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AN ANALYSIS OF THE VISUAL DEVELOPMENT OF A
STEREOTYPE: THE MEDIA'S PORTRAYAL OF MAMMY
AND AUNT JEMIMA AS SYMBOLS OF BLACK
WOMANHOOD.

The Ohio State University, Ph.D., 1976
Sociology, individual and family studies

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UMI
AN ANALYSIS OF THE VISUAL DEVELOPMENT OF
A STEREOTYPE: THE MEDIA'S PORTRAYAL
OF MAMMY AND AUNT JEMIMA AS
SYMBOLS OF BLACK WOMANHOOD

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
Karen Sue Warren Jewell, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University

1976

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The researcher also expresses her intellectual indebtedness for relying heavily upon the works of Donald Bogel, Verta Mae, and Arthur Marquette, in an area characterized by limited investigation.
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INTRODUCTION

This study is based on the utilization of visual sociology as a method of analyzing the media's systematic portrayal of images in American society. The primary focus is on the extent to which specific images symbolic of black womanhood have been developed and perpetuated by the mass media in general and the visual media in particular. Further, the scope of this study encompasses the extent to which the media as well as American society has assigned negative definitions to these images. An attempt is also made to establish the relationship between theories and perspectives of the black woman and these images. Particular emphasis is placed on the identification of mythology and stereotypes which have been incorporated within these images.

More specifically, the focus of this study is on the media's systematic portrayal of mammy and Aunt Jemima as symbols of black womanhood. These images are examined from an historical perspective in an attempt to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent has the black woman in America been represented by the images of mammy and Aunt Jemima?

2. Have the definitions which have been assigned to these images been of a positive or negative nature?

3. Are these definitions assigned to these images generalized to black women in America?

4. What are the sociological implications of these images relative to the treatment of the black woman in American society?
(5) Is there a basis for these images in reality or have they been conceptualized by artists without empirical correspondence?

The question which best characterizes the focus of this study is: Do the images of mammy and Aunt Jemima negate the American conception of beauty, femininity, and womanhood? Further, if these images are symbolic of black women in America, what are the sociological implications of these definitions regarding the black woman?

These questions and others are raised within the context of this study. Of considerable importance is the need to acquire consensual validation, or interreliability. This is done primarily through the acquisition of the works of others in this area; and by identifying values within the American society which define the variables being examined.

This study, therefore, relies in large measure on a historical approach to the study of sociological data. In addition, it should be noted that this topic is not one which has enjoyed extensive inquiry by other researchers, as is true of the methodology employed. Consequently, the reader should be aware of the researcher's intent to examine the data from a systematic perspective. Therefore, while there may be examples which can be identified as exceptions to the norm, these, from the researcher's frame of reference, do not negate the findings revealed by examining and analyzing data utilized systematically.
CHAPTER I

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to explore the mass media's depiction or portrayal of mammy and Aunt Jemima; in order to determine the media's systematic utilization of these images as symbols of black womanhood. Specifically, the mass media in the United States has historically defined the features possessed by mammy and Aunt Jemima negatively. In addition to attributing negative and unpalatable connotations to the characteristics which the media ascribes to mammy and Aunt Jemima, attempts both of a subtle and overt nature, have been made to assign these same negative traits or features to black women in America through a process of generalization. As a consequence of the successfuless of the media's efforts, black women in America are perceived and responded to on the basis of mythological and stereotypic imagery. The rationale for the media's portrayal of mammy and Aunt Jemima from this perspective is deeply embedded in the very fabric of American society; and dates back to early conceptions of the value or worth of black women as human beings. Further, there has been an attempt on the part of many white Americans, both male and female, to conceal the treatment which they have afforded the black woman during and subsequent to slavery. There are numerous evidences of physical and sexual abuses perpetrated against black women in America, most of which have historically been denied or deemphasized.
The media has served to corroborate the stories of the perpetrators of these wrongdoings by depicting black women, through the images of mammy and Aunt Jemima, as lacking femininity, beauty, attractiveness, and other integral characteristics generally associated with womanhood. In addition, these images suggest satisfaction or contentment with the status position which they occupy, usually domestic. Thereby, implying that black women in this country are completely satisfied with this level of achievement. Consequently, the message which resounds clearly is black women are not worthy of the special considerations afforded women of other races, since their physical and emotional make-up vitiates such treatment.

There are ostensible discrepancies in the media's depiction of mammy and Aunt Jemima vis a vis individuals who occupied this status in real life. The media's conceptualization and portrayal of these images reflects an erroneous conceptualization and a distorted perspective. In real life, mammies performed many diverse functions and engaged in numerous constructive endeavors geared toward the amelioration of the plight of their families and their race. In addition, mammies have also been viable forces within the American white society. They successfully socialized white children; thereby, producing businessmen, doctors, lawyers, and other professionals.

The images of mammy and Aunt Jemima, although portrayed negatively by the mass media, possess positive attributes which can be generalized to many black women in America. For example, the black woman is recognized in the black community for her continuous efforts to sustain the black race and its many viable institutions. She performs
instrumental and affective functions in the home. In addition to assuming these dual functions, she has the primary responsibility of socializing her children to function successfully in two cultural systems, American black society and the American white social system.

(Staples, 1973) discusses the formidable task confronting the black mother in the rearing of black children in a white society. He asserts that the black mother must provide material and emotional support to her children and must also encourage them to learn the educational and job skills necessary for success in this world. However, the cards are stacked against her, making the black mother's task a most difficult one. He further states that although these obstacles exist, black mothers for generations have effectively reared their children.

It is unfortunate that the media fails to convey this image to its large audiences. According to Staples, "the usual cultural image of the black woman in America is that of a domineering type who rules the family, her husband included. She is seen as a masculinized female who must be subordinated in order that the black male may take his rightful place in society. Further, this image of her as conveyed through the mass media, is accepted by white people. Sociological studies find the matriarchal structure of the black family a primary deterrent to black progress. One can only wonder how victims of a dual oppression have acquired such an image."

American society, primarily the media, fails to give accolades to the mammies and Aunt Jemimas who have aided in the development and maintenance of white social systems. As stated earlier it is the skill,
knowledge, and phenomenal capabilities of the mammies and Aunt Jemimas which resulted in the production of the Southern Belle, the southern gentleman, presidents of the United States, and numerous other successful individuals, both black and white, both male and female. It is unfortunate that the media and American society have chosen to repay or remunerate mammy and Aunt Jemima, who represent untold numbers of black women, for their efforts by relegating them to such levels of insignificance, capable only of generating laughter, selling foodstuffs, and representing anomalies relative to womanhood, femininity, and beauty. In addition, the numerous mammies and Aunt Jemimas that simultaneously socialized their own biological children as well as their masters, or their employers, offspring did so effectively in both instances.

Staples corroborates this idea. He states that black women may be the only group that ever had to raise children and support them too. Their need to work outside the home can create special problems in the socialization of the black child. Further, according to some studies, lower-class black children are trained to be of little bother to their parents and are expected to mature early. These children that are freed earlier for productive activity are also liberated from parental control. Hence much of the socialization occurs within the peer group or is performed by older women unable to find other work.

Gerda Lerner cites a slave narrative which indicates that during slavery black women were chosen as mammies to the children of slaves whose primary duties were working in the field. This woman was responsible for preparing meals and taking care of or rearing these children. This community concept in childrearing is very much prevalent
today; yet, this cooperation and planning relative to the rearing of children of the working black mother is not portrayed by the mass media. Thus, making plans and soliciting older black women for guardians, and making children independent is a function of the black woman's conscientiousness and insuring that her child is reared adequately in her absence.

Although there have been other images of black women portrayed by the media, they have not occurred with the consistency of the images of mammy and Aunt Jemima. These other images have been short-lived and have never enjoyed the receptivity by American audiences as have the mammy and Aunt Jemima images.

Bogel discusses the short-lived appearance of the mulatto in American movies. According to Bogel, the tragic mulatto was portrayed as a black woman who was doomed and unfulfilled solely as a result of having been born with one drop of black blood. Dorothy Dandridge's career is cited by Bogel as being exemplary of the portrayal of the tragic mulatto. He further states that "Carmen Jones" was the celebrated movie that established Dandridge as the definitive tragic mulatto. Although Dandridge received adulations for her acting in this particular movie in 1954, she was faced with the realization that there was no place for her to go. There was no future for her within the movie industry due to the bigotry which existed in America and reflected in the hiring practices in Hollywood.

Bogel (during a presentation at Ohio State University, March, 1976) discussed the absence of the brown complexioned actress in the film industry. There has virtually been no place for the portrayal
of the black woman of brown complexion; and since the demise of the
mulatto the only image of the black woman which has systematically
been portrayed is that of Aunt Jemima and mammy.

The extent to which black actresses have enjoyed successful
careers in movies and television has been predicated on the type of
image which they have portrayed. If a black actress is willing to
portray the image of mammy or that of Aunt Jemima; and more importantly
if she possesses the necessary characteristics, and is considered
suitable for these roles by studio agents, she can be assured
of some degree of success. At best she will be more successful portraying
these images than she would be should she choose to portray other images
of black women.

There are characteristics ascribed to the image of mammy and Aunt
Jemima which have historically been portrayed by the media. These
attributes are generically ascribed to these images irrespective of the
era in which the images are portrayed. In fact, they constitute the
component parts which when put together result in the images of
mammy and Aunt Jemima. This paper will explore the origins of these
various attributes and the rationale which the media uses for
assigning negative connotations to both the attributes
themselves and the images, as they appear in their wholistic form.
In addition, an explication will be provided in an attempt to explain
the basis for the development and perpetuation of the numerous myths
which have eventuated from these two images. Further, the myths and
stereotypes associated with these images and generalized to black
women in America will be challenged by the presentation of the works
and deeds of black women or famous mammies in the United States. The positive and constructive attributes of these individuals will be discussed in an attempt to negate the negative imagery; which by many Americans is thought to be symbolic of black womanhood.

Emphasis will also be placed on discerning American society's need for the denigration of the image of mammy and Aunt Jemima as well as the generalization of this degradation to black women represented by these images.

In addition to examining the characteristics assigned to these two images by the media, an attempt will be made to compare and contrast these characteristics with those possessed by black women occupying this status in real life. An examination will be made of the discrepancies existing between the media's conceptualization and portrayal of mammy and Aunt Jemima and the real life individuals who occupied this status.

Historically black women have been portrayed and perceived from a distorted and negative perspective. Consequently, their positive accomplishments have remained hidden or obscured. Therefore, the efforts of black women in the building of this country and the perpetuation of the black race as well as the white race will be focussed on in this paper.

Mammy is inextricably woven into the fabric of American society in terms of literature, music, poetry, and visual images. There exists a paradox relative to the manner in which mammy is described and depicted in written material as compared to the image which is portrayed of her in the visual field. Stated differently, mammy is depicted as a very
sentimental loving, caring, productive, and vital force in many sayings, poems, and literary works; yet, "in most visual images she is portrayed as being comical in nature, inept, overbearing, and lacking in wisdom and intelligence. This is not to suggest that written materials or the literature stress or mention the numerous positive aspects which can be attributed to mammas; for this is not the case. However, the literature unlike visual media does not make mention of or allude to negative characteristics attributed to mammy systematically. In fact, much of the written material focusses on the necessity for all white people, particularly men, to have an opportunity to have a mammy; which suggests that there is "something" positive and constructive inherent in mammy. Although this "something" which mammy possesses is never identified it is implied in the literature that it is vital for one's well-being. In other words it is suggested that if an individual did not have a mammy as a child he or she suffers a deficit which can never be fulfilled.

Visual material, unlike the written, consistently portrays mammy and Aunt Jemima from a negative perspective. She is usually depicted as being obsessive, wearing highly unattractive clothing, and possessing other characteristics considered unpalatable. Therefore, the visual material assists the American public in conceptualizing the mammy which is referred to in written material. Unfortunately, this conceptualization is negative; and is so strongly implanted in the minds of the American public, because of its systematic appearance, that it completely negates the reference books definition of her.
A comparison will be made of the written material with that of the visual to determine the extent to which these discrepancies exist. Additionally, the literature will be examined as will visual images to determine if commonalities within each of the media exist relative to conceptualizations of mammy. A similar comparative analysis cannot be made of the image Aunt Jemima as she appears for the most part in the visual media. Reference is seldom made to her in written material unless she is associated with an advertisement in a local newspaper. However, contemporary black artists have made some radical changes in portraying Aunt Jemima. They have destroyed the myth of contentment with the subordinate, and humor generating, position traditionally associated with Aunt Jemima. Therefore, a comparison of traditional vis a vis contemporary visual images of Aunt Jemima will be made. Inclusive in which will be an identification of similarities and differences; as well as the message which the contemporary artist is attempting to convey.

Finally, the historical development of the images of mammy and Aunt Jemima will be examined; with emphasis on a projection of future portrayals of these images. The sociological implications of the mass media's portrayal of negative imagery relative to mammy, Aunt Jemima, and the generalization of this distorted perspective to black women in America will be explored. In addition, efforts and endeavors presently being made to change negative images of mammy, Aunt Jemima, and black women in America will be discussed.
CHAPTER II
THE MEDIA'S DEPICTION OF MAMMY, AUNT JEMIMA
AND BLACK WOMEN AS THE ANTITHESES OF THE
AMERICAN CONCEPTION OF BEAUTY AND FEMINITY

Historically, the treatment of black women by the mass media in America has been to portray stereotypic imagery; projecting and depicting characteristics or attributes suggesting submissiveness toward whites, aggressiveness toward blacks, masculinity and satisfaction and contentment with performing domestic duties. These duties include the rearing of white children and the serving as a companion to white children and adults. The image which has been most pervasive and representative of the mythology generated relative to black womanhood is found in the character Mammy.

The image of mammy is the antithesis of feminity and the American conception of womanhood. She is portrayed as an obses black woman, possessing masculine characteristics, wearing plain, unattractive clothing, and usually with her hair covered with a scarf. Another famous and common image of black womanhood is Aunt Jemima, also stout in stature, yet who is portrayed as being milder in temperament, and like mammy, content with functioning as a servant. (Bogel, 1973) states "Mammy is distinguished from the comic coon (characters playing the role of an Uncle Tom solely as an amusement object) by her sex and
FIGURE 1: America's conception of beauty and mammy, the antithesis (Cosmopolitan; March, 1975; Leonard Freed, 1969).
her fierce independence." Further, Bogel adds, she is usually big, fat, and cantankerous. Mammy's offshoot, he contends, is the Aunt Jemima, sometimes derogatorily referred to as a "handkerchief head." According to Bogel, often Aunt Jemimas are Toms (the socially acceptable Negro character who is chased, harrassed, hounded, flogged, enslaved and insulted, yet, they keep the faith and "ne'er turn against their white massas, and remain hearty, submissive, stoic, generous, selfless, and oh-so-very kind"), blessed with religion or mammies who wedge themselves into the dominant culture. Generally, they are a bit more polite than mammy and certainly never as headstrong.

Although mammies are often depicted as being independent and aggressive, it is only permitted within limits which have been designated or preestablished by those for whom she works. Consequently, she is relegated to the position of a child, and is consciously aware and reminded of her subordination.

The literature is replete with both written and pictorial images of mammy. The mass media have successfully saturated American audiences with conceptions of black womanhood based on mammy. The mammy image has proven to be the most detrimental and denigrating image or depiction of black womanhood, as it has engendered the greatest amount of support and receptivity from American audiences; and has been perpetuated and maintained from its inception to the present. Mammy has undergone slight modifications throughout her history relative to physical characteristics and clothing; yet, her personality, temperament, and status position, remain virtually unaltered.
Mammy has been portrayed as performing numerous functions, most of which are associated with domestic duties or responsibilities. The domestic duties which mammy has historically performed range from washing dishes to acting as a maidservant. In addition, mammy is responsible for rearing white children and serving as a lifelong companion to these "adopted" children. Her primary functions relative to her relationships with the family members she serves entail giving advice, usually in personal matters, and providing a sympathetic and understanding shoulder to cry on.

The extent to which the image of mammy completely negates past and contemporary conceptions of femininity and womanhood can best be illustrated by examining her attire and other essential attributes.

Much of the clothing which is worn by mammy has its origins in the preslavery and slavery era. Early portrayals of mammy depict her as wearing a plain or drab calico dress or attire commonly worn by domestics, such as an apron covering the dress or clothing worn by cooks. In addition, mammy and her counterpart Aunt Jemima wear a scarf covering their hair.

When slaves were brought to the United States they were supplied with clothing by their masters; and later having been assigned specific duties either in the field or in the home, they were given material to fashion their own clothing.

The plainness and drabness of the dress which was initiated during slavery and was later worn by mammy, occurred for two basic reasons. First, slave masters, solely concerned with maximizing profits and
FIGURE 2: Mammy is primarily responsible for rearing white children and serving as their lifelong companion (Middleton Harris, 1973).
minimizing costs, spent very little money for the clothing of slaves. Secondly, plain and unpretentious clothing attenuated the degree to which the black female slave posed a threat to her mistress.

(Wish, 1972) discusses clothing provided to slaves upon their arrival in America. "The women have two dresses of striped cotton, three shifts, two pairs of shoes etc...I notice especially, they are well supplied with handkerchiefs which the men frequently, and the women nearly always wear on their heads."

The fashioning of handkerchiefs into scarfs to be worn on the head can be traced back to Africa. The agricultural economy and African customs necessitated the covering of one's head with what is referred to as headgear. The African custom of wearing headgear is applicable primarily to women. (Ojo Awaera, 1976).

(Feldstein, 1971) discusses the inadequacy and the paucity of clothing provided to the slaves by their masters, as indicated in the Federal Writers' Project. These narratives reveal, according to Feldstein, that in general men were given one pair of shoes, one hat, one blanket, and approximately five yards of coarse, homespun cotton once a year. Women were given a corresponding outfit and additional material to make one frock for each of their children. In addition, he states that although the allotment was insufficient, the slave could obtain more clothing only by performing additional work.

Clothing of slaves was extremely inadequate; yet, differences in the allocation of clothing were manifested on the basis of status differentials. For example, the overall treatment and care of slaves
FIGURE 3: The fashioning of hankerchiefs into scarfs to be worn on the head can be traced back to Africa (National Geographic, 1964).
depended to a large extent on whether the slave functioned primarily in the master's home or in the field.

(Franklin, 1948) notes that some house servants were privileged with the cast-off garments of their owners, but the average slave wore what was generally referred to as "Negro clothes," consisting of jeans, linseys, kerseys, and osnaburgs for men and calico dresses and homespun fabric for women. Further, he adds, that on some plantations Negro women spun and wove the cloth out of which they fashioned their own dresses. In capsulizing the slave owner's position on clothing his slaves, Franklin states that the planters provided no more clothing than was absolutely necessary, as they reasoned that it was necessary and incumbent upon them to provide food to sustain the slaves and to maintain productivity. However, they (the planters) saw little connection or relationship between clothing and work.

It should also be noted that the fashioning or designing of the dresses which were worn by slave women was to a large extent dictated by their masters; particularly if a woman was the property of a slave breeder, whose primary interest and source of income was the breeding and selling of slaves. Slave breeding was a profitable enterprise particularly in the South where the demand was great for obtaining large numbers of slaves to work in the fields to increase the yield of cotton and tobacco. To facilitate the sale of female slaves, dresses were designed to open in the back, thereby aiding the prospective buyer in examining the condition of the slave.
(Bancroft, 1964) says that personal examination of the women in public was restricted to the hands, arms, legs, bust, and teeth. Further, he cites a New Yorker as stating, "In those days, all frocks were secured in the back with hooks and eyes, so that it was an easy matter to go to the women and unhook their dresses and examine their backs for any signs of flogging. In fact, such signs made a woman unsalable."

In the contemporary illustrations and pictures of mammy it is very apparent that this very subtle feature, of designing dresses which open in the back, which had utility during slavery persists today.

Both mammy and Aunt Jemima are generally depicted by the mass media as being obese. In a culture in which being overweight is considered highly unattractive, it is little wonder that both images have enjoyed such success in generating laughter and acting as symbols or objects of humor for numerous American audiences. It has always been an expectation on the part of movie producers that individuals hired for the role of mammy or Aunt Jemima be overweight and be aided by the the director and other designated individuals in the maintenance of excess weight. Bogel states that in the case of Louise Beavers, known for her portrayals of mammy in the 1920's and the 1930's, "she was heavy and hearty but not heavy and hearty enough." Consequently, she was forced to eat inordinate amounts of food to maintain her weight at two hundred pounds, and was therefore able to continue her career playing mammy roles in the movies.

The fact that obesity could possibly have been detrimental to the health of this actress does not appear to have been a concern to tue
FIGURE 4: Mammies portrayed by the media fail to resemble this real life mammy (Leslie H. Fishel and Benjamin Quarles, 1967).
Ostensibly, obesity is considered quite unpalatable and is perceived as a negative characteristic when possessed by men and particularly so when this quality is attributed to females. However, this was and is not always the case. In Africa stout women, who would be referred to as being overweight in America, are considered quite attractive and feminine. Stoutness in Africa is indicative of affluence and prosperity. (QJo Awera, 1976). In addition, Europe being the country which dictates American fashion and defines femininity, at one time heralded stout or overweight women as does Africa by expressing admiration for a statue of an African woman. This preoccupation on the part of both white males and females relative to the physical attributes of this statue resulted in a fashion which overtook Europe and consequently America. (J. A. Rogers, 1952) states that the celebrated Hottentot Venus was brought from South Africa and exhibited nude in Europe; and was a sensation. She had several white lovers and her projecting buttocks set a fashion among white women, who, in imitation wore a bustle, or a large pad over their hips.

It is this very fascination with the extremely large buttocks and breasts of the African black female, and later the American black female that has historically been depicted in the image of mammy and Aunt Jemima. However, these features are somewhat exaggerated, which accounts for the extreme size of mammy and Aunt Jemima; resulting in an image void of aesthetic qualities as defined by American values and culture. The large breasts and the buttocks examined independently represent
FIGURE 5: The fascination and admiration held by Europeans for the Hottentot Venus' buttocks continues to live on in mammy's large derriere (J. A. Rodgers, 1952).
characteristics which are admired in American women; yet, when these features appear in such an enlarged form they suggest the grotesque.

(Gyland Kain) in his poem "The Blue Guerilla" says, "The big ample bosom of Mammy is as American as apple pie. Everybody wants to rest in the big, soft, warm haven of Mammy's black bosom. Mammy--I love you. Oh Mammy.

Big tittied bitch.
Big legged mama.
"an ass so big it screams of power."

(Verta Mae, 1972) states, "The big bosomed mammy is the prototype of the pin-up girl. Think I'm kidding? Check it out...mammy, Gibson Girl, Aunt Jemima, Jayne Mansfield...all had one thing in common...a heaven for white men's greedy heads."

One of the most common features associated with mammy and Aunt Jemima is the shining white teeth. The teeth are conspicuous for essentially three reasons. First, Europeans, and later Americans expressed fascination with the teeth of slaves. Second, the continuous displaying of the teeth, oftentimes inappropriately, suggests contentment. Lastly, the constant grinning, especially when this form of behavior is unwarranted, produces a comedic effect which ultimately generates the intended laughter from the audience.

During slavery the structure and condition of slaves' teeth were of primary importance to slave dealers and prospective buyers. One of the criteria for determining the functional capabilities of a slave was the thorough examination of his teeth. Further, Europeans and Americans appear to have expressed curiosity and amazement toward the
FIGURE 6: "Check it out... mammy, Gibson Girl, Aunt Jemima, Jayne Mansfield... all had one thing in common... a heaven for white men’s greedy heads" (Donald Bogel, 1973; Philippe Garner, 1974; Donald Bogel, 1973; and May Mann, 1973).
healthiness and whiteness characteristic of slaves' teeth.

(Gilberto Freyre, 1966) states that one of the reasons Negro slaves were chosen to be wet-nurses in Portugal was that they met the specified conditions of the Portuguese hygienists of the time of John V, particularly the specification relating to dental hygiene. "One of these was white, sound teeth; for among the white ladies it was rare to find one with good teeth, and on the basis of the colonial chronicles, anecdotes, and traditions it may be asserted that this was one of the principal causes of jealousy and sexual rivalry between the senhoras (mistresses) and the mucamas (Negro servants or wet-nurses)."

Verta Mae further substantiates this idea, "The thing about the teeth is heavy, cause the European women in Europe and the colonies had a serious dental problem." According to Verta Mae, rivalry between female slaves and their mistresses oftentimes was a direct function of this particular jealousy.

Freyre cites the significance of the black female slaves' teeth relative to their worth at the auction or slave market. "A For Sale ad in Diario de Pernambuco, the oldest daily paper in Latin America, said...Catarina, of the Benguella tribe, tall, heavy-set, upstanding breasts, broad face, thick lips, prominent teeth, very black, pretty figure." (October 9, 1828).

This apparent preoccupation with the teeth of the slaves, particularly those of the female slaves appears to have empirical validation. Verta Mae asserts that most of the Africans had strong white teeth. Consequently, the planters always made the slaves open their mouths to
women in their relationships with whites, particularly those whites controlling or mediating their livelihoods. Further, the black female, historically having been in a favored position relative to that of her male counterpart partially because of her ability to reproduce offspring, thereby adding to the wealth of her master and as a result of the fact that she did not appear as a threat to white males, became extremely well versed in numerous forms of manipulation. She inculcated in her offspring these invaluable skills and abilities.

The facade of contentment also had utility for the planter. Slaveholders wanted to project the image that the institution of slavery was extremely positive and that the slaves received good treatment contrary to stories of the evils of slavery promulgated by many abolitionists. Following slavery, the mass media in America continued to perpetuate the idea to foreigners that the American black was treated equitably. Consequently, mammy and Aunt Jemima as well as other black characters portray the image that they are content with their positions and their plight in life.

(Gilbert Osofsky, 1969) quotes Henry Bibb, a former slave, as saying, "The only weapon of self defense I could use successfully, was that of deception."

Feldstein discusses the mythology of the contented slave. He states that a prevalent belief among non-slaveholders was that, in general slaves were basically content; and that this belief was somewhat a function of the self-preserving deception of the slaves themselves, but primarily a result of gullible and uninformed non-slave-
holding visitors to the plantation. Further, he contends that the masters versed or trained the slaves in answering questions asked about the conditions of slavery. Consequently, the slave, when questioned about slavery, usually responded very positively; thereby, perpetuating the myth that slaves were content with their conditions and overall treatment. Feldstein also discusses the activities which the masters felt were indicative of the slaves' contentment. For example, masters maintained that the singing and dancing reflected the slaves' happiness. Contrary to this belief, he argues that this behavior suggests that despite the horrid conditions of slavery the slaves were able on occasion to engage in some activities which served to temporarily attenuate some of the sorrow and unhappiness.

John Hope Franklin further corroborates this idea, stating that the owners of slaves almost always sought to convey the impression that their human chattel was docile, tractable, and very happy. He further says that this effort became a part of their defense of the institution, and that they (slaveholders) went to the extreme in this representation. In addition Franklin contends that the cruelties inherent in slavery necessitated that slaves at times possess a dual personality. Therefore, he adds that some of the manifestations of the slave were superficial and were for the purpose of misleading his owner regarding his real feelings. Much of the negativity associated with mammy and Aunt Jemima is related to the comedic effects which are produced by many of the aforementioned attributes as well as by behaviors exhibited by these characters which occur inappropriately relative to the context in
FIGURE 7: Singing, dancing, and smiling, a sign of contentment? (Middleton Harris, 1973).
which they appear.

The laughing or grinning at insults or insidious or subtle put-downs are considered humorous to audiences as it appears as if the actor is incapable of exhibiting appropriate behavior or impervious to the message which is being communicated. In addition, continuous grinning is suggestive of idocy or border-line mentality. Consequently, the image of mammy and Aunt Jemima suggests ineptness and the inability to be taken seriously except when matters relate to very elementary subjects or areas which fall within the purview of domesticity.

The foregoing characteristics have dealt primarily with mammy and Aunt Jemima's physical appearance and manner of dress as portrayed by the mass media. Having examined the rationale for the media's portrayal of these images, the demeanor or conduct of mammy and her offshoot will be explored. In addition, personality traits or characteristics will be discussed.

The media's portrayal of mammy's conduct can best be described by examining the functions which she performs, the manner in which she performs these responsibilities, and the rationale for the assignment of these specific duties to mammy as opposed to some other task.

As stated earlier, the tasks which mammy generally performs are domestic in nature. For example, mammy may be portrayed as a maid-servant to a young single woman, child, bachelor, or an entire family. The individuals who are served by mammy are almost always white. In addition, mammy has historically been responsible for giving advice to the individuals for whom she is employed. She usually occupies a sub-
serviant role in relation to her employers; yet, she is generally
given some degree of latitude relative to her verbal aggressiveness.
When mammy's behavior is considered presumptuous she is rapidly
reminded of her position by an almost instantaneous rebuff from those
for whom she is employed. Although mammy is often relegated to the
position of an inferior or subordinate she continues to remain loyal
and content.

There are essentially three factors which account for the
assignment of menial and domestic duties to mammy. First, during and
subsequent to slavery the performing of such tasks by blacks for
whites was status producing. Second, the employing of a black domestic
is indicative of affluence among whites. Finally the myth associated
with the image of mammy suggests that there exists a great deal of
satisfaction on the part of black women relative to performing these
type of duties.

Working in the masters big house was considered a more prestigious
and rewarding job than that of working or toiling in the field
during slavery. Special concessions or considerations were given to
houseservants. For example, the master and mistresses discarded
clothing was frequently given to house slaves; as was the privilege of
accompanying the family to church and selected social affairs. The
differential status positions assigned to blacks during slavery
resulted in an elite or a bourgeois class. The attitudes, customs,
and habits of the house slave were acquired through the frequent
interaction with the master and the mistress. Although there may have
existed differences between the house slave and the field slave
relative to the acquisition and maintenance of the culture of the
slaveholder there was one commonality, both were enslaved and both
were subjected to various forms of denigration; differing only in
degree.

Feldstein confirms the idea that the house slave or servant
occupied a higher social plane than the field slave. He quotes Robert
Anderson as saying that the slaves of the wealthier families bragged
of their connections and held in contempt those who belonged to a
lower-class white family, or those who associated with "'po' white
trash."

As cited earlier Bogel defines mammy as fiercely independent and
cantankerous. This kind of behavior was also exhibited during
slavery by the house servants according to Feldstein's quote of
Benjamin Drew, who states, "From the plantation of "quality folks"
came the better class of Negro. They lived better, held what was
considered good positions, were educated, and had the confidence
and respect of the master. Such slaves did not necessarily claim to
be better than whites, but certainly that they were as good."

Feldstein's quote of Austin Steward further substantiates the
existence of the black upper-class during slavery. "On the plantation,
the house servants were "the stars of the party" and what may be
termed the "black aristocracy."
To the other slaves, they were
models of manner, style, and conduct; they were the better-class
black. Although a system of stratification was developed to provide
some limited rewards to some slaves, the system was nonetheless
despised and resented by the individuals who were victims of this
brutal system. The inordinate number of houseslaves who escaped through the Underground Railroad, the numerous attempts to revolt and the rash of attempted and successful poisonings and killings of masters and overseers suggest that there existed a great dissatisfaction with the institution of slavery by the majority of slaves irrespective of their positions or the minor forms of gratification which they received."

The indignation and the presumption which is expressed by mammy towards the whites for whom she works represents the only socially approved or acceptable outlet for her occasional yet, infrequent feelings of frustration and anger; as portrayed by the media. In addition, she (mammy) has never been afforded the opportunity to step outside these established parameters; which were developed and justified based on the treatment which was and in a few instances is still given to black women functioning in the capacity of house servants in reality.

The notion that black servants in white households is indicative of affluence is not new. This belief dates back to slavery.

Franklin corroborates this contention by asserting that in many instances there were more house servants than necessary. More specifically, Franklin states, "If a planter could display a considerable number of house servants, he could convey the impression, frequently inaccurate, that he had great affluence and lived in a state bordering on luxury. Further, the house servant group tended to perpetuate and even increase itself. Once having served in a home, working in the field was frowned upon and resisted with every
resource at one's disposal. House servants were even anxious to "work" their children into the more desirable situation and to marry them off to children of other house servants. The result was that the group increased in numbers beyond the point necessary to maintain the average planter's home adequately."

The continuous portrayal of mammy performing domestic or menial duties suggests that there exists some degree of satisfaction with this type of work. Historically, mammy has symbolized black women as possessing capabilities suitable solely for domesticity. Implicit in this image is the idea, which has been successfully perpetuated by the media, that not only do black women experience a great deal of comfortability relative to these functions which they invariably assume, but the expectation of their employers should not exceed this minimal level of functioning.

Bogel's discussion of the historical development of blacks in the movie industry reveals a preponderance of black females, both young and old, functioning as house servants. He also suggests that these were the only roles made available to aspiring young black female actresses.

It is suggested by Verta Mae, who quotes the following saying, that the idea that black women are best suited for work is not restricted to visual imagery, and is not peculiar to the American society; but probably exists in most societies which maintained the institution of slavery, or those influenced by western thought.

"White woman for marriage, mulatto woman for f_______, Negro woman for work. . ."

---An old Brazilian saying
FIGURE 8: "White woman for marriage, mulatto woman for , Negro woman for work..." -- an old Brazilian saying. (Brides, 1974; Donald Bogel, 1973; and Middleton Harris, 1973; left to right).
The media also provides a distorted image of the power and social relationships between black women and their families through the portrayal of mammy. The media's depiction of mammy as extremely aggressive and domineering, particularly in the infrequent relationships which she has with black men is responsible for the creation and perpetuation of the myth of the black matriarchy.

Implicit in the image of the black matriarch are the same characteristics which are associated with mammy. Both are conceptualized as being strong, stout, aggressive, domineering, and capable of taking care of themselves, all of which suggests masculinity. As a rule mammies are not depicted within a social sphere of their own; therefore, the idea that she can take care of herself without the aid of anyone, particularly from a black man pertains to her financial security. There appears to have been no place for the black male in the life of mammy as she has been depicted by the media, particularly as the movie medium has portrayed her. This conception is generalized to black women, accounting for the prevalence of literature suggesting black family instability, and emphasizing the inordinate numbers of female-headed households while simultaneously deemphasizing the majority of black families in which both parents are present.

Although there have been black male actors in movies in which mammy has been portrayed, they seldom had anything but a platonic relationship with mammy. Further, mammy is depicted as having no children of her own. The only children which belong to mammy are those belonging to her employer. Mammy's personal relationships are not
FIGURE 9: The mass media emphasizes the female-headed household rather than the nuclear family in the portrayal of the black female (Ebony April, 1975; Leonard Freed, 1969).
significant enough to be portrayed. Her own family is not only kept in the background, they are literally out of the picture.

Suffice it to say, this image has been generalized to black women relative to their relationships with their children. Consequently, research of the black family has continued to suggest black family instability, the black family's inability to provide adequate socialization for their young, and the increasing deterioration and the eventual demise of the black family. Unfortunately, recent researchers have attributed the ultimate responsibility for the problems inherent in the black family on the black woman, (Moynihan, 1965; Rainwater and Yancey, 1967). This mode of displacement appears to be a function of the distorted image of black women depicted by the media through mammy.

Having established that mammy is the epitomy of sexlessness, and the antithesis of femininity in America; it is imperative that the rationale for the creation and the perpetuation of this imagery and symbolism of the American black woman be explored. There are essentially two reasons for the portrayal of the black woman negatively; both can be attributed to the treatment which the female slave received during slavery by white men and women.

The literature is replete with instances of abuse of the female slave. These abuses were sexual, physical and mental in nature. Historians have placed a great deal of emphasis on the pervasiveness of the sexual abuse of the female slave. There appears to have been an informal normative structure which condoned the sexual and physical exploitation of the female slave.
All the Pretty Little Horses

Hushaby, don't you cry.
Go to sleepy, little baby.
When you wake, you shall have cake.
And all the pretty little horses.
Blacks and bays, dapples and grays.
Coach and six-a little horses.

Way down yonder in the meadow,
There's a poor little lambie;
The bees and the butterflies
pickin' out his eyes,
The poor little thing cries,
"Mammy."

Hushaby, don't you cry.
Go to sleepy, little baby.

"All the Pretty Little Horses" is an authentic slave lullaby; it reveals the bitter feelings of Negro mothers who had to watch over their white charges while neglecting their own children.

FIGURE 10: Historically, the media and social researchers have relegated the black woman's children in real and reel life (Middleton Harris, 1973).
The value of female slaves was primarily derived from their ability to reproduce; they like their male counterparts were relegated to an inferior or inhuman position. Slaveowners were frequently known to take female slaves as concubines; while others were satisfied with using the female slave as a sexual outlet. This kind of behavior on the part of slaveowners engendered feelings of jealousy, contempt, and hatred for female slaves by their mistresses. There are numerous accounts of white families breaking up after the birth of a mulatto by one of the female slaves. Oftentimes, this blatant evidence of infidelity was too great for the wife of the planter. Further, the mistresses suffered greater humiliation at the thought that their husbands were attracted to individuals who were solely defined and perceived as savages.

The physical and mental denigration and hostility which the female slave experienced at the hands of her mistress paralleled that of the master and overseer. There are countless stories of the cruelties and the abominable acts the mistresses directed towards the female slave.

According to Feldstein, "Slaves wrote widely about the condition of the female in bondage. Although slavery was generally considered to be a universal nightmare for all involved, the female slave received special and additional tortures peculiar to her sex."

Feldstein then quotes William Anderson, former slave, as saying, "the most despicable area of female slave treatment was that of sexual abuse." On the secrecy of sexual exploits, Feldstein quotes Linda Brent, a former slave, as saying "The secrets of the master-slave
relationship were guarded and concealed from the outside world. The slaves were sure, however, that the masters were the fathers of many slave children. Although it was common knowledge in the slave quarters, the mothers would not dare reveal who the father was. No slave in the quarters, or around the great house, would even allude to it."

One of the effects of portraying the black woman as the antithesis of the white woman, or images depicted by the media of the white woman, who is synonymous with feminity is the denial of sexual attractiveness of the black woman; hence, the total negation of the numerous sexual exploits and abuses inherent in the institution of slavery and those after the abolition of this system.

(Gerda Lerner, 1972) states the following on the topic of the sexual abuse of the black woman during and after slavery. "After slavery ended the sexual exploitation of the black woman continued, in both the North and the South, although in different forms and with somewhat greater risk to the white man involved. To sustain it, in the face of the nominal freedom of black men, a complex system of supportive mechanisms and sustaining myths was created. One of these was the myth of the "bad" black woman. A myth was created that all black women were eager for sexual exploits, voluntarily "loose" in their morals, and, therefore, deserved none of the consideration and respect granted to white women. Further, a wide range of practices reinforced this myth such as the laws against inter-marriages; the denial of the title "Miss or Mrs. to any black woman. . ."
In order to be considered "bad" in the sense of being a "heavy" or aggressive person who utilizes coercion or threats to obtain desired ends, one must be either masculine or possess masculine traits. Mammy does in fact possess these characteristics. Thus, she is portrayed as are black women, as women who do not require special treatment because of their behavior and moral convictions.

Additionally the title mammy and aunt denies the black woman of her proper title or one which customarily commands respect and femininity.

It has been stated by elderly individuals who were reared in the South that until a black woman reached the age of thirty-five she was referred to or addressed as "girl." Once she reached thirty-five she was addressed as "aunt," "mammy," or by her first name. (Adelee Huff, 1976). This type of disrespect for black women occurred during slavery, after slavery, and in many places in the South and the North is evident today, in reality, movies, television, and other media of communication.

Verta Mae confirms this idea stating that Sojourner Truth met Abe Lincoln and requested that he sign her book, in which she kept the names of interesting people that she met; and he wrote "For Aunty Sojourner Truth, October 29, 1864. A. Lincoln". "Aunty" and "Uncle" is what white folks call you when they don't wanna say nigger or nigra, and aint about to call you Mr. or Mrs," says Verta Mae.

One final reason for attributing masculine or nonfeminine characteristics to mammy was to attenuate the extent to which black women posed as threats to white women. The literature is replete with violent behaviors which mistresses directed toward female slaves.
FIGURE 11: President Abe Lincoln meeting with Sojourner Truth and signing her book. (Victoria Oritz, 1974; Helen Peterson.)
Much of this behavior has been attributed to the extreme forms of envy and jealousy experienced by white women relative to the female slaves. Therefore, black women are perceived as no threat or at least this is the intent of the media.
CHAPTER III

ORIGINS OF THE CONCEPT "MAMMY"

For the purpose of determining the meaning of the concept "mammy" in both its original and contemporary form; an attempt was made to identify the origin of this concept. In addition, the historical development of "mammy" was traced to determine the extent to which diverse definitions and connotations have been assigned to this concept.

There appear to be discrepancies as to the exact date or year in which mammy first appears in the literature. These disparities are also evident in the definition of the concept. However, there are some commonalities in the definitions of mammy relative to the consistency with which particular characteristics appear in the literature.


The Oxford English Dictionary indicates that the concept "mammy" first appeared in the English language in Britain in 1523. At this time the concept "mammy" was "a child's word for mother." The scope of this study being limited to the United States necessitates focusing on the usage and origin of the concept within this frame of

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FIGURE 12: The English definition of mammy applies to all mothers regardless of race or ethnicity (National Geographic, September, 1964 and National Geographic, March, 1967).
reference. This source provides a uniquely different definition of the concept "mammy" with reference to its use in America. It reveals that mammy was used in the Southern United States especially before the abolition of slavery; meaning "a colored woman having the care of white children." It cites the first literary usage of this concept as 1859 in the Bartlett American Dictionary, "mammy is a term of endearment used by white children to their Negro nurses and to old family servants."

The earliest citation relative to the usage of the concept "mammy" in the United States appears in A Dictionary of Americanisms; which indicates that 1803 was the first time that this concept can be located in the literature. Reference is made to J. Davis' American Travels as the first literary work in the United States in which the concept appears. "Mammy" is defined by A Dictionary of Americanisms as "a term of affection and respect used by white people especially children to elderly Negro women, especially to those who have been their nurses."

It is also indicated that the concept "mammy" is synonymous with the concept "black mammy."

There appears yet another discrepancy in relation to the origin of "mammy," which is found in A Dictionary of American English. According to this source "mammy" first appeared in 1810 in Lambert Travels Through the United States. This particular work suggests that "mammy" is "an old Negro woman also call "momma," which is a broad pronunciation of "mama."

In addition, other literary works are identified which provide further descriptive and definitive corroboration for this concept. In 1835 Longstreet Georgia Scenes states that "aunt" and "mauma" or "maum" are abbreviations or terms of respect commonly used by children to aged
Negroes. "The first generally prevails in the up country, the second on the sea-board." Further, in 1837 the *Southern Literary Messenger III* says, "aged Negro domestics were greeted always by the kind appellatives of "daddy" and "mammy." Finally, a more descriptive account is provided relative to the appearance of "mammy" in *Page Red Rock* appearing in 1898, "an old mammy in a white apron, with a tall bandanna turban around her head suddenly appeared."

The *Oxford English Dictionary Supplement and Bibliography* offers still another date relative to the appearance of mammy in American literature. It suggests that mammy was first used in 1837 in the *Southern Literary Messenger III*, 744, "these too were greeted always by the kind appellatives of "daddy" and "mammy." This particular reference was also cited by *A Dictionary of American English* as an illustration of the various uses of "mammy in American literature and not as the work in which the concept first appeared.

Although there appear to be discrepancies as to the exact year in which "mammy" appears in American literature; ostensibly, there are similarities relative to the origin and definition of this concept. Many of the foregoing definitions indicate other terms or concepts which can be or have been used interchangeably with "mammy."

The following commonalities can be identified relative to the aforementioned definitions of "mammy": (1) the concept "mammy" originated in the southern region of the United States during slavery as did its synonyms; (2) unlike the English definition, "mammy" as it is used in American culture refers solely to a black woman; (3) the functions performed by "mammy" entail duties associated with
FIGURE 13: "What the barber pole is to the barber shop, the Negro mammy is to the shop selling gifts from the "Old South" (Leonard Freed, 1969).
domesticity for example, childrearing or serving as a nurse to children, cooking, cleaning and other such duties; (4) the concept is applicable solely to black women in their relationships to white families for whom they were either enslaved or employed; (5) "mammy" generally does not refer to all black women, but is restricted to older or elderly black women; (6) the concept, theoretically, is one of endearment or affection when expressed by whites, both children and adults, when addressing black women occupying this status.

In addition to there being similarities there are also disparities relative to the definitions cited. For example, some definitions restrict the use of "mammy" to an appellative utilized solely by children, as does the Bartlett American Dictionary; while other definitions include the usage by adults. Further, some definitions are specific as to the exact functions performed by individuals addressed as "mammy." Stated differently, "mammy" is reserved for the nurse of a child or an individual who assumed the primary responsibility for socialization. Still, other definitions suggest that a "mammy" may perform a broader range of functions. However, in both instances the functions assumed by "mammy" are always domestic in nature.

There are also differences in the synonyms which the various sources identify as being appropriate substitutes for "mammy." The synonyms which are provided are "aunt," "maum," "mama," "mauma," "momma," and "black mammy." However, the term which appears to be used systematically as a synonym for "mammy" is "aunt."

Although the concept "mammy" received the greatest popularity during and subsequent to slavery; and has been perpetuated throughout
FIGURE 14: The image of the elderly black woman conforms to the American
definition of mammy originating from the Old South (Middleton Harris, 1973).
the historical development of this country, the literature suggests that the concept or term "aunt" or "auntie" preceded its use in the United States.

A Dictionary of American English states that the concept "auntie" or "aunty" was first used in the United States in 1792. This indicates that this particular concept or term was used at least eleven years prior to "mammy." This reference defines "auntie" or "aunty" as "a term of address, or familiar designation used or applied to elderly or mature colored women, especially in former times in the South."

The usage of this concept is cited in other literary works. In 1835, Ingraham South-West II, "Planters. . . always address them (s.c. slaves) in a mild and pleasant manner as "uncle" or "aunty." Also cited in 1856, Murray Letters from the United States II, "This was an old nurse, an aunty or mammy, as they are sometimes called (all ancient of the darky kind here are addressed as aunties)."

The recurrent paradox or direct contradiction is that either implicitly or explicitly definitions of "mammy" or "auntie" as well as those of other synonomous concepts or terms suggest that these appelatives connote affection. However, excerpts cited in specific literary works, as well as narratives written by former slaves; and descriptions of the institution of slavery written by historians negate this contention. Examples of the total disregard for and harsh treatment of elderly slaves, particularly older females considered "mammies" is reflected in the reference to them as "darkies and the term or adjective "ancient." Further examples of this can be found in the following excerpts.
A Dictionary of American English makes reference to B.F. Taylor's *World on Wheels* (1874). "The turbaned aunty who opened her mouth like a piano and laughed clean across the plantation." This simile suggests anything but affection or reverence for an individual who has been such an integral part of one's life.

An example of the total disregard for and relegation of black women to a level of insignificance is succinctly stated in the next excerpt, cited by A Dictionary of Americanisms. Lumpkin's *Southerner* (1974). "If I knew their names I would at once forget them, contenting myself with "Sally" or "Jim" or if they were old, perhaps "Uncle" or "Auntie"—generic terms we were wont to use for Negroes whose names we did not know."

Subsequent to slavery the concepts "mammy" and aunt became less acceptable, and were used in literary works, for the most part as whites reminisced about their upbringing in the South; either in the form of narratives, poetry, sayings, or songs. This is substantiated by The Oxford English Dictionary's reference to a statement which appeared in Harper's Magazine in October, 1883. "The Negro no longer submits with grace to be called "uncle and "auntie" as of yore."

This is not to suggest that the concept or its synonyms disappeared completely from American culture; for this is not the case. Where literature in its written form left off, the visual media, both television but initially films picked up. Further, radio as a medium played its part in clinging to the concept of mammy.

In the late 1920's and 1930's the film industry became inundated with the mammy image. As televisions became more prevalent, this
FIGURE 15: "The turbaned aunty who opened her mouth like a piano and laughed clean across the plantation" (Middleton Harris, 1973).
medium was soon to pick up the theme of mammy which had already gained acceptance by the masses in America.

Prior to examining mammy as she is portrayed by the visual media, it is necessary to explain the inferential nature of the data for the purpose of arriving at definitions which are implicit in the depicted or projected image. This differs substantially from written definitions found in the literature which are more explicit.

The visual media unlike literature requires that the viewer be perceptive relative to a valid identification of the characteristics and functions systematically assigned to individuals portraying this image or role. Consequently, in order to provide an accurate and reliable definition of mammy through this medium, it is imperative that there be repeated observations, and that interreliability be established between several observers.

In many instances the audio portion of the visual medium assists in the construction of a definition of mammy. For example, the appellatives "mammy" and "aunt" are utilized in addressing or referring to individuals portraying this role. However, when verbal appellations are not used, the viewer or observer must determine if a sufficient number of the necessary characteristics are present for the purpose of inferring that the image being portrayed is "mammy." Similarly, this process must be repeated in an attempt to determine the connotations assigned to images. For instance, in contemporary movies and especially television situational comedies it is a rarity to hear a character addressed or referred to as "mammy," yet, for the most part, the majority of black female characters which appear
on a systematic basis possess those characteristics historically attributed to mammy.

The appellations used in addressing or referring to these female characters are usually restricted to the first name of the character; which is but another form of disrespect and denigration. The first names generally given to these characters are like those referred to by Bogel. Some of the more familiar ones appearing today are "Florida" (female character in "Good Times," a popular television situational comedy); "Louisee" (female character in "The Jeffersons" whose name is Louise, but pronounced as "ouisee" or "Louisee" by her husband, George); "Ester" (sister-in-law of Fred Sanford on "Sanford and Son"), "Wilona" (next door neighbor on "Good Times"), "Thelma" (daughter on Good Times); just to name a few.

There are also other similarities in the attributes of the leading actresses in television situational comedies; which receive the greatest degree of popularity and extremely high viewer ratings. These characters are verbally aggressive, usually stout in stature, and are married to men who they emasculate either by proving them to be constantly wrong; or either because of their inability to provide an adequate income for their family, resulting in the wife's suggestion that she is willing to take a job doing domestic work to help out. This is not to suggest that all or any of the foregoing characteristics are negative in and of themselves, only that they have been defined as negative within the context in which they occur.

This process of defining the attributes possessed by mammy and Aunt Jemima as negative is not overt, nor is it stated verbally.
The media utilizes subtle and insidious mechanisms which infer that the characteristics attributed to mammy and Aunt Jemima and generalized to all black women are negative, and represent the antithesis of beauty, femininity, and womanhood. One method in which this value judgment is crystallized is by contrasting the image of mammy with other, more valued, images.

There are innumerable films in which the star of the movie, a female actress, is generally someone who is considered exemplary of beauty and femininity as defined by American white society. Consequently, mammy is perceived and portrayed as the exact opposite of these valued qualities. The overwhelming result of this portrayal is that mammy is perceived as an anomaly, deserving of none of the special considerations or reverence which is suggested by written definitions found in the literature.

Bogel confirms this idea. He maintains that, "during the depression, audiences viewing such prime Mae West features as "I'm No Angel" (1933), "She Done Him Wrong" (1933), and "Belle of the Nineties" (1934) could not help noticing the black maids who clustered about the platinum blonde heroine. The domestics were always overweight, middle-aged, and made up as jolly Aunt Jemimas. They wore patch-work dresses and colorful kerchiefs tied about their heads, and they had unusual names: Pearl, Beulah, and Jasmine. Their naive blackness generally was used as a contrast to Mae West's sophisticated whiteness. Inevitably set against white carpeting, white furniture, white decor—not to mention the white Mae West—the stout black figures hustling and bustling about served to heighten the hot white sexuality of their bawdy
mistress. The implications throughout the films were that black women could not possibly be rivals to Mae West's femininity, and that only black women were fit to wait on whores.

Another inference made by the media in its portrayal of mammy which aids in the defining of this visual image is the relegation of mammy to a subordinate or an individual who is treated with little regard for her feelings. Further, mammy is portrayed as being submissive in her relationship with her employers. It is also implied that this status is enjoyed by mammy, and that she is satisfied or content with her position and responsibilities.

This idea is corroborated by Bogel who states that, "Hardly any moviegoer of the 1930's has forgotten how in "I'm No Angel," Mae West, after having bounced from her apartment a socialite who has snubbed her, quickly recovered her cool by giving the most famous instructions any movie maid ever received. "Beulah," she commanded, "peel me a grape!" Beulah (portrayed by Gertrude Howard) scurried into the room. Once again Mae West was in complete control of a situation.

It is from these portrayals that a definition of mammy is constructed. There are both similarities and differences between written definitions and those constructed from inferences made from visual images. In addition there are similarities between examples or descriptions cited in the foregoing literary works vis a vis the images of mammy portrayed by the visual media.

The major similarity found in both written definitions and those inferred, of mammy, by the visual media is the function which is assigned to mammy which is the performing of domestic tasks. Therefore,
mammy is defined as being a domestic or a houseservant. There are many differences between the written definitions of mammy and those inferred from the visual media. For example, written definitions suggest that "mammy" is a term of endearment or affection; yet, the treatment which mammy receives by those individuals with whom she relates does not support the idea of respect suggested in the written definitions. Other disparities relative to these two media are: written definitions do not describe the characteristics of the individual defined as mammy, whereas, visual media systematically depict individuals portraying mammy as obese and dressed in domestic attire; the visual media portrays mammy's temperament relative to blacks, particularly black men, as being aggressive; while her behavior or manner of relating to whites for whom she is employed is based on prescribed expectations of submissiveness or aggressiveness within clearly defined limits; which gives the appearance of obstinence and haughtiness.

Finally, with reference to age, there are also obvious differences. Written definitions of "mammy" state that she is an older, elderly, or ancient black female. Although these definitions do not provide specification as to what constitutes "old," or any of the other synonomous terms, one seldom if ever would consider women of the ages of those portraying mammy to be within this age category. Consequently, the media has expanded the definition of mammy to include middle-aged women as well as elderly black females.

It is not a coincidence that the visual media's agents or artists conceptualized mammy in a fashion similar to descriptions provided in
literary works. Many of the foregoing excerpts precede the visual media's portrayal of mammy. Therefore, it can be concluded that the media's portrayal of mammy has been based on descriptions provided by writers. There appears to be a complimentary relationship between these two media. Stated differently, the negative aspects or attributes assigned to mammy which one medium omits, the other (medium) includes.

It is possible to construct a definition of "mammy" on the basis of the media's systematic portrayal of mammy as always possessing similar characteristics. Therefore, the following definition is a result of the inferences made from mammy's appearance in the visual media:

"Mammy is a middle-age or older black female. She is stout or obese, her complexion is dark brown. She functions as a house servant or a domestic. She usually has a kerchief or her head or head wear associated with domestic attire. She conducts herself in an aggressive manner toward blacks, and is usually submissive in her relationships with her white employers. In her appearances in films, she seldom if ever has her own family, as she becomes totally enmeshed in the white family for whom she is employed. When appearing on television, she usually has a family of her own, in which case, she is domineering and controls decision-making within the home. In both, films and on television programs she is addressed or referred to either as "mammy" or by her first name."

Ostensibly, this definition is far more inclusive and comprehensive than those appearing in reference books. However, such a definition enables the viewer or the observer to readily identify mammy in the visual media, whether appearing in films or in television shows. In addition it should be noted that black women portraying the "mammy" image on contemporary television do so in situational comedies, and are not given any serious parts or roles.
The foregoing definition in no way addresses the issue of symbolism relative to the systematic portrayal of mammy by the media, particularly the visual media; which today is extremely powerful in conveying messages and transmitting values, beliefs, and ideals. However, mammy is symbolic of black womanhood, and is depicted by the media as a negative symbol, resulting in the generalization of this image to all black women. The primary reason which accounts for the identification of mammy as a symbol of black womanhood can be found in the relative absence of other images of black women in the mass media.

Other definitions of mammy are for the most part written by contemporary writers. Both Bogel and Verta Mae have defined mammy; included in which is a description of her appearance and her temperment. Further, each discusses the negative attributes which have been so defined and assigned to "mammy." In addition, both authors discuss or allude to the exploitation of this image as portrayed by the mass media. Bogel's discussion and definition of mammy is restricted to her portrayal by the film industry. Verta Mae not only discusses the media's portrayal of mammy, but also examines the numerous contributions of the black women who occupied this status in American society. Finally, both authors distinguish between mammy and Aunt Jemima. Bogel does so on the basis of the temperments attributed to mammy compared to that possessed by Aunt Jemima. Accordingly, "mammy is a bit more cantankerous, while Aunt Jemima is always portrayed as a jolly, less serious black woman."
According to Verta Mae, mammy has the physical features earlier described, all of which result in a negatively portrayed image based on American values. In terms of the functions performed by real life mammies as well as those portrayed by the media, Verta Mae states, "Mammy not only cooked, but she cleaned her way to freedom. You might say she cleaned the very assholes of America. America has sucked Mammy dry. America's mother is a mammy."

The idea that all black women are considered mammies as a result of the disproportionate number of mammy images which have flooded the media is supported by Verta Mae, who says, "W.F.'s (White Folks) have spent lots of energy, hundreds of hours, and thousands of dollars to keep mammy alive—in real and reel life, literature, TV, radio, and their minds. The mammy mystique is so strong that they see a little of mammy in every Black woman who works for them."

The distinction which is made by Verta Mae relative to mammy and Aunt Jemima has nothing to do with the personalities, physical features, or the functions which they are assigned by the media. Rather, she differentiates these two images on the basis of the functions which they perform in their commercial use. Stated differently, Aunt Jemima is a black female like mammy who is associated with the kitchen and with foodstuffs to the extent of having been placed on a box cover.

As a result of the salience of the image of Aunt Jemima and the historical relevance of this image in America, an entire chapter will be devoted to the identification of her origins. The historical development of this image will also be explored.
FIGURE 16: "America's mother is a mammy" (Murry N. Depillars, 1976).
Further, attempts will be made to identify similarities and differences in the portrayed images of Aunt Jemima and mammy relative to the historical development of each in the mass media.

Finally, the various definitions of each will be examined to determine if these individuals are one and the same in reality; yet, two completely separate personalities for the purposes of the mass media and American society.
CHAPTER IV
TRACING THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF MAMMY

The media has provided American society with diverse portrayals of the image of mammy. Each medium has depicted mammy in disparate ways; yet, have maintained a sufficient number of characteristics generally attributed to this image to insure its recognizability and acceptance. By tracing the historical development of the image of mammy relative to various media, it becomes evident that changes have occurred in the portrayal of the image since its inception or initial appearance in the literature. For example, originally mammy was conceptualized and portrayed solely on the basis of her relationship with the white families with whom she was employed or owned. Later she was portrayed as being an integral component of her own family unit. Nonetheless, mammy is most commonly or generically perceived by American society in the former setting or milieu.

The image of mammy will be examined from a historical perspective as portrayed by the following media: literature, films, radio, and television. The order in which each medium will be examined relative to the image mammy is based on the chronology of her appearance in each.

The historical portrayal or depiction of mammy in American literature has been cited earlier. It was suggested by many sources that mammy appeared most frequently in the literature during and immediately
subsequent to slavery. Approximately eighteen years following slavery appears the first statement in an American magazine indicating that blacks were no longer willing to be subjected to the denigrating appellatives which had become an acceptable and recognized form of address by American whites, particularly those residing in the southern region of the United States. Nonetheless, there continued to be a plethora of references made to mammy or the synonym of this concept; which is "aunt" or one of the forms of the term aunt. For example, newspapers continued to refer to black women as "aunt" or "ancient" in the reporting of stories. The term ancient is not a synonym but has been used in defining the concept. The advertisement section of daily newspapers was primarily responsible for the continuous and overt reference to black women in a negative manner.

The reporting of stories like that of the advertising for positions or jobs relative to black women were overwhelmingly negative in content and flavor, and reflected a dichotomy. This dichotomy has been alluded to earlier, and is a consistent theme throughout the history of this country in reference to the treatment of black women. It is the portrayal of the black woman as either a girl or a mammy. Implicit in the conception and portrayal of the black woman as a girl is the notion of the bad girl.

The advertisement section of daily newspapers quite frequently carried want ads for domestic workers which generally requested employment of a girl as opposed to an older woman.

A local newspaper in Columbus, Ohio, the Columbus Dispatch, carried the following advertisement on January 20, 1871: "Wanted--A
Here reference is made to locating a good girl which has many implications. It can be inferred that what is being requested in terms of the adjective "good" relates both to the worker's capabilities as a domestic as well as to her behavior. Gerder Lerner and others maintain that the conception and perception of the black woman as "bad" is inextricably woven into America's conceptualization and portrayal of the black woman.

News reporting relative to black women was reported in a similar fashion. The following two stories are examples of this. Both are taken from the Columbus Dispatch.

On September 4, 1871 in an article entitled "Downright Shameful" it is reported in a humorous tone, that an austere matronly colored woman reported to the police in a southern patois about a man who engaged in profane language, defaming her character on the Sabbath day.

The above story was reported in such a manner as not to be taken seriously by anyone. The seriousness or the genuine concern of the complainant was attenuated and replaced with the ludicrousness of the entire episode.

On December 7, 1871, the same newspaper reports, "An ancient colored woman known in this city as "Old Aunt Jenny" died on Tuesday evening. . . Two of her children are imbeciles and should now to be taken to the Idiot Asylum."

Again, the terminology and tone of this as well as numerous other stories indicates the generalization of the mammy image with its negative implications to all black women. The terminology is similar to that which is found in literary works and other sources which
is also mentioned that it was said in 1958 and 1970 that one reason why such actresses as Eartha Kitt in Anna Lucasta and Lola Falana in The Liberation of L. B. Jones failed to emerge as important screen love goddesses was that they were too dark.

Following Bogel's historical study of blacks in movies, the 1930's was an important transitional period. It was during this era that mammy and other black characters no longer dressed as old-style jesters. Instead, they became respectable domestics. Bogel calls this the Age of the Negro Servant. He also calls this era the Golden Age for black performers. Again, the movies during this era reflect a great deal of exploitation and mistreatment of the black-servant performers.

Throughout the history of blacks in the movie industry mammy has been portrayed in the stereotypic fashion discussed earlier. The only evident difference in the portrayal of mammy resides in the temperment of the character. The functions performed were essentially the same as were the prescribed expectations held by the individuals for whom mammy was employed.

Bogel discusses the three great movie mammies and the manner in which they portrayed the images or characters in the various films in which they appeared. Louise Beavers, Hattie McDaniel, and Ethel Waters are renowned as the film industries most famous and impressive mammies. By tracing the careers which each of these individual black actresses had it is possible to simultaneously examine the historical development of mammy in the movie industry. Although there were other actresses playing isolated roles of mammy, it was
organize a militant movement to "keep their good-for-nothing husbands at home."

In 1915 mammy appeared again in D. W. Griffith's "Birth of a Nation." Again, mammy as were all the black characters, portrayed by actors in blackface. This became the most controversial Civil War drama ever to be released in America, according to Bogel. Mammy is portrayed as a faithful houseservant in the big house and is, like the other characters, content with performing her duties. All of this contentment with slavery and the positions assumed by these family servants is destroyed with the Civil War.

In the "Birth of a Nation" mammy is portrayed as overweight, middle-aged, and dark complexioned. According to American values mammy was completely sexually unappealing. Stated succinctly, mammy was desexed. Again she was representative of black womanhood.

This movie was deemed highly controversial as a result of its stereotypic nature; as well as its attempts to perpetuate myths regarding the conduct of blacks and their satisfaction or contentment with their conditions of enslavement. However, the American public was very supportive and receptive, making the "Birth of a Nation" one of the highest grossing movies of all times.

Bogel points out that D. W. Griffith's delineation of color categories for black actresses was maintained through the sixties in the movie industry. According to Griffith's scheme, a dark actress was considered for no role but that of a mammy or an Aunt Jemima; while the part-black woman—the light-skinned Negress was given a chance at lead parts and was graced with a modicum of sex appeal. It
describe and define mammy. It is through this particular medium in both news stories and want ads that the image of mammy and the bad girl image were most successfully perpetuated; primarily because of the accessibility, popularity, and costs of newspapers over other media.

Emphasis will be placed on the visual media's portrayal of the mammy since this is the primary focus of this paper. Consequently, the examination of other media's conceptualization and depiction of this image will not include the depth and comprehensiveness of that of the visual media. The purpose for examining on a cursory level the historical development of mammy in these other media is two-fold: (1) to reveal the contiguous nature and the chronological development and solidification of the "mammy image" into American culture; and (2) to demonstrate how other media successfully laid the groundwork and supplemented the visual media; which is one of the most impactful and powerful of all the media, in promulgating this imagery throughout American society.

Next, is the examination of the film industry's portrayal of mammy from a historical perspective. The most comprehensive and exhaustive study of mammy as she is depicted by the film industry was conducted by Bogel. It should be noted that Bogel also alludes to the dichotomy, mammy—bad-black-girl image, maintained by the mass media.

Mammy made her first appearance in films in 1914 in the black-face version of Lysistrata. The comedy was entitled "Coon Town Suffragettes;" and dealt with a group of bossy mammy washerwomen who
these three actresses who gained the greatest degree of notoriety in the United States. Consequently, they served as models to be emulated by other not as successful actresses; for they portrayed the image of mammy, as well as that of all black women, to the satisfaction of the American public. It should be noted that had they fallen short of the expectations of the studio agents, who represented the views of the American public, they would not have become famous movie mammies. Further, as stated earlier, literary works predating films had conceptualized, described, and defined mammy in great detail. Consequently, the only thing which remained for the film industry was the location of individuals possessing such traits or characteristics. Initially, since the film industry did not hire blacks to portray the black characters in the movies, it was necessary for them (studio agents) to employ white actresses with all of the stereotypic features of mammy with the one obvious exception—skin color. Therefore, it was left up to the studio agents to provide the actresses portraying mammy with a darker complexion which they not only did but over did; to the extent that the white actresses were blacker than any real life black actress ever portraying mammy in the history of the film industry. In fact, these black face actresses more closely resemble mammies depicted in cartoons. Both images reflect the wild imaginations of artist's conceptualizations vis a vis real life individuals occupying the status of mammy. These black face actresses were successful in generating the intended laughter from the masses in America. Therefore, when they were replaced by black actresses, not nearly as comedically black, the same imagery and negative connotations
FIGURE 17: Caricatures and this blackface mammy portrayed by white actress Lillian Leighton reflect distorted portrayals of many American artists (Middleton Harris, 1973; Daniel Leah, 1975).
remained; as they had become an integral part of and imbedded in the character.

Louise Beavers became the first distinctive mammy figure in movies. She played in an assortment of maid roles in Hollywood films. She was carefully groomed for her mammy and Aunt Jemima roles; becoming one of the most successful black actresses during her career.

In reality Louise Beavers did not fit the stereotypic image which she portrayed in innumerable films. In fact, she had to go on force-feed diets to maintain her weight in excess of two hundred pounds. On those occasions in which she was under pressure relative to heavy scheduling, she oftentimes lost weight, and was padded by studio agents to give the effect that she was a larger woman. She also had problems with her accent, when the talkies came in; for Louise Beavers was born in Cincinnati, Ohio and moved to Los Angeles in 1913 and attended school as Pasadena High. She had to instruct herself in speaking in the slow-and easy backwards dialect or southern patois for the purpose of maintaining her roles in talkie films.

Louise Beavers not only was subject to humiliation by portraying the mammy image but also in real life during an audition. During the filming of "Imitation of Life" Miss Beavers was insulted by a young white girl, cast for the role of Peola at the age of ten. The young girl, Dorothy Howard, learned that Miss Beavers was to portray her mother, and exclaimed that she did not want her, "She's black!" Another humiliating situation was also encountered by Louise Beavers when, during the filming of the same film, she requested that the word "nigger" be removed from the script. With the assistance of
FIGURE 18: Louise Beavers had to be carefully groomed to portray mammy (Donald Bogel, 1973).
FIGURE 19: Louise Beavers in "Imitation of Life" experienced problems in the filming of her portrayal of mammy (Donald Bogel, 1973).
the NAACP she was successful in having this term removed; however, she was punished for having done this. Her punishment was that she was called into the front office and made to pronounce "Negro" repeatedly. Nonetheless, "Immitation of Life" was her greatest film. Her performance was so outstanding that critics were taken aback when she failed to receive a nomination from the Academy for an Oscar.

Louise Beavers portrayed mammy as a sensitive, submissive, and sympathetic individual. She was received very well by American audiences. She was extremely loyal to her employers as cast in the many movies in which she played. Bogel states that Louise Beavers was the essence of Christian unselfishness.

Other movies in which Louise Beavers played are: "Uncle Tom's Cabin in the late 1920's, in which she was considered for a mammy role because of her size and color. However, because of her youthful appearance she was given a role as a cook. According to Bogel, Miss Beavers, at this time in her career, was healthy and hearty but not healthy and hearty enough. She also appeared in the following screen performances early in her screen career: "Annabelle's Affairs," "Girls Around Town," "She Done Him Wrong," and "Bombshell." These are but a few of the movies in which she portrayed mammy.

Hattie McDaniel played every aspect of the stereotyped mammy character that existed; to the extent that she met with constant ridicule from her critics. Miss McDaniel portrayed mammy as a big-bosomed maid, fussy, and fiercely independent. However, it must be remembered that she was aggressive within defined or pre-established
limits. The American public enjoyed and was very receptive to this movie mammy, not only because of her loyalty to the white families for whom she worked in the movies, but primarily because she was pretentious in her showmanship. She was boisterous and never failed to speak her mind. It was always assumed by the audiences who comprised Miss McDaniel's constituency, that she was acting only in behalf of the white family for whom she worked, therefore, her verbal aggressiveness and temerity was acceptable under these circumstances.

Bogel maintains that during the 1930's, which was a profitable era for movie mammys, that this was the age in which the servant emerged as a social equal. She literally became a mother figure. Further, the put-on was carried to the forefront of the action, and the style of the servant overpowered the content of the script.

It should be noted that black actresses portraying mammy during the early years of blacks in films did so not because they were in agreement with these stereotypic images but because these roles were the only ones available to them. It was either that they portray these denigrating characters or find another profession or career. The black actresses during this era of movies had become inured with the roles for which they would be considered. The most they could hope to do to improve their plight was to challenge extreme forms of degradation and humiliation inherent in the script. Each actress had or utilized her own unique mechanisms of dealing with the subtle and overt forms of humiliation with which she was confronted in the movie industry.
As cited above, Louise Beavers dealt with these problems by demanding that the script be free of certain terminology. Further, she made it clear to studio agents that she had never been trained in the area of domesticity. Consequently, professional white cooks had to prepare foods usually pancakes; and Miss Beavers would merely stand in front of the stove giving the audience the impression that she had prepared the food. Unlike Louise Beavers, Hattie McDaniel had yet another method of attenuating the extent to which she was humiliated by Hollywood movie agents as well as the American public.

Miss McDaniel used her aggressiveness and bossiness as a means of retort. Fortunately, for Hattie McDaniel, studio agents as well as the American public were receptive to her portrayal of mammy. She was permitted to maintain this posture of equalizing her status with those for whom she was employed or for whom she was owned as cast in the numerous movies in which she played. Although Miss McDaniel portrayed mammy as an aggressive individual oftentimes stepping out of place she, like other movie mammies, maintained one essential expectation, loyalty.

Bogel states with reference to a maid or mammy role played by Miss McDaniel in "The Mad Miss Manton" with Barbara Stanwyck, that the talking back to Barbara Stanwyck, as well as to others that were casts as Miss McDaniel's employers or owners, was a triumph of sorts as Miss McDaniel was doing what every black maid in America must have wanted to do at one time or another. He also adds that Hattie McDaniel's flamboyant bossiness often can be read as a cover-up for deep hostility, and that she seemed to time her lines to give her black audience that impression.
Miss McDaniel's portrayal of mammy in "Gone with the Wind," according to Bogel, marks an end to the mammy era. This was one of the most spectacular mammy movies in the thirties; and one which resulted in Miss McDaniel becoming the first black actress to win an Academy Award as Best Supporting Actress. It was her performance as the O'Hara family's faithful mammy that won her this award.

The significance of this performance is that Hattie McDaniel's portrayal of mammy in this movie is reputed to have more closely resembled the relationships which occurred between mammies and the white children which they reared during slavery than any movie prior or subsequent to this one. Further, Bogel states that in this film, "Mammy had brought to light a fact that white audiences had long ignored or suppressed: here was a black maid who not only was capable of running the Big House but proclaimed in her own contorted way her brand of black power. McDaniel scared her audience. Indeed, in the South there were complaints that she had been too familiar with her white employers."

What had happened was that Hattie McDaniel had become too independent and presumptuous for the white American public. Her portrayals of mammy had become too radical and revolutionary; primarily because she represented, as did other movie mammies, all black women in America. Consequently, it would have been detrimental to American society had this behavior become adopted by the large numbers of black women, particularly in their relationships and interactions with their employers. In addition, severe problems were subject to erupt
FIGURE 20: Hattie McDaniel's portrayal of mammy in "Gone with the Wind" marks an end to the mammy era, according to Bogel (Donald Bogel, 1973).
as a disproportionate number of black women during the 1930's were engaged in this profession, either as cooks or maids.

This is not to suggest that there were no black actresses portraying mammy after the thirties; for, this was not the case. What did occur, however, was that American audiences were no longer as receptive to these characters. They (mammies) were still capable of generating a great deal of laughter, but according to Bogel, their overall impact was gone. Therefore, the 1940's marks an end of the servant era, and more specifically, the end of the mammy era for the movie industry.

In the 1940's a new mammy was born, exhibiting a unique temperament unlike that of either Louise Beavers or Hattie McDaniel. It was Ethel Waters who became the mammy of the new era. The middle forties marked the appearance of new mammies which corresponded to the new social policy of the American government relative to blacks. Further, in tracing the developmental history or the evolution of the study of the Black Family, as a subfield in sociology, it is cited by Andrew Billingsley (Robert Staples, 1971) as the era in which studies and research became focused on the black family, initiating primarily out of the Chicago School.

With the forties came the serious performers relative to prior years. The reason being is that America was just emerging from the Depression, and was being confronted with facism in Europe; and was also experiencing more vocal black civil rights advocates suggesting that blacks be given equal opportunities in all areas of employment including the movie industry. Further, reformist groups wanted
stereotypes and myths which had historically been perpetuated about blacks to be eradicated from films.

According to Bogel, President Roosevelt issued an Executive Order which forbade racial and religious discrimination in war industries. Later the government pushed for integration in all areas. The movie industry was soon to follow the war and other progressive industries in America.

In addition, he (Bogel) cites an article appearing in the *New York Times*, February, 1943 which corroborates the position of the government and that of the movie industry.

"Two major studios, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and Twentieth Century Fox, in producing pictures with all-Negro casts, are following the desires of Washington in making such films at this time. Decisions to produce the pictures, it is stated, followed official expression that the Administration felt that its program for increased employment of Negro citizens in certain heretofore restricted fields of industry would be helped by a general distribution of important pictures in which Negroes played a major part."

In keeping with this theme, Bogel adds that the postwar movie audiences of the late 1940's were prosperous but not very relaxed; and demanded that films reflect the problems and issues confronting all Americans, which during this era began to include those concerns of black Americans as well. Consequently, Hollywood was forced to provide American audiences with realism, or more accurately some semblance thereof. In addition, there was a tendency to focus on
previously ignored topics such as antisemitism and racial discrimination.

This is not to imply that the new mammy characters introduced during the forties played serious parts or roles which had social significance or relevance. For this certainly was not the case. In fact, all though this sentiment existed or was verbalized in America, the reality was the contrary. The primary reason that mammy could never in any form or unique portrayal be cast in a serious role is a function of the attributes assigned to the image which completely obviate any seriousness on the part of the character. The image of mammy with its overt and implicit negative connotations precludes realism and relevance relative to those concerns confronting black women in their relationships to either the black or white social systems of which they are a part. It does so by the portrayal of an image whose comedic attributes transcend its serious nature. Stated differently, emphasis has always been placed on mammy's ability to generate laughter and her inability to perform tasks other than those associated with domesticity. Therefore, she could not possibly be capable of handling problems of a complex nature. Unfortunately this inability to function on anything but an elementary level is generalized to all black women in America.

Ethel Water's portrayal of mammy is perhaps the movie industry's first attempt to depict this character as she is defined in resource materials. Miss Waters portrays mammy as an elderly woman who is highly respected by the individuals for whom she is employed. Unlike earlier mammies there is nothing inherent in this portrayal of mammy
to indicate humor at the expense of the character and the overall group of black women for which she stands. Like the reference books which depict or define mammy as an older or elderly woman who has assumed the responsibility for rearing the white children who address her with this appellative, Ethel Waters portrays the same kind of image of mammy. Both portrayals are based on idealism in that they in no way reflect the true or authentic nature of individuals who occupy this status in real life. The portrayals of mammy undertaken by Louise Beavers and Hattie McDaniel were based on a type of humor which was capable of generating laughter by promoting stereotypes and other forms of denigration not only to the black actresses portraying mammy but also to the black women in America represented by this omnipresent image. It is also unfortunate that the mammy image portrayed by Miss Waters was similar to that idealistic picture conceptualized by definitions located in resource books. As cited earlier, these definitions which either explicitly or implicitly indicate that mammy was a highly respected black woman were later refuted by literary works and by slave narratives recounting the treatment of black women in general, and those who were elderly in particular.

Of particular importance in the visual area relative to the imagery of mammy is the extent to which the character or image can be recognized on the basis of characteristics which have become generically associated with mammy. Prior to Miss Water's portrayal of mammy the characteristics traditionally associated with mammy were related to size, complexion or color of skin, and the conduct exhibited in interactions with blacks, but primarily whites for whom mammy was
employed or if the script was written about slavery; mammy's relationship with the planter and his family was focussed on. There was also consideration given to the age of the black actress portraying mammy, as she could not be too youthful in appearance; yet, she could not be too old. Therefore, the ripe age for an actress looking for success in a career as mammy was that of middle-age, which is completely antithetical to that which is described or defined by resource books and other literary works.

Although the portrayal of mammy by Ethel Waters provides corroboration for the definitions appearing in resource materials, it is one which is not universally known to American audiences; who for the most part, have become familiar with traditional stereotypic images. Consequently, the image of mammy that is portrayed by Miss Waters was for the most part not recognized as such by the American audiences, who were by this time accustomed to and saturated with the younger, bigger, blacker, and more emotional women than the mammy which she portrayed.

From the perspective of American audiences, the portrayals of mammy by Miss Waters was akin to the American conception of a grandmother and not the stereotyped conception of mammy. In fact, Ethel Waters once played the role of Granny in "Pinky" filmed in 1943.

In 1952 Miss Waters again portrays mammy in "The Member of the Wedding." She played the role of Berenice, a cook, housekeeper, protectress, reprimander, advisor, and confidante to Frankie Adams, played by Julie Harris, a twelve-year-old motherless girl entering adolescence and her six-year-old sickly cousin-playmate.
Miss Waters provides this family with her wisdom and knowledge; offering guidance and comfort throughout their years until adulthood is reached by Frankie. It is at this point that Berenice is no longer needed. Consequently, she seeks another family in need of her humble wisdom and concern for humanity. Although Miss Waters was symbolic of the strength and courage inherent in black women, this tribute was restricted, by virtue of its imagery, to the older black woman and not to the masses.

Bogel maintains that Miss Water's characterizations were well received by black audiences as she personified the black spirit they believed prevailed during the hard times of slavery, and they felt she brought dignity and wisdom to the race; and for white audiences, Ethel Waters spoke to an inner spirit of a paranoid and emotionally paralyzed generation that longed for some sign of heroism. He (Bogel) also adds that it was Miss Water's personality reflected in her autobiography *His Eye Is On The Sparrow*, which resulted in the sentimental attachment and admiration which American audiences held for her as opposed to the characters which she portrayed.

In her autobiography, Miss Waters tells of the struggles and obstacles which she encountered as a young child and through her entire life. It is from these tales of woe that audiences became sympathetic to her and rooted for her success and happiness in the movies in which she played.

The receptiveness of black audiences to this new concept or portrayal of mammy appears to have been a function of discontent and total dissatisfaction with prior images of mammy which had inundated
black and white audiences. Ethel Water's portrayal was envisioned as the first stage in the evolution of more authentic and realistic portrayals of mammy and black women. However, this should in no way suggest complete or absolute satisfaction on the part of black audiences with the new image itself; only the perception of a minor victory, which was long awaited, in the overall goal. Unfortunately, the image of mammy, representing all black women did not evolve into more accurate depictions by the mass media, particularly in the visual sphere.

The next mammy to appear in movies in a leading role was Claudia McNeil and Sidney Poitier in "Raisin in the Sun." She like the majority of mammies preceding her with the exception of Ethel Waters fit the stereotyped image of mammy quite well. However, she maintained the tradition established by Miss Waters by not overtly playing a comedy role. Here role was considered serious in nature by American audiences. She was portrayed as a motherly figure, again incapable of performing tasks other than domestic.

Unlike her predecessors, Claudia McNeil also introduced a new portrayal of mammy in that she was portrayed as being responsible for and relating to a new kind of family unit—her own. This was revolutionary for the mammy image, in that for once a black woman had a family and private life of her own. This was perhaps yet another minor victory in the struggle for authentic portrayals of black women. However, in retrospect blacks during the sixties and the seventies in a reassessment of blacks in films described this portrayal of blacks as being detrimental to the
FIGURE 21: Claudia McNeil and Sidney Poitier in "Raisin in the Sun" and Virginia Capers in new version of "Raisin" with mammy image revived (Encore, July, 1975).
image of black family life. It was maintained during this reevaluation period that the attention of blacks had been averted by what appeared to have been progress. By taking a closer examination at the images being portrayed it was later maintained that the mass media, particularly the visual media had become more insidious and sophisticated in their portrayal of blacks. For example, black females were still being portrayed as super aggressive relative to their relationships with black men, which according to American values suggests masculinity. In addition, black females more specifically, mammy was portrayed as emasculating women who relegated the black man from his adult position to that of a boy.

( Frances Cress Welsing, 1974 ) a black female psychiatrist was one of the first proponents of this position. It was also added that the myth of the black matriarch does not typify black male-female relations ( Hill, 1971 ).

Subsequent to this film, mammy images were essentially replaced by the bad-black-girl image relative to leading roles in films.

The visual media received a great deal of assistance in the perpetuation of the mammy image by other media. The extent to which newspapers and literature aided have been cited earlier. However, the audio medium was also instrumental in providing supplementary assistance to the visual media.

The appearance of mammy is found as early as 1928 in radio programming on the Amos and Andy show; " which was aired over WMAQ, Chicago. It became one of the most popular and longest-running programs in radio history.
It should be recalled that the 1920's marked an era in movies in which blacks in general, and mammy in particular were portrayed by white actors in blackface as jesters. Not only was this true for the film industry but also occurred in radio.

One major difference between radio and movies was that the former portrayed the black woman or mammy within the context of having relationships within the black community as opposed to restricting her relationships and interactions to white families. Unfortunately, these male-female relationships were based on myths and other negative conceptualizations of how black males and females relate.

The primary female characters or mammies portrayed were Sapphire Stevens, played by Ernestine Wade, and Madame Queen, played by Harriette Widmer. These females were middle-aged mammies who were extremely bossy, aggressive and emasculating toward their men. They like the other characters were purely comedic in nature.

Mammy's next radio appearance was on "Fibber McGee and Molly." It was during this program that the maid Beulah was introduced; and became a character who eventually evolved into a separate radio program of her own; as a result of the widespread acceptance of this character by American audiences.

Radio like its visual counterpart allowed a white man, Marlin Hurt, to play the character of Beulah. Unlike films the audio nature of radio precluded the necessity for white actors to use burnt cork, unless there was an audience in the studio during the broadcast.

As cited earlier by Bogel, the thirties was the era in which blacks portrayed servants in the movie industry. This also held true for radio.
In the "Fibber McGee and Molly Show" Beulah had some catch phrases which became familiar to American audiences throughout the country. (Buxton and Owen, 1972) state that the catch phrases associated with Beulah were:

Beulah. "Somebody bawl for Beulah?"

Beulah. (laughs) "Love that Man!"

"Fibber McGee and Molly" stayed on the air until 1952, appearing at 9:30 p.m. with few exceptions, on Tuesday, NBC promoted the show as comedy night.

"The Beulah Show" evolved from Fibber McGee and Molly, with Marlin Hurt continuing in his role as this famous radio mammy. It was also known, as indicated by the script, as the "Marlin Hurt and Beulah Show." Following Marlin Hurt's death in 1947, the program was revived on ABC. Bob Corley, another white man, took over where Hurt left off playing Beulah. Corley was twenty-one years old when he took over the Beulah role. He claimed that age and hormones eventually prevented him from being able to do the Beulah voice.

The Beulah program finally moved to CBS with the revolutionary innovation of permitting a black woman to play Beulah. Black actresses who played Beulah were Hattie McDaniel, Louise Beavers, and Lillian Randolph. The first two actresses played mammies for more than one medium, as their careers had been developed around and dependent upon the mammy image. Again the show, as was the character, based solely on comedy. The catch phrases were essentially the same, except a new one which was added:

Beulah. "On the con-positively-trairy!"
Finally, the television industry was next to perpetuate the negative mammy image throughout the country. One element which aided this visual medium in the maintenance of this negative imagery was the advent and utilization of color. However, mammy was initially portrayed in black and white, and later appeared in color.

There is a great degree of contiguousness between the radio industry's auspicious characters and those early characters appearing on television. For example, the early portrayals of mammy and consequently black women are to be found in the same television shows which were once exclusively heard over radio stations. More specifically, both "Amos and Andy" and the "Beulah Show" were initially comedy radio shows in which mammys were portrayed. Later, these shows appeared on television, providing real images for what once was left to the audiences imagination and conceptualizations based on visual images which had established a firm foundation in films and in American society.

Television programs in which mammy was portrayed followed a different chronological sequence than that established by radio. "Beulah" appearing on ABC debuted on October 10, 1950 and was televised until September 22, 1953. Mammy was portrayed by Louise Beavers, Ethel Waters, and Hattie McDaniel. Bogel comments about these three famous movie mammys and the irony of them all appearing on television as television mammys.

Next was the "Amos and Andy Show" in which there were famous mammys. Sapphire and her mother, "Mama" were the mammys which the male characters had to contend with.
FIGURE 22: Famous movie mammies also famous television mammies portraying the character "Beulah" (Daniel Blum, 1959).
The "Amos and Andy Show" was the first televised over CBS on June 28, 1951 and was aired through June 11, 1953.

The next mammies to appear on television reappeared in the 1970's in situational comedy series. New versions of mammies were portrayed on "Good Times," by Esther Rolle; "The Jeffersons," by Isabel Sanford; and on "That's my Mama," by Theresa Merritt. These situational comedy mammies were not new to American audiences, for similar mammies had appeared in films, such as Claudia McNeil. However, this more subtle mammy, who appears on the surface to assume somewhat of a passive role, which in the end usually proves her husband wrong is somewhat novel for television viewers. Critics have argued that these mammies are more harmful than the earlier ones who assumed an overtly aggressive role relative to their husbands; for the message of emasculation, and the matriarchal nature of the black woman as defined by the artists writing these scripts is implicit; yet, these types of covert behaviors, it is maintained, present mixed messages which the average television viewer does not analyze but internalizes just the same. All of these mammies relate to their own black families. They are stereotypic in nature relative to the prescribed appearances of these actresses as well as the conduct or end result which is to be a function of this conduct; which is invariably the denigration of black women and the emasculation of black men through the use of comedy and firmly established myths.

There is one apparent difference in one of televisions mammies. That difference is that historically mammies have been portrayed as members of the lower class when they relate to their own families.
FIGURE 23: Contemporary television mammies portrayed by Theresa Merritt (top center), Esther Rolle (left bottom), and Isabel Sanford (right bottom (Encore, 1975; Ebony, September 1975, Black Stars, July, 1975).
However, "Louise" played by Isabel Sanford in "The Jeffersons" is the first middle-class mammy to appear in the visual media within this context.

Louise's husband George is a successful businessman who runs a cleaning business. Emphasis is placed on the fact that George is a little man and that Louise is a big stout woman. It appears as if George makes all of the decisions; however, the attentive viewer with a modicum of perception can discern that before the show is over George always discovers that his opinion is incorrect or insensitive and that Louise is right. Further, it is not infrequent that Louise humiliates George by disagreeing with him in a cutting fashion in the company of others with whom George is disagreeing.

The historical development of mammy clearly indicates that she was the first portrayal of black women and has been sustained in essentially the same form as was her early depiction.

Further, Black critics have become vociferous about the negative images presently and systematically being portrayed by the media. However, the consistency with which this image of black womanhood has been depicted by the mass media suggests that American audiences have not become saturated as yet with this imagery.
CHAPTER V

FAMOUS MAMMIES

Throughout the history of this country there have been innumerable outstanding black women. There are many narratives and biographies on black women who possessed courage, wisdom and knowledge relative to diverse fields.

During slavery there are stories of black women who stood up for the rights of their people and for the humane treatment of their families. There were others who so despised the cruelties of the institution of slavery that they sacrificed their children by killing them to prevent them from having to experience this inhumane and perverse treatment. Further, there were many women who facilitated the running away of slaves. There were others who devoted their lives to lecturing in the North to acquire support from white abolitionists in order to expedite the growth of legal, social and moral consciousness among white people for the purpose of abolishing slavery. Early during slavery black women utilized knowledge and sagacity to enhance their positions and those of members of their families.

Following slavery there were many black women who recognized the need for establishing businesses for self-sufficiency. Others became educators and provided academic instruction for black children formally and informally.
All of these women engaged in endeavors which strengthened the black community and its many viable institutions. In addition, they represented models of success to be emulated by young blacks; and provided inspiration to many blacks in their efforts to overcome structural barriers. Most importantly, these illustrious black women represented hope to many during times when giving up appeared to be a most propitious solution or alternative.

The number of productive black women or famous mammies is too large to include them all in a discussion and explication of their numerous accomplishments. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the lives of only a few mammies whose contributions are known because someone recognized the importance of recording their endeavors. Consequently, the list of noteworthy mammies is by no means exhaustive.*

There are many others who contributed to the maintenance of the black race and its integral institutions by utilizing their great wisdom and courage. Many of their names remain obscure but their deeds and wisdom will prevail forever.

The following famous mammies will be discussed: Mammy Sojourner Truth, Mammy Harriet Tubman, Mammy Mary Ellen Pleasant, and Mammy Mary McCleod Bethune.

One characteristic which appears to be peculiar to this group of women is that they acquired as much if not more knowledge

*This chapter relies largely on the works of Sarah Bradford, 1969; Henrietta Buckmaster, 1966; Sylvia Dannett, 1964; Victoria Ortiz, 1974; Helen Peterson, 1972; and Helen Holdredger, 1953.
experientially as they did didactically. Stated differently, their sagacity, perserverance, and tenaciousness can also be attributed to the possession of "mother wit;" which is essential to the circumvention and overcoming of societal barriers or obstacles and the attainment of personal and cultural goals.

Mammy Sojourner Truth was widely herald and praised by prominent Americans and foreign dignitaries. She is one of the most renown black abolitionists ever to have lived. Mammy Truth devoted a tremendous portion of her life in pursuit of the freedom of blacks from the wraths of slavery.

Mammy Truth was born approximately around 1797 in New York's Ulster County. Her slave name was Isabella. As a slave Mammy Truth performed her work extremely well; and was always considered an asset by her owners for her strength and physical endurance of hard labor. On many occasions she was sold to new masters either because of the death of her previous owner or for the personal reasons of her master.

Mammy Truth is noted for her strong religious convictions, and her tenacious dedication to her goal of lecturing around the country to effect the abolishment of slavery.

Mammy Truth was walking down a highway in New York when her career became crystalized and she knew that her destiny was firmly established. It was during this revelation that she changed her name from Isabella to one which was more applicable to the new life which she envisioned. Sojourner means traveler and truth—a bringer of truth to the American people. She believed that her new master, who
was God, stood for truth. Consequently, there was no name which could have been any more appropriate or fitting.

Mammy Truth traveled by foot to reach the people in America with her message of the realities of social injustices affecting blacks and women.

Mammy Truth was well received and esteemed by most who met her save her opponents. She met with President Abraham Lincoln who was most honored to have her in his company. She received gifts from numerous individuals through the country. One such gift was a dress which Mammy Truth received from Queen Victoria of England.

Battle Creek Michigan became the place where Mammy Truth decided to settle. She was entering her sixties when she made the decision to settle down once again. She chose this city for she had stayed here with friends during an illness and found this area enjoyable.

Once resettled she had little problems identifying new sources of income. Mammy Truth being the creative and generous woman which she was maintained her self sufficiency through having her picture printed up on cards, and the caption which appeared underneath said: "I sell the shadow to support the substance." In addition, her income was also supplemented by the sale of several editions of her "Narrative." She was never well off financially. In fact, on occasions her financial situation was extremely poor. However, on these occasions many of her friends responded with rapidity to provide Mammy Truth with food, clothing, and money.

Although Mammy Truth resettled in Michigan she had by no means retired. In fact, she continued, in spite of age and her health, to
FIGURE 24: Young girl modeling the dress sent to Sojourner Truth by Queen Victoria of England (Victoria Oritz, 1974).
lecture to any forum which she could. It is stated by (Oritz, 1974) that Mammy Truth even enjoyed speaking to children and having children read passages from the Bible to her.

In 1870, at the age of seventy-three Mammy Truth set out once again to travel and speak to diverse audiences.

Having made immeasurable contributions to the cause of blacks and women in the United States Mammy Truth died in 1883. She is a much remembered and honored black woman whose accomplishments and dedication to the truth, liberation and equality of her race made her a world renown mammy.

Mammy Harriet Tubman also called the Moses of the Black race is known for her courage and fearlessness relative to freeing three hundred slaves. Her endeavors to free slaves reflect her ability to strategize and coordinate a viable mechanism for the liberation of masses of people.

Mammy Tubman was born in 1812 to slave parents in Maryland. Mammy Tubman had a history of receiving extremely harsh treatment from masters and mistresses. As a young child she was hired out to a woman who beat her constantly and fed her scraps. When returned to her master her back was a mass of scars. At the age of eleven she was put out in the fields and expected to do the work of a woman. She toiled and labored very hard as did other field slaves. One day she observed a male slave attempting to escape while working in the field. At the same moment the overseer also observed the slave's actions. Mammy Tubman moved rapidly enough to block the overseer for the time it took for the slave to escape the overseer's view. In a rage, the overseer threw a metal weight after the man which struck
Harriet in the forehead. Thereafter, Harriet experienced headaches and periods of unconsciousness as well as an indelible scar on her forehead.

Following the death of Mammy Tubman’s master she was hired out because of her phenomenal strength and ability to perform functions usually assigned to a man. Within the year the heir to the plantation died and rumors speared immediately that all of the slaves would be sold. Mammy Tubman’s two sisters were sold; and she was told by a waterboy that she had been sold to a slavetrader who would pick her up the following morning. With this information Mammy Tubman felt her need to escape to be imminent. Recalling a white woman she had seen on a couple of occasions who had offered her assistance should it ever be needed, Mammy Tubman fled the plantation that night and made her way to the home of the white woman. Mammy Tubman learned immediately that the woman who had befriended her was a "conductor" on the Underground Railroad. This served to allay her fears; for, she had wondered if she was being placed in a trap by this woman and would be returned to the plantation from which she had escaped. The woman, as did many others along the way, directed Harriet to freedom. It took Mammy Tubman two weeks to reach Philadelphia.

Mammy Tubman vowed to return to Maryland to free her parents. As it turned out she freed many people, relatives, friends and her parents. The reward for Mammy Tubman reached the phenomenal sum of forty thousand dollars. She was definitely a shrewd and ingenious woman to have escaped such large numbers of individuals; for an additional handicap was the scar on her forehead which increased the likelihood of her being recognized.
In addition to freeing hundreds of slaves Mammy Tubman served as a nurse to Union soldiers during the war. When dysentery was taking over the hospital, Mammy Tubman went to the woods and gathered herbs and brewed them; thus controlling this epidemic. It must be remembered that this was during a period in which medical care in the army was practically unheard of. Mammy Tubman lived to be ninety-two; yet, she remained young and active and continued to work for the sick and poor as well as to generate monies for the development of educational facilities for blacks.

Mammy Pleasant was a black woman who was actually called by this name during her life. She is considered one of the most successful black businesswomen to have lived. There are numerous stories regarding Mammy Pleasant's successful business endeavors. She was reputed to have known personally many white businessmen and to have introduced these individuals to young ladies who they were to eventually marry. In addition, she provided grooming for young white women in order to prepare them for courtship and marriage. Mammy Pleasant also provided these young girls with room and board within a home purchased by her in San Francisco, California.

Mammy Pleasant was born Mary Ellen Pleasant a slave on a plantation near Augusta, Georgia. As a child of ten she provided directions for a traveler on horseback and told the traveler of her desire to be sold to him; for she had no family on the plantation as her mother had been sold while she was younger.

Mammy Pleasant was sold to this gentleman and sent to New Orleans to be with her new owner. Having determined that Mammy Pleasant was a
FIGURE 26: Mammy Mary Ellen Pleasant, Auspicious Businesswoman (Helen Holdredge, 1953).
precocious child she was sent to a convent in Missouri for education. When she proved to be extremely gifted she was given additional schooling.

Mammy Pleasants reputation for being a successful and shrewd businesswoman related primarily to her endeavors in San Francisco. (Holdredge, 1953) states that Mammy Pleasant, once a Voodoo Queen wielded a strange and sinister influence on some of San Francisco's leading citizens for almost a half century. She also adds that in the 1850's and 1860's men of wealth and position, without homes or family ties came to Mammy Pleasant's boardinghouse each night to enjoy the excellence of her table, and to meet girls of beauty but questionable background. Through her machinations, many of her white girls made brilliant marriages or entered into profitable alliances.

Mammy Pleasant also received large sums of money to arrange for adoptions of illegitimate children fathered by wealthy men. She ultimately became a model of success by utilizing her unlimited knowledge some of which was didactic but much of which was experiential.

Mammy Mary McCleod Bethune was born in 1875 and died in 1955. Mammy Bethune was born in Mayesville, South Carolina and was the middle child in a family of seventeen. She was the first of the children to be born in freedom.

Mammy Bethune was always eager to learn. At the age of eleven, a mission school opened in Mayesville and was headed by a black woman, Miss Emma Wilson. Mammy Bethune attended the mission school until Miss Wilson taught her pupils all she could. Graduation occurred making Mammy Bethunes parents quite proud.
FIGURE 27: Mammy Mary McCleod Bethune (Ebony, 1975).
Later, she was offered a scholarship by a white woman in Denver, Colorado. Therefore, Mary Bethune attended Scotia Seminary in Concord, North Carolina which was comparable to a junior college. She then attended and graduated from the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago for missionary training.

Mammy Bethune was and is recognized as a most outstanding woman whose contribution to education and humanitarianism and her continuous effort to enhance racial understanding is unparalleled.

The foregoing illustrious mammies are no longer here to receive this tribute or recognition. However, there are many black women living today whose efforts and dedication are directed toward their families, toward the maintenance of viable institutions in the black community, and toward projecting a positive and productive image for black youth to emulate. These women deserve recognition for these efforts, the following roll call is in order:

1. Mammy Maya Angelou
2. Mammy Angela Davis
3. Mammy Aretha Franklin
4. Mammy Althea Gibson
5. Mammy Fannie Lou Hamer
6. Mammy Barbara Jordan
7. Mammy Coretta Scott King
8. Mammy Leontyne Price
9. Mammy Wilma Rudolph
10. Mammy Nina Simone
11. Mammy Cicely Tyson
These women and others who go unmentioned have in their own times projected such constructive images of black womanhood that they transcend and negate those depicted by the mass media.
Definitions of Aunt Jemima as opposed to Mammy are similar in their descriptive content. There are far less discrepant definitions of Aunt Jemima. For the most part, definitions of Aunt Jemima are restricted or limited to one specific function performed by black women, —cooking. Unlike her counterpart, or mammy, Aunt Jemima is usually conceptualized as an obese black woman also dark complexioned whose sole responsibility centers around either the preparation or the serving of food.

Bogel defines Aunt Jemima as a more jolly less serious mammy, whose primary responsibilities are cooking foods or standing over a stove.

Verta Mae also defines Aunt Jemima within the context of the preparation and serving of food. She also cites the origin of the concept of blacks preparing or serving foods to whites. Her investigation indicates that this concept dates back to Ancient Rome and early Europe. Accordingly, it was common practice for royalty to have as servants black males and females. The price of black slaves in Rome was higher than the prices established for whites sold at slave markets. It is also maintained that in the 1600's European women walked young black warriors like they now walk poodles. This notion is corroborated by Rodgers who states the following: "...ladies of fashion appeared in public each with a monkey dressed in an embroidered jacket and a little black slave boy wearing a turban and baggy silk pantaloons."
FIGURE 28: Aunt Jemima, a more jolly less serious mammy (Donald Bogel, 1973).
FIGURE 29: Princess de Conti of France and her Negro favorite, left; Lucrezia Borgia of Italy with her favorite (J. A. Rodgers, 1952).
Further, she (Verta Mae) maintains that the Moors or people of color have historically been valued by whites as servants; and have served whites in various capacities. "Black women have been preferred as wet nurses to the big boys as well as the babies; and the Roman women resented that fact to the extent that there were many abuses to the Moorish women by the Roman ladies." She further cites an interesting old Anglo-Saxon myth that seeing a blackamoor the first thing in the morning is an omen of good luck.

With this frame of reference Verta Mae suggests that the placing of blacks, both Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben, on the boxes of various food products is a cultural hangover from this earlier era.

Prior to tracing the historical development of the image of Aunt Jemima the following questions must be addressed: (1) Who is Aunt Jemima?; (2) Was there a real individual called Aunt Jemima?; and (3) Is Aunt Jemima and mammy the same individual in real life or in images?

The writer corresponded with the Quaker Oats Company who is the present manufacturer of Aunt Jemima products and raised some of these questions. The Quaker Oats Company maintains that there never has been anyone in real life who was called Aunt Jemima. They further contend that the images portrayed of Aunt Jemima are based solely on artists conceptions.

(Arthur F. Marquette, 1967) states that there is no individual who was called Aunt Jemima.* However, he cites several individuals

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*This chapter draws heavily upon the work of Marquette who has traced the historical development of the Quaker Oats Company and Aunt Jemima products.
or black women on whom artists have based their conceptualizations.

Based on his discussions of the historical development of the Aunt Jemima pancake mix, Aunt Jemima is simply an image developed for the purpose of selling the first self-rising pancake mix. The rationale which the first producers and manufacturers of this product used for selecting the Aunt Jemima image is based on American folklore.

It is maintained by Marquette that, "The American Negro has always represented in American life the acme of the culinary arts, respected as in France are the chefs who belong to the Societe Gastronomique. He further contends that southern hospitality during slavery was determined and influenced by black cooks and chefs; and that blacks become enmeshed in the folklore in America as the ultimate experts in cookery."

It is from this legend that Aunt Jemima pancake flour capitalized and exploited black women.

The historical development of the image of Aunt Jemima is fascinating and reflective of numerous modifications in the original image as well as differences in the personalities of the women who represented Aunt Jemima in real life. It should also be noted that the many personalities with their diverse personalities and unique ways of portraying Aunt Jemima was a function of three factors; the continuous state of economic crises which the many companies manufacturing the Aunt Jemima pancakes have encountered, the social mood of the country, particularly the social status and accomplishments of the blacks, and the vivid imaginations of the many artists who have conceptualized and portrayed this image.
The history of the image of Aunt Jemima corresponds directly with
the history of the Aunt Jemima pancake and other Aunt Jemima products.
Initially, there was no one real black woman to represent the image
of trademark, later there were three distinct personalities to become
nationally associated with the Aunt Jemima pancake mix. Finally
several entertainers represent the Aunt Jemima products. On the
contemporary scene there is again no one individual who represents
this line of products. Therefore, it is ostensible that the historical
development of the Aunt Jemima products and particularly the image is a
cylical one.

It should also be noted that although Marquette in his analysis
of the rationale utilized by the original manufacturers of Aunt Jemima
pancakes contends that blacks during slavery were symbolic of the
ultimate of talent and skill within the area of cooking or the
preparation of foods; the esteem and recognition nor have high honors
ever been bestowed upon blacks in a fashion or manner comparable to
that which has been enjoyed by renown or famous chefs both in Europe
and in America. In fact, the image of black women, as well as several
black females who portrayed Aunt Jemima, has been exploited and
disrespected for the sole purpose of making money. At the same time
that the manufacturers of Aunt Jemima pancakes have made profits
they have perpetuated myths and stereotypes relative to the sexless and
unattractive, as well as masculine nature of black women in America. In
addition, the concept of contentment and satisfaction with performing
domestic duties is also sustained.
The image of Aunt Jemima originated in Saint Joseph, Missouri from the ideas of Chris L. Rutt, an editorial writer on the Saint Joseph, Missouri Gazette. Rutt joined with a friend, Charles G. Underwood, in the purchase of property and organized the Pearl Milling Company. In the local community they were confronted with inordinate competition. Consequently, Rutt, determined to become successful looked for a milling product which was not being manufactured, but which he felt would eventually be in high demand. He arrived at the idea of a ready-mix pancake. After much trial and error a suitable pancake mix was developed. Rutt was determined to find a trademark which would best characterize his product, and simultaneously appeal to the public. While attending a local vaudeville house in 1889 Rutt discovered what he thought to be the perfect image and trademark for his product. "Baker and Ferrell, a pair of black-face comedians were providing entertainment in this minstrel show. They talked with a southern dialect which was perceived as humorous by audiences and told alleged Negro jokes. The show-stopper of the Baker and Farrell act was a jazzy, rhythmic New Orleans style cakewalk to a tune called "Aunt Jemima," which was performed by Baker in the apron and red-bandanna head-band of the traditional southern cook. It is from this show that Rutt selected an image. He placed the name "Aunt Jemima" on a one-pound paper sack as a trademark. The image which was also placed on the sack was a wide-eyed grinning caricature of Aunt Jemima in which today resembles living color.

As a result of financial difficulties, the R. T. Davis Milling Company acquired the Aunt Jemima product and trademark from its
original producers in 1890. R. T. Davis, the owner of the milling company was considered an advertising genius. Davis along with friends and associates began a search, entailing a great deal of publicity, to locate a black woman who would fit the image already conceptualized and portrayed by Rutt.

Davis' rationale for wanting a real black woman was for the purpose of generating public exposure at fairs, expositions, and festivals. Feeling that the public would be more receptive to his product if they saw a replica of the trademark alive.

Davis' friend, Charles Jackson, a Chicago wholesaler, recommended a black woman in the employ of his friend Judge Walker.

Nancy Green, fifty-nine years old, a black woman well known for her culinary abilities, outgoing, and according to Marquette, gregarious in the extreme, was the first black woman to portray Aunt Jemima.

Miss Green was born on a plantation in Montgomery County, Kentucky as a slave. She enjoyed talking to crowds about her experiences on the plantation during slavery. Miss Green's life became totally enmeshed in the Aunt Jemima image to the extent that she continued to portray the image despite the numerous managerial reorganizations and company bankruptcies.

Nancy Green made her famous debut at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 where she presided over a pancake demonstration. It was during this exhibition that she gained her notoriety and also made the American public aware and receptive of the product she was promoting. Miss Green, at this particular event made pancakes over the griddle, sang songs, and told stories of her old days on the plantation. She
FIGURE 30: Nancy Green made her debut at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 as Aunt Jemima (Arthur F. Marquette, 1967).
used her lively wit and some truth to captivate her audience. She actually had a script, part of which was based on the old vaudeville Aunt Jemima song. The image which was portrayed by Nancy Green was very much in keeping with the traditional image of mammy and all black women in the United States.

Davis' innovative spirit did not end here relative to portraying images of Aunt Jemima. He was one of the many producers of foods to offer boxtop premiums. In so doing Davis spread the image of Aunt Jemima, with all of her inherent stereotypes and myths, all over the country. An Aunt Jemima rag doll was tremendously successful and found its way into the arms of many little girls throughout the country. After such success with this merchandise, Davis had a cutout paper doll of Aunt Jemima printed on the back of the Aunt Jemima pancake mix, which by this time was distributed in cartons as opposed to paper sacks. The rag doll concept in promoting the Aunt Jemima product was again revitalized prior to the Quaker Oats Company acquiring the product in the 1920's. American housewives were extremely receptive to this idea, and flooded the manufacturing company with requests for the Aunt Jemima rag doll, indicating that they had been reared on the Aunt Jemima dolls and now they wanted them for their daughters. Consequently, an entire generation had been inculcated with the Aunt Jemima myths and stereotypes which were generalized to all black women in America. Thus, the negativity of this form of mammy syndrome had been perpetuated. Although every household in America could not afford to employ a black woman as a domestic the members of these households could vicariously experience
this dream through tales of Aunt Jemima, which Nancy Green kept alive, and through their own fantasies by the possession of various Aunt Jemima artifacts.

Other Aunt Jemima products which kept the image alive and the sales high were salt and pepper shakers, Aunt Jemima cookie jars, plastic syrup pitchers, and chinaware.

Following Davis' death in 1900 the product began to decline. However, Miss Green continued to portray the image of Aunt Jemima. In addition, with each advertisement in national magazines in 1919 there appeared an intriguing narrative based on the Aunt Jemima folklore. Again, these narratives were based on mythology and stereotypes of the experiences of black females working in the planters' homes during slavery. Again the public was receptive to this form of advertisement and responded by purchasing the Aunt Jemima pancakes.

A new image of Aunt Jemima did not appear until the 1930's when the Quaker Oats Company purchased the Aunt Jemima Milling Company. It was during the depression years that the sales again declined. The original Aunt Jemima, Nancy Green, had been killed on September 24, 1923 when she was struck by a car on Chicago's South side. It should be mentioned that Miss Green's death was capitalized on by Davis, who published a souvenir booklet. The pamphlet was entitled "The Life of Aunt Jemima, the Most Famous Colored Woman in the World." Her picture was placed on billboards in many cities along with the caption—"I see in town honey." When these billboards were erected they indicated to the public that one of the local grocery stores was sponsoring a demonstration with a live Aunt Jemima.
FIGURE 31: Old Aunt Jemima rag doll, modern Aunt Jemima napkin holder and thirty year old cookie jar keep the image alive (Middleton Harris, 1973; researchers doll; and cookie jar, possession of Cheryl Foster, Columbus, Ohio).
The second woman to portray the image of Aunt Jemima for the manufacturers of this product was also from Chicago's South side. She was Anna Robinson. She was a massive woman of 350 pounds. "Unlike her predecessor who maintained and took pride in being the white man's valued servant, she established the Negro cook as a personage in her own right," says Marquette.

Miss Robinson was also received well by American consumers. She possessed in greater degree than her predecessor the characteristics historically attributed to mammy and all black women. She was obese, humorous, and dark. After choosing a new model for the Aunt Jemima trademark, a new image on the Aunt Jemima pancake mix was portrayed.

Anna Robinson's portrait remained on the Aunt Jemima pancake mix as well as on other products until recent years when a revolutionary image of Aunt Jemima was portrayed, which was in keeping with the status of blacks in America.

Verta Mae's comment on the new Aunt Jemima's image is in response to a statement made by Dick Gregory who says that it is no coincidence that the black male or Uncle Ben is portrayed as being more attractive than the black female. He further states that "You have never seen them (the advertisers) use a fat, out of shape hillbilly white woman to advertise anything."

Verta Mae states that, "in order to maintain the credibility gap I would like to mention a discovery, Brother Dick, W.F.'s (White Folks) must have read your article and got on their case! Aunt Jemima is younger, lighter, and slimmer these days. And her head rag is not a rag anymore. It's a headband, and if you look closely you will see
FIGURE 32: Traditional Aunt Jemima images found on Aunt Jemima Food Products (Arthur F. Marquette, 1967).
FIGURE 33: Contemporary Aunt Jemima image: younger, lighter, and slimmer with a headband not a head rag (Quaker Oats Co. 1976).
a bit of straight dark brown hair showing. But Quaker Oats blew it, cause on the syrup (next to the pancake) she is shown with the original head rag."

Marquette cites the portrayal of Aunt Jemima by still other black women subsequent to the death of Anna Robinson in 1951. He states that enter entertainers such as Edith Wilson and other show personalities completed the transition. However, these latter individuals may have portrayed the image of Aunt Jemima at various affairs such as in Disneyland; yet, they did not become national images to be placed on the numerous Aunt Jemima products which came into being during the post World War II years.

Moving away from Marquette, the image of Aunt Jemima did not appear solely on food boxes. It was during the years that Anna Robinson portrayed Aunt Jemima that television advertisements were seen all over the country with her image. In addition, the Aunt Jemima Show was broadcast over CBS radio from 1942 to 1944. It was broadcast as a once-a-week, five minute program for Aunt Jemima pancake flour.

It would appear, from the various images which have been portrayed of Aunt Jemima and mammy that they are one and the same individual or at least Aunt Jemima is a black mammy whose primary or sole responsibility is the preparation of foods. Mammy is perceived only as an Aunt Jemima when she takes on the responsibilities in the kitchen; for it is here that she is always jolly and happy. Stated in more general terms, if the black woman is kept in the kitchen she will be content; as will those for whom she is employed. In the event that mammy performs dual functions such as cleaning and cooking then she is not only a mammy she is also an Aunt Jemima.
Whether a black woman is portrayed as a mammy or an Aunt Jemima the image is still defined negatively, and results in the same kind of overall lack of respect for black women.

In real life the images of both mammy and Aunt Jemima do not refer to any one particular individual. Both images were developed on the basis of stereotypic information and mythology. This is not to suggest that there were no real persons who fit these stereotypes; for, this is not the case. There are no doubt individuals who fit very well into these categories. However, there have been many women who occupied the same status positions that have not fit so nicely into these categories. Further, there is absolutely nothing wrong with the possession of these characteristics. However, the connotations are negative relative to the implicit suggestions that black women are satisfied with performing these tasks. Also the physical characteristics which these images possess are defined negatively in American culture.

Contemporary black artists have attempted to radically alter the negative imagery portrayed in the forms of mammy and Aunt Jemima. (See Dipillars and Lockard's images of Aunt Jemima). They feel that the black woman has been exploited for too long. Today, Aunt Jemima is portrayed with many of the original characteristics indicating that the big strong aggressive black woman is no longer perceived negatively at least by the black community. Further, she is portrayed as conveying a message to the many artists who historically portrayed her as being content and satisfied with her position as a cook that she is no longer willing to tolerate this distortion of the truth. This same sentiment is generalized to the portrayal of mammy; which is still very much a
FIGURE 34: A contemporary artist redefines Aunt Jemima (Negro American Literature Forum; Fall, 1975).
part of the many images confronting American audiences. These new
depictions of Aunt Jemima are also generalized to all black women in
America; who have become more verbal about the ways in which they are
depicted by the media.

It is of extreme importance that the black community define
images of black women positively. It has been proven in the past that
when images of black individuals or appellatives used to describe or
address blacks are defined positively, thereby, losing their negative
connotations they are no longer maintained or used as mechanisms to
denigrate individuals and an entire cultural group existing within
American society. For example, the head rag that mammy and Aunt Jemima
have traditionally worn, which resulted in the American audiences
perceiving these women and other black women as sexless is no longer
perceived as such because these traditional head coverings, have now
become extremely fashionable and are now worn by both black and white
women. In fact, there is now an art associated with the tying of
fancy knots into the scarf. Consequently, what originated in Africa
as an integral part of African culture and was later maintained by
female slaves in America is now being worn by fashion conscious females
regardless of their racial or ethnic background. The same holds true
for terms which once caused or resulted in many harsh feelings, such
as "nigger" which is used extensively by blacks in the media and no
longer results in the same discomfort that it once did. Further it
can not be used as a form of denigration either. Consequently, as
more individuals attack the portrayals of black women in the form of
mammy and Aunt Jemima as being unrealistic; yet assign to them positive
FIGURE 35: Headscarfs are now worn by fashion conscious females in America regardless of race or ethnic background (Essence; February, 1972).
connotations, they too will lose their power to generate laughter and money for the producers and manufacturers who for too long have taken advantage of and exploited black women.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the black community has long recognized the full negative impact of the Aunt Jemima image. Teenagers in the black community playing the dozens or signifying had incorporated Aunt Jemima with all of her negativity into their sayings. It was not uncommon to hear as a child growing up—"Hey Boy" or "Hey girl, Ain't Je Mama on a pancake box?" The common reply was "No, is yours?" or "No my mama ain't on no pancake box!" This type of teasing using insults transcended all social class lines. Implicit in this saying was a dislike for the image which portrayed black womanhood throughout the history of this country, which has invariably been mammy or Aunt Jemima.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The mass media's systematic portrayal of black women as mammys and Aunt Jemimas and the assigning of negative connotations to images of mammy and Aunt Jemima, which are symbolic or representative of black womanhood, has resulted in the mistreatment of the black woman on the following levels. First, the perpetuation of stereotypes and myths relative to the black woman's social and physical attractiveness and her capabilities has lead to her exclusion in the performing of serious roles in the visual media. Second, she is relegated to a level of complete irresponsibility and neglect in relation to her responsibilities as a socialization agent of her offspring. Moynihan's thesis, in which the primary problems confronting the black community are attributed to a large extent to the black woman, is exemplar of this mode of thought.

Next, a great disservice is done to the inordinate number of black women who in the past and present function in capacities comparable to those of mammy and Aunt Jemima; for the mass media, particularly the visual media, has historically denigrated their image. American society has conceptualized and defined black women from an extremely negative and distorted perspective. Many of these women have successfully reared both white and black children, some of whom have become presidents of the United States, while others have gone into
various and sundry areas within business and other professional fields. Not only did these black women make meaningful and viable contributions within the black community, they were also instrumental in effecting change in major social systems within white institutions. In spite of their efforts and contributions they have been portrayed as individuals incapable of rational or serious decision making capabilities. In addition, they have been subjected to exploitation and verbal abuses by both the studio agents who employed and are still employing them as well as various forms of humiliation by their fellow actors who were following the scripts provided for them. Further, had it not been for the receptivity and acceptance of American audiences, it is questionable whether this form of imagery could have existed.

Finally, as scholars become more involved in the study of black family problems they have become increasingly concerned about the relationships existing between the black male and female. Of particular importance is the high rate of divorce and separation. Initially, studies of this kind focussed on the phenomenon of broken homes within the lower-class. However, more recently with the ascent of more blacks into the middle and upper-class, attention is being placed on the high rates of divorce among this group. There are numerous theories and combinations thereof proposed in an effort to explain this phenomenon and its devastating impact upon all family members and institutions within the black community. The media, with its mammy and Aunt Jemima images, appears to have firmly rooted prescribed expectations for black-white relationships involving black women. In addition, interactions between the black male and female have also been predefined. More
specifically, the expectation is that the black woman will attempt to
temasculate the black man if and when he is present, and that the black
woman's role or relationships within the context of white family life
are of far more importance than her relationships with her own family.
These expectations are seldom, if ever, verbalized as they are implicit
in the roles which black women play. Through the media's systematic
portrayal of the black woman from this perspective one can but wonder
what the impact of this type of distortion has upon the relationships
which black women have with other members of the black community,
especially with members of her family. Further, the conflicts existing
between the black male and female have been attributed in part to the
black woman's perception of the worth and utility of the black male
as being insignificant and of little importance (Liebow, 1967).

It is presently being recognized by many black academicians that,
heretofore, too much attention and effort has been devoted to the
challenging and the refutation of myths and distorted studies proliferated
by social researchers. These studies are for the most part based on
the same type of misinformation relative to the black woman that has
been sustained by the mass media. Consequently, scholars such as
Frances Welsing, Robert Staples, Robert Hill and others are attempting
to identify strengths, and constructive contributions existing within
the black community. The process of redefining the black community,
its institutions and members is a horrendous taks which is now being
undertaken.

One of the most powerful mechanisms for conveying this information
is through widely circulated black magazines. Again the importance of
visual portrayals is ostensibly recognized by the publishers of these
magazines, for they are replete with diverse images of black men, women, and children. Further, one magazine is devoted to the black woman and issues concerning her. Black women are portrayed in various and diverse ways relative to their professions and the uniqueness of their family arrangement. This kind of realistic portrayal gives the black community a more wholistic impression of black women in America.

In addition, the black actress who has contributed immeasurably to the positive portrayal of black women in America, their trials and tribulations, is Miss Cicely Tyson. Unlike her predecessors she has literally refused to accept roles which are of a denigrating or humiliating nature. As a consequence of this position, she has on many occasions been without work. The position which the television and movie industry places the black woman in is one of a double bind. Either the black woman takes the roles which are available to her, which more often than not have proven to be a great disservice and injustice to her and the image of other black women, or she can refuse, as has Miss Tyson, to portray black women from a negative perspective. When the black actress chooses this option she rapidly becomes aware of a barrage of problems confronting her career. One of which is the inability to obtain employment; and the probability that she will not get the opportunity to display her acting abilities or to receive recognition for these talents. The entire situation spells disaster relative to a successful career.

However, one can not help but admire those individuals who have refused to play these roles at the expense of jeopardizing an auspicious career. On the other hand, a great deal of admiration is felt for those
individuals who played and are still playing mammy and Aunt Jemima roles; yet have attempted to demand that certain statements be removed from scripts and that specific scripts be rewritten either in totality or in part. There are numerous levels on which this form of distortion and misrepresentation of the images of blacks, and particularly the black woman, must be attacked. After all, had it not been for the mammies of the past, the Hattie McDaniels, the Louise Beavers, and the Ethel Waters, there would be no Cicely Tyson. It was these mammies in the past that grinned and took all forms of verbal and physical abuses which made it possible for the mammies and Aunt Jemimas of today to refuse to be victims to this form of utter disrespect, both in real life and in the portrayal of these images. The status of the black woman regardless of her profession has been enhanced because of the philosophies, strategies, and conduct exhibited by individuals and groups of black women in the past.

Through the historical development of the image of mammy—relative to the mass media—the process of redefining this image has been underway. It should not be interpreted that the media has been instrumental in modifying this image on its own volitions, for this does not appear to be the case. Rather, the black woman portraying the image of mammy and Aunt Jemima, as well as the black community, have demanded that these images be portrayed positively. One argument which the media has used consistently regarding the portrayal of all images is that of providing the public with what they need and demand. However, the obvious flaw or imperfection in this argument speaks to the systematic images portrayed of other cultural groups in America who are much smaller in number than
are blacks. For example, mammies counterpart in the Italian cultural group is Mama Rosa. She also has a counterpart in the Jewish race. However, one does not see these women portrayed negatively. They are always given respect because of their wisdom and their invaluable role within the family. They are not portrayed grinning, only smiling warmly. Could this possibly be a function of the relative power of such cultural groups? These portrayals may also be a function of the mass media being mediated or controlled almost exclusively by members of these cultural groups.

Aside from the gradual transition which is occurring toward redefining images of black women, it must be recognized and appreciated that there is a cultural heritage which aids in the understanding and clarification of the dress, conduct, and physical appearance of black women portrayed as mammy and Aunt Jemima. It is imperative that the average American, both black and white recognize the salience and significance of these cultural customs and norms. In so doing, the purpose and rationale for assigning negative connotations to these practices and values by American whites, during and subsequent to slavery, will be better understood—as will the rationale for the perpetuation of these images.

The identification of customs associated with headgear in terms of their use for religious purposes as well as their more practical function for the transporting of agricultural products to the marketplace helps American audiences understand the residual of this custom, with the fancy tying of headscarfs by today's young black women, and the persistent wearing of the head rag by middle-aged and older black women.
In addition there are many cultures today, including Africa, where it is still fashionable or customary to associate obesity with prosperity. Unfortunately, America is not one of these countries. Consequently, stout women are perceived as unattractive. However, by understanding the dynamics associated with the values a society assigns to weight, dress, and conduct, individuals are afforded the opportunity to better appreciate these customs and not to perceive them as deviations from the norm or anomalies which result in the feelings of embarrassment, discomfort, or inferiority.

Further, academicians can use this knowledge to develop or employ a more authentic model from which to evaluate black family life and its concomitants. If social scientists examine and attempt to explicate black family life fully cognizant of the cultural importance and significance of various customs, values, and beliefs, that can be traced back to Africa, perhaps a more valid model for studying the black family will emerge. This will also facilitate the discovery of the origins of many myths existing about blacks in general and the black woman in particular. For example, the myth of the matriarch and the rationale for its development can better be understood by examining imagery and comparing images portrayed by the mass media with those which can be found in family photo albums. One must look to see if the black male is present, in these photos, his location foreground or background and so forth. When this type of comparative analysis is undertaken it becomes obvious that the role of the black male in the past and in the present, particularly in the rural South, was anything but that of the timid, meek, and passive individual who would allow himself to be relegated to a position of
relative unimportance by the black female or anyone else.

This is not to suggest that the black woman is or was not aggressive, for this is not the case. However, the black females aggression in no way negates, obviates, or attenuates the masculinity and decision-making capacity of the black male. The media and many social scientists would have the American public believe that the possession of this trait by both sexes is detrimental to the relationship and is the cause of unstable and unhappy marriages.

The primary problem with images which portray black women from a distorted perspective is the influence and the impact which they have on black women and men in their relationships. If these myths are internalized they can erode relationships between the black male and female. Although these portrayals are not valid and should not be generalized, to all black women and men the axiom of W.I. Thomas becomes operative, "If men define situations as real they become real in their consequences." It is for this very reason that the black community must begin to critically analyze the portrayals of the black woman and begin to redefine her image. The black woman and the way in which she is portrayed by the mass media is only a starting or focal point. Since the black woman is the primary socializing agent, as are all women regardless of race or ethnicity, she must be perceived as a positive, constructive, and revered individual by her charges. Of equal importance is the way in which she is perceived by the black male, who must share with her in the responsibility of childrearing and the maintenance of the black race. However, of primary importance is the black womans' self perception which must be positive so that she can project an image
conducive to generating and commanding respect from her significant others. However, it becomes extremely difficult for the black woman to maintain this positive self concept when she consistently sees negative reflections of herself through roles played by other black women. The other alternative image for the black woman to see as a model is the other half of the dichotomy, which is the bad-black girl image. Consequently, everywhere the American black woman looks she sees negative imagery of herself and others like her.

This situation results in the black woman having to look for positive imagery outside of her race but within her own sex group. Therefore, the only positive and constructive images of womanhood available to black women are to be found in the images portrayed of white women. The one exception was mentioned earlier in the portrayals of black women by new black magazines and the portrayals of black women by Cicely Tyson and other positive images of black women seen on television talk shows. However, it is a rarity to see black women on these talk shows with any regularity. Therefore, in terms of portrayal of images on a systematic basis, it is highly unusual to see realistic and positive images of black women that are void of the traditional myths and stereotypes.

The historical changes which have been made in the portrayal of black women from a negative perspective have been cited. Stated succintly, they are few, yet, they have occured. Many have been a function of the demands of various black and white organizations. Other changes have been effected by the actresses themselves; still other changes have occurred as a result of the affluence of members of the black community and their ever increasing visibility in American society.
One specific example of the portrayal of the black woman using the mammy image yet indicating the creation of a new characteristic of mammy as a direct function of the migration of blacks to the middle-class is the television comedy. "The Jeffersons." This situational comedy is the first television show which portrays a middle-class mammy.

Prior to this depiction of a middle-class mammy, mammies have exclusively represented the lower-class. This is somewhat antithetical to what existed during slavery and today also. For instance, during slavery the working as a servant or domestic in the house of the master was a clear indication of affluence not only for the black female, but also for the white family that owned her. This belief also prevailed and exists today according to Verta Mae, who suggests that domestics oftentimes acquire status differentially as a result of the social status of the families for whom they are employed. Consequently, this belief is a carry-over from the era of slavery. What appears inconsistent is that the media has systematically portrayed mammy, as she is defined in reference books, as relating solely to white families as a lower-class individual. This is evidenced by her poor use of the English language and her behavior which is all too often inappropriate.

The mammy during slavery who worked primarily or solely in the fields, and was mammy only to her own family, was not perceived as a middle-class woman. If one looks at the historical development of mammy relative to the visual media it becomes apparent that no differentiation has even been made until recently.

The overall impact of the media's portrayal of mammy, particularly the visual media with its subtle messages and information, is not fully
known at this time. It is certainly plausible that from this type of portrayal that both black and white audiences are subjected to distorted imagery and unrealistic perspective from which to relate to the black woman. The influence of these images on the perception of one's worth by the black individual is phenomenal, as is the possible damage caused the black woman's self concept.

Ostensibly, a redefinition process must continue, as well as a concerted effort on the part of black actors and actresses, lay individuals, social scientists, and studio agents to create and portray positive images of the black woman.

Many subfields of sociology, such as the area of Criminology, already recognize the necessity for analyzing definitions and their impact on individuals labeled as deviant. Richard Quinney (1975) states, "although social reaction operates as social control, it is at the same time a means of conferring definitions on persons, probably producing the actions that are the object of control..." Defining a person negatively, therefore, affects the person's definition of himself and his subsequent actions. Visual sociologists must also examine the many definitions which are implicit in the images which are consistently before us. In addition, Radical Criminologists may find the visual methodology to be contributory in the identification of diverse media utilized by powerful interest groups in perpetuating specific definitions, beliefs, and values on a level differing from the traditional mechanisms already identified.

Visual sociology can also provide insight into the area of Social Psychology by aiding in theory construction. Of primary significance
is the extent to which images serve as reinforcers and effect one's self concept. Also one's ability to role play is undoubtably influenced by the knowledge which one possesses about members of his social environment. Consequently, Operant Theorists, Symbolic Interactionists and others within this subfield of Sociology can utilize visual sociology as a viable methodology.

The general field of Sociology can also utilize the visual methodology for the purpose of theory construction and as a method of analyzing social systems and entire cultures. Although norms, values, beliefs, and mores are expressed in written form, they can also be inferred by observing and critically analyzing images portrayed systematically by the mass media. The analysis of these two media bring out consistencies and disparities in theory, philosophy, and practice or reality. Cultural lags which prevent the acquisition of new beliefs and practices are also evidenced in images.

There is no doubt that visual sociology is a definite asset in the areas of theory construction and verification, and in the analysis of data. It must also be remembered that specific weaknesses inherent in the visual method preclude its use independently of other methodologies. It is the researchers opinion that the visual method should supplement, not supplant other methodologies. Further, the amorphous stage of development which characterizes visual sociology necessitates the development of prescriptions to be followed by researchers, as well as the building in of structure and guidelines. These criteria should dictate rules to be followed in the collection of data and, more importantly, rules to be used in the analysis of data.
This researcher found it necessary to utilize the interview method as a first step in the collection of data and as the last stage in the analysis of data for the purpose of establishing interreliability. In addition, a historical review of the literature was also utilized for the generation and analysis of the data.

Recognizing the weaknesses inherent in the visual method, it is the researchers opinion that the viability and benefits of visual sociology in the field of Sociology transcend those areas requiring sophistication and improvement. Only through the use of this instrument can these modifications be effected, resulting in an efficacious tool for social research.

The sociologist using the visual method, particularly those interested in the area of the black family, has a horrendous task before him or her relative to understanding the effect of images upon the behavior of cultural groups, the black family being only one such group. There is also the imperative of expanding upon the media's portrayal of the black woman. There is the need for more investigation into the visual media's portrayal of all black males and females.

Of particular importance is the extent to which the visual media's portrayal of the black woman from a distorted perspective is peculiar to America, as a result of its own peculiar institution of slavery. Questions must be answered as to how other countries have systematically portrayed the black woman. What does mammy mean in England today? As it was cited earlier, mammy was defined in very general terms in England. It would be interesting and helpful to know if the concept mammy and Aunt Jemima were ever reserved for black women only; and to know the
FIGURE 36: Future studies should focus on the portrayal of the black male (Murry N. Depillars, 1976).
nature of the meanings assigned to these images. Do countries who engaged in their own forms of slavery portray the black woman differently than she is depicted in the United States?

The extent to which there are regional differences relative to the portrayal of mammy within the United States should also be addressed.

In addition to utilizing the visual methodology for the purpose of analyzing data, it is possible that very meaningful results and theories might also be generated from a synthesis of hard methodology and soft methodology.

It is of primary importance that hypotheses be tested regarding the impact of this negative imagery. Is there a correlation between the negative imagery portrayed by the visual media and the black woman's self concept? Is there a relationship between the visual media's portrayal of the black woman as sexless, aggressive, her mode of dress, and her relationship with the black male?

There are many questions which require answering relative to the visual media's portrayal of black women using the images of mammy and Aunt Jemima, which are essentially the same image.

Social scientists are charged with the responsibility of conducting further inquiry into this area as well as raising other relevant questions.

On the other hand, the task of Americans, both black and white, is to redefine the images of black women, particularly those of mammy and Aunt Jemima, since they have been and remain the most pervasive throughout this country.
NO MORE
APPENDIX

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