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"Rip It!": A Juxtapositional and Critical Discourse Analysis of Gender Violence in 3 Tyler Perry Films

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Background

- Gender violence in media-discourse is generally **minimized, normalized, underrepresented and misdirected**.[1]
- Sexist, offensive and prejudiced humor, jokes about victims, and language, frames gender violence as **acceptable**.[2]
- *C*ontrolling images* in media make gender violence appear natural and inexorable.[3]
- Racist and sexist stereotypes of Black women regularly used in media: *mammy, matriarch, welfare queen* and *jezebel*.[3]
- **Minimal social work attention is given to the study of gender violence in media**.
- **Social work literature on media-produced discourse of violence against Black women is absent**.

Objective

- **To interrogate media-produced discourse of gender violence against Black women by examining the contrast of Black female victimness and Black matriarchy in Black contemporary film.**

Design

- This qualitative study, using **juxtapositional**, **critical discourse** and **intersectional analysis**, explored discourse of Black female victimness and matriarchy in: *Diary of a Mad Black Woman*, *Madea's Family Reunion* and *Madea Goes to Jail*.

Methods

- Main characters were observed for victim and matriarch attributes.
- Recorded discourses: character demographics, personality and backgrounds; noted language/dialogue; interactions; scenes and character juxtapositions.

Results

- Victimness and matriarchy operate in a (juxtaposing) **transitional archetype model**:
  - **Victim**: Primary female characters are victims and transition into other archetypes
  - **Bitterfruit**: Victims lose stereotypical victim traits, such as passivity and crying, and take on hardened personalities and resentment
  - **Matriarch**: Next, characters evoke dominating, aggressive, tough and violent dispositions
  - **Forgiver**: Character forgives abuser; if not she stays in matriarch-limbo (i.e. Madea)
  - **Princess**: If transitioning character forgives, she obtains her happily ever after fairytale
- Some noteworthy juxtapositions include contrasts between:
  - **Hard matriarchy and soft victimness**
  - **Protecting matriarch and protected victim**
  - **Violent matriarch and forgiving victim**
  - **Tragic matriarch and fairytale-given victim**
  - **Child abuse and corporal punishment**
  - **Black matriarch as problem and White patriarch as authority**
  - **Healthy and unhealthy relationships**

Conclusion

- **Stark contrasts** exist between discourses of Black female victimness and Black matriarchy and such contrasts are shaped by using racist and sexist stereotypes.
- Juxtapositions stage a fallacy: **Black matriarchy and Black female victimness as mutually exclusive**.
- The films **fail to present an option that opens up agency** for Black female victims and survivors to be strong (via matriarchy) and in need of help (via victimhood).
- **It is essential for progressive social work to examine the impacts, agency and underlying meanings derived from viewing of media discourse.**