

“Decoding Black Women from the Boardroom to the Bedroom”

Breaking the Taboo, Myths, & Misconceptions

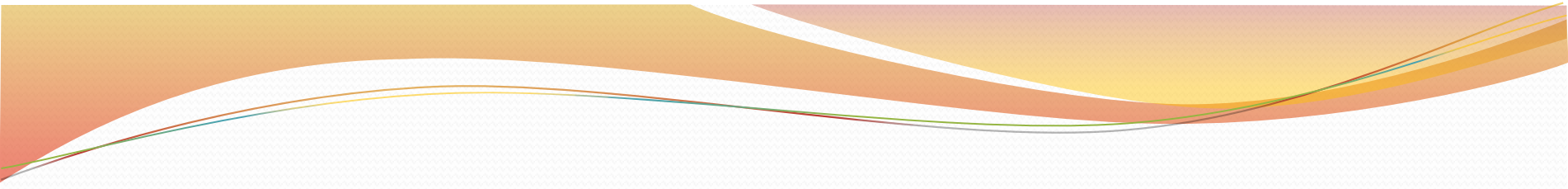
Black Men Healing Conference.

Metropolitan University, St. Paul, MN



Verona Mitchell, PhD
Founder & CEO
CulTives, LLC

Contributor:
Felicia Williams-Gary
Cultural Historian
CulTives, LLC



“Black women are a prism through which the searing rays of race, class and sex are first focused, then refracted. The creative among us transform these rays into a spectrum of brilliant colors, a rainbow which illuminates the experience of all mankind.”

(Wilkerson, as cited in Hine & Thompson, 1998)

Slavery - Trauma



- Sea voyage, the Middle Passage, from Africa to the Americas
- Enslaved Africans were age 14 to 30
- Women and girls represented 25 percent of the total transported slave population
- Women and girls were raped throughout the sea voyage
- Forced to watch the rapes of their mothers, sisters, children
- Babies born at sea was tossed into the Atlantic

Slavery - Trauma (cont.)



- On plantations... women and men worked side-by-side, same jobs
- Performing manual labor with men
- Forged a different societal norm in the slave community
- Societal norm based on:
 - economics
 - property/chattel
 - devaluation of humanity

Matriarchal Fighter

- Self-Defined
- Self-Determined
- Voice
- Building Community
- Spirituality & Regeneration



Messages of Devaluation & Misrepresentation



- African-American females are viewed as “Black matriarchs”
 - dominant
 - pathological
 - deviant
 - destructive to the African-American family

Messages of Devaluation & Misrepresentation - Cause



- Devaluation and misunderstanding; often in comparison with Anglo (White) females
- Attempting to “fit” African American female’s culturally distinct leadership and communication style into the framework of leadership exhibited by Anglo (White) females



The “Great She-Elephant”

- Maternal mythical creature that existed solely to nurture and preserve her communal structure (as cited in Shedlock, 1920)
- African female leaders are sometimes referred to as the “Great She-Elephant.”
- She is the maternal keeper of the tribe embodying
 - Strength, power, and gumption
 - Ability to operate under an abscess of societal dysfunction, and rapid social change

Boardroom: Power Control

- Traits
 - Self-Confident
 - Independent
 - Autonomous
 - Nurturing



Boardroom: Power Control

- Behavior
 - Androgynous
 - Communicates Directly



Boardroom: Power Control

- Styles
 - Democratic
 - Directing
 - Participative
 - Strong influence strategies
- Transformative



Overview of African American Women Executives' Leadership Communication

<i>Leadership Communication Theme</i>	<i>Description</i>
Interactive Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing the business, its mission, and its goals, and being able to communicate that knowledge clearly, directly, and consistently • Being accessible to staff and customers • Modeling effective behavior
Empowerment of Employees Through the Challenge to Produce Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expecting high performance, based on the executive's confidence in the person's ability to deliver • Setting specific goals for producing high quality results
Openness in Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bringing important issues into the open • Making sure voices (including their own) that need to be heard on a certain issue get that opportunity • Having no hidden agendas
Participative Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative Debate: Dialectic inquiry that involves one-to-one argument and explicit agreement and refutation for the purpose of collaboratively reaching decisions • Autonomy: Trusting employees and pushing control of the organization to the lowest levels • Information Gathering: Staying aware of multiple points of views
Leadership Through Boundary Spanning Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting the organization to the community in positive ways • Articulating the organization's mission and purpose.

Boardroom: Power Control

Transition from Professional to Personal

- Reinforce and Acknowledge Achievements
- Show interest in profession/work
- Step Up **YOUR** game at home



Boardroom: Power Control

Transition from Professional to Personal

- Be a Partner
- Communicate Directly
- Set a Relaxing Environment
- Don't Compete (you will lose)



Table 1
Conceptualizing Leadership Traits, Behavior and
Styles Cross-Culturally: A Socialization Perspective

	<i>Anglo-Americans</i>		<i>African-Americans</i>	
	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>
<i>Traits</i>	Supportive	Self-Confident	Self-Confident	NC
	Cooperative	Independent	Independent	NC
	Nurturing	Autonomous	Autonomous	NC
<i>Behavior</i>	Collaborative	Instrumental	Nurturing	NC
	Interdependent	Assertive	Androgynous	NC
			Communicate directly	NC
<i>Styles</i>	Democratic	Autocratic	Democratic	NC
	Participative	Directing	Directing/ Participative	NC
	"Weak" influence strategies	"Strong" influence strategies	"Strong" influence strategies	NC
	Altruism-based strategies	Punishment-based strategies		NC
	Transformational	Transactional	Transformational	NC

Note: NC = not considered.

Gender, Cultural and Leadership: Towards a Culturally Distinct Model of African-American Women Executives' Leadership Strategies
Parker & ogilvie, 1996



How Do You See Powerful African American Female Leadership

- What's your perception of the African American female?
- Why that perception?
- How was your perception formed?
- Given the information presented how can you partner with and build relationship both professionally & personally

Sex & Intimacy

“Let’s Not Get It Twisted”

You need and desire both



Hedonism

Puritanism



Sex & Intimacy

Public Images vs Private Realities

Public Valuation & Affirmation



Influences are:

- Cultural & religious ideologies
- Sexism & racism
- Sex takes time

Public Devaluation & Private Valuation



Sex & Intimacy

Desire for Sex & Intimacy

- Raw inhibited sex
- Sex is physiological (physical, mental)
- Sex takes time





Sex & Intimacy

Desire for Sex & Intimacy

- Intimacy takes commitment & time
- Cuddle, support, comfort
- Intimacy is emotionally driven (psychological)

Sex & Intimacy

- Sex Agreement
 - What goes?
 - What doesn't go?
- Mutuality
 - What are **YOUR** needs & wants
 - Your **PARTNER'S** needs & wants





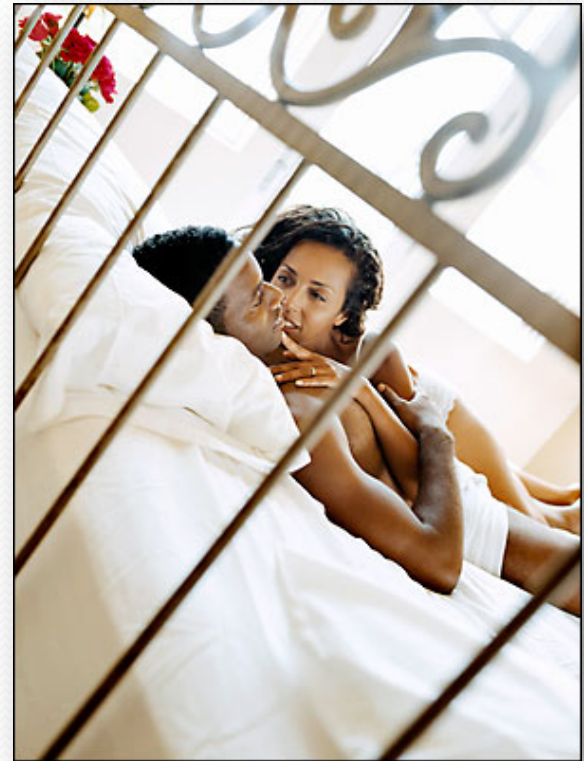
Sex & Intimacy

Commitment & Concessions

- Confidentiality
- What to tell?
- What to keep between partners
- Don't let society, culture into sex or intimacy
- It's your safe space to "be"
- Willing & opened to explore

Sex & Intimacy

- Openly Define Commitment
 - Say what you want
 - Don't let society, culture into sex or intimacy
 - It's your safe space to "be"
- Willing & opened to explore



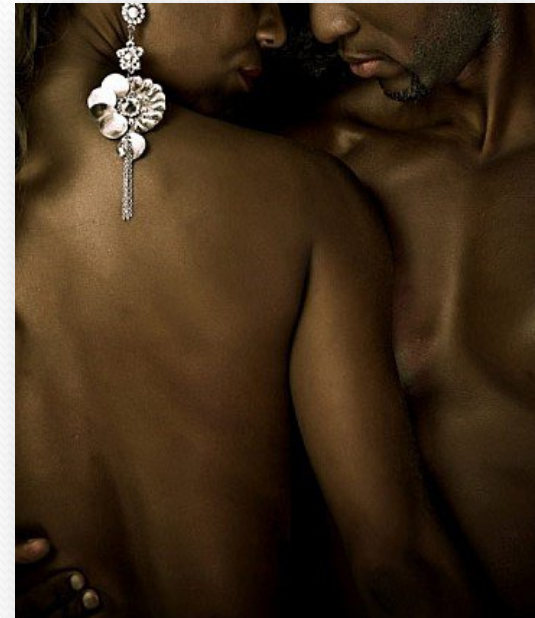
Sex & Intimacy

- TRUST
- VALUE SEXUALLY
- COMMUNICATION
- COMMITMENT TO THE AGREEMENT
- CONFIDENTIALITY (more important than male ego)



A Woman Is Made of Love
Even if she doesn't think so
Or feel that way at the moment
A woman is made of love...pure love
A Woman Is Made of Love
Even if she doesn't feel comfortable expressing that love
In her present environment and surrounding
Because her love has been compromised
By those who would take advantage of it
Or don't know how to handle it
And don't understand
That she is much more than flesh and bones
A Woman Is Made of Love
For love...and her universe is vast
Mysterious and unfathomable even to herself
So you never know what blessed
And magical substances of affection
She can conjure, churn or cook up
And drop on you during those special moments
If you cherish her, treat her right
And stir her imagination
You will truly find out how
A Woman Is Made of Love
Paradise Free JahLove

A Woman Is Made Of Love



CuLTives

Cultural Perspectives & Associates



www.cultives.com
info@cultives.com