the *Amos and Andy* character Sapphire Stevens" (Hudson, 1998, p. 6). The Sapphire has no specific physical features. Typically, her complexion is brown or dark brown. She is a mature adult whose build is moderate to stout. The Sapphire is loud, overbearing, shrewd and aggressive. She is ambitious, educated and seems to relish conflict; especially with (in her opinion) the good for nothing black man. "The most notable characteristic of Sapphire is her sassiness which is exceeded only by her verbosity. She is also noted for telling people off and spouting her opinion in an animated loud manner. Because of her intense expressiveness and hands-on-hip, finger-pointing style, Sapphire is viewed as comedic and is never taken seriously" (Jewell, 1993, p.45).

Ultimately, she represents the domineering emasculator. The Sapphire image of black womanhood, unlike other images that symbolize black women, necessitates the presence of a (black) man. When the Sapphire is depicted it is the man who represents the point of contention (Jewell, 1993). Her sheer existence is predicated on the trickery and lack of integrity of her male counterparts. This allows her to project her superior moral compass onto the amoral (black) man. She is one dimensional in her display of strength and anger in the face of all situations. Moreover, the Sapphire abhors the Jezebel because Jezebel represents a form of dependency on men which to her represents a quintessential form of weakness. Both of these images support white patriarchy. The former by limiting black women's power to the power found solely in her beauty and vagina; the latter by situating black women's power as over the top and ultimately absurd.

### **Do You Have Love for New York?**

*I Love New York* (a spinoff of the unprecedented hit television show *Flavor of Love*) is Vh1's adaptation of reality dating for the modern black woman. *I Love New York* follows the dating triumphs and debacles of Tiffany Pollard (AKA New York) as she sifts through 20 eager-to-please men in her quest for true love. With a cast of cartoonish characters, like the domineering and thuggish "Chance" and the lovably shy, accountant "Mr. Boston," the show descends into all out chaos as the men battle and fight (figuratively and literally) for "New York's" heart. The televised mayhem has been wildly successful for the network, bringing in 4.4 million viewers during the first season's premiere. In fact, the Monday night premiere was "the most-watched series premiere ever for the cable network...[and] was also [the night's] highest-rated program on cable television" (Anonymous, 2007).

"New York" gained popularity as an over-the-top, uncontrollable, no-holds-bar contestant on Vh1's *Flavor of Love*. Although she failed to capture the heart of her man (Flavor-Flav) she was successful in capturing the attention and hearts of millions of viewers and in doing so, landed her own show (*I Love New York*) where she is able to traipse around her (Vh1 subsidized) mansion in skin-tight mini dresses proclaiming her "HBIC" status (Head Bitch In Charge). *I Love New York*, features vignettes of the male contestants (who come in all shapes, sizes and colors) vying each week for the attention of "New York." In order to obtain one-on-one time with "New York" the men engage in outrageous and degrading competitions like boxing-for-love (where the men are forced to get into extremely tight red and white shorts, climb into a boxing ring and fight each other while "New York" remains on the side of the ring wearing a black bra and panties covered only by a short silky boxing robe, cheering them on) and the culinary competition where each man must prove he can wet more than "New York's" sexual appetite by creating a culinary dish that is to the liking of both "New York" and her mother "Sister Patterson."

Once the victor has an opportunity to spend quality time with “New York” he all too often spends the date endorsing her sexual prowess, skillful lovemaking, voluptuous body and Jezebel-like ways. In every single episode of the show, “New York” receives an inordinate amount of sexual attention from the men who are willing to do everything from massaging her topless back to sucking her perfectly pedicured toes...and being the perfect embodiment of the Jezebel—“New York” never offers any form of resistance. On the contrary, she seems to crave the sexual objectification that the show perpetuates.

While “New York” is the star of the show, her mother “Sister Patterson” has a prominent, reoccurring role as her daughters most trusted advisor. “Sister Patterson” embodies the Sapphire trope, constantly threatening the male contestants and slinging emasculating insults their way. She uses her quick wit and razor sharp tongue to cut the contestants down to size. She can be seen rolling her neck and pointing her finger in the face of contestants as she challenges their sexuality, physical strength and mental capacity. And, although she is not in a position to definitively determine who will stay or leave the mansion (that is a privilege reserved for the network’s most prized Jezebel), she makes it abundantly clear that without her approval “No man will remain in my daughter’s house!”

### **Jezebel and Sapphire for the New Millennium**

As we have previously iterated, the lead female characters on Vh1’s *I Love New York* represent contemporary examples of two of the most pervasive mediated caricatures of African American women during the 20<sup>th</sup> century—the Jezebel and Sapphire. Tiffany Pollard as the new millennium Jezebel is typecast in the same one dimensional way as the blaxploitation Jezebel of years past, and as such, she evokes and enacts many of the same troubling stereotypes. “New York’s” lustful appearance, promiscuous demeanor and manipulative behavior make her the perfect Jezebel for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And, much like the caricature she embodies, most things about “New York” are a profound exaggeration, from her lengthy highlighted hair weave and thick protracted false eyelashes to the four inch stiletto shoes she dons, she is as complex as a Dick and Jane preschool text. The maximization of “New York’s” sexual appeal appears to be a chief priority of the show’s creators. Consequently, in virtually every episode she is heavily made-up and provocatively dressed to accentuate her womanly curves. She flaunts her sexual prowess verbally by displaying braggadocio early and often. During the second season opener, she claims to be able to, “tell just by looking at a man if he has a big dick.” She flaunts her surgically enhanced breasts visually to the viewing audience and contestants by wearing extremely small bikini tops, extra small corsets or going topless altogether. Her insatiable sexual appetite is on display at all times. In fact, during one episode of the show entitled *Nip/Suck*, a former contestant just happened to pop into her mansion (to say hello) and after seeing him she shared an intimate, reflective moment with the audience. She looked directly into the camera (or the eye of the audience) and began rubbing her body and moaning. Between moans she shared the following, “Oh God, seeing him just makes me want to pleasure him and have him pleasure me up and down, if you know what I mean.” During the same episode “New York’s” already hypersexual persona appears to be in overdrive as she oscillates from one contestant to another. While she passionately kisses one contestant she is forcefully pulled away from him and swung into the arms of another who she also kisses passionately. The other contestants look on like eager schoolboys awaiting their turn to be touched, petted, kissed and seduced by the sex kitten.

As the new millennium Jezebel “New York” exemplifies the beguiling temptress. She uses her (hyper) sexual energy and feminine wiles in concert with her authority as the show’s star to emotionally manipulate the various men with whom she interacts. In an episode entitled *Mind Games* “New York” introduces her aspiring suitors to her therapist and forces each one of them to participate, with her, in a couples counseling session. During each session, she stares deeply into the object of her desire’s eyes, gently caressing his head and face while leaning toward him in a suggestive manner, and divulges a secret... that she expects to wear the pants in the relationship and that she expects them to act like the “wifey.” In doing so, she creates cognitive dissonance in the competitors by challenging their masculinity while simultaneously stirring up emotions of lust and desire.

Much like the caricature's archetype, "New York's" allure transcends demographic boundaries. Regardless of whether the contender is black, white, Latino, Asian or a mixture of races and /or ethnicities he works tirelessly to gain the attention of the "exotic" and "hot" Jezebel. In an episode entitled *Flowers from Fishburne* "Tailor Made" a Caucasian competitor craves Tiffany's affection. His desire is so insatiable that he sends her two dozen roses before her date with another man.

In the *Stolen Date* episode we see how the Jezebel exudes exotic eroticism to men with expendable incomes. During this episode "Tailor Made" is seen laying in wait, spying on "New York" as she makes out with "Punk." Once he manages to steal her away, he offers her a bag with a gift box inside. "New York" opens the package to reveal a beautiful black, silky, designer dress. She is overjoyed with the gift and as she hugs him tightly and kisses him slowly she adoringly states, "I love you baby and I want you to just keep loving me"—for the new millennium Jezebel gifts are analogous to love. As she prepares for the evening's activities she decides to slip into the dress and as she does she states, "Oh baby, I am going to let him have me in this." She reaffirms her position as the Jezebel and "Tailor Made's" position as her latest conquest at the elimination ceremony later that night by remarking, "Tailor Made has gone from the dog house to the penthouse."

"New York's" mother "Sister Patterson" lacks the nurturing sentiment displayed by most mothers depicted on television. "Sister Patterson's" in your face style and confrontational orientation seems to trump any motherly instincts she might possess. Perhaps her Sapphire role which is juxtaposed against her daughters Jezebel role is the culprit for the discordance and dysfunction that seem to pervade their relationship. "Sister Patterson" is often seen rolling her eyes at Tiffany when she opts to engage in highly sexualized activities. She also accuses Tiffany of being "soft" and not having the strength to make the right decisions. "Sister Patterson's" strength and conviction regardless of context is prominently displayed throughout the show. Her strength (in her opinion) makes her a vital component of the show and to her daughter. In fact, at one point Tiffany yelled, "My mother is ALWAYS right, even when she's wrong!" to one contestant who dared to question her mother.

"Sister Patterson's" perpetual negative attitude is prominently on display from the moment she enters the house. During the opening episode she is introduced to the suitors by "New York" with pomp and circumstance. Upon introduction, "Sister Patterson" saunters through the door with a scowl firmly planted on her face, and sarcastically asks the contestants, "Who were you expecting, the tooth fairy?" She makes a point of rolling her eyes at each competitor before joining her daughter to assist in the naming ceremony. The guy's initial encounter with "Sister Patterson" sets the tone for the eye cutting, neck rolling, hair tossing, dismissive, sharp tongued wit that will be her modus operandi for the remainder of the show.

After the naming ceremony "New York" and "Sister Patterson" host a mixer in the backyard of the mansion so they can get to know the bachelors. Whether conversing with bachelors individually or holding court with a small group, "Sister Patterson" employs a condescending sarcasm meant to intimidate and belittle the participants. She questions the bachelors' sexuality and accuses many of them of being gay. When speaking to "12 pack"—who admitted to plucking his eyebrows—she asks him in a mocking manner, "Have you ever slept with any men?" When he professes his heterosexuality she laughs in his face, rolls her eyes, and walks off. "Sister Patterson" also uses her race to intimidate (white) bachelors. With a serious look on her face she asks "Mr. Boston," "You know my daughter's black don't you?" This encounter causes him to squirm uncomfortably and explain to her that he is not a racist. For the duration of the mixer, "Sister Patterson" bullies and ridicules each bachelor with whom she interacts. Before the end of the mixer "Chance" attempted to engage "Sister Patterson" in a conversation. She responded by blowing smoke in his face and rudely dismissing him. The bachelor "Chance" took exception to this treatment and respectfully let "Sister Patterson" know she was acting contemptuous. "Sister Patterson" responded by shouting "SHUT UP!" She called him a punk and an idiot, and threatened to kick him off of the show. Even when "Chance" attempts to apologize she screams "get away from me—you're an idiot!"

"Sister Patterson's" pessimistic attitude and biting wit can be observed in other scenes as well. During one confessional session, "Sister Patterson" looks directly into the

camera (and into the eyes of the viewers) while offering her opinion(s) of the potential suitors that she dislikes. When describing “Wolf” she offers the following, “He is not impressive...He looks like a farmer...He needs to go home. He is a goat!” During her raucous ridicule of “Wolf” she rolls her neck and chuckles to herself. In another confessional, when referring to “Million” she asserts, “He is a loser...and he smell (sic) like doo-doo.” Interestingly, the bachelors rarely appear to take “Sister Patterson’s” insults seriously. In fact, she is often the object of jokes and is outright dissed and dismissed behind her back by the bachelors.

### **Showing No Love for New York**

Feminist theory seeks to analyze the conditions which shape women’s lives and to explore cultural understandings of what it means to be a woman. Its basic premise is that male dominance derives from the social, economic and political arrangements specific to particular societies. Because women have historically been the objects of knowledge rather than the producers of it, feminist theory is about women thinking for themselves—women generating knowledge *about* women and gender *for* women (Jackson & Jones, 1998). Feminists don’t view inequalities between men and women as natural and inevitable and insist that they be interrogated and critiqued. The *Feminist Dictionary* (1991) defines feminism as a movement seeking the reorganization of the world upon a basis of sex-equality in all human relationships; a movement that rejects every differentiation between individuals on the grounds of sex, would abolish all sex privileges and sex burdens, and would strive to set up the recognition of all common humanity of woman and man as the foundation of law and custom.

Feminist thinkers and activists have had difficulty coping with dissent since the beginning of the contemporary movement for women’s liberation. The call for unity and solidarity based upon notions that women constitute a sex class/caste with common experiences and common oppression made acceptance of alternative views and dissention unacceptable. Dissention was often resolved with the formation of separate groups and the development of different labels like: radical feminist, reformist, liberal, Marxist, etc. Controversy around the issue of common oppression reached its peak when discussions of race and/or class difference seemed to clash with feminist ideologies.

There is no history of common oppression for black and white women. Consequently, the African American community has held contemptuous sentiments toward feminism and black feminists. In addition to the challenges they pose to patriarchal religious traditions and institutions, they are seen by many blacks as more attuned to the interest of white women than the struggle for black empowerment (Kolawole, 1997). Although many of the goals presented by the women’s liberation movement are of vital importance to the lifestyle and life quality of black women, the dramatic difference in the nature of the oppression of black women (who have confronted sexism, racism and economic oppression) when compared to their white counterparts create a natural rift. The dehumanization experienced by women of the African Diaspora and other women of non-white cultures remains unparalleled by American white women (Gordon, 1987). In short, the women’s liberation movement lacked a clear focus upon which the oppression of the black condition could be negotiated. As a result, many African-American females perceived feminism as an impediment to the more important struggle against racism.

For some black women genuinely interested in the feminist agenda, it appeared that white feminists did not want the issue of racism raised because they did not want to deflect attention away from their projection of white woman as “good” i.e., non-racist victim, and white man as “bad” i.e. racist oppressor. For them to acknowledge women’s complicity in the perpetuation of imperialism, colonialism, racism and/or sexism would have made the issue of women’s liberation far more complicated. This is bolstered by the fact that the women’s liberation movement fails to state clearly that the system is wrong; what it does communicate however is that white women want to be a part of the existing system. They seek power not *real* change (Gordon, 1987).

Some black women interested in women’s liberation responded to the racism of white female participants by forming separate “black feminist” groups. Unfortunately this reactionary response both endorsed and perpetuated the very “racism” they sought to oppose. hooks (1981) identifies black feminists as black women who are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and see

their particular task as the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that major systems of oppression are interlocking.

Alice Walker coined the term “womanism” in her book *In Search of our Mothers’ Gardens* (1983). Walker developed the term to expand modern feminism by incorporating the tradition of black women. The term womanist links both black feminism and feminists of color. The term womanist is:

1. A derivative of *womanish* (opposite of “girlish,” i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious). A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, “You acting womanish,” i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious courageous or *willful* behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered “good” for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown-up. Being grown-up. Interchangeable with another black expression: “You trying to be grown.” Responsible. In-charge. *Serious*.

2. *Also*: A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or non-sexually. Appreciates and prefers women’s culture, women’s emotional flexibility (values tears as a natural counterbalance to laughter), and women’s strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or non-sexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people male *and* female. Not a separatist except periodically, for health. Traditionally capable, as in: “Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow and our cousins are white beige and black?” Ans.: “Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower represented.” Traditionally capable, as in: “Mama, I’m walking to Canada and I’m taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me.” Reply: “It wouldn’t be the first time.”

3. Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. *Loves* the spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. *Loves* the Folk. Loves herself, regardless.

4. Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender (Walker, 1983 pp. xi-xii)

Ultimately, womanists and feminists can be viewed as two sides of the same coin. The currency they represent embodies equality, empowerment, recognition of systemic forms of oppression and a desire for accessibility. The purple and lavender hues work in harmony to oppose the innate injustice found in patriarchal ways of knowing. Accordingly, it is the authors’ contention that both would vehemently oppose the portrayal and perpetuation of the Jezebel and Sapphire stereotype prominently displayed in Vh1’s hit show *I Love New York*, a reality dating show chronicling Tiffany Pollard’s quest for true love.

Analyses of popular mediated depictions of African American women are critical because this imagery can have a direct impact on the lives and livelihood of African American women. The activation-recency hypothesis proposed by Hansen and Hansen (1988) suggests that individuals who are primed with media content are more likely to use the content for subsequent information processing than those not primed. Hansen and Hansen suggest that media consumers transfer knowledge (obtained from the media) to other contexts because “the distorted appraisal of a subsequent stimulus induced by activation is unlikely to be consciously corrected” (p. 290). In short, we are not likely to view stereotypical portrayals African American women and consciously correct the impressions we form about them (in real life) that result from mediated depictions. Ford (1997) later found that priming resulted in greater attributions (by European Americans) of stereotypical behavior (to African Americans). Additionally, he used activation-recency to demonstrate the relationship between stereotypical portrayals of African Americans and an increased likelihood that European Americans would make negative social judgments about them.

*I Love New York* is problematic for black women for various reasons. The show not only impacts the way *others* view and interact with black women, but also impacts the way black women view themselves. We believe *I Love New York* is patriarchal at its core. But much worse is its mediated introduction of internalized patriarchy by black women to black women. We believe the violence of patriarchy and misogyny is only exceeded by the devastation of internalizing patriarchy in African American women. Furthermore, we view black women’s acceptance, acquiescence and ultimate reinforcement of the patriarchal archetype as black female patriarchy. Black female patriarchy occurs when African American women take ownership of male domination,



actively participate in the maintenance and support of the power and privilege of men to rule over, exploit and debase women, and submit without question to male authority, abuse and exploitation (Westfield, 2006). Ultimately, the black female patriarch idealizes the patriarchal male role. She does not work *with* men, she works *under* them instead. She does not seek pleasure without the presupposition of seeking to please. She does not seek to partner with a man, rather she seeks to be controlled and eclipsed by a man (either explicitly or implicitly). For the black female patriarch the absence of a penis means the absence of any real power or authority (even over one's own body). Westfield's (2006) rearticulation of Alice Walker's definition of a womanist (provided earlier in this text) suggests that the black female patriarch is:

A woman who hates herself and other women, sexually and/or non-sexually; has no appreciation and no preference for women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (believes there is no value in tears, believes that counterbalance to laughter is fighting and warfare), sees women's strength as a threat to men and male power; committed zealously to the exclusive survival of men and all that is male even if it means the denigration and debasement or annihilation of women and children.

It is our hope that through the deconstruction of black female patriarchy and analysis of mediated depictions of the Jezebel and Sapphire that black female patriarchs will self identify and more importantly, self correct. Black women must reject notions of black female patriarchy by seeking to collaborate with healthy, progressive men. Black women cannot look to a debased media system controlled by patriarchal systems of power for legitimate images of themselves to model. Instead, they must create new epistemological models that promote equality over dominance, collegiality over discord and interdependence over dependence. Black women must seek mutually beneficial relationships, mutually advantageous opportunities and most importantly black women must realize that the way we view ourselves is infinitely more important than the way we are depicted by *others*.

Scholars who are interested in mapping the terrain upon which a critically vigilant populous must travel should engage in future research investigating the hegemonic strata's depiction of LGBT communities, other communities of color and depictions of women that exist in mainstream mediated text.

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