

# KILLING BOOGEYMEN: PHALLICISM AND THE MISANDRIC MISCHARACTERIZATIONS OF BLACK MALES IN THEORY

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**Abstract:** Black males have been characterized as violent, misogynist, predatory rapists by gender theorists dating back to mid-nineteenth-century ethnologists to contemporary intersectional feminists. These caricatures of Black men and boys are not rooted in any actual studies or empirical findings, but the stereotypes found throughout various racist social scientific literatures that held Black males to be effeminate while nonetheless hyper-masculine and delinquent. This paper argues that contemporary gender theories not only deny the peculiar sexual oppression of racialized outgroup males under patriarchy, but theories like intersectional invisibility actually perpetuates the idea that racialized males are disposable. To remedy the imperceptibility of sexual oppression and violence under the male category, the author gives an historical account of the development of racist (anti-Black) misandry throughout the centuries and proposes a theory of phallicism to describe the seemingly contradictory constructions of Black men as sexually predatory as in the case of the rapist, but nonetheless sexually vulnerable and raped under patriarchy.

## Introduction

Black men enter our theoretical purview through the negative stereotypes of our day. The historical milieu from which they actually emerge and the realities they live within are ultimately thought to be irrelevant to the production of disciplinary theory. The academic theorist—both Black and white—fears the Black males they see in society; so the theories about Black men in various literatures, conferences, and discourses that frame him as dangerous merely conform to these pre-existing biases.<sup>1</sup> While intersectional theory

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<sup>1</sup> The capitalization of the B in the word Black is meant to point to the tension of how we think about Blackness as naming a particular people and struggle, and specific existence different

has produced any number of positionalities that complicate the identitarian schema of race, class, and gender, Black men, specifically hetero-sexual Black men, remain isolated to the categories of violence, deviance, and sexual pathology. These ideas have become so intuitive that they often require no actual warrant or evidence to persuade various publics of their truth. Black men are caricaturized by gender theory, so it is easy to rationalize these phobias, which interpret Black men as patriarchal, violent, and indifferent to the suffering of others, as method. Despite decades of social science research showing Black males experience higher rates of employment discrimination than, and less preference to, their female counterpart due to the association of criminality, fear, and aggression with Black maleness (Livingston and Pearce 2009; Pager 2007; Moss and Tilly 2001; Moss 2006), under-representation in higher educational attainment (MacDonald et al. 2011), a disproportionate risk of statutory rape and sexual coercion as children and young adults (Curry and Utley Forthcoming; French et al. 2015), higher rates of intimate partner violence and homicide (Hampton et al. 2003; Palmetto et al. 2013; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al. 2012; West 2012; Mallon 2007), and are more routinely targets of lethal violence in the United States (Curry 2017), contemporary theories of Black masculinity suggest toxicity is the cause of Black male deviance and maladjustments rather than the cultural and structural realities that confront Black men and boys as racialized-outgroup males in the United States (Oliver 2003; see Pence 1999 for a description of Duluth as ideological and politically motivated).

As Arthur F. Saint-Aubin (1994) explains: “even when black men are the ostensible subjects (they are in fact objects) of workshops, special journals editions, etc., they are still marginalized theoretically and compared to a norm by which they are usually judged lacking” (1056). While other subjects have been afforded the ability to speak individually as members of oppressed or marginalized groups, Black men are censored—told that that any mention of their oppression, vulnerability, or death is patriarchal, because it inappropriately centers their experience over women’s oppression writ large, and thereby not worthy of more intellectual concern or research. This logic is peculiarly tailored toward Black males. Other race/sex groups, be they white or Black, who enjoy much higher incomes, life expectancy, social mobility, and institutional representation in schools, universities, and industry, are not told they should not speak. Journals and conferences do not refuse papers on white men or women theorists, or Black women,

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from that of whiteness. In the case of Black men and boys, this also plays an important role in forcing the reader to wrestle with the invisibility of Black males in gender theory beyond that of pathology, as well as problematizing Black maleness in relation to that of white humanity or western MAN. These grammatical signs are meant to better situate how I think of the Man-Not and how we need to think of Black people, especially Black men differently. Consequently, I de-capitalize the w in white and small capitalize MAN to show these are western anthropologies that do not include Black males who are not-man at all.

rather it is Black males who are told that their actual disadvantage is not welcomed, especially when it exceeds that of women throughout society, in the realm of theory.

Instead of clarifying the various aspects of racial oppression, economic exploitation, sexual violence, and death imposed on non-white populations, current discursive formulations of race and gender expressed by hegemonic masculinity and intersectionality offer a perpetrator-only view of Black men and boys. This view holds while societal violence enacted by institutions such as the state, the police, and various configurations of white vigilantism, take Black lives, Black males are ultimately the cause of the communal and interpersonal violence that most threatens Black women, children, and non-conforming Black peoples. Focusing solely on the individual acts of violence, with no attention to the antecedents of the violence perpetrated by Black men and boys, these feminist theorists depict Black male socialization as a process of mimesis consumed by its lack of patriarchal power. Black males, deprived of the calming effects of structural power and recognition—or what R.W.S. Connell actually means by hegemony—resort to brute force, physical power, and violence: savagery, to secure a semblance of white masculinity's power. In short, these theories claim that they become boogeymen—a fear inspiring entity that haunts life and at any moment can threaten death to other Blacks.

Under this gender schema, Black males emerge as distorted and pathological in their responses to anti-Black racism/white supremacy. Whereas Black women are interpreted within group-based identities opposed to patriarchy, and committed to liberation, Black men are thought to crave the position of white men and his possessions, deluded by patriarchy's power to offer economic and political advance and cultural recognition, simply because they are men. As Andrea Hunter and James Davis explain:

Studies of Black women emphasize how out of oppression a unique definition of womanhood was forged, one in which adversity gave rise to strength. However, the discourse around men and oppression focuses on the stripping away of manhood. It is a perspective that casts Black men as victims and ignores their capacity to define themselves under difficult circumstances. (1994, 21)

This mimetic account of Black manhood insists that despite the level of violence and the atrocities committed against Black males at the hands of white men, the only response—as a disposition that runs through all their political organizing from slavery to now—has been to fashion themselves, their politics, and their apperception of freedom in the image of white men. This idea is so commonly accepted among gender theorists that it is asserted as intuitive, self-evident, and having no need to be substantiated by actual evidence or study of fact.

In sharp contrast to the interpretation of Black males in the United States, mainstream masculinity scholars emphasize the naturally occurring diversity of masculinities among white and European ethnic populations the world over. As the sociologist Sofia Abiom explains, “Although hegemonic masculinity is essentially directed at the domination of women, thereby nourishing a traditionally dichotomized gender system that cuts across social class, it similarly discriminates against men from lower classes and, even more so, gay and non-white males” (Abiom 2010, 2–3). Abiom suggests that hegemonic masculinity is not effective in studying Portuguese men, and goes so far as to say that the alternative masculinities found among these men show that they are not only resisting hegemonic masculinity and economic exploitation, but the various forms of emphasized femininity that legitimize the reach and dominance of patriarchy. This is not an uncommon analysis among social scientists who empirically study masculinity outside the United States (Groes-Green 2011). Throughout *masculinities* literature various authors are quite clear that there is no necessary or even well-established relationship between the dominant masculinities of a particular geography or social cultural context and the patriarchal systems that perpetuate the domination of women by men. Drawing from Michael Flood’s (2002) analysis in “Between Men and Masculinity: An Assessment of the Term Masculinity in Recent Scholarship about Men” concerning the indeterminacy of the term masculinity and the deployment of hegemonic masculinity in feminist literature as any negative set of attitudes, behaviors, or traits contrary to an agreed upon set of values, Christine Beasley, a specialist in hetero-masculinities, has argued that:

it is politically deterministic and defeatist to assume that the most dominant (in the sense either of most powerful or most widespread) ideals/forms of masculinity are necessarily the same as those that work to guarantee men’s authority over women. Dominant forms of masculinity, for example, may not always, at all times, legitimate men’s power, and those that do legitimate it may not always be socially celebrated or common. (2008, 88)

The variety of masculinities verified across the world as antinomies to hegemonic masculinity has motivated James Messerschmidt (2012), a leading masculinity scholar, to argue that “gender scholars—which includes editors, reviewers, and authors—must distinguish masculinities that legitimate a hierarchical relationship between men and women, between masculinity and femininity, and among men from those that do not.” (72)

This article argues that the history of Black men’s oppression has been especially marked by a process of (un)genderization. Black men have simply never been considered men, and as such exist beyond the established gender hierarchy that accounts for white male patriarchy and white and Black female disadvantage. The freedom of Black men from slavery birthed

the rapist, while his attempts to live a social and economic life was met with lynching, death, and castration. The mutilation of his body was a spectacle that served to deter others from seeking freedom. His death was used as an indication of the health of white supremacy—its vitality and progress. The caricatures of Black men, which have served as the basis of Black gender studies, for the last several decades simply fail to convey the actual existence and history of Black men and boys in the United States since emancipation. This lack of interest in the sexual violence or constructions of Black maleness beyond the rapist has led to a reductionist account of Black male oppression and discrimination. In the United States, Black men have been victims of a peculiar racial antipathy that vacillates between savagery and manhood. Whereas savagery entails the animalistic and brutish nature of violence, the history of Black manhood has always been seen as effete or not man. This ungendered condition marks a boundary between civil society—the world of work, citizen, and life—and phantasm. In a vein quite different from many philosophers who have taken up the twentieth-century practice of positing the organization of society from the pathologies of the individual, this account begins with the socio-historical structures of society—its group-based activity—as the basis of individual socialization. Consequently, phantasm is designated as a depository of negativity that births the anti-social malformation of MAN. This paper attempts to clarify the means through which this figure—the Boogeyman—exists in theory and is imposed upon Black males.

## **1 Hegemonic Masculinity and the Inapplicability of the Concept to Black Males**

Contemporary theories of Black masculinity in the academy assert that Black males desire to emulate white patriarchy. These theories argue that all men in a patriarchal society in fact benefit from patriarchy. In sharp distinction to the idea of multiple masculinities, these Black gender theories insist that Black men, while disadvantaged by race and class, do not constitute a different masculine kind—they are just lesser patriarchs. As Aaronette White explains:

Though most African American men do not experience the same level of power as most White American men, patriarchy produces pecking orders across different groups of men and within different subgroups of men. Each subgroup of men defines manhood in ways that conform to the economic and social possibilities of that group. However, even marginalized men (e.g., poor men of color) accept the system because they benefit from the “patriarchal dividend,” which is the advantage men in general gain from the

overall subordination of women, particularly the women in their subgroup. (2008, xv)

Intersectionality has done little to complicate this view of Black males. The dominant intersectional account of heterosexual Black men and boys suggests that while they may be disadvantaged due to racial discrimination and violence, they are nonetheless committed to the subjugation of other groups to achieve some notion of male privilege (Hutchinson 2001; Mutua 2013). Frank Rudy Cooper's "Against Bipolar Black Masculinity: Intersectionality, Assimilation, Identity Performance, and Hierarchy," for example, argues that Black men are most accurately described as suffering from bipolarity, or the oscillation between the Good and Bad Black male image. Cooper (2005) believes this "is an intersectional phenomenon because it is the product of the combination of narratives about blackness in general and narratives about black masculinity in particular" (858). He maintains that heterosexual Black men are lured "into taking pleasure in the present hierarchies" (896). He holds this view despite Black males attaining no actual advantage or benefit from the emulation of white patriarchal norms. He writes: "heterosexual black men are taught to emulate the economically-empowered heterosexual white men who set the norms in this culture" (896). In an attempt to assimilate into mainstream society, Black men formulate their identity on the white masculine ideal. Consequently, the bipolarity means that "heterosexual black men will feel compelled to prove their manhood through acts that distance them from marginalized others. Emulation of normative masculinity thus makes it more likely heterosexual black men will seek to offset their feelings of powerlessness by subordinating others" (900). Utilizing Michael Kimmel's (1994) essay "Masculinity as Homophobia," Cooper (2005) restates the dictum of hegemonic masculinity as:

The predominant account of normative United States masculinity describes it as fundamentally based on a fear of being associated with denigrated others. To be a full man, one must distinguish oneself from femininity. One accomplishes that by distancing himself from the qualities associated with women and from women themselves. Instead, one treats women as possessions to be displayed as evidence of one's manhood. Similarly, one must distance oneself from gay men. This is the attempted repudiation of the presence of feminine qualities in men. (899)

Like many intersectional theorists, Cooper provides no actual evidence or argument as to how or why Black men would tend toward the assimilation of white masculinity. They just do. Black men who share any of the same ideas as white men are suggested to be hegemonic, while women be they Black or white who imitate the very same norms are not described as hegemonic or emphasized, despite these ideas being central to Connell's

(1987) actual account of hegemonic masculinity. In short, under the present gender order, all masculinity aims toward the domination and subjugation of women and queer subjects. While this is a popularly accepted mythos, it stands in sharp contrast to what is actually described by Connell's theory.

Since the publication of Connell's first book *Gender and Power* (1987) her theory of hegemonic masculinity has undergone several iterations. In its initial formulation, hegemonic masculinity was introduced as a way to explain the forms of masculinity and femininity: "their interrelation is centered on a single structural fact, the global dominance of men over women" (183). While Connell does not believe that there is a hegemonic form of femininity in the sense that there is an independent idea with the cultural force of hegemonic masculinity, she nonetheless holds that at the level of mass social relations, emphasized femininity, or "compliance with [male] subordination . . . [that] is oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men" has been and continues to be necessary to the continuation and thriving the hegemonic ideal (183). Contrary to its popular use in various gender literatures, hegemonic masculinity does not mean the ascendancy of male power through force. Connell states that:

'hegemony' means (as in Gramsci's analyses of class relations in Italy from which the term is borrowed) a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organization of private life and cultural processes. Ascendancy of one group of men over another achieved at the point of a gun, or by the threat of unemployment, is not hegemony. Ascendancy which is embedded in religious doctrine and practice, mass media content, wage structures, the design of housing, welfare/taxation policies and so forth, is. (1987, 184)

Connell deliberately separates her theory of hegemonic masculinity from sex role theory which simply holds that all men in a society replicate the same behaviors or aspire to the same ideals because they are men. Hegemonic masculinity has structural power and ideological currency in a given society. While it may be compatible with force against subordinated groups, hegemonic masculinity is marked by the power of the idea to make individuals conform. In fact, remarks Connell, hegemonic masculinity does not mean "being particularly nasty to women. Women may feel as oppressed by non-hegemonic masculinities, may even find the hegemonic pattern more familiar and manageable. There is likely to be a kind of 'fit' between hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity" (184). The kinds of violence usually associated with poor lower class men have little to do with hegemonic masculinity. As Connell explains:

Hegemonic masculinity does not equate to violent masculinity. Indeed, where violence is central to the assertion of gendered power, we can be fairly certain that hegemony

is not present, because hegemony refers to cultural centrality and authority, to the broad acceptance of power by those over whom it is exercised. (2012, 13)

It is often the case that violence is simply ecological: the consequence of economic or political marginalization that is expressed as *violence* toward women, children, or other men in close physical proximity.

Hegemonic masculinity is not a universal account of masculinity or ubiquitous within any given society, as is often presented in the intersectional or Black feminist literatures. In her subsequent book *Masculinities*, Connell is clear that her accounts of hegemonic masculinity are isolated to the history and structures of gender relations in modern capitalist societies. The kind of masculinity Connell seeks to analyze is “it is built on the conception of individuality that developed in early-modern Europe with the growth of colonial empires and capitalist economic relations” (1995, 68). By 2005, Connell had completely rejected the idea that hegemonic masculinity explains a necessary relationship between men and other men and women. She writes,

The formulation in *Gender and Power* attempted to locate all masculinities (and all femininities) in terms of a single pattern of power, the ‘global dominance’ of men over women. While this was useful at the time in preventing the idea of multiple masculinities from collapsing into an array of competing lifestyles, it is now clearly inadequate to our understanding of relations among groups of men and forms of masculinity and of women’s relations with dominant masculinities. (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 847)

Connell recognized the gravitas of the masculine ideal simply did not hold, and that “dominance in gender relations involves an interplay of costs and benefits, challenges to hegemonic masculinity arise from the ‘protest masculinities’ of marginalized ethnic groups, and bourgeois women may appropriate aspects of hegemonic masculinity in constructing corporate or professional careers” (848). In a vastly different vein than the aforementioned theorists, Connell actually insists that marginalized ethnic groups resist hegemonic masculinity, and bourgeois women can in fact use hegemonic masculinity for social mobility. In short, there is no account even in Connell’s work which suggests that Black men would simply emulated white ideals or benefit from those constructs more than any other marginalized group in society.

In Connell’s most recent publication, “Margin becoming Centre,” she suggests that Black manhood and the various masculinities of the global South show the most potential to overthrow the global reach and dominance of hegemonic masculinity. Colonial notions of masculinity that do not come from settler origins have completely different configurations. As Connell (2014) writes,



rather than speaking of the globalization of gender, it is more accurate to speak of the colonality of gender. . . . In colonization, native bodies were coerced to form plantation, pastoral and domestic workforces; land was seized; new power structures were built around the colonial state. These processes disrupted indigenous gender orders, often with great violence. (220)

This account is not that surprising given Connell's commitments in her first text. Colonization and imperialism prevented colonized people from inhabiting gender because the imposed ruling racial caste of the colonizer comprised of white men and women displaced the indigenous relations between the now racialized males and females. In other words, the gender divisions found within the white ruling class occupying the land of Blacks imposed sexual homogeneity on the inferior racial group through sexually specific segregationist logics deployed by white settlers to create distance between fragile white women and savage native men while promoting contact between patriarchal white men and savage native women. Connell explains that

the creation of the imperialist world order involves a global differentiation of gender patterns, or inserts a global dimension into their definition. The frontier of trade, conquest, or settlement exalted forms of masculinity different from those becoming dominant in the core countries. . . . The expansion of white settlement involves a dialectic of masculinities and femininities as well as race and class; the women were invading white men's realms as well as the lands of the blacks. (Connell 1987, 157)

As such, the imposition of European gender hierarchies distorted the actual relations between white gendered bodies and the savage (ungendered) bodies of Blacks and natives. The presence of white women within empire broached the boundaries of the masculinity thought to be synonymous with imperialism, only to construct white femininity as a colonial endeavor that subjugated native males. Black men and men of the darker races have historically defined themselves as opposed to the encroachment of empire, and by effect the gender order that has now become known as patriarchy. The solidification of gender orders in the United States continue to conceptualize Black men and other racialized groups alongside an order that Connell herself not only rejects, but argues should not occupy the central concerns of how we evaluate masculinity more generally.

Black men are simply not socialized to expect that the behaviors or ideals conveyed by white masculinity works for them. In *The Changing Definition of Masculinity*, Clyde Franklin III (1984) argued that

Many Black male youth also learn that a lacuna exists between those traits of dominance and competitiveness internalized and their exhibition in the larger society. They are very much aware of the high rate of Black male unemployment, Black male underrepresentation in high-paying, high-prestige occupations, and the generally inferior status of Black males in American society. (53)

Black men are socialized in this society quite differently than white men. Remember, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) suggest that even working class white men have masculinities much more equitable than ruling class men and that it has been documented that ethnic minority men have developed durable non-hegemonic protest masculinities in response to dominant hegemonic masculine structures and performances (847–848). As such, it seems preposterous simply to assume, or assert (as is often the case), that Black men who have historically been denied manhood and the ability to enjoy any political or economic advantage over Black women would simply mimic white masculine ideas.

Contrary to the stereotypes of Black maleness, which asserts it to be homophobic and misogynist, Black men have simply not defined themselves as opposed to or distinct from women in general or Black women in particular, and Black males are not necessarily homophobic. Some studies show that Black men, like Black people more generally, do hold homophobic beliefs similar to that of white Americans, but are also less homo-negative than white Americans because they view homosexuals as minorities deserving of civil rights (Lewis 2003) or are simply neutral in their opinions toward gay and lesbian groups (Whitley et al. 2011). In a recent study by the sociologist James Joseph Dean, he argues that Black men do not necessarily see homophobia as the polar opposite of heterosexual identity. Instead, says Dean, twenty-first-century Black men's homophobic and anti-homophobic attitudes should be understood as part of a continuum of masculinities in which "heterosexual men are neither simply antigay nor uniformly pro-gay but rather there is a multiplicity of homophobic and anti-homophobic stances that they draw on in constructing their sexual—gender identities, its boundaries, and their relationship to gay identities, symbols, and spaces" (2013, 558). Black males have variety, so their gender beliefs are contextual and influenced by socioeconomic status, regular church attendance, and education (Lemelle and Battle 2004; Negy and Eisenman 2005).

There is a long record demonstrating the anti-sexist attitudes and radical gender consciousness of Black men in the United States. Black men have historically been found to be more supportive of women's rights, and linked fate more so than white men and white women. These studies also found that Black men have been more supportive of women's issues than Black women since the mid-1990s. Black men simply do not have vastly different views than the women in their communities. In (1983), Noel A. Cazenave

wanted to understand the extent to which middle class Black men suffered from accepting society's traditional prescripts for what it means to "be a man" while being denied (because of their race) the requisite resources to obtain their "manhood" through normatively prescribed channels. His study found that middle-class Black men, those thought to embrace the ideals of hegemonic masculinity most readily, have more progressive gender attitudes than white men and "approve of nontraditional roles for women, women's issues, and egalitarian marital relationships, and believe that men can learn a great deal from the way women act that can be incorporated into their own behavior" (21). In (1989), Ruby Lee Gooley's study of race and gender consciousness among Black Americans found that "the mean race and gender consciousness levels of Black women are more similar to the mean levels for Black men," than that of white women (169). In a 1992 study, Andrea G. Hunter and James E. Davis found that "discussions of masculinity were absent from [Black] men's definitions of manhood" (1994, 475). Black men simply did not believe that the practices and ideas of America's white masculinity applied to how they envisioned or lived out Black manhood. Kathleen Blee and Ann Tickamyer's "Racial Differences in Men's Attitudes about Women's Gender Roles" adds to Hunter and Davis's study by showing that Black and white men fundamentally differ in their perception of women and male sex roles (1995, 29). In (1998), Andrea Hunter and Sherrill Seller's "Feminist Attitudes among African American Women and Men" the racial subjugation of Black men facilitated "a recognition of the importance of both women and men inside and outside the home, particularly in difficult times. Hence, one response to a threatened male breadwinner role is a shift in gender role attitudes" (1998, 95). In (2006), Evelyn Simien's *Black Feminist Voices in Politics* study of gender attitudes and political beliefs among Black Americans found that "black men are equally and, in some cases, more likely than black women to support black feminism" (55–56). In a subsequent study, Simien (2007) found more evidence for her previous research. She argued that her findings dispel

the notion that African American men have not supported or have had no engagement with black feminism . . . [and] the present study provides additional evidence to support the claim that African American men have truly progressed in their thinking about traditional gender roles and have supported black feminist tenets for longer than many realize. African American women are similarly supportive of black feminist tenets, but to a lesser extent than African American men. (146)

Four years after Simien's initial finding, Catherine Harnois used Simien's metric to test whether or not Patricia Hill Collins's theory of standpoint epistemology was in fact exclusive to Black women. Harnois's study

concluded yet again that Black men were as likely and in many cases more likely to support the values (like the interconnectedness of race, class, and gender) and political behaviors traditionally thought to belong solely to a Black feminist orientation (2010, 82–84). In a follow-up study using survey data, Harnois (2014) examined Black American’s beliefs about gender inequality. In the summary of her findings she argued that the data shows, yet again, that Black men have historically been supportive of, and continue to be supportive of, Black women’s leadership roles in politics, and have wholeheartedly supported gender equality more than any other group of men and more than some women in late twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

If Black men emulated white hegemonic masculinity, and truly saw themselves as opposed to women, then why can we not see the consequences of said theory empirically in the voting and surveyed opinions of Black men and women? These accounts of Black male attitudes conducted over the last three decades should look vastly different if Black men did in fact interiorize the lessons of ruling class white masculinity in the United States. Often the accounts of Black masculinity offered by gender theorists are reductive and assume that Black masculinity itself is anti-woman, anti-gay, and anti-feminist. No such claim can be established empirically. As Michael C. Dawson (2001) explains, “Economic class has the greatest effect—indeed, the only significant effect—on support for black feminist ideology . . . even after all of the individual level controls are included, those who live in neighborhoods with high levels of concentrate poverty are more likely to reject black feminist positions”(157). Given the evidence, it seems clear that hegemonic masculinity both as a theory and as an account of Black male socialization in the United States does not apply. Often philosophers attempt to respond to, or more accurately dismiss, empirical evidence through universalizing the results of a particular case and then dismissing the universal claim as a fallacy. For example, one might respond if we believe the previously stated finding, then one would say that sexism does not exist in the Black community. The *reductio ad absurdum*, however, mischaracterizes the subject in the proposition. Hegemonic masculinity is an account of ruling class masculinity and the ideological consequence of patriarchy in modern capitalist societies; it does not make any specific claims concerning interpersonal relationships toward women or sexist ideas concerning women. As such, the argument would be a claim concerning the prevalence and structure of patriarchy in Black communities. Black men and women can and do hold sexist assumptions about Black women, but these negative ideas are transmitted from the larger white society, not reflective of an ideology created by hierarchies originating within the group.

In those cases where we do of course find personal expression of sexism or misogyny, we find similar attitudes within the respective age groups and economic or educated cohorts. However, as shown by Barbara Turner and Castellano Turner’s “Evaluations of Women and Men Among Black and

White College Students,” while Black college students in the 1970s were not more likely to have negative views of Blacks or women when compared to whites, “compared to whites, black females and males view men as ‘no good,’ and black females also view them as irresponsible and untrustworthy, . . . blacks did seem to evaluate men less favorably than whites evaluated men” (1974, 454–455). While Turner and Turner’s study only included 154 Black respondents, Noel Cazenave and Rita Smith’s study found in a survey of 256 Black respondents from various socioeconomic classes that a substantial minority viewed Black male–female relationships as negative, and in those cases there was a “greater acceptance of negative stereotypes about Black men than there is regarding Black women” (1990, 166). These studies suggest that the negative stereotypes Black people have of each other are forms of internalized racism. When the sexual peculiarity of these stereotypes are accounted for among Blacks, we find that anti-Black male attitudes are held by Black men and Black women, but are more prevalent among Black women than Black men (Chesnut 2009). However, it is important to note that these studies show the minority cases of Black people. In other words, Black people generally have positive views of each other, and in those cases where they do not, negative perceptions of Black men are more widely held than negative perceptions of Black women.

## 2 Anti-Black Misandry: A History of the Negative Sexual Accounts of Black Males

The demonization, social marginalization, and extermination of Black males, specifically heterosexual Black males, is among the most long-standing practices of white America’s patriarchal regime. Black men were targeted by ethnologists, sexologists, physicians, and politicians throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. During slavery, Blacks were described as childlike savages, sensuous, and in dire need of moral education and civilization. They were a feminine race that stood to be ruled by the patriarchal (white) race. Under the ethnological schema of the nineteenth century, the Black race actually had no gender, since they had not evolved far enough beyond savagery to have or need specific sex roles (Curry 2016). The bodies of Black people were fungible, used for whatever whim whites pleased. While we are more familiar with the rape of Black women during slavery, the story of Black male rape by white men and women is often overlooked. Not unlike other British colonies, the bodies of male natives were exoticized and often the objects of colonial fetishes (Sen 2010; Aldrich 2003). Black males were raped, mutilated, and eaten during American slavery (Woodard 2014). The bodies of Black men were thought to be potions of virility to whites and was often consumed as a ritual. The rape of Black men was of similar course. The rape of Black males during slavery was often exercised as the ultimate demonstration of power and punishment.

The mass rape of Black males during slavery was an unbridled show of force that often resulted in death. James Hoke Sweet (2003) explains:

perhaps the most violent sexual assaults of slaves occurred in Pará in the late 1750s and early 1760s. Francisco Serrão de Castro, heir to a large sugar engenho, was denounced for sodomy and rape by no less than nineteen male slaves, all Africans. Among those who were assaulted were teenage boys and married men. As a result of these sexual attacks, a number of the victims suffered from “swelling and . . . bleeding from their anuses.” Francisco Serrão de Castro apparently infected his slaves with a venereal disease that eventually took more than a quarter of his victims to their graves. (74)

The sodomization of Black men by white men was often associated with the most brutal forms of punishment, but as we often learn from the story of Luke in Harriet Jacob’s narrative or Thomas Tistlewood’s diary, the rape of Black boys was often done for pleasure (see [Jacobs 2000](#) and [Burnard 2004](#)). It was not only white men who committed rape; the white woman was too a rapist. As historian Thomas Foster (2011) writes, “As with relations between white men and enslaved women, sexual contact between white women and enslaved men ranged from affectionate to violent” (459). In the institution of slavery, white women had complete control and access to Black male flesh. She was a master, so to speak, and able to determine the Black male slave’s life or death. “Wives and daughters of planters who formed these sexual relationships were simply taking advantage of their position within the slave system” (459). In this world, white women could use Black male slaves for their personal enjoyment without risking their reputations, and as Foster writes “retain their virtue and maintain the appearance of passionlessness and virginity while seeking sexual experimentation” (459). While history demonstrates the rape of Black men is true—meaning it did in fact happen—our ability to think of Black males as victims of sexual violence throughout history is obscured by our notions of gender and the vulnerability certain bodies are believed to have to rape.

The various arguments over the decades aiming to delink sex from gender have been ineffective in delinking the idea of gender from that of woman. The insistence that gender is coterminous with that of women suggests that the systemic neglect of manhood in gender studies is an extending of gender category rather than an analysis of gender itself. The modern concept of gender was not naturally assumed to belong to the province of the woman. In the nineteenth century, races were gendered, not bodies. As Ann McClintock (1995) writes:

Racial stigmata were systematically, if often contradictorily, drawn on to elaborate minute shadings of difference

in which social hierarchies of race, class and gender overlapped each other in a three-dimensional graph of comparison. The rhetoric of *race* was used to invent distinctions between what we would now call classes. At the same time, the rhetoric of *gender* was used to make increasingly refined distinctions among the different races. The white race was figured as the male of the species and the black race as the female. Similarly, the rhetoric of *class* was used to inscribe minute and subtle distinctions between other races. The Zulu male was regarded as the “gentleman” of the black race, but was seen to display features typical of females of the white race. (55–56)

It was not until the rupture of the race hierarchy between the patriarchal white race and the female Black savages that the modern concept of gender was born. The birth of the gender concept revolved around two primary notions after emancipation. The first was the concept of manhood and whether Black men qualified for the social and political rights offered to them after the Civil War, and the second was the relation between white men and women and the free Black savage. As the historian Melissa Stein explains,

During the Civil War and Reconstruction, . . . U.S. physicians and scientists who wrote about race became increasingly preoccupied with the interrelated issues of citizenship and what it meant to be a proper man or proper woman. Consequently, 22 percent of scientific texts on race published between 1860 and 1879 explicitly focus on issues related to gender, compared to just six percent in the 1850s and zero percent between 1830 and 1849. (2015, 91)

With the new attention to matters of gender in the ethnological literature, the increased sophistication of speaking about white men and women was set against the birth of the Black rapist.

The starkest contradiction in the ethnological record is perhaps the descriptions of Black males. In the years immediately following the Civil War, there was a concerted effort to infantilize and feminize Black males. Ethnologists exerted great efforts to describe Black males as childlike and immature. Franz I. Pruner-Bey, the preeminent anthropologist of his day, had been quoted saying that “the black man is to white man what woman is to man in general, a loving being and being of pleasure” (Hunt 1863, 39). The ethnologist Carl Vogt held that “The grown-up Negro partakes, as regards his intellectual faculties, of the nature of the female child, and the senile white. He manifests a propensity for pleasure, music, dancing, physical enjoyments, and conversation, while his inconstancy of impressions and of all the feelings are those of a child” (Dunn 1866, 25). Dr. James Hunt, president of the London Anthropology Society, wrote:

No man who thoroughly investigates with an unbiased mind, can doubt that the Negro belongs to a distinct type of Man to the European. The word “species” in the present state of science is not satisfactory; but we may safely say that there is in the Negro that assemblage of evidence which would, ipso facto, induce an unbiased observer to make the European and Negro two distinct types of man. (1864, 23)

The male of the race was judged to be the indicator of the race’s civilizational potential. In the case of Black men, the ethnological consensus was that he simply was not Man. There were no distinct differences between the Negro and the Negress, according to Hunt (1864, 9).

The denial of Black manhood—his effeminization—did not stop ethnologists from believing that it was slavery, and the institution of slavery only, that constrained the brutish nature of the Black male. These scientists believed that emancipation would unleash the primordial rage of the Black male rapist and doom white civilization. According to F. E. Daniel, a Texas physician,

there was no perversion of the sexual sense. The males did not desire the white women, nor dream of ravishing the white children . . . freed from these restraints . . . and despite torture and certain death staring him in the face, the rape fiend, the negro sadist, wreaks his vengeance and spite on some innocent child and gratifies, in that unnatural manner, his abominable lust. (1904, 459)

Without the paternalism of the slave institution, Black men were thought to be overcome by their primal instincts during puberty. William Lee Howard, a noted sexologist and physician, writes:

It is a fact observed by those who are in a position to study the negro that with the advent of puberty all intellectual development ceases; even the “sound memory,” which is the cause of much apparent precociousness, seems to be submerged by the growth and activity of sensuality. With the advent of puberty the Negro shows his genestic instincts to be the controlling factor of his life. These take hold of his religion, control his thoughts, and govern his actions. In the increase of rape on white women we see the explosion of a long train of antecedent preparation. The attacks on defenseless white women are evidences of racial instincts that are about as amenable to ethical culture as is the inherent odor of the race. It is this sexual question that is the barrier which keeps the philanthropist and moralist from realizing that the phylogenies of the Caucasian and



African races are divergent, almost antithetical, and that it is gross folly to attempt to educate both on the same basis. When education will reduce the large size of the Negro's penis as well as bring about the sensitiveness of the terminal fibers which exist in the Caucasian, then will it also be able to prevent the African's birthright to sexual madness and excess—from the Caucasian's view-point. (1903, 424)

The Black male rapist was no myth—he was an unevolved relic of nature. His propensity to rape was thought to be the product of much antecedent preparation. The ontogenesis of this creature was from the feminine-male-savage to that of the rapist. There was no intermediary or final developmental stage that rendered him a man in any account by white ethnologists during the nineteenth century. At puberty, the Black male regressed. His maturation and growth toward adulthood marked by the onset of puberty devolved him to his most basic sexual instinct. Freedom was thought to be incompatible with the actual nature of Black men. As sexologist G. Frank Lydston explained,

When all inhibitions of a high order have been removed by sexual excitement, I fail to see any difference from a physical standpoint between the sexual furor of the negro and that which prevails among the lower animals in certain instances and at certain periods . . . Kiernan, in the *Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases* in 1885, called attention to a fact which is very pertinent to our present inquiry—namely, that the furor sexualis in the negro resembles similar sexual attacks in the bull and elephant, and the running amuck of the Malay race. This furor sexualis has been especially frequent among the Negroes in States cursed by carpet-bag statesmanship, in which frequent changes in the social and commercial status of the Negro race have occurred. (McGuire and Lydston 1893, 17)

As ethnology gave way to anthropology and sociology in the mid-1900s, new accounts of Black males' temperament and psychological dislocation arose. The most noted interventions of psychoanalysis was in ethnographic studies of the Negro in the South in the 1930s. John Dollard's *Caste and Class in a Southern Town* introduced the idea that Black men were primarily motivated to violence through their internalized hatred of whites. Dollard believed that the organization of the South following the end of slavery could be best described as a racial caste system. This caste was “a barrier to social contact, or, at least, to some forms of social contact. It defines a superior and inferior group and regulates the behavior of the member of each group” (1937, 62). The inferiorization of Blacks in the lower caste leads to social isolation that produces psychological maladjustments—what

Dollard describes as a distinctive psychology (63). For the Negro male, this caste position was circumscribed by the white man's sexual gain—his access to both the white woman and women of the lower racial caste—and the barring of “sexual contact between women of the patriarchal caste and men of the lower caste” (136).

The sexual order of Jim Crow led white social scientists and Southerners to suggest that “there was much more aggression and violence with the Negro caste than there is in the white code” (Dollard 1937, 269). Speaking primarily of lower-class Negroes, whites suggested this group was emotionally unstable, and that such violence was a racial trait—“Negroes are nearer to savagery, and . . . are more aggressive than we ourselves” (269). This view applied to both men and women. Negro relationships were marked by high levels of sexual jealousy. Black men and women frequently assaulted or killed each other over sexual jealousy. Because the Black male lacks the ability to lead a strong patriarchal family unit, Dollard hypothesizes that a Black man will resort to personal force to keep his woman (270). To explain the aggression of Black men under the Southern caste system, he introduces a theory that is still recited with reference to Dollard's work today. Dollard suggested “another alternative to punishing the white rival is punishing the Negro woman; much of the suspicion and aggression against Negro women by their husbands or lovers may be accounted for in this way; it is too dangerous to take out on the white man, but the woman betrayer is at hand and may be punished” (271). Dollard believed that Black men were culturally predetermined by the racial order to be violent and psychologically disposed to such aggression by their repressed want of vengeance against whites.

Dollard observed that the Southern white public were overly sensitive to any displays of Black male assertiveness in his ethnographies. “The sensitivity to any assertive move on the part of the Negro is immediately recorded in threatening judgments of his behavior of the type we already know, he is said to be uppity or getting out of his place” (289). The racial order of Jim Crow was designed to destroy the self-concept and will of Black males. Oppression of Black men was specifically contoured to deprive them of the will to pursue the means of acquiring any semblance of manhood. They were to be trained upon their depravity and denials. The perceptions of aggression from Black men and Black women were qualitatively different according to Dollard:

within the caste system situation Negro women can be somewhat more expressive of their resentment than can Negro men. In comparing the life history data of Negro men and women, it was quite clear that much more antagonism is tolerated from women; they can do and say things which would bring a severe penalty had they been men. It may be that white caste members do not fear the

aggression of women, so much, especially since it cannot take the form of sexual attack, or the chivalry expected of men in our society toward women in general may come into play. There are, of course, distinct limits to what a Negro woman may do, but they are not so narrow as for men. (1937, 289–290)

Black men were trapped by the sexual order of Jim Crow. Under the South's patriarchal order, Black men were punished more severely than their Black female counterpart for violating the societal norms used to enforce their racial inferiority. Black males were condemned to the bottom of the racial caste system such that any attempt by a Black man to improve himself economically was "perceived by the white caste as an affront" (298). Racialized maleness is a different kind of threat to white superiority in repressive racial regimes than femaleness. This kind of maleness exists in a different register distinct from gender, sociologically obvious, but theoretically unaccounted for in our reading of Black maleness.

Under the white caste system, Black males were socially, politically, and interpersonally impotent. Because of their political and social disadvantage, they were thought to suffer low self-esteem and internalized aggression toward whites. Having no fathers in the home and lacking the economic power or employment opportunities of Black women, white social scientists suggested the matriarchal structure of the Black family inhibited the growth and development of Black men and boys (Kardiner 1959, 421–422). Among lower-class Blacks, it was believed that this maladjustment manifested as self-hatred (Kardiner and Ovesey 2014, 366–367). The lack of a strong family structure infantilized Black boys psychologically, making them form various dependency and antisocial complexes, while nonetheless hyper-sexualizing them. Kardiner and Ovesey observed in *The Mark of Oppression* that lower class Black boys sexual activities and concluded that the delinquency caused by the lack of a nuclear family created sexual deviance. They argue for instance that Black boys

learn about sex in the streets; masturbation generally begins early, six to eight. On the whole, masturbation does not play much of a role in the growing lower class boy. This is due to the early opportunities for relations with women. First intercourse at seven or nine is not uncommon, and very frequent in early adolescence, usually with girls much older. (2014, 68)

This indicated the lack of individual ego development and sexual maladjustment due to the lack of a patriarchal family structure as well as Black males' hyper-sexuality for mid-twentieth-century social scientists.

The work of Dollard, Kardiner, and Ovesey served as the basis of the presumed inferiority complex of Blacks into the 1970s for white social scientists. Thomas Pettigrew's (1964) *A Profile of the Negro American*

for instance summarized the findings of these works in support of his argument that “the psychologically vulnerable Negro crippled by weak ego development from earlier family disorganization, is much more likely to fall prey to mental illness, drug addiction, or crime depending on his particular life history” (23). While Black boys were thought to be sexual predators and hyper-sexual given this weakened ego formation, they were nonetheless still effeminized. Lower-class Black males were thought to suffer from a confused sexual identity, which made them more prone to delinquency. The absence of fathers made Black boys effete—and prone to criminality. As Barclay and Cusumano found, “even when one controls for female headed households, “the number of Negro and white boys with and without fathers was the same, the Negroes still came out with higher feminine scores” (1967, 35). Fatherless homes were assumed to produce deviance generally, but more so in Negro males (Caldwell 1959; Burton and Whiting 1961). The effeminization of Black men was not simply in their relation to white men as lesser males or less masculine men. The twentieth-century caricature of the feminine Black male reiterated the ethnological thinking of Black males in the nineteenth century as a maladjusted psychologism. This made Black males incapable of being husbands and fathers or having any optimal familial role. Ironically the outgrowth of the feminine personality disorder of Black men was hyper-masculinity. As Patricia Moran and Allan Barclay (1988) explain in their summarization of twentieth-century social science on sex-role identity:

the more feminine orientation of these boys whose fathers are absent leads to a sex-role conflict, which is resolved by compulsive denial of anything feminine together with overt demonstration of hyper-masculinity often associated with delinquent behavior . . . [and] Negro adolescents appeared to have stronger feminine identification than white adolescents. (115–116)

The use of hyper-masculinity to describe Black males is rooted in a racist trope that holds Black boys to be culturally deformed and socially deviant. This was the dominant view of Black men from the 1930s to the late 1980s (Biller 1968).

This idea that Black men were not fathers and could not be men dominated the literature of the 1960s. Even in the *Report of Consultation on Problems of Negro Women* published in 1963, Dorothy Height writes, “If the Negro woman has a major underlying concern, it is the status of the Negro man and his position in the community and his need for feeling himself an important person, free and able to make his contribution in the whole society in order that he may strengthen his home” (1963, 35). Height’s opinion was influenced by elaborate studies and programs that established these ideas of Black males in the mid-twentieth-century facts with scientific certainty. Given the dominance of this view, there is simply

no record among American social scientists, be they Black or white, of Black patriarchy. While there are various accounts of what is now understood as hyper-masculinity as a product of Black men's low self-esteem, these theories were based on the idea that Black men wanted to be white men because they had no actual role models (as in fathers), or idea to aspire toward but that which oppressed them and confined them within segregated ghettos and poverty. Black men were suffering from neurosis and cultural marginalization, which increased their propensity for delinquency. In my research, I could find no social scientific account or theory of Black (male) patriarchy prior to the various Black feminist reactions to Black Power (Noble 1978; Wallace 1980; hooks 1982). Because white sociologists and racists were firmly committed to the racial inferiority and sexual effeminization of Black males, the idea that Black men were patriarchs simply did not, or could not, exist within the white sociological, psychological, or historical accounts given of Black males in the twentieth century. This evidence suggests that Black feminism singularly birthed the idea of Black male patriarchy as a reaction to the prominence of Black men like Eldridge Cleaver during the era of Black Power, and linked theories of Black men's hyper-masculinity and deviance in the late 1970s and 1980s were fundamentally linked to Black men's quest for political power and civil rights.

The culmination of these myths—which have always asserted themselves to be theories—accounting for Black males violent, dangerous, and predatory nature as rapists and killers, as well as the historical and contemporary rearticulations of these ideas that present themselves as *obvious facts* concerning the deviant and flawed nature of Black males, are evidence of a peculiar anti-Black, racial, or perhaps more accurately stated, a racist misandry operating throughout the centuries in the United States.

### 3 Toward a Racial Subjugated Male Thesis or The Theory of Phallicism.

In *Social Dominance: An Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression*, Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto (1999) describe a system of social hierarchy and outgroup construction that runs counter to many of the ideas and systems we are socialized to accept under intersectionality in the liberal arts. The theorization of social processes and problems often emerge as axiomatic rather than deliberative, insofar as every theory pays homage to mentioning race, class, and gender. The consequence of this rhetorical acknowledgment is that many scholars who declare their attention to these concepts (e.g., race, class, gender) have no explanative theories of how these concepts function in the United States, which is usually the geography of their concerns, or an account of the actual substance of the categories deployed. In this world, race usually means Black and white, class often means rich or poor, and gender often is framed as man or

woman. While there are criticisms that involve a range of other social identities like disability, religion, citizenship, sexual orientation, etc., these are largely external categories used to enhance the rubrics established by a race, class, gender, or intersectional analysis. This shorthand rhetoric to describe complex social processes are present throughout the humanist and social sciences. As Sidanius and Pratto (1999) write, “While many of the theories locked within their traditional academic disciplines are able to reap the benefit of parsimony, this benefit generally comes at the cost of a good deal of cultural and theoretical parochialism” (4).

Social dominance theory “begins with the basic observation that all human societies tend to be structured as systems of group-based social hierarchies. At the very minimum, this hierarchical social structure consists of one or a small number of dominant and hegemonic groups at the top and one or a number of subordinate groups at the bottom” (31). Sidanius and Pratto (1999) distinguish between individual social hierarchies where individuals in society gain or possess wealth and prestige based on particular individual characteristics and group-based social hierarchies referring to “that social power, prestige, and privilege that an individual possesses by virtue of his or her ascribed membership in a particular socially constructed group such as a race, religion, clan, tribe, lineage, linguistic/ethnic group, or social class” (32). Sidanius and Pratto understand group divisions through Pierre L. van den Berghe’s biosocial accounts of human societies articulated in *Man in Society* (1975) and a shorter article titled “Race and Ethnicity: A Sociobiological Perspective” (1978). Van den Berghe believed that “All human societies continue to be organized on the basis of all three principles of sociality: kin selection, reciprocity, and coercion” (403). As these societies become more complex, kin relationships and reciprocity become more accentuated while coercion becomes a noted characteristic of state based societies. Another social condition also breeds an extreme amount of violence and conflict—that condition is racism. According to Van den Berghe,

ethnic and race relations are not only relations of cooperation and amity with the in-group; they are equally importantly relations of competition and conflict between groups. While intra-group relations are primarily dictated by kin selection, real or putative, intergroup relations are typically antagonistic. (1978, 409)

In such societies,

there is open competition for, and conflict over scarce resources, and not infrequently the establishment of multi-ethnic states dominated by one ethnic group at the expense of others. Coercion then becomes the basis of interethnic (or inter-racial) relations. (409)

Van den Berghe maintained that for racism to fully function, there was a sexual dynamic that sought to control the access subjugated or racialized males had to women and resources, while dominant males, or white men in the context of the United States, enjoyed unfettered access to the women of the subordinate racial group. He writes, for example, that

Racism has never stopped dominant group men from mating with subordinate group women. But the reverse is probably true. Racism requires a special effort to sustain when most of your closest relatives belong to the despised race, that is, when phenotypes become poor predictors of genetic relatedness. . . . Fully institutionalized racism can only be maintained, in short, in societies like South Africa and the United States that retain a high degree of racial endogamy, or that have reestablished racial endogamy after a phase of miscegenation under slavery. (1978, 408)

Sidanius and Pratto realized that these patriarchal societies that gained economic surplus exhibited a tendency to construct subordinate males as sexual threats to the endogamy of the dominant white race. In short, the organization of these particular societies saw subordinate males as threats to their kinship relationships with the dominant group. Looking at various capitalist societies throughout the world, Sidanius and Pratto found that in every society studied, the subordinate males within that society experienced the most severe forms of discrimination and seemed to be the consistent targets of the most egregious forms of violence and death.

Sidanius and Pratto (1999) argue that modern capitalist societies organize around three primary social stratifications systems: age systems where adults govern over children, gender systems where males tend to have disproportionate power and status to females, and arbitrary-set systems which are “socially constructed and highly salient groups based on characteristics such as . . . ethnicity . . . race, caste, social class, . . . any other socially relevant group distinction that the human imagination is capable of constructing” (33). In these societies, age and gender tend toward fixity given their biological designations, but have some degree of malleability, while arbitrary-set systems are marked by an “unusually high degree of arbitrariness, plasticity, flexibility, and situational and contextual sensitivity in determining which group distinctions are socially salient” (33). Sidanius and Pratto (1999) claim that the foundational nature of age and gender stratifications make them “no strangers to very brutal forms of social control” (34), but it is those defined by their position within socially constructed arbitrary sets which experience the most brutality forms of direct violence, especially when these arbitrary sets are defined by ethnic or racial differences. Whereas age and gender groups designate power within the dominant or superior group, arbitrary-set systems construct the characteristics of the other. Sidanius and Pratto argue that arbitrary

sets are “filled with socially constructed and highly salient groups based on characteristics such as clan, ethnicity, estate, nation, race, caste, social class, religious sect, regional grouping, or any other socially relevant group distinction that the human imagination is capable of constructing” (33). These distinctions are marked by asymmetrical power relations where “one group is materially and/or politically dominant over the other” (33).

The popular understanding of Western patriarchy is marked by the assumption that patriarchal violence is inherently misogynistic, violent, and threatening to the lives of women. According to Sidanius and Veniegas (2000), “Many feminists characterize patriarchy as primarily a misogynist structure driven by male hatred of and contempt for women. However, empirical research shows that patriarchy is primarily associated with paternalism (i.e., the intersection of discriminatory intent and positive affect) rather than with misogyny” (48). Social dominance theory does not suggest that women are not oppressed within patriarchal and capitalistic societies rather following Laura Betzig’s work on patriarchal impetus for violence and power within societies, Sidanius and Pratto (1999) suggest

intrasexual competition among males may encourage men not only to dominate women politically and economically and so control women’s sexual and reproductive behavior, but also to form expropriative male coalitions against outgroup males. These activities will result both in the oppression of women and in class stratification among men. (264)

Similar to Connell’s exploration of hegemonic and subordinate masculinities, social dominance theory holds that the division of males by arbitrary sets presents an insurmountable border between the men and women of the dominant group and the male subordinates of the inferior group where patriarchy involves in Connell’s schema the incentivization of emphasized femininity and the outward display of violence against non-conforming/subordinate/racialized males. This difference by degree of violence and intensity of discrimination is called the *subordinate male target hypothesis (SMTH)*. To be clear, Sidanius and Pratto (1999) are not arguing that patriarchy does not discriminate or oppress women; rather, they are arguing that the type of violence against subordinate males in these structures are different than the violence directed against subordinate females. They write:

the SMTH does not imply the absence of discrimination against women, for such discrimination clearly occurs and is part of the gender system of group-based social hierarchy (i.e., patriarchy). Rather, what we are suggesting is that, everything else being equal, subordinate males rather than subordinate females are the primary objects of arbitrary-set discrimination. (50)



In housing, incarceration, employment, and policing, social dominance theorists have found that subordinate males suffer more occurrences of outward discrimination and lethal violence than subordinate females within capitalist patriarchal societies.

#### 4 Intersectional Invisibility As a Response to Evidence of Greater Subordinate (Racialized/Black) Male Oppression

The explanative power of social dominance orientations caused a reformulation of intersectional modes of analysis in the mid-2000s by moving social scientists away from additive and interactive explanations of Black female disadvantage toward notions of invisibility. Introduced as a concept by Valerie Purdie-Vaughns and Richard P. Eibach's "Intersectional Invisibility: The Distinctive Advantages and Disadvantages of Multiple Subordinate-Group Identities," Purdie-Hughes and Eibach (2008) believed that while social dominance theory does in fact explain the greater levels of oppression, discrimination, and lethal force endured by subordinate male targets, the focus on males should be understood as a kind of prototypicality or privilege of recognition by dominant group white males. Purdie-Hughes and Eibach begin by acknowledging that intersectionality has traditionally sought to legitimate the double-jeopardy hypothesis, or the idea that minority women suffered the effects of both gender oppression and racial oppression in the United States. Over time, this idea expanded to include class and sexual orientation, but revolved around the idea that multiple subordinate identities—the increased markers of non-prototypicality—would in fact indicate lower social standing to other groups. Historically, intersectionality has appealed to two models of multiple subordinated group's disadvantage to demonstrate this point. The first is the additive model, or the view that "a person with two or more intersecting identities experiences the distinctive forms of oppression associated with each of his or her subordinate identities summed together. The more devalued identities a person has, the more cumulative discrimination he or she faces" (2008, 378). The second is the interactive model, which argues that "each of a person's subordinate identities interact in a synergistic way. People experience these identities as one, and thus contend with discrimination as a multiply marginalized other" (378). Purdie Hughes and Eibach (2008) ultimately suggest that the additive and interactive models of intersectionality aimed to predict a concrete sociological fact—

that people with multiple subordinate identities will be subjected to more prejudice and discrimination than those with a single subordinate identity. The double jeopardy thesis is typically supported by findings demonstrating that on many economic and social indicators such as wages, job authority, and occupational status, people with intersecting

subordinate identities (e.g., Black women, Latinas, and some groups of Asian American women) are at the bottom, falling below White women and ethnic minority men. (379)

While some authors like Devon Carbado are adamant that “Black women do not experience double jeopardy in every context . . . [and] there are contexts in which Black men do” (2013, 814), his view has not reformulated the popular understanding of intersectionality held by most theorists. Carbado’s account presumes non-prototypical masculinities which differ because of their sexual orientation, he simply does not believe heterosexual Black men, who have been historically framed as the biggest threats to white endogamy, are oppressed due to their sex in ways comparable to other groups.

By intersectional invisibility, [Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach \(2008\)](#) mean

the general failure to fully recognize people with intersecting identities as members of their constituent groups. Intersectional invisibility also refers to the distortion of the intersectional persons’ characteristics in order to fit them into frameworks defined by prototypes of constituent identity groups. (381)

Under intersectional invisibility, multiple subordinated groups are thought to experience fundamentally different forms of oppression from that of single disadvantage identities (380). So while subordinate males suffer from greater levels of violence, discrimination, and death, intersectional invisibility argues that the primary struggle of multiple subordinate groups is one of recognition, where members of these groups “struggle to have their voices heard and, when heard, understood” (383). Recognition, however, is not the same as the sociological disadvantage thought to initially justify the aforementioned additive or interactive models. Purdie-Hughes and Eibach admit that the data amassed by Sidanius and Pratto—showing that subordinate males across the world experience greater job discrimination, that Black men in the United States report greater discrimination over 30-day periods, and subordinate males endure more retail discrimination than their female counterparts, “offer strong support for social dominance theory’s prediction that prejudice against arbitrary-set subordinate groups is largely targeted at the men within those groups, which often causes minority men to be worse off overall than minority women, contrary to both conventional wisdom and the double jeopardy hypothesis” (380). To justify a new model of intersectional disadvantage, given the weight of the previous evidence, they argue for a shift away from the rubric of sociological disadvantage to a theory of recognition that makes paramount the various historical, cultural, legal, and political erasures that marginalization groups with multiple subordinated group identities suffer.

By shifting the question to how particular groups are recognized—how visible they are to prototypical groups that are defined ethnocentrically

as white, androcentrically as male, and heterocentric as straight—[Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach \(2008\)](#) now suggest that subordinate males, even when they experience the greatest levels of discrimination, violence, and death, are in fact more privileged by being closer the identity of the prototypical dominant group male. From this perspective, the authors criticize the subordinate male target hypothesis for naturalizing androcentrism, or “the tendency to define men as the prototypical exemplars of a given group and women as non-prototypical exemplars of that group” (381). Consequently, subordinate male targets of violence are privileged even though invisibility protects subordinate females from the similar levels of violence.

The oppression of subordinate group men is the product of psychological dispositions that evolved as males competed for resources in the human ancestral environment. By contrast, our model views the oppression of subordinate group men as a reflection of the general tendency in an androcentric society to view all men—both those of dominant groups and those of subordinate groups—as more important than women. It is this marginalization of women in an androcentric society that causes subordinate women to be relatively ignored as direct targets of oppression compared to subordinate men. (383)

Intersectional invisibility maintains that the violence racialized males suffer originates from a place of advantage and similarity to their oppressors rather than difference and subjugation from these groups. As I explained previously,

Intersectional invisibility holds a contradictory view of violence under patriarchy that suggests this: While violence against women in patriarchal societies is evidence of their lower status and domination under patriarchy, the greater levels of violence against racialized men in the same society are not evidence of their dehumanization, but their privilege as men. ([Curry 2017](#), 176)

The dangers of such a theory are obvious. If death, one of the most extreme forms of violence waged against racialized men in a patriarchal society, cannot be an indication of the precariousness and vulnerability of the targeted group, then dehumanization, oppression, and the idea of violence itself become commensurate to offence. The loss of life, especially the systematic and reoccurring death of specific populations, has historically occupied a noted place in the conscience of the West given the relationship between dehumanization and genocide. To suggest that the deaths of Black men and other racialized males in Western societies is a mark of privilege rather than oppression negates the very idea that these bodies have a right to life and can or should be recognized as persons by adherents

of intersectional invisibility. Intersectional invisibility must presume that racialized males are dehumanized—that they possess a lesser life—for the calculus to work.

It is important to recognize that intersectional invisibility is *interpretive*, revolving around the meaning of androcentrism—not predictive or sociological. Its claim that Black males benefit from the established androcentrism of the United States is false for two major reasons. First, the authors draw upon Sandra Bem’s analysis in *The Lenses of Gender: Transforming the Debate*, where she defines androcentrism as “the privileging of male experience and the ‘otherizing’ of female experience; that is, males and male experience are treated as a neutral standard or norm for the culture or the species as a whole, and females and female experience are treated as a sex-specific deviation from that allegedly universal standard” (Bem 1993, 41). However, Bem is clear that

Not all males in U.S. society actually have power, of course, and the term male power should thus be construed narrowly as the power historically held by rich, white, heterosexual men, for it is they who originally set up and now primarily sustain the cultural discourses and social institutions of this nation. (3)

The gender polarization resulting from the institutionalized cultural patriarchy that maintains sharp divisions between male and female simply does not exist among Black peoples in the United States as demonstrated earlier. Bem is focused on how white racial groups understand the process of gender differentiation; her analysis does not mention Blacks or other racial groups whatsoever.

Purdie-Hughes and Eibach simply assert that the maleness between racial groups in perpetual conflict with each other is shared and recognized as such by the dominant group making *maleness* more prototypical, while femaleness even within the same racial group that shares cultural unity with the dominant male class remains non-prototypical. Purdie-Hughes and Eibach provide no justification as to why subordinate outgroup males are interpreted as *patriarchal males* similar to those of the dominant class. The Jamaican theorist Errol Miller claims that:

Patriarchy has historically marginalized men not covered by the covenant of kinship. Filial and fraternal bonds have always mitigated how men used power over other men who belonged to the group. . . . Throughout history such men have been perceived as threats and treated as such. Patriarchy’s treatment of such men has always been more brutal and harsh than its treatment of women. (Miller 1991, 243)

In twentieth-century genocides we see the very same dynamic. Outgroup men are targeted for extermination and dehumanized as vermin who spread disease and rapists who risk polluting the women of the superior racial caste—a threat to racial endogamy. Conflict, especially when conducted by racialized regimes, targets and dehumanizes outgroup males who are seen as separate and evolutionarily distinct from the superior male group. Jones (2000) explains that “the gender-selective mass killing and ‘disappearance’ of males, especially ‘battle-age’ males, remains a pervasive feature of contemporary conflict” (189). History has shown that patriarchy seems to have an inherent aversion to outgroup racialized males where dehumanization is often conveyed by death. Why assume that such a vulnerability to death is best understood as sharing in Bem’s conceptualizing of (white-societal) androcentrism? Under this framework, all conversations of death, dying, discrimination, and disadvantage concerning Black, Brown, or Indigenous males or racialized males would be androcentric and patriarchal, for no other reason than those victimized or killed are men. In short, all conversations about men (regardless of their actual oppression, murder, or genocide in the society) would be condemned because *they are about men* and by definition androcentric or patriarchal.

Secondly, while Sidanius and Pratto do not hold that women are the primary victims of lethal violence, there is no justification for the claim that violence against groups is an indication or measure of their actual importance, or value to dominant group of *patriarchal* males. One could just as easily suggest that the reluctance of patriarchal societies to kill women to the extent that they kill outgroup racialized men is due a greater value attributed to women. Purdie-Hughes and Eibach simply assert that in patriarchies women have less value than men without considering the actual status and histories of racialized males under these systems. Sidanius and Pratto (1999) argue that arbitrary set discrimination against subordinate males is committed to protecting the endogamy of the dominant racial group. In its initial formulation, social dominance theory hypothesized that males were both the agents and targets of arbitrary set discrimination. This view held that women had little incentive to engage in or perpetuate arbitrary set discrimination against outgroup males; however, recent research by MacDonald et al. (2011) has shown that it is “not the case that men should be the only agents of intergroup prejudice nor is it predicted that men will always exhibit more prejudice than women (196).” Instead, they suggest that

both men and women are agents of prejudice, but . . . the character of this prejudice and its underlying motivations differ among men and women as a function of the different adaptive challenges each has faced over evolutionary time in the context of intergroup violence. Women are more motivated by threats to their reproductive choice,

whereas men are more motivated to out-compete sexual rivals. (196)

The authors continue,

Whereas prejudice held by men may be driven by aggression against and dominance over men belonging to arbitrary-set groups other than one's own (out-groups), women's prejudice is more likely to be characterized by wariness or fearfulness of such men. (91)

As such, women of the dominant group act as triggers so to speak of dominant male aggression—accentuating the idea of the subordinate male as a sexual threat—and maintaining stereotypes of subordinate males' sexual threats far beyond that of males of the dominant group or females of the subordinate group (Navarrete et al. 2010). Contrary to intersectional invisibility theorists, dominant-group females are wed to the gender differentiation that maintains their gender position above arbitrary set groups, and have a tremendous amount of power over subordinate-outgroup-racialized males; they directly contribute to white patriarchy rather than being solely victimized by it—a thesis which contradicts Purdie-Hughes and Eibach's assertion that non-protopicality is outside the social processes and power of (white) patriarchy.

## 5 The Theory of Phallicism

Traditional theories of patriarchy assume that the bio-logic of the body, specifically the male genitalia, is indicative of a social pact of sorts whereby all penis-wielding flesh is both a physical and social threat to women. In this world, the male genitalia is conceptualized as a weapon wielded against women by a body prone to rape and violence interpersonally. Because all society is dedicated to this domination, it is assumed that the racialized male body, because it possesses male genitalia, is welcomed into this social union. Because patriarchal power is understood to be structurally permitted and interpersonally enforced, Black men are depicted as enacting patriarchy in any and all interpersonal relationships with women or other men. The Black male is asserted to be synonymous with violence, especially sexual violence. While he does not possess any of the characteristics of the white patriarch, his disposition to violence, his brutish nature, and savagery are substituted for the accounts of power that white men use to subjugate and rape women. He is a rapist, an abuser, hyper-masculine, and dangerous. This view of Black men has been well described but often not interpreted as having relevance to the positionality of Black men in society, or the sexualization these myths allow. Founded upon heteronormative accounts of sexual violence, both social dominance theory and intersectionality have ignored the rape and sexual violence historically perpetrated upon racialized

male bodies. Racism and colonialism have configured Black maleness as devoid of a sexuality. He becomes whatever the delusions of power imagine him to be. His body is completely fungible, having no resistance to the imposition of white desires or society's but violence. As such, the reality of sexual victimization, cannibalism, and rape are denied to have claimed Black men throughout history.

To correct this view, I suggest a new paradigm of Black male sexualization is needed. This theory, initially conceptualized as a racially subjugated male thesis, argues that racialized maleness suffers from impositions of social force that denature Black male flesh into phantasm. This entity does not exist within the mind of individuals as an expression of particular wills or lusts, but rather is positioned as an imagination of the society, whereby individual Black men can all be substituted for the activity of this imagining interpersonally. Black manhood then is framed by this irredeemable confinement. While womanhood is thought to be denied by patriarchy and an idea worth reclamation despite its participation and orchestration of colonial genocide, Black manhood is condemned and indicted for being of such savagery that it is an idea no male could wish to possess.

Phallicism refers to the condition by which males of a subordinated racialized or ethnicized group are simultaneously imagined to be a sexual threat and predatory, and libidinally constituted as sexually desirous by the fantasies or fetishes of the dominant racial group. This concept is meant to guide a seemingly inexplicable tension if not contradiction between the description of racialized males under repressive and murderous regimes and their hyper-sexualization as objects of desire, possession, and want. The *racialized male* is conceptualized as the substantive (social) meaning of rape, while simultaneously being subjugated to rape by both the male and female members of the dominant group who disown their sexual violence because the hypervisibility of the racialized male is only as the rapist. The peculiar sexualization of racialized men and boys as objects has routinely been dismissed because savage men are thought to be super-agentic—choosing their prey, not being victims of predation. The idea of the rapist imposed upon racialized men from Africa, Asia, and Indigenous America suggest there is a structure of patriarchal imposition and imperial conquest which rationalizes the disposability of male victims of genocide or conquest as a honorific, insofar as the elimination of the male threat is ridding the world of primitivity, or evil, while nonetheless denigrating their flesh by sexual violence.

Since the rape of Black men serves no reproductive purpose and in fact undermines endogamy and the reproductive homogeneity of the dominant racial group, its function is markedly different from the rape of Black women or other women of subordinate classes by dominant group men. Whereas the rape of Black women has historically been utilized to create intermediary populations between the white dominant and Black subordinate populations throughout British colonies, the rape of Black men serves no

parallel function. It is marked primarily as an expression of force, power, or coercion upon Black male bodies. I suggest that within the racial subjugation system, the violence against racialized males is not simply rooted in extermination to protect the reproductive capacity the dominant group or to avoid the extermination of dominant-group alpha males, as suggested by MacDonald in her account of gendered racism. Phallicism suggests that the function of rape, and the simultaneity of the sexual threat used to legitimize the death of Black males and the erotics, the fascination which acts as the depository of white sexual excess, operates beyond the lethality and genocidal logics Sidanius and Pratto utilize in describing arbitrary set discrimination. Social dominance theory, while immensely helpful in explaining the disproportionate disadvantage racialized men have in relation to dominant and subordinate group women, offers no actual account of subordinate male sexualization beyond its operation as a rationalization of force by the dominant group. As such, there is not historical acuity regarding the simultaneity of the coercive imposition of violence leading to death and the coercive erotics of dominant group sexual practices that dehumanize and victimize subordinate males in a distinctly different register than lethal force.

Black maleness then describes a register of sexual inversion to the established modern gender hierarchies suggested as universal to all sexed bodies in which maleness is the category of societal violence and inter-personal imposition, and transubstantiation in which racialized maleness is transfigured as not male, and feminine, while not female but rapist. This violence is marked by the power described structurally by authors like Connell in terms of hegemonic masculinity, but is marked by the dominant ruling class woman as hyper-vulnerability. Phallicism then is the complementary dynamic by which racialized males are victims of the brute power of white patriarchy, which can be seen to be enforced by police killings of Black men and boys, their incarceration, the rape of Black males as prisoners, or suspects, while having these brutish acts rationalized as being in service of the idea of protecting women, society, and civility. Because the relation of the Black male to the ruling-class woman is defined by sexual terror and rape, it is her social articulation of the fear, of the always imposing danger, that legitimizes the paranoia of Black males as sexual terrors. The convergence of white male and white female sexual power, their desire—be it lust or antipathy—motivates misandric stereotypes that legitimize the murderous acts enacted upon Black male bodies.

## 6 Conclusion

The stereotypes of Black men as deviants and sexual predators, or irrational and mimetic savages who imitate their white masters, are prevalent throughout our society and academic writings. These caricatures of Black men and boys are examples of what Black male studies scholars call *anti-Black*



or *racist misandry*. While ideas of Black men as dangerous, criminal, and rapists are easily identified as racist, the very same ideas of Black men are more acceptable when expressed as gender theories of Black (toxic) masculinity. The reproduction of these theories suggesting the anti-sociality and deviance of Black men and boys—the totality of these negative ideas—is what characterizes the racist misandry of (gender) theory. To be clear: anti-Black misandry is the cumulative assertions of Black male inferiority due to errant psychologies of lack, dispositions of deviance, or hyper-personality traits (e.g., hyper-sexuality, hyper-masculinity) which rationalize the criminalization, phobics, and sanctioning of Black male life. These ideas are part of the group-based racial consciousness of white America and part of the social fabric and mythology of racism. In other words, we are all exposed to the notions of Black male deviance and danger. These stereotypes of Black males are held by whites or Blacks, white men, white women, other ethnic groups, or Black women. Often the hatred of Black men is hidden by appeals to safety, civility, and democratic order, because he—the phantasm of the boogeyman in America—is thought to be a threat to all that is good, white, and woman.

The conceptualization of Black men as murderers, rapists, and criminals continues to dominate academic discussions, disciplinary theories, and the culture of universities across the country. Black males are the scapegoats of any number of ills, all the while, remaining seen only as perpetrators of violence against Black women and children, and the murders of themselves. They are imagined to be dangerous. Let's be clear about these ideas—or more accurately stereotypes. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2014), there are roughly 18.9 million Black males in the United States. Of that group, 12.1 million Black males are adults between the ages of 18–65. In 2016, the Violence Policy Center reported 191 single offenders committed homicide against an intimate which included their wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends among Black Americans (6). This means that the number of adult Black men who killed intimate partners in 2014 was roughly one millionth of their adult population in that given year. As of December 2014, the Bureau of Justice Statistics estimated 841,000 Black men were in state or federal prisons and local jails (West 2010, 20). Of the adult population, less than seven percent of Black males are convicted criminals incarcerated for crimes. As theorists, it is important not to be deluded by the abstraction of our theories. Most Black men are not criminals. Less than a millionth of them are murderers of their women, and while their numbers of incarceration and violence are disproportionate when compared to whites, so too are their economic isolation and political marginalization. This is to say that there is no reason to theorize Black males as the actualizations of the pathologies imposed upon them throughout history. There is

no other group that would defend defining the character of millions based on the offenses of hundreds, or the behavior of thousands.

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