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The past four decades show significant increase in number of marriages between Black men and non-Black women, and decline in marriage overall for Black women (Crowder and Tolnay 2000; Raley, Sweeney, and Wondra 2015). This retreat from marriage by Black women has been explored focusing on deficits in the number of available partners, but the role of racial intermarriage has been widely ignored. Factors attributed to exchange within Black communities include increase of economic autonomy and higher collective educational attainment of Black women and minimal employment opportunities, mass incarceration, and lower educational attainment of Black men (Crowder and Tolnay 2000; Raley, Sweeney, and Wondra, 2015). While literature supports this change, little has been done to investigate framing images and discourse circulated through digital media spaces. I argue that contemporary patterns of Black American mate-selection are influenced by digital social media entities (re)enforcing negative notions of Black American womanhood, leading Black men to avoid them as romantic partners.

The goal of my research is two-fold. First, I propose to utilize digital social media space, namely Instagram, to identify common themes that influence perceptions of beauty, desirability, and the potential of romantic partnerships in young Black American communities. Second, I will discuss social and psychological implications and long-term effects which accompany the shunning of Black American women through digital media spaces. In doing the latter, I investigate historical and modern typecasts ascribed to Black

American womanhood, and possible effects of long term negative framing of African Americans (Black women particularly) on the mate selection process. Through this historical analysis I study this phenomenon through a lens of the past, and one of the future to create awareness about historical origin and future implications. I expect that negative ascribed characteristics often depicted in social media are internalized by the community and function to influence the mate selection processes within it. I will discuss implications of heavy social media usage for Black American women especially, and ideas for combatting negative effects on younger Black female generations' self-esteem and empowerment in writing narratives reflecting true lived experience. My research assumes that without positive ascriptions of Black women or "alternative" narratives from social media entities, future generations of Black Americans will make romantic decisions with a skewed view of themselves and those they choose to select or reject.

THE INEVITABLE RETREAT? DIGITAL MEDIA SPACES AND
MARRIAGEABILITY DYNAMICS IN MODERN
BLACK AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

by

Mackenzie M. Green

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Committee Chair

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This thesis written by Mackenzie M. Green has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair _____

Committee Members _____

Date of Acceptance by Committee

Date of Final Oral Examination

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years I've noticed a significant number of Black men in the community around me in inter-racial relationships. As compared to other ethnic groups, Black men are disproportionately choosing to pursue romantic relationships outside of their own race (Crowder and Tolnay 2000; Gosier 2002; Harris and Kalbfleisch 2000; Livingston and Brown 2017; Wang 2012). A study done in 2012 found that about 24% of all black male newlyweds in 2010 married outside their race, as compared to just 9% of black female newlyweds (Wang 2012). Presently, little research exists exploring the historical and social taboo of interracial relationships between Black and European Americans; however, according to Collins (1990) Blacks and Whites have an extremely volatile relationship based on enslavement and oppression, producing an ongoing history of mistrust (also see Harris et. al 2000). As such, the idea of interracial relationships between Blacks and European Americans is often seen as a symbolization of institutionalized oppression and racism despite the very intimate nature of romance. Being a Black American woman, I became curious about this and wondered why I rarely see Black women in social settings or advertisement with men of other ethnicities, and at the same time rarely see Black men with Black women anymore.

There is an understanding among many heterosexual Black women, especially highly educated ones, that our marriage pool is considerably low due to historical and

institutionalized exposure to racism, which continue targeting Black communities and Black men especially. Black men are removed from their communities through staggering rates of incarceration and death at the hands of violence and police brutality. It is also well-documented that Black men suffer from discrimination and exclusion from workforce and educational sectors. Subsequently, as compared to White men and Black women, Black men have relatively low educational attainment and financial stability. Because most romantic relationships involve persons with similar social status, the number of marriageable Black men as compared to Black women is considerably small. Moreover, Black men increasingly marry women of other races, further adding to the deficit of marriageable mates for Black American women. In daily conversations about this issue, much of the reasoning I have heard has been at the expense of Black women. In other words, Black American men often justify their pursuit of interracial relationships by blaming supposed faults and undesirable characteristics ascribed to Black American women collectively. This expense will be discussed and demonstrated further in Chapter 2 and Chapter 5.

I have worked for about six years as a customer service clerk for a major southern grocery store franchise while in school, and have gotten to know members of my immediate community including neighbors, co-workers, and friends quite well during this time. I've watched management come and go, neighborhood children grow up and go off to college, and formed friendships with my customers and co-workers, which I expect to last a life-time. Being in this work setting has undoubtedly given me opportunities to observe my community and notice relational patterns that inspire my research. One of the

most vivid experiences I remember was an interaction I had with a former manager regarding his preference in dating.

In many informal job settings, there is “locker room talk” or dialogue between employees (mostly men) about subjects that are arguably inappropriate in a professional setting. The customer service manager at the time, a younger Black man, began talking to other male co-workers about his preference for dating White women, and the rationale behind his decision. We were sitting in the break room having lunch, and he told a “joke” saying “If it ain’t snowin’ it ain’t blowing.” This phrase refers to White women, commonly referred to by men of color as “snow bunnies”, claiming unless you had a White woman you were missing out, or uncool. He then went on to explain that he liked White women because they had less attitude and were less mouthy and “ghetto” than Black women. As the only Black woman in the room I felt offended because I knew the description of Black women he provided was not an accurate depiction of myself or many of the other women I know. After making these statements he looked at me, as if perhaps searching for a response. Receiving my blank stare, he replied “Oh, sorry Mac” with a smirk on his face. The men laughed and went on with their lunch as if nothing had happened.

I will never forget how I felt that day. First, I was angry that a Black man could say such things about women of his own race. Second, I wondered what experience with Black women was so terrible that it would prompt our own men to strive for relationships outside of our community at all costs. Indeed, this was not the first time I had heard a Black man say such untrue and disparaging comments about Black women. In those few

moments, I felt ugly and insignificant. I made my way to the sales floor, and forced a fake smile (which I've mastered given my years of work in customer service), and continued to work under this manager who had just insulted me and all the Black women I knew.

This type of encounter with Black men was neither my first nor last, but it altered my observational focus of social and romantic relationships and interactions. I watched countless Black men shopping in our store with their mostly White wives. I also saw this trend outside of the store in my neighborhood and farther out in other parts of the city. I beheld the looks that these couples would give Black women, including myself. Many of the men would stare as if looking for some type of resentment or jealousy from Black women, while their wives or partners would scowl as if trying to protect a prize that they thought we might try to steal. I watched Black grandparents parade their mixed grandchildren around as if they had won the lottery or accomplished some level of insurmountable success, which "plain Black folk" could never attain.

Before long, I came to understand that the Black woman's experience of feeling discounted a worthy romantic partner or human for that matter was not isolated to my feeling. It was something that many Black women shared. I also began seeing social media accounts of inter-racial coupling highlighting Black men and non-Black women disproportionate to visuals of Black women with non-Black men. In other words, these issues were not specific to my immediate physical surroundings. YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, music, advertisements, television shows and film have consistently reinforced the debasing and typecasting of Black women. Through these shared spaces, the divide

between Black men and their perceptions of Black women are evident. Although it is true that some Black men are extremely supportive and passionate about Black women and their role in our communities, a growing number of others seem to blame, and even hate Black women for many problems experienced in the community which are products of systematic racism and discrimination. Silencing of Black women's voices has transcended through time and space, penetrating our own communities and minds. While racism seems to be the focus, the intersectional experience between race and gender which Black women are expected to maneuver is often ignored. Through my observation and experience over the years I have been thrust into studying this situation and investigating the social factors which may contribute to this great divide.

Between 1970 and 1990, the percentage of Black women 18 and older who were married dropped from 62% to 43%. These changes were the most drastic among young Black women (Crowder and Tolnay 2000). By 1990, only 35% of Black women under the age of 35 had ever been married compared to 49% in 1970. (Bureau of the Census, 1971, 1990a). More recently, Hurt et al. (2014) concluded that 7 out of 10 Black women are currently unmarried and 3 out of 10 Black women will never marry. This demographic trend is so pronounced that it has received popular media attention (e.g. ABC News Nightline "Why Can't a Successful Black Woman Find a Man?"; CNN documentary "Black in America").

Social scientists have found considerable similarity in Black women's explanation for remaining single. Among these marriageable women, scholars have focused on discrepancies regarding economic instabilities, difficulty trusting, experience with issues

in current relationship, pain from prior relationships, disparities in human capital between partners, and fear of neglect, abandonment, and divorce (Hurt et al. 2014; King and Allen 2007). Other studies propose that some Black women are completely content to remain unmarried due to their skepticism about the longevity of marriage or the desire to pursue careers and handle other personal responsibilities (e.g. higher education, jobs, parenting) (Collins 2000; Holland 2009). I suspect that the latter proposal is an important notion to be considered, and will be discussed more with my findings in Chapter 5.

As mentioned previously, then decline in marriage by Black women has been accompanied by an increase in rates of interracial marriage by Black men. In 1960, less than 4 in 1,000 married couples in the U.S. were interracial. By 1998 this proportion had increased by more than six times to over 24 per 1,000 couples. (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1999). About 4.5 percent of the nation's married Black men in 1990 had non-Black spouses, with the majority married to White women. (U.S. Bureau of Census 1990). These rates of intermarriage were likely even higher in many metropolitan areas where contact between Blacks and other racial groups was greatest (Crowder and Tolnay 2000).

Although interracial relationships are no new feat (Wang and Penaloza 2017; Wong 2003), I surmise that recent media framing fetishizes Black male-non-Black female sexual and romantic relationships. Social media spaces such as Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube serve as a sort of social haven where individuals have the freedom to share their thoughts and opinions, interests, and moments in their everyday life. While this can certainly be a productive and useful space, it also leaves us exposed to

interactions with potentially harmful content. Younger generations rely heavily on these outlets for news, the latest gossip or celebrity scandal, newest fad in music or fashion, and perhaps most riskily their perceptions about reality, understanding of society and its functions, and views of other groups in society. Young American culture is based on this realm of social media, and so it would behoove social scientists and general society to be aware and critical of the content and framing being used to perpetuate messages through such spaces. Framing is an operation whereby a communicative medium such as newspapers and, more recently, digital platforms define and shape the contours of a broad tapestry of contemporary issues. Our individual and collective perceptions and understandings are derived, in part, by these framing processes (Brock, 2009; Byrne, 2008; Everett, 2002; Hughey and Daniels, 2013). Framing comprises social construction of a social phenomenon, either by political and social movements, political leaders, mass media sources, or other organizations and actors. My research will focus on Instagram hashtags and their role in the social construction of black female narratives, and the recent increase in inter-racial marriage by Black men.

This argument revolving around the role of framing on Black mate selection cannot effectively be made without first understanding the history which continues to greatly dictate the Black American female and male narrative. This distinction between Black Americans and Blacks from other parts of the world should be noted for future discussion in my analysis and findings.

The institution of slavery, and the sickeningly ingenious systems of control bubbling up after it continue to shape Black American reality through social interaction

and normative role-setting. Investigating this dynamic within Black communities is of importance to social science for a few reasons. First, because it contributes to knowledge of contemporary marriage and family and internal communal race relations. Second, it illuminates yet another possible consequence of decades of structural and social racism on Black identities and life-course decisions. Finally, it illuminates possible dangers created by social media spaces as a means to create divisiveness and extreme conflict within certain communities who's success as a whole depend largely on unity and collective awareness.

I begin my analysis with a review of relevant literature on sociological concepts unique to the Black community including historical notions of slavery, the legacy of this institution on contemporary structural and interpersonal racism, educational dynamics, Black racial identity formation, racialized sexism, market conditions and joblessness of Black men, interracial romance, and finally the use of media and advertisement framing as a means of promoting narratives and images about the new "ideal" Black family. This study will explore the following questions: What factors are contributing to Black men dating/ marrying outside their race, but not Black women? Where does this leave Black American women? What are the possible consequences for the Black community as a whole? Do these factors and any consequential effects vary by gender? Lastly, how might digital media framing attribute to this phenomenon.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

All sociology worthy of the name is “historical sociology”
-Mills (1959:146)

My research focuses on reasons for Black American men leaving the community to pursue interracial relationships. To have a deeper understanding of this increasingly popular trend, I thought it logical to take a historical approach and consider the many elements of Black American experience which have shaped the communities today. Slavery, the system used to involuntarily migrate Black families to the United States, is often regarded as the starting point for White dominance of Blacks in the US (Feagin 2000; Gutman 1977). I take this historical event as my starting point and propose that slavery continues to inform Black social life. Previous work has shown that implications of slavery are still apparent in understanding Black family structure, Black femininity, the criminalization of black bodies and self-valuation (Barnes 2003; Collins 2000, 2005; Hooks 1992; Littlewood 2000). Copious amounts of research on black family patterns suggest preconceived assumptions about the pathological nature and defect of the Black family. These assumptions generally manifest from the continuous use of white, middle-class models as a method of evaluation for families enduring a completely different set of social forces which determine its structure and dynamics (Staples 1971).

As Black American women become more successful and achieve higher levels of education collectively, Black men's self-esteem and confidence in terms of providing for a family may be damaged. With internalization of "traditional" gender norms, it is difficult to operate in relationships where core patriarchal values are being undermined. This non-conformity of Black families is not new, in fact many of the "problematic" characteristics attributed to Black matriarchal families can be traced back to the institution of slavery. Independence of Black women has most often been out of necessity and the need to survive. Just as patriarchal attitudes are passed down through generations, so are expectations of independence and strength to Black women, regardless of social experience. Despite this, many Black men blame their counterparts for their frustrating state in society. Through this literature review I will highlight some of the main factors found in research which may shape current attitudes by Black men about themselves, the reality of living with blackness, and their relationship to Black American women. This analysis can be later connected to my method and findings chapters, which focus on the role of Black consciousness on Black male perceptions, and the manifestation of historical and emergent stereotypes and ascriptions to Black American women through digital social media.

Black Slavery in the U.S.

The first African slaves were brought to the U.S. in 1501 by Spanish and Portuguese settlers. John Hawkins, an English naval commander inaugurated what would be known as the "Triangle Trade" from the 1520's to 1867 (Larson 2017). This trade

facilitated huge profits for slave traders like Hawkins through the looting of human cargo from Africa to America. The opposing sides of the triangle were transporting tobacco, sugar, and cotton back to Europe, and goods such as textiles to Africa (Larson 2017). Over the duration of the trade some 12.5 million slaves had been smuggled from Africa, and nearly 11 million had landed in the Americas (Larson 2017; Hallam and Boston 2017). Slaves were exploited for their free labor and forced to produce vast amounts of valuable tobacco, sugar cane, coffee, and cotton crops for their white slave owners. Financial profits gained through use of slave labor helped to secure the foundation of the United States, and the economic dominance of whites who live in it (Larson 2017; Hallam and Boston, 2017). This practice of the exploitation of black bodies should be noted as it connects to upcoming discussion about contemporary structuralized racism and systems of social control.

Unfortunately for many African Americans, slavery is the only concrete beginning of ethnic historical knowledge. Often little is known pertaining to individual or familial origin preceding this moment in time. U.S. Black slaves were many more generations removed from Africa than those in the Caribbean. During the nineteenth century, the bulk of slaves in Brazil and the British Caribbean were born in Africa, as compared to the 1850's where most U.S. slaves were fourth or fifth generation Americans (Hallam and Boston 2017). The institution perpetuated cruelty and abuse which black slaves were subject to physically, spiritually, and emotionally. Such mistreatment experienced during the antebellum period is significant because it establishes a tone for the treatment of and social interaction with Black Americans in the

future. Inter-personal violence, as well as psychological and religious indoctrination were used not only to extract maximum production and economic profit, but also to establish and maintain supreme power and control over slaves.

Internal slave trade within the United States dispersed the African American population through the South in a migration that far exceeded the Atlantic Slave Trade to North America in volume. Despite Congress outlawing the slave trade in 1808, it continued to flourish, and the slave population nearly tripled over the following fifty years and persisted into the 1860's displacing 1.2 million women, men, and children, whom for the most part had been born in America (Larson 2017; Hallam and Boston 2017). Being "sold down the river" was one of the most calamitous possibilities for the enslaved population. Some locations, such as the Louisiana sugar plantations, had exceptionally notorious standing, but it was ultimately the separation and destruction of family that created intensive anxiety among slaves (Hallam et. al 2017).

Literature pertaining to this topic suggests that slavery has played a drastic role in the interaction of Black Americans with the rest of society, the black female-male relationship paradox throughout American history, and the argument that blacks have yet to escape the grasps of its harsh legacy. Starting from this point of slavery and working forward, we may begin to see the dynamics of the African American family and the beliefs which inform interactions between black men and women to this present time. Through this review I hope to further illuminate the complexities of these prejudices in black communities and how our experiences with these phenomena influence our interactions with one another.

The Black Family in Slavery

There is an ongoing debate as to the impact of slavery on Black familial strength. There are those like E. Franklin Frazier who's "The Negro Family in the United States" claims that the black family was matriarchal and fragile, and as cited in Kett (1977), Daniel Patrick Moynihan who's notorious "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action" thrust the black family into the forefront of the national policy debate in 1965. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, President Lyndon B. Johnson addressed the American people with his 1965 State of the Union message with the claim that:

Indices of dollars of income, standards of living, and years of education deceive. The gap between the Negro and most other groups in American society is widening. The fundamental problem, in which this is most clearly the case, is that of family structure. The evidence — not final, but powerfully persuasive — is that the Negro family in the urban ghettos is crumbling. A middle-class group has managed to save itself, but for vast numbers of the unskilled, poorly educated city working class the fabric of conventional social relationships has all but disintegrated. There are indications that the situation may have been arrested in the past few years, but the general post war trend is unmistakable. So long as this situation persists, the cycle of poverty and disadvantage will continue to repeat itself.

President Johnson's argument holds some truth. Policies and laws created even after slavery have worked to further disenfranchise Blacks and make it more difficult for them to actively compete in American society. Although Frazier acknowledges that slavery and the social conditions proceeding it placed an intolerable amount of stress on the family, he also accredits some of the more secure features of black family to the master class (whites), and argues that they thus were most prone to dissolve when the binds between masters and slaves were disjointed (Kett 1977). This outlook gained

notoriety during the 1960s in the Frazier-Moynihan proposition which aimed to base social policy on the assertion that black family life was profoundly flawed. Despite this claim, Frazier hardly believed that blacks either sought or lived in any type of “nomadic promiscuity” and attested to his belief in the clout of family sentiment among blacks. How does this connect to African American communities today? The gaps between Black Americans and others is still widening. This includes immigrants (white and of color) whom have far surpassed Black Americans economically and socially, despite having been settled significantly fewer generations than Blacks. Social issues such as mass incarceration, the school-to-prison pipeline, joblessness, violence and death through police brutality and crime are just a few of the major factors that inextricably impact this widening gap between Blacks and others in society. This gap has caused a buildup of frustration and resentment in Black communities, resulting in for many, a state of desperation. Escape from the struggle is sometimes sought by any means necessary. I argue that the increasing rate of interracial marriage by Black men is an emerging strategy to “escape” falling through the cracks of this ever-widening gap.

Daniel Moynihan (1965) posits that this instability within the black family is one of the aftershocks of slavery. There is some truth to this statement, but not in the way which Moynihan implies. Slavery in many ways was the foundation for the black family structure and produced residual effects which still influence blacks today. For example, black men and sons were sold more frequently than female members of the family, perhaps due to their perceived ability to perform difficult labor, perceived danger and

threat due to their race and gender, or because whites deliberately intended to fracture black family structure to gain and maintain more psychological control over their slaves.

With this division of the family beginning in, black slave women often became the mother and father of their households, not by choice but because they had often been involuntarily separated from their male counterparts during domestic slave trades in 1808, continuing into the 1860's (Hill 1999; PBS; Society, Anon. 2014). Black women were responsible for not only working on plantations, but also providing for their children and other family members both physically and emotionally. Slavery ultimately forced black women to devote their energies to work and to family life and essentially deprived Black men of their roles as bread-winners, protectors, and heads of the family (Hill 1999). We may still see the residual effects of this dynamic today in single black female-headed households, and the resentment which many black men carry against black women in their seeming participation in demasculinization. For example, many black men feel as if black women have more opportunity than themselves, and some even feel that black women are, at least partially, responsible for the comparatively low status of black men (Cazenave 1983). Michelle Wallace's 1978 book "Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman" was the focus of a series of debates in the 1980's, mostly due to her position that there has been an ongoing erosion of the relationships between black women and black men, with intensifying hatred and animosity between the two groups (Cazenave 1983). Most notably, recent revivals of the women's movement and affirmative action have exacerbated some concern that black women, who continue to experience the duality in victimization by racism and sexism, are more sought after in

educational and job opportunities than black men (Cazenave 1983; Crowder et. al 2000; Hurt et. al 2014; Peterson 1993; Marsh 2012; McCowan and Alston 1998). Blame for the fragility and denigration of the Black family after slavery, which both Frazier and Moynihan propose, is placed at the feet of Black women. Similarly, current issues within the Black community regarding joblessness, low educational attainment, and emasculation of Black men are even still accredited to Black women.

Utilizing the United States federal census of 1880 and 1900, Herbert Gutman discovered that majority of black families in southern communities were headed by males (Bailey 1980; Kett 1977; Loewen 1982; Rice 1977). Censuses of 1905 and 1925 in the state of New York showed that black families survived migration from the south and flourished in a new urban environment. Despite unfavorable comparison to Jewish and Italian immigrants, the black family was 83 percent male headed in 1905. This finding was quite remarkable considering the mass fragmentation of African American households during slavery. Half a century later, in the 1970's, however, only 63.9 percent of all black American families were headed by males (Bailey 1980; Rice 1977). What might have happened in this short period to cause such a drastic drop in black-male headed households? Both Gutman and Frazier alike contend that this decrease in black familial "disorganization" is a result of economic discrimination, unemployment, and underemployment exacted on blacks as new mechanisms of racial and social control by white Americans (Bailey 1980; Loewen 1982; Rice 1977). Narratives created during slavery about Blacks were used to justify such prejudice by whites, and can be similarly

observed in motion today through penalty and narratives perpetuated through media about Black “character” (Lantz 1980; Loewen 1982).

In his piece “Slavery Remembered: A Record of Twentieth Century Slave Narratives”, Paul Escott (1979) concludes that preceding slaves’ capacity to endure such maltreatment and egress whole attests to a tenaciousness and resiliency about mankind. The fact that slaves were not crumbled and accomplished the magnitude they did acts as a source of encouragement for many who remain apprehensive about the future. Escott’s statement not only pertains to slavery, but also to what could be known as “black national character” (Loewen 1982). Although this character is a relief considering the context of slavery, it also contributes to often naïve expectations that Blacks are naturally equipped to shoulder any type of trauma and does little to acknowledge deep-seated systematic damage done to the Black community by the institution. The legacy of slavery is a national trauma, but also a seething personal one for Black Americans. Even today still we are daunted with the task of proving to non-Blacks that this legacy is alive and well and continues to tyrannize Black communities, families, and individuals.

No healing took place within Black communities after slavery was abolished. In fact, new systems of oppression were created by whites to overtly and covertly continue to deny Blacks full entry and integration into American society. Issues of police brutality, mass incarceration, and death caused by violence prevalent today in Black communities are all systematic and psychological methods of continuous warfare used to chip away at its integrity.

The Legacy of Slavery on Contemporary Structural and Interpersonal Racism

While racism manifests itself differently over periods of time, its impact on African Americans and other groups of color is inescapable. African Americans have a unique, and deep experience with racism because of our displacement in American and global society, being perceived by many non-American blacks in the same ways we are by white and other minority groups. Thus, the legacy of slavery extends beyond white-black tensions, even if it started that way, and continues to be maintained by white dominance.

Throughout U.S. history African Americans shoulder bigotry and partisanship in education, housing, employment, and criminal justice practices, and have been subjected to continuous humiliation, dehumanization and harmful stereotypes – all of which individually and cumulatively influence Black social relationships and personal identity. Toxic exposure toward negative attitudes of blackness may eventually become internalized, and in an effort to escape further persecution and be welcomed into society some Blacks may through action or thought “denounce” their blackness and fully dedicate themselves to “becoming white” (Fanon 1952). Below, I review the discriminatory experiences in education, employment, housing and CJ practices in more detail.

Racial Socialization

White children experience privilege in that they can exercise “color blindness”, or their ability to not “see” race (Risman and Banerjee 2013). People who employ this concept of color blindness believe that seeing race is racist and so pretend not to see it (Bonilla-Silva 2001). This attitude allows whites to imagine that our world is post-racial, and absolves responsibility to recognize white privilege and various forms of institutionalized racism. Color blind ideals ignore structural inequality and in turn lead to the assumption that if group differences do in fact exist, they are the fault of those experiencing such differences and not of the greater white society. This ideology is passed down over generations, further perpetuating cultural dysfunction and stagnation of socio-cultural progress. Black children, however, do not have the opportunity to exercise color blindness, because so much of their social interactions and experiences are based on the concrete identification of race. There is no escaping the color black. It is a brand that identifies and individual and groups them into a pile with thousands of others, good and bad, but “all the same”, nonetheless. This is a painful realization which many Blacks come to face through their process of socialization, and I argue that levels of Black consciousness for each individual may greatly influence decisions and coping strategies regarding the reality of their position in society. I will discuss this further in the theoretical application chapter. Family, education, and historical notions of colorism all contribute to socialization outcomes for Black children and shape their perceptions of self-value and worth, and ability to utilize the sociological imagination to not only conceptualize their own experience, but empathize with other Black’s as well (Okech,

Harrington 2002). These entities contribute to levels of black consciousness, which can be used to explain African American behavior in all facets of American life, including family and education as primary factors (Baldwin 1984; Marable 1995; McCowan, Alston 1998; Okech, Harrington 2002).

Despite the continuous debate about its state, the family is regarded as a dynamic force in the lives of Black Americans (Wilder and Cain 2010). At some point over the life course Black boys and girls will encounter one or more of the various social structures which perpetuate racism, or will have their own individual social experiences surrounding the issue of race. Historical and contemporary notions of racism greatly inform Black narratives and social interaction with the rest of society, and thus many Black parents are burdened early with the decision of whether to discuss dynamics of color and racism with their children. Comprehensive discourse about race within Black families impacts the ability of black children to successfully maneuver through society as they have confrontations with their own consciousness and their exposure to racism. While Black families often serve as an operative entity of socialization used to combat racism, they can likewise perpetuate skin tone anxiety and bias, or colorism. Black children are often submerged in this culture of colorism at early ages with it being reinforced through socialization in interactions with family, systems of education, and other members of society (Wilder et. al 2010).

Educational Conditions: Limiting Access to Education

Cultural competency describes the capacity of educators to assist students in appreciating and welcoming their own culture, as well those of students from backgrounds unlike theirs. Sociopolitical consciousness signifies the efficiency of educators in elevating learning beyond the scope of the classroom by utilizing knowledge and skills to identify, critically analyze, and answer real world problems (Ladson-Billings 2014). Research on racial disparities within the educational sector seem to illustrate a lack of these two concepts. As a result, Black children often fall behind in educational achievement as compared to their White classmates, and are most at risk for formally dropping out, or psychologically detaching themselves from the system before completing high school (Ladson-Billings 2014; Paris and Alim 2014).

Although American society has seemingly made progress toward including African American children in its educational structure, the blatant racism which was once shown through segregated schools and refusal by whites to educate their children alongside blacks has been disguised modernly through racist policies, prejudice treatment and criminalization of black children in the class room, and lack of enthusiasm for the success of children of color (Payne and Welch 2010). In other words, the same stereotypes of intellectual inferiority and innate danger ascribed to blacks during slavery, and the ideology which justified their oppression did not just dissipate with abolishment. It can still be observed in modern day society through culturally ignorant and discriminatory pedagogy and educational policy.

As early as elementary school African American children may begin to feel the stings of racism from both peers and teachers through race-laden social interactions and prejudicial punitive treatment. Examples of this might be white neighbors or acquaintances covertly or blatantly preventing their children from playing with black children, or differences in tone, language, and attitude by whites toward black children as opposed to white ones. Although no child should have to experience such hurtful treatment and alienation, it is an experience all too common for black American children and they pick up on these attitudes sooner than adults might think. This makes the black childhood experience a difficult one, because before even beginning school, they must begin conceptualizing and involuntarily experiencing manifestations of racism. This awareness of the role that racism plays in black lives is critical because it is inevitable. The more awareness or consciousness a Black individual has, the better equipped he or she may be in repelling hatred of self and others with similar skin in relation to social exile (Hall, Pizarro 2010).

Recent attention has been placed on black student's natural hair. Countless black girls have been threatened with suspension, expulsion, and even arrest simply because they choose to embrace the hair they were born with (Latimore 2017; Lawrence 2017). Educators justify this discrimination by arguing that natural hair is a "distraction", inappropriate, and unprofessional for school settings (Campbell 2016; Escobar 2016; Tate 2017). Nonetheless, white students have worn curly, teased, dyed and even braided hair styles appropriated from Black culture to school without being called distracting or receiving punishment. Rather than spending valuable time reaching each student through

teaching and embracing each child's culture, educators choose to spend time and taxpayer dollars to attack black student's identities. Why aren't white and black children who express themselves through their hair being treated in the same ways? More importantly, what is this teaching black children about themselves and their worth? This notion of natural Black hair as unacceptable or unattractive will be discussed further with images analyzed through my content analysis.

Race Hierarchies and Education

A study done by Ausdale and Feagin (1996) discovered that children have the capacity to differentiate by racial category and use race hierarchies at very young ages. What does this mean for black children? As in any other social context, blacks are often seen as least desirable and are thus treated as such. Black children are generalized and viewed as disruptive and unruly, and thus are often avoided, teased, or cast aside by other children. As a coping mechanism, black children often segregate themselves and dissociate their individual identities from the classroom to be protected from the effects of daily prejudice and racism.

Self-segregation can begin as early as elementary school and become a way of life for black students, carrying on through middle and high-school (Ladson-Billings 2014; Paris and Alim 2014; Wilder et. al 2010). Some students of color, however, internalize and implement racial stereotypes to distance themselves from the negative perceptions of others. For example, a bi-racial student interviewed by Stoughton and Siverston (2005) said "I'm bi-racial and I feel more comfortable hanging around with white people. I hang

out with black people too, but some black people aren't civilized." How might black students hearing this sentiment begin to feel? Constant rejection and labeling imposed upon black students certainly takes a toll, and they themselves may begin to internalize these negative stereotypes and attempt in various ways to dissociate from the collective group.

Punitiveness of Black Children in Education

Teachers participate in a far more dangerous type of racism. In the classroom, black children often become criminalized for certain behaviors or defiance, while white students participating in the same types of behavior, or worse, are not. Black students are more often seen as naturally deviant and thus treated as such (Ladson-Billings 2014; Payne and Welch 2010; Steffensmeier, Ulmer, and Kramer 1998). Behavioral issues, difference in learning styles, and frankly any instance of "non-conformity" by black students are swiftly addressed and harsh punitive policies are often implemented. Black students are more likely to be targets of austere controls than white ones. This inequality may result in troubling negative psychological and legal effects (Payne et. al 2010). Rather than understanding how social context and experiences of black children might influence their outcomes and opportunities for success in schools, teachers are often too quick to see them as hopeless individuals, who will eventually become criminals anyway. Those individuals who are stigmatized by teachers and school administrators are more likely subject to harsher punishment, regardless of the infraction (Ladson-Billings 2014; Payne and Welch 2010). Modern urban public schools are increasingly becoming like

prisons and instituting practices like adult criminal control systems. Like the CJ system, educational institutions often disproportionately punish and criminalize black students based on racialized stereotypes (King and Wheelock 2007; Payne and Welch 2010).

Research suggests that beliefs about deviance by white educators are a product of historical cultural assumptions of behavior (Tittle 1997). Cross-cultural ignorance of behaviors, “White gaze” (oblivion to issues of race), experience, and expression might also lead teachers to make prejudiced conclusions about black students and intensify their feelings of alienation in general society (Brown and Beckett, 2006; Ladson-Billings 2017; Paris and Alim 2014). This attitude stifles teacher’s opportunities to experience satisfaction by seeing not just some, but all their students flourish, and reach their full potential and reinforces the feelings of hopelessness and humiliation that black children internalize from other experiences outside of the classroom. This constant labeling and prejudice ascribed to African Americans starting at such a young age certainly accumulates, and overtime wears on self-esteem, levels of self-efficacy, and worthiness in all aspects of social life.

In terms of education, negative experiences in formative school years impact many black children’s confidence and desire to pursue higher levels of achievement. Some black students may retreat and drop out of high school, while others may doubt their preparedness to be successful in college. These doubts and fears are a logical response to their alienation in the classroom and amongst peers in earlier years. Those students who do poorly in school or do not receive high school diplomas may find themselves struggling in an already racist and discriminatory society to find gainful

employment, let alone careers in which they may feel they have something to offer. This connects to later discussion of chronic unemployment and joblessness of Black men and the relation to socioeconomic status, and mobility strategies. The extent to which black students internalize their experiences with racism in school effects not only how they may view educational institutions, but also themselves as productive and valuable members able to contribute to the world in which they live.

Considering this concept, what are the implications of such obstacles in education for black students on black romantic relationships? Black children with low self-esteem, or negative associations with their culture and race may attempt to dissociate themselves from other black students in attempts to recover acceptance by whites or other groups which they feel they lost, or want to gain. This socialization process can spill over into the romantic realm when children begin “dating” in middle-school and high school. Black children who hold negative sentiment toward other blacks as consequence of their socialization may choose white mates or other minority mates outside of their race to increase their social acceptance within the school environment. If new levels of consciousness and cultural historical awareness are not reached through sociologically and culturally relevant education, the same logic for mate selection can be used continually into adulthood.

Colorism

The term colorism is common in everyday social dialogue, yet scholars define the concept as an intra-racial system of inequity founded based on skin color, hair texture,

and facial attributes which are closer on the spectrum to whiteness (Wilder et. al 2010). This ideology is yet another implication of the legacy of slavery, beginning with lighter slaves receiving preferential treatment over their darker-skinned, undeniably Negro counterparts. Prior works have argued that privileges acquired by some slaves from having lighter skin and desirable physical traits could be explained by kinship ties between White slave owners and the bi-racial children they had because of illicit rape and sexual exploitation of their black female slaves. Whites saw a piece of themselves in these more Eurocentric slaves, and perceived them to be easier to assimilate into White culture.

Practice of colorism unsurprisingly created animosity within slave communities thrusting darker slaves into a competition toward whiteness in the hopes of showing loyalty and unwavering work ethic to negotiate better standing with their white overseers. As with many other aspects of culture and social norms, Black Americans have internalized these sentiments about dark versus lighter skin and worthiness of status based on skin color. Black men, women, and children go through the process of assessing one another based on physical appearance and ascribe value and desirability based on relative closeness to White standards of beauty (Wilder et. al 2010). Darker skinned individuals are stigmatized more by negative labels, jokes, teasing, and reinforcement by others within their own community, and externally in interactions with non-Black Americans. Their more “nomadic” and negroid features subject them to intensified scrutiny and criminalization justified though stereotypes about the “nature” of blackness

and the imminent threat which Blacks bring to society (Du Bois 1920; Payne and Welch 2010).

Colorism, like racism, is not confined to harmless ideology, but influences both informal and formal policies and behaviors which show favoritism or benefits to those Blacks who look the ‘whitest’ (Wilder et. al 2010). This concept of colorism, and its benefits can be connected back to earlier discussions of Black socialization and education, and internalization by individuals in turn influencing mate selection choices. These benefits include opportunities for better jobs and economic mobility, more positive experiences with peers, family members, and other members of society, greater educational outcomes due to perception by instructors that lighter skinned students are more willing to assimilate, and hold White normative values more closely than darker skinned peers, and specific to my research the process of mate selection. Social issues such as colorism should be considered in dialogue surrounding race and marriage, and the increase in interracial marriage by Black men because they provide important context for possible reasoning catalyzing the process of retreat from intra-racial romance pools and attempts to create romantic bonds outside of the community.

Black Consciousness

Black consciousness assumes two factors. First, being black is not only a situation of pigmentation, but instead a reflection of a mental attitude. Secondly, through just the act of describing oneself as Black, one may begin the path to emancipation and ultimately invest oneself in the struggle against any entity which seeks to utilize your blackness as a

marker for inferiority or subservience (Biko 1971). Black consciousness is defined as the enlightenment and awareness of the Black individual toward the need for organization and rallying of all Blacks around the causes of their oppression. It seeks to unearth the lie that black is deviation from the "norm" which is white, and serves as the manifestation of a new discernment that by attempting to run away from themselves and to mimic normative white standards, black insult the their very own essence (Biko 1971). This type of consciousness is supposed to invigorate the black community with pride in themselves which has been lost through years of exposure to racism which impede Black efforts, value systems, culture, religion and outlook to life. Blacks with high levels of consciousness no longer seek to reform the system because in doing so implies acceptance of the major points around which the system revolves. These Blacks are on a mission completely transform the system into one that is equitable and inclusive of all races and ethnicities. Such a major task can only be attempted in an environment where people are convinced of the truth inherent in their existence, and are aware of the way that informal and formal methods of social control work to keep minority populations, especially Black Americans oppressed. True emancipation, therefore is significant in the concept of Black Consciousness, for we cannot be conscious of ourselves and yet remain in bondage. We want to ascend to the envisioned Black self which is a free self (Biko 1971; Hughes and Demo 1989; Okech and Harrington 2002; Porter and Washington 1979). Black consciousness and its stages will be reviewed in more detail with my theoretical framework in Chapter 3.

Criminal Justice, Penalty, and Social Control

Criminological research finds that absent of controls, young Black men and boys are sentenced more harshly than any other group in American society, and are thus disproportionately overrepresented in prisons across the country (Steffensmeier, Ulmer, Kramer 1998; Payne et. al 2010.) Studies also show that race is most influential in sentencing of younger as opposed to older males (Steffensmeier, Ulmer, Kramer 1998). These young men are being filtered into the criminal control system at alarming rates through profiling by law enforcement and the same school-to-prison pipelines which were mentioned earlier in the discussion of education.

Scholars assert that more punitive sentencing practices are employed against young Black men because of their historically perceived character by normative White society as “the dangerous class”. Evidence suggests that this “predisposition to crime” stereotype is ostensibly applied by some whites to the black population, but the most pronounced facets of this false attribution are induced regarding young black males particularly. Sociologist Jewelle Taylor Gibbs writes “Black males are portrayed by the mass media in a limited number of roles, most of them deviant, dangerous, and dysfunctional” (Steffensmeier et. al 1998). The bulk of this stereotyping befalls younger black men most heavily, with media and others referring to them by a plethora of labels: “thugs,” “welfare pimps,” “flunkies,” “delinquents,” “drug dealers,” “savages,” and “demons” (Cleaver 1968; Steffensmeier et. al 1998). Criminalization of Black boys and men shows just one example of the dangers of mass media and its powerful ability to create seemingly inescapable narratives detrimental to various minority groups. This

power of media should be kept in mind during discussion of my content analysis and the images used to perpetuate narratives about Black American women as undesirable partners.

After contact with the criminal justice system, Black men have even less economic educational resources due to criminal records. Further distancing of these resources makes it exceptionally hard for Black men and boys to survive at the basic level in American society. The systematic removal of young Black men from communities by way of incarceration has overtime reduced the number of marriageable Black men in the pool for mate selection with the Black women in their communities, and removed a significant number of fathers from the home negatively impacting familial stability and social outcomes (Cazenave 1983; Spain 1972; Western and Wildeman 2009).

Housing and Market Conditions: Unemployment and Joblessness for Black Men

Contemporary American perceptions often presume inequality between races to be decreased. The 1954 Supreme Court decision in the famous *Brown v. Board of Education* case proclaimed racial segregation of public schools unconstitutional. This ruling carved a path for the Civil Rights Act in 1964, which banned racial segregation in schools and workplace, among other arrangements. *Brown v. Board* opened gates to better opportunities at education, including higher education for Black children. Since this ruling made discrimination based on race illegal, the new law offered greater opportunities to African-Americans in the labor markets. Despite Daniel Moynihan's

cries for social investment in poor inner-city communities during the 1960's, politicians chose to move in a more punitive direction, catalyzing mass growth in the prison demographic and yet again removing Black men from their communities (Western et. al 2009). Since this push for penalty, issues of chronic unemployment and joblessness have become more intense.

A remarkable drop occurred in the average number of weeks that Black men worked per year between 1970 and 2000. This number decreased in every city, and in some of them by as much as 25 percent. In 2000, Black men worked an average of only 33 weeks a year in San Francisco (dropped from 42 weeks in 1970), 34 weeks in Los Angeles and Chicago (from 43 and 45 weeks in 1970), and 35 weeks in Detroit (from 45 weeks in 1970) (Kolesnikova and Liu 2015). Atlanta was the city with the highest number of average weeks worked in 2000, with 41 weeks, yet even this number is lower than the average number of weeks worked by black men in any of the 14 cities in 1970. In contrast, the weekly hours of work stayed remarkably stable between 1970 and 2000 with relatively small increases in some cities and decreases in others. The low number of weeks worked on average by Black men in 2000 not only implied underemployment for many of them, but also that many did not work at all, which drove the average numbers down.

Connections have been made between perpetual residential segregation and use of racial stereotypes, specifically to the ideology that Blacks are inherently more prone to criminal activity. Economic success and social opportunity are contingent largely upon education and the ability to maintain employment. With fewer opportunities for

educational efficacy and empowerment for Black boys, chances for becoming financially stable through gainful employment as adults are stifled. Even with education blacks must still maneuver through racial prejudice and discrimination in the job market, but those with less education certainly fare far worse (Spurgeon and Meyers 2010). Consequently, as these counter-productive systems are at work, the black community cannot thrive. The other overarching component which limits black men's capacity to attain employment is the concept of racial threat.

Whites, and even other minorities often see black men as both physically threatening, and hazardous to the "natural" social hierarchy. Employment would allow black men the ability to provide for themselves and for families, increase opportunities for financial mobility and growth, and increase their status in overall general society. This level of equity would threaten the classic white power structure and the interests of the elite, thus new systems are created as the social composition and atmosphere change to prevent black men's ability to gain employment whether through discriminatory teaching processes or mass incarceration (Bobo and Charles 2009; Payne and Welch 2010; Risman and Banerjee 2013).

Limited and controlled access to jobs can damage aspects of black masculinity and result in the projection of this anger and frustration onto black women who may be seen by black men as participating in this effort to demasculinize them (Cazenave 1983; Crook, Thomas and Cobia 2009). Rather than blaming the white power structure for the inequality they must face, resort to blaming the closest group in which they can still exert some form of control and power. This misplaced blame falls on the shoulders of Black

American women, who are seen by some male counterparts as encroaching on limited opportunities and resources for education, power, and mobility in society (Franklin 1984). It is from this perspective that we may begin to see in addition consequences of sexist ideology and gender belief on interactions between black men and women which may further incentivize Black men to leave the community in pursuit of non-black partners.

Colorism and Notions of Gender

Wilder and Cain's "Teaching and Learning Color Consciousness in Black Families: Exploring Family Processes and Women's Experiences with Colorism" contends that the issue of colorism holds distinct significance for Black women (Wilder et. al 2010). Scholars have asserted that Black women are exposed to a "multiple jeopardy" and repression as it pertains to their social location (Baca-Zinn and Thornton-Dill 1996; Collins 2000; King 1988); including skin tone as an added factor can further aggregate the situation of intersecting oppressions (Wilder et. al 2010). Lived experiences which manifest from colorism are gendered. Skin tone, accompanied with other physical characteristics such as grade or texture of hair and facial structure hold "more bearing" in the lives of women than men (Hill 2002; Hunter 1998; Ozakawa-Rey, Robinson and Ward 1987; Wilder et. al 2010). The relationship between skin complexion and physical desirability is significantly more powerful for women than men, with a hyper-preference for very light or fare women (Wilder et. al 2010).

In addition, skin color serves as a more crucial indicator of self-esteem amid women than men. Fair skin tones are positively related to higher self-esteem, specifically for women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Thompson & Keith 2001). These conclusions come as no surprise due to the high societal appraisal placed on white female beauty and the manners in which the quest for beauty is gendered. Social construction of beauty is influenced by other societal status values including race (Hunter 2004). By cause of the persistence of White racism in the United States, light skin is valued as more beautiful and desirable than dark skin, especially for women. Lighter skin pigment can also serve as social capital for women of color, and more specifically fair skinned Black women who are more privileged in sectors of income, education, and spousal prestige than darker skinned women (Hunter 1998, 2002; Wilder 2010).

Following this same rationale, Black men (especially those with darker skin) may be more inclined to seek romantic partners with lighter skin pigment perhaps in hopes that they too will be able to elevate their social status, and if presented with the opportunity reach penultimate status by securing romantic relationships with White women who serve as the control for standards of beauty. Ironically, despite research supporting notions that colorism affects Black women more than it does Black men, Black men are still twice more likely than Black women to intermarry (Livingston 2017). Frantz Fanon's "Black Skin, White Masks" discusses this infatuation of and pursuit toward whiteness by some blacks whom as a result of being colonized feel the need to be "elevated above his jungle status" in connection to the adoption of "the mother country's cultural standards." He or she will "become whiter" with the renouncement of Blackness.

Fanon's perspective speaks directly to my theory on the movement toward interracial relationships by black men. Through this movement there is a seeming collective effort to transcend the "junglehood state" and arrive at a much more desirable status of "basically white". By actively choosing white or other spouses as opposed to Black women, men in this group effectively "denounce" their blackness. This perspective will be discussed further with upcoming section on interracial romance.

Racialized Sexism

General social hierarchies typically involve dynamics of race, class, and gender, with little significance placed on intersectionality. Most Americans have some awareness of racism and historical intolerance of Blacks, disparities between class groups and neglect of poor, lower income Americans, gender discrimination in pay gaps between men and women, or even policy decisions about women's reproductive health and family planning. While these are increasingly common social discussion points, these same dynamics at play within Black communities often go unnoticed. Even within Black spaces hierarchies exist, with colorism, transphobia, classism, and sexism working on yet a second level to oppress minority members an already marginalized community.

Time and again Black women have shown up full force to the fight against racism and sexism in American society, sacrificing self to protect other members of the community whom they love. From expanding the women's movement and feminist theory to include all women's voices, and not just white-Middle class ones, to organizing civil rights and Black Power movements with little recognition, Black women continue to

be a powerful force in the realm of social change and equity. Recent literature has focused on the common self-sacrificial juxtaposition of Black women, and the ability to cope with exposure to racism and sexism by general society, as well as their own black male counterparts. Black women and men tend to unite under issues of racism such as police brutality, violence, and mass incarceration which disproportionately target black communities (especially Black men and boys). Both groups use their voices to unite and speak loudly about the injustices which continue to befall the community because of racism, with countless Black women throwing themselves in harm's way to protect Black men. However, in issues of gender, Black men have not shown up in the same ways that their counterparts have. Black women are expected to endure their abuse silently, keeping issues of domestic violence, sexual, mental, and emotional abuse to themselves.

Most violence exacted on Black women is done by Black men, the same men whom Black women have defended throughout American history. Eldridge Cleaver, Black activist, author, and former Black Panther Party member illustrates this concept. Being an influential leader in one of the most influential radical black activist groups in American history Cleaver might have been expected to serve in the best interest of the Black community, working to improve any type of despotism which negatively impacted it. Cleaver, however, took advantage of his position of power within the community and ultimately confessed to raping young Black girls, gaining nerve, and eventually escalating to Black women and then White women. His actions contradicted his supposed responsibility and desire to protect and uplift, and instead further desecrated Black female

bodies. In his work “Soul on Ice”, Cleaver gives a quite jolting perspective on racism and the ascribed roles of White and Black men and women respectively.

According to Cleaver, there are four distinct roles:

1. *Omnipotent Administrator*- The Elite White male driven by envy, and able to exercise supreme power. He is the “puppet master” forcing white females, black males, and black females to perform in regulated and automated ways that seem appropriate to them. The Omnipotent Administrator forces ultra-feminine females (White women), sub-feminine females (Black women), and super masculine menial bodies (Black men) to perform roles heavily dictated by fear, assimilation, conceptual frameworks of human value, dignity, worthiness, beauty, manhood, threat, sexuality, and personal rights.
2. *Ultra-feminine Female*- The White woman, representing the definitive embodiment of beauty and femininity. She is placed so loftily on a pedestal, meant to be unreachable. Any attempts at her signifies a damnable offense, and is punishable by death. She is rightfully bestowed queendom by virtue of her relation to the White male. She has liberation to not be domestic or engage in domestic transactions. If the ultra-feminine female relinquishes to any affection that does not involve a white man, she has perpetrated an abomination, poisoned her soul and thus should be banished from the throne. Generally, she performs her role but seems agitated by the controls of White men. She resents the notion of being property and having little autonomy regarding her sexual prerogative.

Cleaver claims that because of this she is lonely enough to perhaps be receptive to the Black man's soul, which he believes to be her "psychic bridegroom".

3. *Super-masculine Menial Body*- The Black male is viewed as a worldly robot, expected to perform duties outside and away from the house, and women (including the Black women in his own communities). He has no real purpose aside from production for the advancement of the Omnipotent Administrator. He need not think for his plan has been set, and yet he holds the desire to exist beyond what the Administrator has dictated. His method for ascension has been to disengage from Black women, who are considered to be sub-feminine, and instead begin endeavors toward white women and join in the exploitation, hate, abuse, and domination of Black women. This is the black male's way to solidify his own masculinity, and possibly gain the voice of a highly valued woman to confirm his non-threatening character for purpose of gaining access to resources, capital, material ownership, esteem and respect that he thinks Black women desire. In any instance where he perceives the black woman to be stifling or blocking him from achieving these means, he feels she is perpetuating treason against the very core of blackness. He rarely considers the magnitude of black female battles because he believes the advancement of the black nation belies the black man, who carries the perceived heaviest burden of combating emasculation and establishing his identity.
4. *Sub-feminine Female*- The Black woman, who is expected to fulfill her roles as worldly laborer and provider of affirmation, has been exploited, dehumanized,

and abused for pleasure and to reinforce men's masculinity despite the degree of debauchery. She has been tortured at the hands of the Omnipotent Administrator who believes that she has no claims at any human boundary, and the Ultra-feminine female who feels in contest with her for the body and mind of her white spouse. The Black woman is frequently investigated for insight about how to handle the implications of femaleness in a reality where she is commanded by the Omnipotent administrator and at odds with the super masculine males within her own communities. The black woman has demonstrated the essence of survival. While bargaining her place, attempting to heal from continuous exploitation, and dueling what used to be her closest companion (Black men), she understands her role to mean forced independence and fleet from domination drifting toward becoming an Amazon.

As a prominent member of the Black Panther Party, Cleaver served as a voice for many of the men within Black communities. Ironically, although Cleaver and many other Black male activists such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Stokely Carmichael claimed to love their Black wives and the other Black women in their communities were having illicit encounters with White women, and saw them as simply more desirable and valuable. Considering the acceptance of Cleavers above ideology by other Black men, possible reasons of for conflict between Black men and women and the pursuit of White women by Black men can be observed. Earlier discussion of joblessness, disparities in educational and economic success between Black men and women, and gender differences in socialization all coincide with this description of roles that Cleaver gives. If

Black men really understand their ascribed roles in the way that Cleaver suggests, and are in fact attempting to establish masculinity by distancing themselves from Black women because of their ascribed sub-feminine roles, and aspiring to address White women in attempts to undermine dominant White male social structures and increase status and prestige, then the increase in interracial dating and marriage by them arguably makes sense.

Interracial Romance and the Historical Taboo

Marriages among Black men and non-Black women have become increasingly common since the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that laws prohibiting interracial unions are unconstitutional in the *Loving versus Virginia* case of 1967 (Kalmijn 1993). Prior to this ruling, inter-racial romance was a taboo phenomenon, especially between Black men and White women. Black women have historically been sexually exploited and abused by White men so frequently that it has become a somewhat normative practice. As result of this painful history of dominance and dehumanization, many Black women are leery of entering romantic partnerships with White men.

Black men have their own history with inter-racial interactions, with innocent boys like Emmitt Till and George Junius Stinney Jr. being brutally tortured and murdered, or locked away and exonerated decades too late under accusations of interacting with or looking at White women and girls (Gosier 2002; Wang 2012). Any gaze by Black males toward White women symbolized threat and direct opposition to White male dominance. Unlike Black women who were disposable bodies so to speak,

there to serve needs of their White masters, White women were attributed to be the most precious part of White society, and thus needed to be protected at all costs. Any non-White male suspected of plotting on or holding passionate sentiment for White women committed the most abominable offense, and were punishable by death.

This history has carried through post-slavery American society, and in some ways, can still be seen today. Criminals convicted of committing crimes against White female victims receive the most extreme punishment, often still death, while similar crimes perpetrated against Black women rarely go noticed. With this unique racial dynamic regarding abuse of Black women by White men, and intense punishment for Black men suspected of gazing at White women, why are interracial marriage rates for Black men increasing, while Black women remain reluctant to enter relationships with White men? Harris and Kalbfleish found that when comparing verbal strategies across both contexts and open-ended responses to likelihood or reality of dating interracially, participants were resistant to the idea of dating a person from another race. External factors such as family and society were cited as primary deterrents to involvement in an interracial romantic relationship. Overall, participants in this study used more social distancing strategies for commencing interracial dating relationships than same race dating relationships.

It was predicted that in 2000 demographic makeup of U.S. population would consist primarily of people of color (Masini 1993). This happened. With increased numbers of people of color in workplace, schools, and all other aspects of life, and higher levels of interpersonal contact, the potential for interracial relationships was predicted to

inevitably rise. The increase in interracial marriage was supposed to indicate improvements in race relations, but as we approach 2018, after the 2017 election of president Donald Trump and the resurgence of White supremacist groups all over the nation, the country has experienced a rude awakening as to the true state of racial ideology in the United States. Those enthralled with the social significance of race may perceive inter-racial romantic partnerships as a threat to the racial social order. Others may find it ironic that so many Black men are pursuing relationships with white women, given the violent and undue costs they had to pay for even considering this in the past. Both White and Black Americans may harbor negative sentiment with Whites wanting to maintain their supremacy and feeling threatened by the mixing of races and “unpurifying” of the white “master” race, and many Blacks still harboring bitterness and anxiety about historical and contemporary interactions with Whites. It is important to keep the topics discussed above in mind with discussion of the images collected in my content analysis, which will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

All the factors discussed in this chapter including historical and modern systems of oppression and control over Blacks, education, colorism, gender differences, and current issues specific to Black men such as joblessness, mass incarceration, and status elevation can all be connected to the theory of black consciousness. The next chapter will outline the basic concepts of the theory and its relation from the individual internally to the broader realm of society.

CHAPTER III
GUIDING THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There is a fact: White men consider themselves superior to black men.
There is another fact: Black men want to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect.
-Fanon 1952: 3

Black Consciousness Theory

W.E. Cross's (1971) "The Negro to Black Conversion" proposed that blacks can advance in a sequential path via four unique phases of black consciousness. These stages include, in sequential order, the pre-encounter, encounter, immersion, and internalization (also see Okech and Harrington 2002). Each of these levels are identified by a person's beliefs, understanding of, and sentiments toward other blacks, whites, and themselves.

Individuals advance through stages of Black consciousness in a cyclical rather than linear process. One may orbit back to a preceding phase, stay in a phase consistently, or progress forward. Building upon both Cross's and Parham's explanations of black consciousness, Jake Milliones (1980) produced the most detailed phase model which goes as follows:

1. Individuals in the preconscious stage have not yet begun development on the black consciousness spectrum and have absorbed white racist stereotypes of

2. African Americans. They are hostile toward enrichment of black consciousness and believe stereotypes of African Americans to be true.
3. Persons in the confrontation phase view whites as adversaries and retain deep anti-white sentiments. They reject white culture and may participate in militant discourse when discussing racial issues.
4. Persons existing in the internalization stage osmose positive attitudes about being Black and diminish anti-white sentiment. Individuals on this area of the spectrum possess a more realistic conceptualization of and happiness in their ethnic identity. “Black is beautiful” would be the attitude at this juncture, with people taking pride in their blackness while being less accommodating to those who find their pride uncomfortable.
5. The final integration state is shown in individuals who are empathetic toward other African Americans who may still be existing in the previous stages. They can develop an adaptive approach toward Blackness and broader white culture and are exertive in working toward the emancipation of themselves and others. Integration requires dissolution of negative opinions of both blacks and whites, treating them equally.

Black consciousness has been theoretically applied to educational achievement for black students, most commonly black males (Okech & Harrington 2002). Findings show that individuals in the pre-conscious stage have significantly lower levels of self-efficacy and educational achievement than those in the integration stage (Okech & Harrington 2002). The process of “disidentification” where black students begin to detach

personal self-esteem from curricular outcomes as a defense mechanism against impeding failure is closely connected to levels on the black consciousness scale (Okech and Harrington 2002). Using this same logic, I applied black consciousness theory to black romantic relationships, and the displays of interactions between black men and black women. While reading the literature on black consciousness I kept the following questions in mind.

1. How does each stage of the black consciousness model impact individual's ability to effectively communicate and understand one another's obstacles and experiences?
2. Are there correlations between levels of black consciousness and ability to cope and achieve social and personal success?
3. How might internalized social gender norms impede the capacity for healthy black relationships?

Implications which accompany certain levels on Millione's model can be identified in some common views black men and women have about each other, and can begin to explain the break down in relational quality.

It makes sense most sense to use Black Consciousness as opposed to other theory for this study because it considers the significance of race in explaining the internal conflict experienced by many African Americans as they become confronted with various systems of oppression in their lifespan. Other theories I have considered such as status frustration and racial threat do not necessarily study the individual's battle within and how fear or anxiety surrounding black identity may influence other normative milestones

in life such as marriage or starting families. I utilize Black consciousness theory to inspect the desire by some Blacks to “achieve whiteness” as Frantz Fanon describes in his work. At the time Fanon was discussing this issue, Black women seemed to be the dominant group seeking whiteness and refusing to marry Black men at all costs because of the perceived failure that would come with doing so (Fanon, p.28). Fanon talks about the woman of color and the white men as an expedition for acceptance and advancement into higher social caste. I believe the roles have flipped with time, and now it is Black men who have collectively begun this quest for whiteness. Black consciousness theory as included by Fanon and others allows an analysis of internal attitudes which may catalyze such a quest. In the discussion following I will focus on some of the main facets in which levels of Black consciousness may be influenced, or may work to influence the decisions and perceptions of those who exist on the lower end of the spectrum.

Racism and Black Consciousness

As discussed in the previous chapter, prejudice and discrimination against black Americans based on skin color and ascribed stereotypes are nothing new, and haven not been destroyed overtime. While racism manifests itself differently over periods of time, its impact on African Americans and other groups of color alike is inescapable. It is imperative to consider the persistence of racism in the United States as it has a profound effect on black lives. We cannot begin to conceptualize black consciousness and its value without first acknowledging the structural systems which have worked for centuries to keep minority communities socially immobile.

Although black men and women are bonded together by this continual battle with racism and ethnic discrimination, the same cannot be said in issues of gender. In the same fashion that general society is at odds about appropriate gender norms, and all women are oppressed by patriarchal ideology and practice, black women and men experience dissension based on gender within the community. I believe this to be one of the most critical issue regarding black romance.

Colorism

The outcomes of slavery on Black Americans are extremely complex. This institution severely impeded upon the ability for blacks to ever truly “assimilate” or conform to general societal expectations. Society from this point in history forward was infected with the plague of racist rhetoric which has infiltrated at every possible level. One of the earliest consequences of slavery can be seen through the practice of colorism. Colorism can be understood as the preferential treatment and desire for a lighter shade of an ethnic group as opposed to a darker one. While enslaved, lighter slaves were treated considerably better by others (white and black) than their darker counterparts (Hughes and Hertel 1990). This bias in treatment was because white slave owners were often related to the lighter skinned slaves (most often through the rape of black female slaves by their “masters”); light skinned individuals were perceived to be more capable of assimilating to white culture and social values (Hughes and Hertel 1990).

This rhetoric which promoted devaluation of darker skinned African Americans has survived through the centuries, and is still very much present today through

television, advertisement, modeling, treatment by whites and perhaps even more-so by other blacks. It seems as if we have become obsessed with this idea that “light and closest to white” is worthier of admiration than darkness. The concept of colorism is a powerful demonstration of the internalization of white values by African Americans. Resulting from such internalization, blacks have resorted to methods of self-harm such as skin bleaching, relaxing hair, investment in plastic surgery, and other methods to disassociate with all things assumed to be “black” such as changing speech, associates, etc. Just as blacks have internalized this concept of colorism and attempted to change their identity through appearance, speech, and other presentations of self. I prewise that some also attempt to disassociate from their blackness through romantic relationships.

Gender Norms and Expectations

Patriarchal societal beliefs and expectations of gender roles are partly to blame for the break down in quality of black romantic endeavors. This is an issue because “traditional” American gender roles do not fit the historical context of black men and women in our society. This argument, like arguments of structural racism can again be traced back to the institution of slavery. As discussed earlier regarding the Black family in slavery, black women often became the mother and father of their households, not by choice but because they had been separated from their men (Hill 1999). These women were responsible for not only working on plantations, but also providing for their children and other family members both physically and emotionally. Slavery ultimately forced black women to devote their energies to work and to family life and essentially deprived

Black men of their roles as bread-winners, protectors, and heads of the family (Hill 1999).

Utilizing the United States federal census of 1880 and 1900, Herbert Gutman discovered that most black families in southern communities were headed by males (Kett 1977; Rice 1977; Staples 1971). Censuses of 1905 and 1925 in the state of New York showed that black families survived migration from the south and flourished in a new urban environment. Despite unfavorable comparison to Jewish and Italian immigrants, the black family was 83 percent male headed in 1905. This finding was quite remarkable considering the mass fragmentation of African American households during slavery. In the 1970's, however, only 63.9 percent of all black American families were headed by males (Staples, 1971). What might have happened in this short period to cause such a drastic drop in black-male headed households? Both Gutman and Frazier alike contend that this decrease in black familial "disorganization" is a result of economic discrimination, unemployment, and underemployment exacted on blacks as new mechanisms of racial and social control by white Americans (Kett 1977; Rice 1977; Staples 1971).

Per the National Center for Biotechnology Information, The United States shows startling racial and ethnic differences in marriage patterns. Contrasted to both white and Hispanic women, black women marry later in life, are less likely to marry at all, and have higher rates of marital instability (Wondra, Raley, Sweeney 2015). The authors argue that the racial rift in marriage that surfaced in the 1960s, and has grown since, is due partly to broad changes in ideas about family arrangements that have made marriage optional. As

the supposition to get married has fallen, coupled with other transformations in the economy that have multiplied women's economic contributions to the household, socioeconomic standing has become increasingly important for marriage. Race continues to be associated with economic disadvantage, and thus as economic factors have become more relevant to marriage and marital stability, the racial gap in marriage has grown. This also speaks to my argument about interracial marriage by Black men as an economic and social strategy.

Consider the situations of both black women and men in the economic sector. As discussed previously, Black Americans are an interesting anomaly because of their experiences with structured racism through education, employment, and financial opportunities. Black men continue to suffer most in this regard due to their gross overpopulation in the prison system, issue of discrimination in employment, and alienation through education. These hindrances have surely worked overtime to denigrate levels of black consciousness and self-efficacy in black men. These modern systems of oppression toward black men can be connected to the "dysfunction" in the black community, and the father institution of slavery. As more black men are removed from the community through prison pipelines, police brutality, workforce discrimination, and lack of skills due to isolation in school systems, the marriageable pool of black men continues to decrease (King and Wheelock 2007).

Resulting from the removal of black men from communities and impediment in their means to be self-efficate and provide for their families, black women are left with the responsibility of being both provider and parent, carrying a dual load while still

having to body external forces of racism and sexism working in unison against them (Aguirre, Benokraitis, Feagin 2000). As Gutman, Moynihan, and Frazier all recognize, slavery gave Black women no real opportunity to choose their role in the family. They were expected to perform high levels of labor right alongside white men, and were not seen as fragile or worthy of protection and security as their white female counterparts. Since this beginning of the black family in American society, black women have shouldered the burden of both mother and father, involuntarily defied traditional gender roles, and perceived as strong, powerful, sub-human beings whom are best able to weather inequality, abuse, and dehumanization (Benokraitis and Feagin 1995; Bethea 1995; Wyatt 2004).

Some argue that gender role variations among blacks' manifest from the African cultural heritage, where lower status of women was elevated by their economic roles and the existence of female-centered kin networks. The most powerful argument of black divergence from rigid gender roles is found in the experience of African American women, whom scholars have argued are taught to be strong and independent, to prepare for careers rather than to rely on marriage for economic security (Cazenave 1983; Few 2007).

Socialization of black women is often miscomprehended by black men who view strong, independent black women as emasculating and undesirable. This quality in black women is, again, not necessarily by choice, but stems from perceived necessity. Black women are certainly aware of the issues black men face because of racism such as joblessness, mass incarceration, and discrimination in all facets, and thus are often taught

be prepared to support themselves and their families in the ways that black men may not always be able to (Crook, Thomas, Cobia 2009). Black men, however, are not able to conceptualize black women's oppression through sexism and gendered beliefs coupled with living in a racist society in the same way.

There is little evidence that African American sons are socialized into accepting gender role flexibility and nontraditional gender roles in the manner that black girls are. This difference in socialization based on gender and race, paired with difficulties faced by young black men as a product of their inability, because of structural obstacles such as low wages and unemployment, to assume traditional masculine roles in their families are what cause conflict in adult black male-female relationships. It is much harder for black men to cope with the effects of demasculinization by white society while also empathizing with and supporting black women amid their own struggles with oppression and inequality.

Prior literature has argued that Black people have more traditional and sexist views than do whites, and Black women, even those who are employed, have not achieved gender equality in the domestic arena. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that as the minority, blacks are all competing for the same resources. Black men and women alike are pursuing the same jobs, educational opportunities, and opportunities for socioeconomic expansion which may cause tension between genders. Black nationalism may also play a role. Black men believe that they should be the strong head of household while their black female counterparts are responsible for raising children and keeping the home. This concept of black emasculation by black women causes much conflict in many

black relationships, and may force many black women to assimilate to gendered expectations. However, considering the situation of blacks in larger American society, it is quite unreasonable to expect traditional gender roles to be followed. Both the man and woman must work to support the household due to low socioeconomic status as compared to whites.

Keeping this unique situation of black men and women in society in mind, we may begin to conceptualize black romantic partnerships through the lens of black consciousness. If black men are “emasculated” by society through discriminatory structures, and further by the perceived advantage and privilege of black women, they may not be enthusiastic about pursuing romantic partnerships with them. Depending on where individual black men may be on the black consciousness scale, their ability to understand the duality of black women’s experiences, which are not less painful or harmful than their own, is impacted. Similarly, black women’s location on the scale may hinder or encourage their ability to understand and cope with the obstacles black men are faced with in American society.

This concept may be a critical lens with which to address the conflict between black men and women in our communities. As suggested through literature on black consciousness applied to education and black identity formation, I believe efforts to increase the self-efficacy of black men, and education of black youth about the historical and structural implications of blackness, can help to remedy this disconnect between genders in the community.

The framework of black consciousness can be applied to any sector of the black community and experience, including romantic relationships (Okech & Harrington 2010). It is imperative to first have a foundation of knowledge about the juxtaposition of blacks in American society historically, before we may truly begin to understand the magnitude of historical influence on levels of black consciousness.

CHAPTER IV
DATA AND METHODS

Framing

Hip Hop culture is constantly and rapidly changing, with new artists and musicians promoting evolving cultural value, discussing current social issues, creating new trends, and setting the tone for audience's perceptions of success and accomplishment. As a Black female born in the early 1990's, I remember growing up watching MTV and BET to see all the latest music videos, keep up with the latest trends, and learn about new artists. Artists like Queen Latifah and Lauryn Hill provided messages to me about the spirit of Black women and the expectations that I should have for the rest of society about the way I was viewed and treated. I relied heavily on narratives created by these artists for the ability to orient myself in society and to reinforce my self-esteem and feelings of beauty and worth. Especially since Black women have been portrayed as undesirable compared to their White female counterparts through media and cinema for decades, it meant a lot to be exposed to images that uplifted and empowered us for once, and in a sense placed us on our own pedestal in ways that we had been denied by the dominant White culture.

During my lifetime, however, representations of Black women within the realm of media and entertainment continue to evolve, perhaps in response to changes in social issues and climate. Within the last 25 years these images and representations of

Black women have seemingly shifted from ones of strength, autonomy, entrepreneurship, and unique Black notions of femininity, back to historically established hyper-sexualization, undesirability, sub-feminine qualities, and emasculating nature. Many current Black male celebrities have at some point made disparaging comments about Black women through music, film, and digital media commentary or displayed a “preference” for White, or other “foreign” women.

Big Boi, half of the Southern rap duo *Outkast* faced a wave of backlash from the black community after he tweeted an anti- Black woman meme shown below, comparing and contrasting Black “mothers in the 1970’s” to Black “mothers now”.



Figure 1. Black Mothers Then, Black Mothers Today

The photo representing mothers in the 1970's is of Florida Evans and her daughter on the famous African American sitcom "Good Times". The image used to depict Black mothers today was of a nearly naked young Black woman posing explicitly for the camera in front of her young child. The text overlay of the image implies that Black American women's overt hypersexuality and irresponsibility as mothers are the root of issues with younger Black populations. Big Boi's post received outrage from social media which took major offense to this suggestion and responded with images of

successful modern Black mothers, one showing a group of Black mothers and their children all dressed in cap and gown attending their graduation ceremony, another showing a young Black mother who had revolutionized formula feeding of children with her inventions, one depicting Black women who started companies grossing millions of dollars despite having children at early ages, and others illustrating Black women as achieving levels of higher education despite experiences with racism, sexual abuse and discrimination within and outside their own communities.

Interestingly, people also mocked Big Boi's claims by presenting an equivalent image of the one he had posted, showing an image of Black fathers in earlier times as compared to Black fathers today. The image used to depict Black fathers of the past was of a Black father reading a story to his daughter, while the other was of Big Boi himself laying his head on the naked pelvis of a white woman in one of his own music videos (see below).



Figure 2. Black Fathers Then vs. Now

This image and response by the poster named “Patty Mayonnaise” illustrates clapback, which I further discussed in Chapter 5. Clapback is a term coined by the Black American community to describe often witty and effective responses to offensive or defaming assertions, perceptions, and behaviors. Clapback can be thought of as a kind of “reality check.” In this case Big Boi asserts that promiscuous young Black mothers of today are the reason for the youth’s behavior. By doing this he generalizes two groups, Black mothers, and young Blacks, ascribing bad behavior and characteristics to the group, rather than individuals. “Patty Mayonnaise” engages in clapback by flipping this generalization back on Big Boi by showing the image of a Black father “back then” and comparing it to Big Boi’s photo which was used to display Black fathers “of today.” The

image of Big Boi she chose is interesting to note considering my focus on the role of interracial relationships. By using this photo and generalizing Black fatherhood to make her point, the poster also insinuates that the Black fathers of “today” have interests in using non-Black women as props (i.e., a pillow or headrest). The use of images such as these to denigrate and/or erase Black American women will be discussed further in my findings chapter.

Albert Haynesworth was likewise recently critiqued after tweeting that his white ex-girlfriend was physically, emotionally, and verbally abusive to him. Haynesworth made claims that his son’s mother was extremely violent, beat him on multiple occasions, and called him a “nigger.” This claim came as a surprise to the Black community (Black women especially), since in a 2011 interview he expressed that he had no desire to date or marry Black women. This was especially ironic since Black women have been notoriously blamed for the emasculation of Black men. Black women again took to social media and expressed their apathy for Haynesworth’s situation, who like many other Black men within the community had expressed their disinterest or undesirability for Black women as reasoning behind pursuing inter-racial partnerships.

These are only two instances of this dynamic, illustrating a portion of the relational conflict between Black men and women. Black women have been able to identify inconsistencies with reasoning given by Black men for their rejection of black females, while simultaneously developing an acceptance for “undesirable” treatment by White women perhaps under the assumption that pursuing them provides opportunity to “upgrade” or “marry up”. These modern images and narratives of dehumanization of

Black women and infatuation with White women perpetuated through media by Black men speak to Cleaver's (1968) description of the black male's role as a super-masculine medial body in American society.

It is important to note that I am focusing on Black men in this context because White men are most often discussed in sociological discourse in terms of racism and dominant power structures. In the same ways that Cleaver (1968) argues White men (the Omnipotent Administrators) exercise control and dominance over minorities by race, class, and gender, I pose that Black men similarly employ within their own communities to control the minority population within it (Black women, children, LGBTQA communities). This concept is not necessarily confined to an individual level, but can be understood as an overall dominant culture prevalent within Black communities, which further oppress minority populations (in this scenario particularly Black women the LGGBTQ demographic) (Cleaver 1968).

Many Black men still orient themselves in society with rigid traditional beliefs about gender and the roles ascribed to each. This rigidity can perhaps be accredited to the repeated exposure over the life course to White normative culture and patriarchal ideology (Cleaver 1968). From this exposure, Black men may act on their gender privilege and create toxic narratives about Black women and other members of the community in the same way that Cleaver claims White men have done. This inequality stemming from gender gives Black men an opportunity to employ an "omnipotent administration" of their own, especially considering earlier discussions about their continuous fight for masculinity, status, and stability within Black and White society.

As my awareness of this issue has increased during my time in college, I have also become more aware of what Bell Hooks calls “The Oppositional Gaze”. Hooks argues that when many Black Americans first gained the opportunity to see television and film, they did it knowing that mass media was a network of knowledge and authority reproducing and preserving white supremacy (hooks, 1992). Gazing at the television and mainstream cinema resulted the negotiation of black representation. Oppositional gaze answered to this dynamic of looking relations by creating independent black cinema. Black spectators of mainstream media, cinema, and television could trace the progress of political movements toward racial equality through the construction of image (hooks, 1992). I began to see the world and society for what it was and for how it saw me. The black sitcoms that I once watched as a teen, which I thought were quite amusing and served as a form of representation for our community, also became subjects of my critical eye. I began to dissect characters (particularly black female ones) and noticed a pattern. Many of these shows targeting our community operated under the guise of good humor and the long overdue opportunity for Black actors to display their craft, but less obviously perpetuated some of the same age old racist characterizations that Blacks had been attributed by Whites. This attribution became especially apparent in the case of Black female narratives.

If this oppositional gaze is unique to Black women as hooks argues, where then does it leave Black men in terms of their ability to differentiate truth from fact in terms of the portrayal of Black women and their qualities in film and television as compared to the popular narratives of White women? This question important to consider when discussing

possible reasons why Black women tend to refrain from inter-racial marriage and dating, while many Black men use these popular narratives about Black women as the reason for their own inter-racial relationships (Crowder, Tolnay 2000; Hurt, McElroy, Sheats, Landor, Bryant, 2014). If no alternative narratives are received by Black men (or Black women for that matter) through personal experience, education, or expanded social interaction, how then would such negative typology of Black women be de-constructed? How might these narratives influence the mate selection process for both parties?

To further investigate popular narratives about Black American women in relation to mate selection outcomes, I wanted to conduct a content analysis of digital media. I began by considering looking at 2 YouTube channels – one taped and promoted by a successful African American woman seeking to empower other Black women and girls and the other by a digitally successful (popular) Black man who often discussed Black women’s faults. Because of the number of videos publicized on this channel and the fact that people must purposefully subscribe or watch these videos, I decided that selection bias may be an issue. I decided, then, to examine Instagram for relevant images. As someone who uses Instagram, I was aware of numerous images disintegrating Black women and promoting images of Black men with non-Black women. For the first year of my graduate degree, I saved many of these images with the intention of examining them. Upon discussing using these images; however, I became aware that a more systematic method of image selection was desired. I finally decided to purposefully search for hashtags that seemingly would reveal images and content related to my interest examining why Black men may be seeking relationships with non-Black women.

In doing so, I searched two Instagram hashtags -- #dontdateblackgirls and #dontdateblackwomen. Each of these hashtags contained five images, with six of the ten images being identical. This happens when the person posting the image includes multiple hashtags to be associated with it. In this case, the poster had attached both hashtags to the same image, and so it showed up under each hashtag. After clicking on each individual image and identifying the poster, it became clear that a page named @BlackMenAbroad was responsible for posting five of the ten images. Upon visiting the page, I came across the third hashtag #blackmenabroadmovement where my 41 additional images were found. These 41 images were all posted by the @BlackMenAbroad page, so I decided to include each of these posts and corresponding comments in my analysis, resulting in a total of 51 images. It was under this hashtag that the most compelling emergent themes were found, and dialogue in corresponding comments was the heaviest.

Although many images contain multiple themes, each theme was coded for separately and then tallied. Below is the original coding sheet used for each of the 51 images. Although the below code sheet is blank, Appendix A provides the original tallied scores using this code sheet. Appendix B provides a visual depiction summarizing the original tallied results.

Table 1. Code Sheet with Original Themes

Theme	Image and Textual Information Reinforcing Theme	Number of Likes
<p>Emasculating: Language or images indicating that Black women deprive men of maleness or masculine identity</p>		
<p>Single-Mother: Language or images suggesting that Black women are unmarried parents, can't "keep" a man, or have children "out of wedlock"</p>		
<p>Not Beautiful: Language or images suggesting that Black women have a low level of attractiveness or do not meet an expected standard of beauty</p>		
<p>Covetous: Language or images suggesting Black women as greedy or "gold-digging"</p>		
<p>Hyper-sexual: Language or images suggesting Black women are only or primarily useful for sexual endeavors or are largely valued for sexual or physical attributes only</p>		
<p>Abrasive: Language or images suggesting Black women have a hostile attitude, are cold, unsympathetic or are not nurturing</p>		
<p>Other: [Specify]</p>		

Upon completion of coding for all images, I went back and grouped some similar themes together. In other words, original themes were combined or recoded to account for thematic/conceptual overlap. In addition, some themes were removed because they were not prevalently depicted in the data. A new coding sheet was created for this process, and is shown below (see below).

Table 2. Blank Coding Sheet with Combined Themes

Prevalent Themes	Number of Instances Theme Present	Number of Likes/ Views Associated with Theme
Not Beautiful		
Hyper-sexual		
Single Mother		
Emasculating/Abrasive		
Other: Emergent Sub-Themes		
Black American vs. African/ Other women		
Sexism/ Misogynoir, Silencing/Engaging, Dehumanization of Black women, Minimizing Black Female Accomplishment		
Promotion of Black men		
Clapback		
Irony/Hypocrisy, Antagonistic		

The following chapter will more fully detail how the data demonstrated common themes and narratives about Black American women being touted through digital social media spaces.

CHAPTER V

THE IMAGES OF STEREOTYPES AND RACIALIZED SEXISM

I find that most images posted under the three Instagram hashtags #dontdateblackwomen, #dontdateblackgirls, and #blackmenabroadmovement reproduce common stereotypes about Black women. These stereotypes work to reify negative notions of Black womanhood, traditionalist gender ideals, and a distinction between Black American women and women of other racial and ethnic groups. As discussed in the preceding chapter and indicated in Appendix 1, there were six original themes along with an additional category of “Other”, which I used to analyze (code) each of the 51 images.

Of these seven original categories, Not Beautiful, Hyper-Sexual, Single Mother, Emasculating, and Abrasive were most prevalent.¹ The data revealed several items that I originally categorized as “Other,” but which appeared consistently enough that they resulted in additional [emergent] themes. These themes included Black American Women as Unique from Other Women, Sexism/Misogynoir, Promotion of Black Men, Clapback, and Hypocrisy.

The findings below are organized by discussing the themes I originally identified as expected (Not Beautiful, Hyper-Sexual, Single Mother, Emasculating, and Abrasive)

¹ Images reflecting the category “Covetous” rarely showed up, so the data does not suggest this item as a clear theme.

and are followed by the emergent themes discovered while coding (i.e., items consistently appearing that were originally coded in the “other” category). To help illustrate examples of these themes, I include some of the original posts in my discussion below. This chapter concludes through my discussion of themes and observations that relate to notions of marriageability of Black American women and the increase in interracial romantic pursuit by Black American men.

The total number of times each code appeared in the data is detailed in Table 1 below (see Appendix A for earlier versions of the coding sheet and data collection procedures).

Table 3. Final Thematic Code Sheet

Prevalent Themes	Number of Instances Theme Present	Number of Likes/ Views Associated with Theme
Black Women as Not Beautiful	50	254 likes, 286 views
Black Women as Hyper-sexual	45	112 likes, 313 views
Black Women as Single Mother	36	114 likes, 217 views
Black Women as Emasculating and Abrasive	26	160 likes, 588 views
Other: Emergent Sub-Themes		
Black American Women as Unique	39	279 likes, 217 views
Misogynoir (e.g., Sexism, Silencing Black Women, Dehumanization of Black Women, Minimizing Black Female Accomplishments)	45	221 likes, 309 views
Promotion of Black Men	37	467 likes, 217 views
Clapback	49	205 Likes
Hypocrisy (e.g., Irony and Antagonistic Engagement)	32	210 likes, 89 views

The information presented in the table above is also provided in a summary chart below, which more depicts the themes, likes and views of the recoded theme more visually.

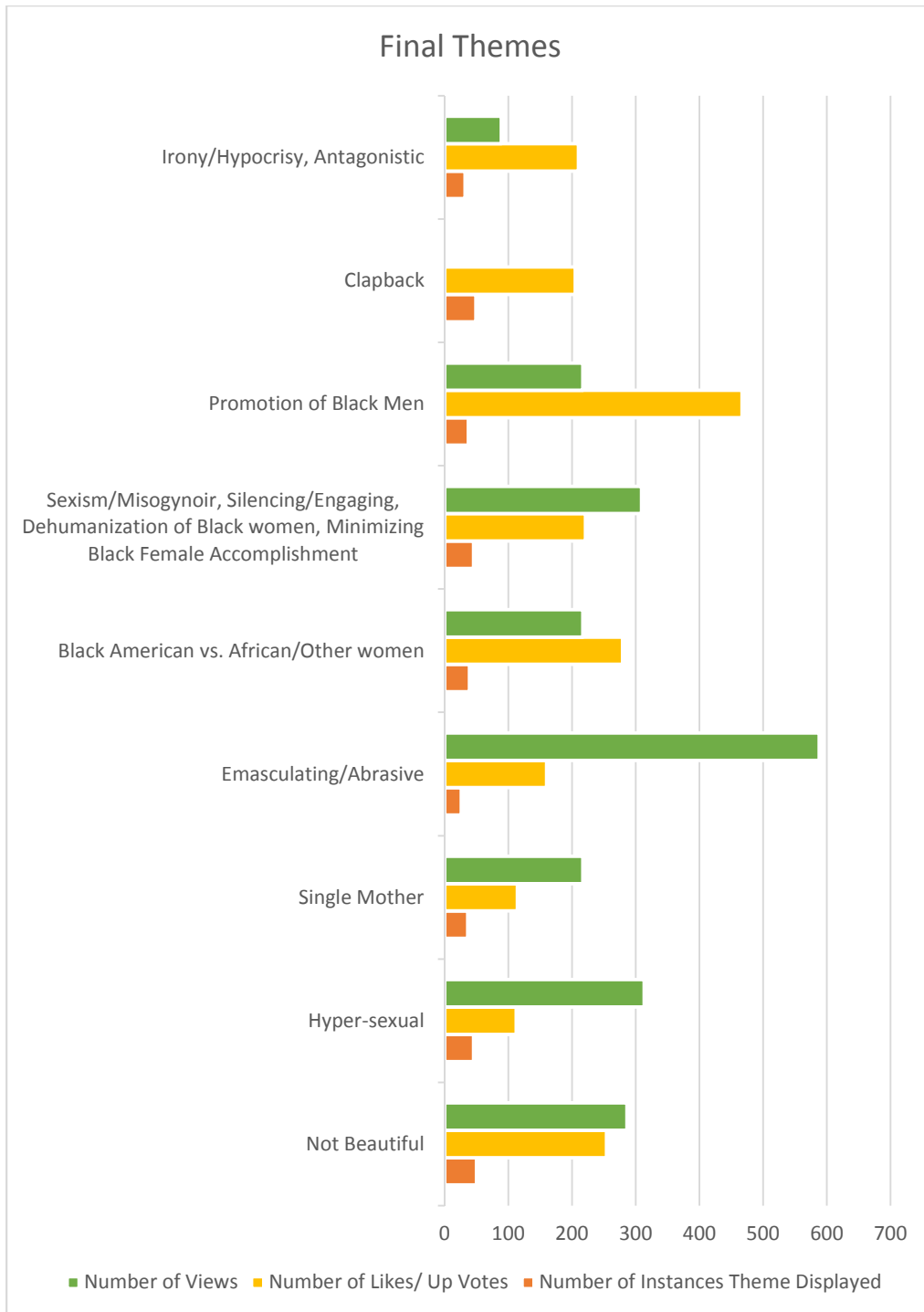


Figure 3. Themes, Likes, and Views after Recoding/Combining Themes

Below, I present specific information and examples of each of these themes. Although I do not include all 51 images analyzed for this project, I select and paste images that best represent the theme discussed to provide detail and richness to my discussions below.

Black Women as Not Beautiful

One of the most common themes was the notion that Black American women lacked various physical and interpersonal qualities or traits which were perceived to equate with beauty. As indicated in Table 1, images and comments conveying this theme occurred 50 times over the 51 posts. These images, videos, and comments were viewed 286 and garnered 254 likes. One image, which is shown below, posted by @BlackMenAbroad was a “before and after” side by side photo comparison of an African American woman with her natural hair in a short afro and bare face, and then later with a long, curled red sew-in weave, and a face full of make-up.



Figure 4. “Nothing Without Weave”

The text overlay on the image reads “When you are nothing without weave. #TheTypicalBlackWoman2016”. The poster then goes on to say in the caption: “At BlackMenAbroad™ definitely approved of this. You’re nothing without weave!”

This image is impactful because in the African American community, hair represents a significant social and political issue. This issue of hair, much like colorism, is not new amongst the Black community, but Black women often fall in a “catch-22” situation of what is beautiful and what is not. If Black women wear weave, they are often criticized for wearing someone else’s hair or teased and mocked for being “bald” and not

able to grow hair of their own. If they decide to “go natural,” beauty is often defined by curl-pattern, texture, and length, and many women who fall below the standards of “good” or assumed mixed or multi-racial hair are once again branded as being unbeautiful. In either case, Black American women face criticism from outside racial and ethnic groups, and within the community from Black American men (who have similar sentiment to @BlackMenAbroad’s). Despite these criticisms, there has been a natural hair movement on the rise among Black American women over the past few years as more women “transition” from relaxed or chemically straightened hair to their naturally kinky or coily hair. Transitioning involves growing relaxed hair “out” or abstaining from use of chemical relaxers until the natural curly hair grows long enough for an individual to feel comfortable cutting off the relaxed ends. This process of cutting is called the “big chop.” For many Black women this is a deeply spiritual and mental process since for centuries many have been led to believe that straight hair is more beautiful, professional, and desirable than natural “Black” hair is (Banks, 2000). Wearing weave, braids, wigs, and other styles help African American women keep more fragile, sensitive hair protected while it grows and gives women a level of comfortability if transitioning or getting acclimated to a fresh big chop. As shown in this image example, transitions to natural hair continue to be an avenue whereby Black women’s beauty is criticized and questioned.

Hair is not the only way that Black women’s beauty is questioned. Below are two additional examples which display the theme of Black American women as “Not Beautiful”:



Figure 5. “Yuck”, 12 likes

The caption included by the original poster of this image further reads: “Yuck!!! Glad I got my options away from black American women”. The poster also associates the image with hashtags #run, #yuck, #bitchesbelike, #blackwomen.



Figure 6. “Ugh...Yuck!”, 11 likes

The original poster includes with this image a caption that reads:

Ugh... Yuck! What’s wrong with today’s Black American women seriously? Repulsive tatoos throughout her body, unfeminine trait’s as near rivaling of that transgender dude’s in drag and wearing diseased artificial hair from another race. We’ve see (sic) why young black males of this modern day and age opting out all together for hopping out the fence into interracial relationships or getting their passports into cultures of ladies who appreciate being feminine, soft, prissy, dainty and decency. No man doesn’t wanna come home to a woman who wanna act harder like men at all. That’s not appealing so well. Hashtags associated with the image include # yikes, #yuck, #ew.

Although I depict only a few examples here, this theme was prominent in images and comments. The language used displays various degrees of disgust, undesirability and unattractiveness synonymous with Black American women. The last example captures the idea that perceived lack of beauty and “ladylike” qualities in Black American women are reason for Black men to vehemently pursue interracial relationships. This also assumes that women of other racial or ethnic groups all possess the desirable or beautiful traits that Black American women lack.

Black Women as Hypersexual

Patricia Hill Collins discusses hypersexuality in relation to the institution of slavery and the tone set for Black women in later American and global social periods in history (Collins 1994, 1997, 2000). The perceived “natural” hypersexuality of Black American women during slavery and later periods was used by males of all races to justify the rape, assault, and dehumanization of Black women. This theme was interesting to view from a social media perspective because many of the images containing the theme used hypersexuality to blame Black American women for various issues, such as single-motherhood, and to justify the disrespectful and abusive language used toward them collectively.

For example, the figure titled “Repulsive and Unladylike,” which is shown below, claims Black American women are “symbolically proclaiming they’re only good for sex and nothing else.”



Figure 7. “Repulsive and Unladylike,” 4 likes

The poster uses this image to claim that the two women in the photo, who appear young, are portraying that they’re only good for sex, assumedly because of the dresses they are wearing appear to be made from condoms. @BlackMenAbroad’s caption reads:

“Uhhh we got no words to say... Why are black USA women so repulsive and unladylike in both trait’s and looks? Is this all they’re symbolically proclaiming that they’re only good for sex and nothing else.”

Another possible interpretation of the photo might consider that one of the women is holding a black microphone, as if at an event or speaking engagement. The other is standing with her back turned slightly toward the camera and her arms crossed as if she might have felt slightly uncomfortable or immodest in her dress. The two women could have been at a benefit or awareness event for AIDS or sexual health and wearing dresses made of condoms to fashionably promote safe and responsible sex. In instances like this, photos without context are left up to interpretation, and if interpreted incorrectly can result in negative or stereotypical assumptions. A viewer of the image, @shyykior comments and shows a similar interpretation of the original @BlackMenAbroad representative saying, “They ready”, eluding to the fact that the condoms used to make the dresses would later be used for sexual purposes. The hashtags associated with the image include #trifling, #nasty, #shameless, #classless, #blacktrash, and #ghettotrash, hence reinforcing the hypersexual theme. Some of these tags also overlap with other themes such as “Not Beautiful” and “Emasculating” (e.g. #disgusting #repulsive #unfeminine #mentalillness).

Figures 8 and 9 below also display the theme of hypersexuality by Black American women.

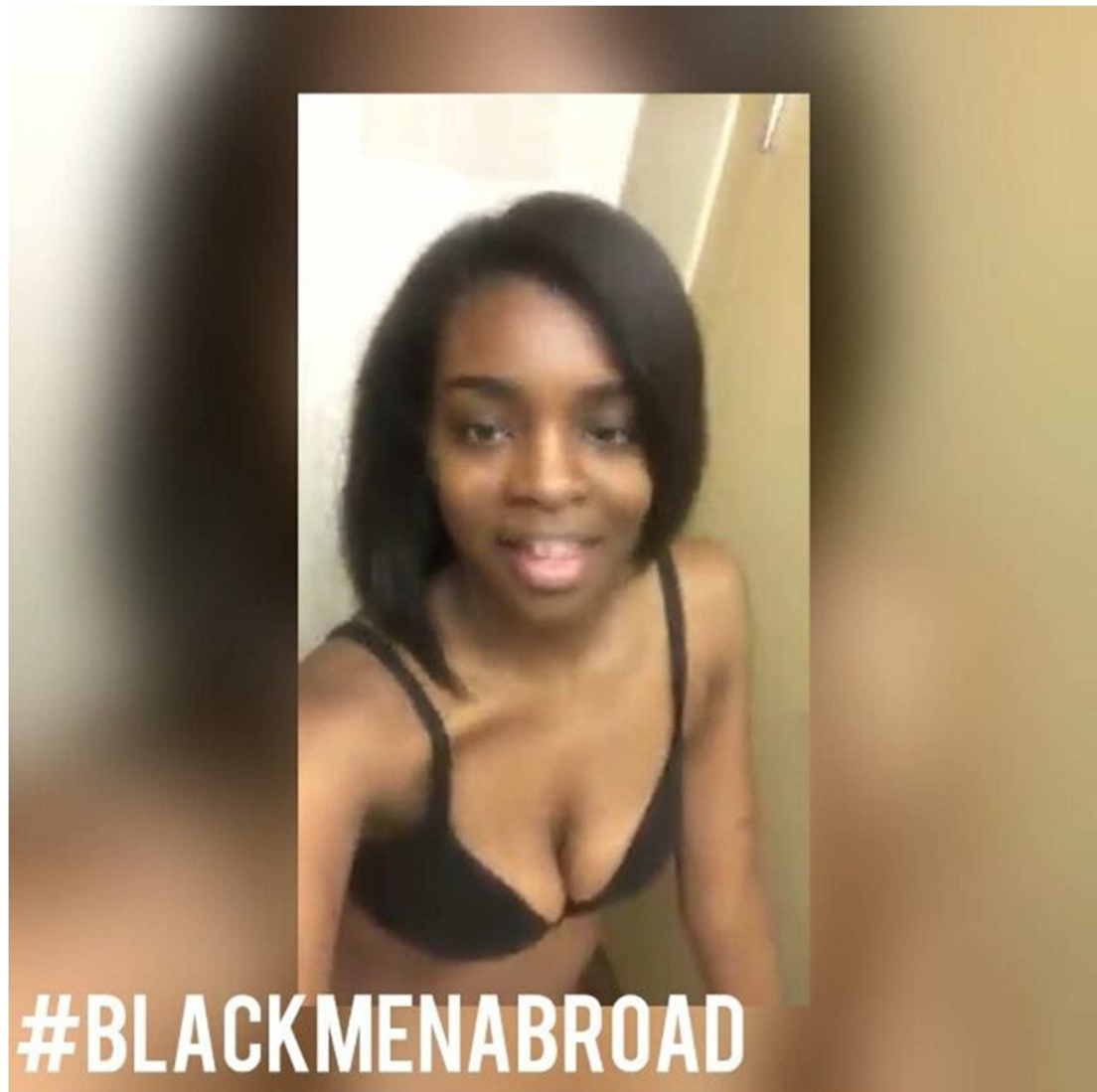


Figure 8. “Internet Thot”, 92 views (Video)

Figure 8 is a still image of a video reposted by @BlackMenAbroad. In the caption he calls the woman in the video, Jimi Meaux, a “diseased ass broad” whose sexual behavior is “downright disgusting, despicable, unthinkable, trashy and immoral.” He then goes on to write that she is a “humanoid cockroach” and labels her a self-proclaimed “Internet Thot,” slang for internet whore, who has a “body count of 75+ men.” In this

instance “body count” refers to the number of people an individual has been sexually involved with, but it is more commonly known for the number of bodies lost or killed in war. Given the poster’s use of the words diseased and immoral in describing this young woman, the use of casualty language is significant. Using this individual Black woman’s sexual history, the poster pleads with male viewers to reconsider “the factors dealing with this nonsense in 2016.” He urges followers to download and use Duolingo, which is a free language app like Rosetta Stone, to learn different languages so they may locate a romantic partner who is not an African American woman. Along with this @BlackMenAbroad suggests that men “start a small investment for a passport that cost around the same price as your high-end Air Nike Jordan’s and get out of America as soon as possible!!” He claims that these male viewers will thank him later, insinuating that they will be happier with a partner who is not a Black American woman. The @BlackMenAbroad page and accompanying #blackmenabroadmovement regularly promote this idea of Black American men obtaining passports and learning new languages to travel abroad and find “better” women in foreign countries. It is also important to note that this movement is being marketed to Black American men specifically, with no mention or inclusion of Black American women traveling abroad in similar pursuits.



Figure 9. “Women Today”, 4 likes

Figure 9 is of young Eartha Kitt, a well-known Black American actress, singer, dancer, activist and comedian born in the 1920’s in South Carolina. The image text overlay, caption, and corresponding comments all make a distinction between the Black American women of today and Black American “Foremothers”. The caption by @BlackMenAbroad reads: “Black American women aren’t nothing like mother’s and grandmother’s at all. All credit goes to Black Men Vent.”

While this image may not itself invoke clear notions of hypersexuality, the comments attached to it do. A viewer comments in support of the image and caption, arguing that Black American women want to be treated like “our mom’s and grandmom’s

but half of em' ain't even FIT to meet mom's and grandmom's!" This viewer goes on to argue that most Black American women are only on social media sites "...half dressed, twerking, glorifying stripping and/ or the sale of their bodies (trickin'), behaving uneducated and frankly embarrassing our race." The viewer ends his rant by saying

It's sad for the decent black women I do know to be represented by the ones I just described and it's just as unfair that they must live with that stereotype of how their perceived because of the bad seeds as it is for us black men to have to fight the world to prove we're not like all the stereotypes they have about us....
#Perception#RespectYourselfB4DemandingItFromOthers
#WhatHappenedToOurPeople.

Although this comment appears to recognize heterogeneity of Black women, he begins his comment by noting that "most" Black women are not deserving of respect because of their hypersexual behavior. This viewer's opinion displays some overlap in subsequent themes on misogynoir and hypocrisy, which I discuss shortly.

Black Women as Single Mothers

It was not uncommon for images and comments to ascribe single-motherhood to Black American women. In fact, this theme appeared 36 times across the 51 images and received 217 views and 114 likes. Images 7-10 below provide a few examples illustrative of this theme. As shown, depictions of single parenthood place blame and shame solely on the mother, with no mention of the father or his role in the fractured family. This theme can be related back to historical analysis of the Black American family and factors which contribute to the large number of Black female headed

households, which I discussed in Chapter 2. Not surprisingly given historical depictions of “Black matriarchy” as pathological, this theme was also commonly connected to other themes like “Emasculation/Abrasiveness,” which I discuss further below.

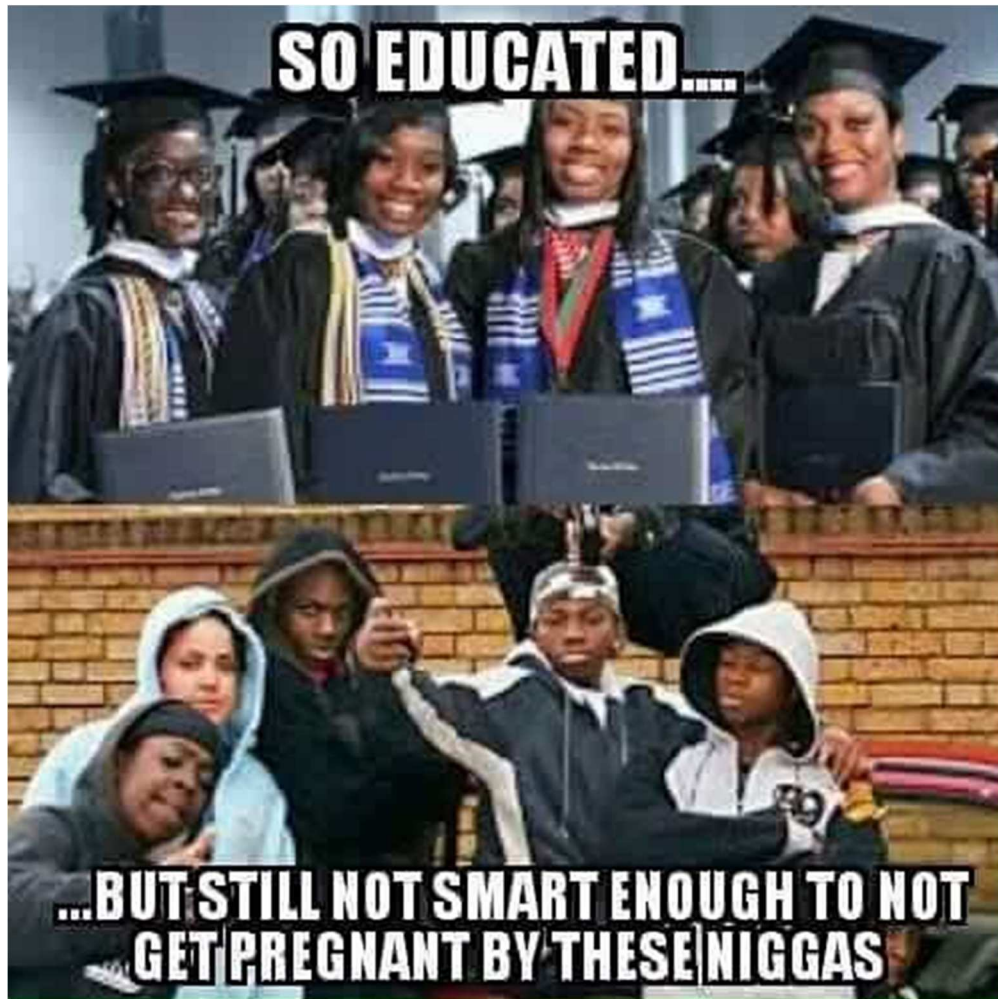


Figure 10. “So Educated...”, 23 likes

Figure 10 demonstrates consistent depictions of this theme, being further reinforced in the caption by @BlackMenAbroad with the following statement:

We've found this to be ridiculous... We always hear that American black women, proclaiming that they're "smartest" women in America, yet (sic), they got the highest rate of an (sic) 72% rate of becoming single mother's (sic).

What's good of education, if one's (sic) lacks the basic premise: Common sense?

The poster trivializes Black American women's collective high educational attainment, while repeatedly displaying his own seeming lack of education with repeated grammatical and punctuation errors. In addition, he corners Black American women into an unwinnable situation. He claims so many Black women are uneducated, classless, and lacking desirable qualities, yet Black women who do possess those qualities are reduced to their "typical mistakes" and decisions to sleep with and get pregnant by men of lower social status or success. This attitude again ignores Black American women who are successful and do not fit this narrative. Why not pursue them? What barriers are preventing connections from being made between the Black men who complain about Black women not meeting their expectations and Black women who do?

Question. Why is that when someone like Erykah Badu has 3 kids by 3 different men while unmarried nobody downs her? But if the average sister does the same thing she is talked down upon?



Figure 11. “Erykah Badu” posted under #blackmenabroadmovement by @BlackMenAbroad

Images depicting Black American women as single mothers are often used to define them as irresponsible and un-valuable, and this claim holds across social class. The image on the left is of American soul singer-songwriter, record producer, disc jockey, activist, and actress Erykah Badu. She has children by hip hop and rap artists The D.O.C., Jay Electronica and Andre 3000, one of the members of rap-funk duo Outkast. The picture on the right is of an unknown Black American woman with multiple children, but no context on who’s children they are (i.e., they may have the same father, or be the woman’s nephews, or children of a friend but this is not implied in the context

presented). Once again, the poster trivializes Ms. Badu's accomplishments as an artist and assumes that having children with multiple men was an unplanned mistake, not a choice. What is more, the image explicitly places fault for her single motherhood status on her perceived hypersexuality.

The caption on the image reads: "If it doesn't matter if a single mother is poor or Rich: "a c*m dumpster is a c*m dumpster, No matter the social status." In the comments section, the poster further writes: "We at Black Men Abroad do not accept leftovers and c*m dumpsters leftovers from another previous men's kids. Just say no to single mothers!"

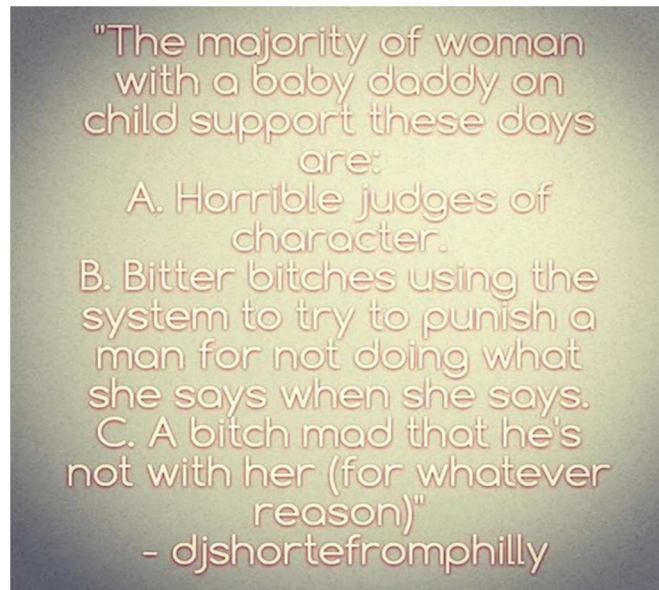


Figure 12. "Majority of Woman with a Baby on Child Support", 5 likes

Figure 12 again places blame on single mothers by stating that they are bad characters of judgement for picking the "wrong men", and that they are using the

government to take advantage of fathers and obtain unfair monetary gain. This image also overlaps with another original theme which was Black American women as “covetous”, or operating solely for monetary or material gain.

A viewer, @pancreas, in opposition to argument displayed in this image “claps back” or refutes with a comment stating: “Or women whose child’s dead-beat father has left her to raise their son by themselves and the child support money is the way she provides for her child. Can’t stand you”. @BlackMenAbroad responds to this by saying “Try closing your leg’s (sic) then and demand to wear a rubber”. As seen in this exchange, the original poster and administer the @BlackMenAbroad responds to the person trying to refute the image content by once again depicting Black women as sexually promiscuous and irresponsible and omits any reference to the male sexual partner’s responsibility.

Black Women as Emasculating and Abrasive

Comments and images depicting Black women as emasculating and abrasive were seen twenty-six times across the 51 images. These images received an extensive amount of views – 588 of them, and they collectively received 160 likes. Figure 13, which is shown below, well-depicted the attitudes conveyed in many of these posts. The image makes a clear visual distinction between Black American women and African women. The woman pictured on the left is assumed to be the Black American woman due to her hostile and somewhat domineering stance as she yells at the Black man beside her. The woman pictured on the right is notably younger looking and wears African beads on her

head. She appears to be more timid, and perhaps even fearful and in need of protection. The text below the image further depicts African women (girls) as “nice,” implying that Black American women are not. In considering earlier conversation about natural hair in relation to image 1, it is also worthy to note the difference in hairstyles between the two women, with the assumed Black American woman wearing her natural, or chemically unprocessed hair, while the assumed African woman appears to have chemically or heat straightened hair.

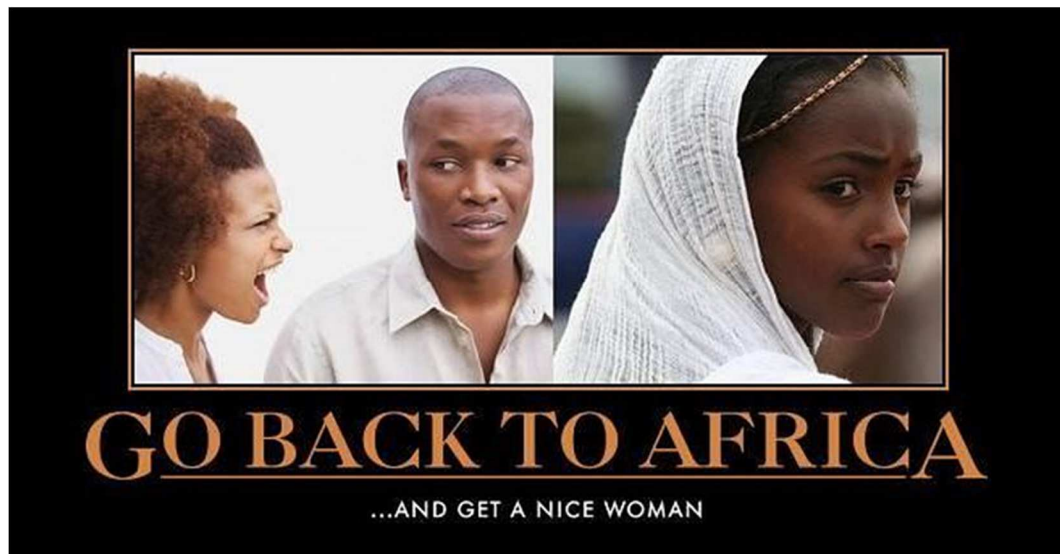


Figure 13. Go Back to Africa and Get a Nice Woman, 11 likes

Further expounding on this image, @BlackMenAbroad addresses his male audience by further writing

For all black men in AmeriKKKa, who's sick and tired of the disrespect, slandering and unappreciative American black women. "YOU" got options and that's start with a passport, brother's.. (sic) You don't have to simp to some unattractive broads, lower your own masculinity

or chasing (sic) single mother's. (C'mon dudes, raise your standards and just demand better for yourselves, black men) (In some states, the government can get you and put you on child support for a kid that isn't yours. Who's in Hell wants that) There's tons of foreign women in many parts of the world that's (sic) definitely appreciated (sic) your efforts, your kindness, smile towards your way and enjoy being around you. You'll thanked us later.

As should be clear, this image explicitly points out Black American women as emasculating; however, other themes, including Black Women as a Single Mother, Not Beautiful and Hypersexual are also apparent. These themes are further emphasized in some of the associated hashtags, which include #childsupport.

@BlackMenAbroad targets this message specifically on Black male followers. He contends that all Black American women are disrespectful and unappreciative of Black men, and so they should galivant abroad in search of foreign women who will cherish and adore them. This is ironic considering the historical support of Black American men by Black American women and the continuous waves of support of Black men by Black women on social media. Numerous hashtags on Instagram such as #BlackMenSmiling (10,088 posts), #blackboyjoy (309,469), and #blackboymagic (78,335 posts) are just a few of the hashtags that promote and appreciate Black men all over the world, with much of that support and adoration coming from Black American women.

Following the work of Collins (2000) and King & Allen (2009), I find that the independence and perhaps at times "impatient" bluntness of some Black American women is misconstrued for abrasiveness or emasculative qualities. I have grown up around Black men my entire life, and yet must admit I get a bit nervous when walking

down the street and running into a group of them. This is not necessarily because I think they would harm me or are dangerous in some way, but because of the numerous times I have walked through or near groups of Black men and been aggressively cat-called. The uncomfortableness gets old, and you must learn to adapt. If you can't avoid the situation your next option is to be on the defense always. Figure 14 reflects this uneasiness. The young woman's shirt in the image is a "playful", yet it is a painful reality of the experiences that Black American women experience while dating or interacting with Black men. The shirt is a passive communication to let men who might consider addressing her about some of the common "pick-up" lines directed at Black American women by Black men. Rather than taking the time to approach a woman tastefully, start a conversation, and perhaps ask her name, many Black men will just yell "Aye" from wherever they are standing, expecting the woman to acknowledge and come to them. The second phrase "We can't chill" refers to a modern dating "alternative". Rather than physically going out on a date, users of Netflix on social media created the term "Netflix and Chill," which generally means a woman or man may come over to watch Netflix and just "chill," which more than likely than not leads to sexual intercourse. This method eliminates the "middle man" and helps men to avoid having to "pay" for sex through spending money on public dates (e.g. going out to dinner, movies, activities normally done on dates). The last phrase "Send yourself a pic" is another all too common and annoying request given to women by men shortly after exchanging phone numbers. Requesting women to "send a pic" can be harmless, but it often leads to requests for nude

pictures. This request is considered disrespectful by many Black American women, especially when they are just meeting the person.



Figure 14. And They Wonder Why They Are Single, 10 likes

@BlackMenVent, the original creator of the image, and @BlackMenAbroad, the re-poster, both use this image to contend that Black American women abrasively reject Black men, thus emasculating them. In their comments, they write: “And they wonder why their single,” effectively suggesting that Black women should not reject Black men’s continuous harassment. In the comment section of this post, @BlackMenAbroad’s dialogues with an assumed Black American woman where he calls her “a feminist whore”, claiming that “the truth hurts.” His response was due to her disagreement with

the content of this post. Another woman comes to her defense saying that @BlackMenAbroad's use of language was uncalled for and he ironically responds by saying "Our page = our rules. We don't let nobody disrespect us then had the audacity to get respect (sic). To get respect, is to give respect @j4clyn our so-called rude feminist friend named @misogynoirandtruth had came us so quite rude." It appears that @BlackMenAbroad struggles to recognize his own hypocrisy with his expectations for unearned respect from Black American women, despite simultaneously dehumanizing and debasing them.

Black American vs. African/Other Women

One emergent theme seen consistently in the data is that Black Women are considered unique as compared to other women, including African Women. Although Figure 13, which was discussed above, illustrates this point, others, such as Figure 15 pasted below, were apparent as well.



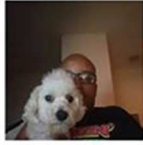
Figure 15. “When That I Don’t Need a Man”, 57 likes

This image adds an element of celebrity to the analysis, with the first 3 men to the right of the lonesome Black woman being well-known Black American actors. The first man holding a white female partner by the elbow is Bryan White; the man sitting beside him with his arms draped around a fair-skinned, “mixed” looking partner is Bow Wow, or child rapper “Lil Bow Wow”, and beside him is popular actor Lance Gross with a fair-skinned, female partner. The man on the farthest right is unknown to me but he also appears with a light-skinned, perhaps, biracial partner. Celebrity status is important to consider because through observation over the years, I’ve noticed that many of the non-

verbal cues about pursuit of interracial relationships by Black men are perpetuated and reinforced by popular Black American male actors, musicians, producers, and other celebrities. It is presently rare to see young successful Black American men in the spotlight with Black American wives or spouses. Even with a few examples of Black male moguls with Black wives, the prospect of interracial romance and having a non-Black female partner seems to have more of a glamorized effect. It is like the quintessential token of success. This will be discussed further in my conclusion. The text overlay also mocks the independence often associated with Black American women, by blaming what many may see as a positive quality and claiming it as the reason for some Black American women's difficulty to find suitable partners. In addition to the text of this image, the posturing and gesturing of the single Black woman in Figure 15 emphasizes the point that Black American women's independence is shameful – or should be. This image shows overlap with the theme Black American vs. African, Other women because the qualities of independence and self-sufficiency which are negatively ascribed to Black American women are used to distinguish them from all other women.

Sexism

Sexism, including misogynoir, is not uncommon in the data. Figure 16 provides a clear example of how misogynoir is exercised on this social platform.



Thomas Bland

Women dont have anything TO bring to the table other then ass and good looks. This is 2016 the days of women building with men are over... we live in a day and time where women can get by, by being lazy and giving good dome to a man...

4 minutes ago • Like •  1 • Reply

Figure 16. Thomas Bland, 5 likes

Both this image and the caption below it show general dissatisfaction toward women in general, without regard to race, ethnicity or nationality. However, the text does depict women as subordinate to men. In doing so, it simultaneously portrays women as mere sexual objects; thereby, reducing their humanness. The additional caption by @BlackMenAbroad in the comments section of this post states that men should stop

fooling around with these American women all together as they don't bring nothing to the table besides looks, being lazy, giving her food free food and gift's then don't get anything back in return for all your hard work and troubles. Just say no to American females period.

This post, then, also supports the theme of American women as inferior to non-American women, arguably due to their negative attributes. @BlackMenAbroad mentions several times in his posts that Black men give and do small things, like buying food or buying gifts, for Black American women and getting “nothing in return”. This is a highly insensitive and uninformed attitude considering the collective sacrifices that Black American women have made for Black men, which often reduce or postpone opportunities to elevate or accomplish their own goals and dreams. In fact, scholarship indicates that Black American women give endlessly to those around them often getting very little in return (e.g., cite Davis, Collins, Ritchie and others if you have them). Where do Black American women go for support and empathy when it seems as if everyone, and perhaps even most intensely Black men, are not there to support them?

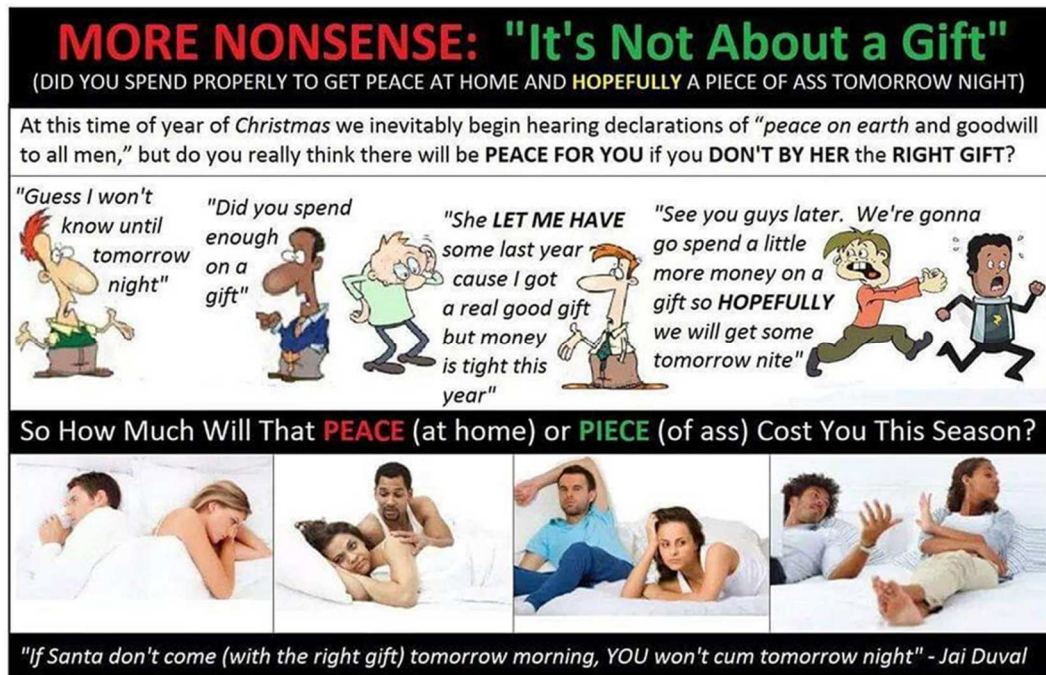


Figure 17. “More Nonsense”, 16 likes

The final three themes which I discuss are distinct from the rest. While earlier themes were identified through historical stereotypes and popular narratives discussed in research literature, these final three are more “emergent” themes. Or ones unique to my research through the coding process. The themes of “Promotion of Black Men”, “Clapback”, and Irony/ Hypocrisy are all actions or behaviors that I noticed taking place in majority of the images coded. The “Promotion of Black Men” and “Irony/Hypocrisy” themes focus on elevating Black men specifically in a positive light while simultaneously ignoring or debasing Black women collectively. The “Clapback” theme is an emergent tool used by Black women to fight back against this. These themes are discussed further below.

Promotion of Black Men

The promotion of black men theme encompasses specific promotions of Black masculinity as well as the exclusion of Black women through silence. This theme received a great deal of attention, receiving 467 likes among viewers and was apparent in 37 posts of the 51 I analyzed. Below are a few images, which clearly display this theme.

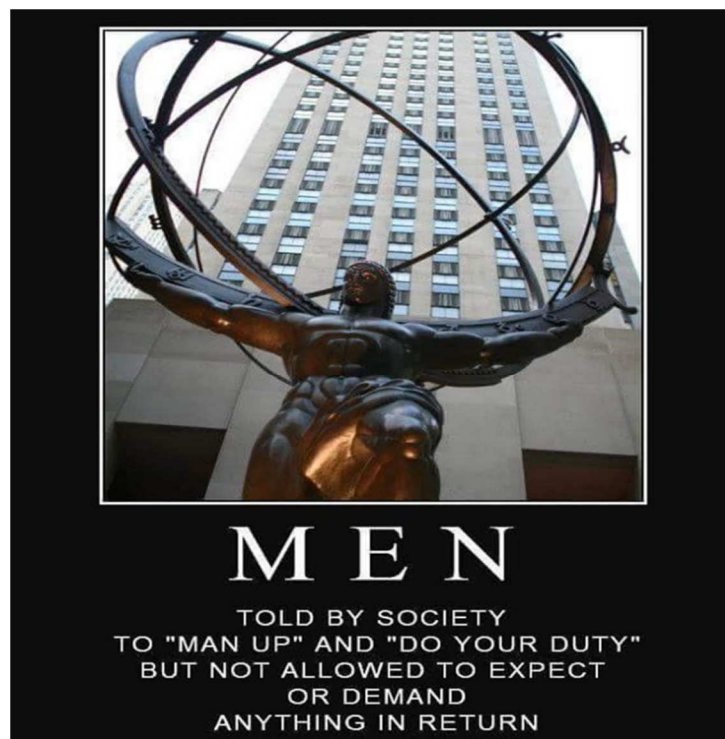


Figure 18. “We Aren’t Bound by Rules, We Are Bound by Definition”,

@BlackMenAbroad posts a comment that states

We aren’t bound by rules, we are bound by definition. Black Men Abroad aren’t following society’s concepts, Black Men Abroad are looking for door’s (sic) of opportunities to define the impossible.

In this image and comment, there is no specific mention of women and the expectations which society (heavily controlled and influenced by men) has placed on them. The sculpture of the Greek god Atlas, who was condemned to hold up the sky for eternity displays the strength and masculinity associated with men. This strength is purely physical, and does not place value on inner mental and emotional strength which may be associated more with women. The image eludes to idea that there is only one important type of strength, and women do not possess it. A viewer in disagreement with the image asks “What duties do you have though? Miserable.” @BlackMenAbroad did not respond to this comment, essentially ignoring her question which may reflect previously mentioned issues of dismissal and silencing toward Black women.

Figure 18 clearly identifies the priority of Black men by excluding Black women from the post. In fact, the supplemental caption for this post specifies that “This is us and only for black men abroad.” Associated hashtags include #ourmovement, #foreignmovement, and #passportpower, again reinforcing the idea that Black American men specifically should obtain passports giving them power to travel abroad and find “suitable” foreign women. Interestingly, screenshots of @BlackMenAbroad’s notification page were common under the #blackmenabroadmovement (see Figure 19). The heart and number to the right of it signify new likes for images on the page, while the person icon and number to the right of it indicate 17 new individuals following the page. These likes and follows indicate increasing support for the @BlackMenAbroad page and #blackmenabroadmovement.

2016 :
THE YEAR OF
THE PASSPORT
#BlackMenAbroad

Figure 19. The Year of the Passport #blackmenabroad, 11 likes

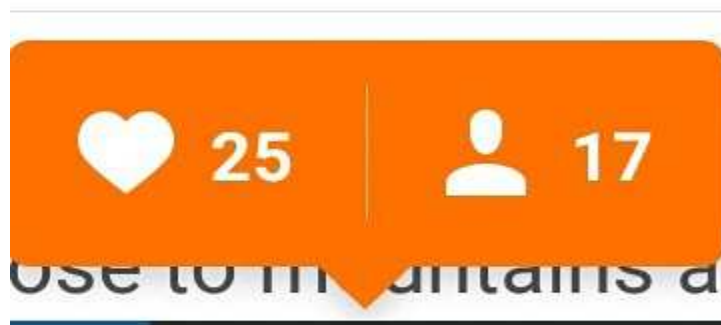


Figure 20. 25 Likes, 17 Adds, 17 likes

Considering the content of their other images, it can be assumed that support for the page also indicates disregard or lack of support for Black American women and the impact that such rhetoric may have on them. @BlackMenAbroad states in the caption “We are truly humbled and grateful for all the love and followings that you guys sincerely believe in our movement. We’re just getting started, baby! We’re setting our mark’s across the waters.” Associated hashtags include #french, #frenchchick, #foreignwomen, #blackmen, #blackmenonly, #trendsetter, and #trendy. There are eight images like this one under the #blackmenabroadmovement tag, with a total of 174 new likes, 64 new follows, and 18 new comments on the @BlackMenAbroad page.

Clapback

“The clapback” was a term created by the Black American community for snappy comments to often disrespectful or offensive content presented by another person or group. Of all the themes, this one was the most entertaining and certainly least psychologically taxing for me to code. This theme was comprised of Black American women refuting some of the sexist and ill-informed rhetoric displayed on @BlackMenAbroad’s page. Clapback was seen solely in the comment and dialogue sections under images from viewers who disagreed with the image itself, or the text associated with it by the poster.

For example, in Figure 21, titled “When You Are Nothing Without Weave”, which I cited in the Not Beautiful theme received 17 likes.



Figure 21. When You Are Nothing Without Weave

In the comment section a viewer named @hopeless_aspirations “claps back”

saying:

Shit like this makes me hate black men, thank god the guy I like isn't a self-hating punk like the majority of black men. No other races project their hatred of themselves onto their women like our men do. It's disgusting. The girl is beautiful with and without weave, as you can tell the weave is a protective hairstyle for her natural hair. I swear most of you black men make me sick.

Another viewer, @kenkigal also claps back stating: “So a black woman in her natural hair is nothing without weave? That’s exactly the mentality that perpetuates the foolishness you spew on your page.. You are #confused.” Nine other women clap back in the comment section saying “They talk about us for wearing weave then talk shit when we wear our real hair. What the fuck do they want us to do?”

A second comments: “But white women wear extensions too. Why are you only bashing Black women? Are you okay? Have you had too much unseasoned cooking?”, “White girls can all have their asses. I don’t care.”

A third woman states: “Black men are so ignorant these days it’s really pathetic, and they are teaching our sons that same ignorance. Once I heard my son say that if a woman didn’t look Spanish or White that he did not want her, by the time his black mother (me of course) got through with his black ass he brought home a black ass dark skinned Haitian woman... That’s what I fucking thought negro..”

Figure 12, which I pasted in prior discussion, was also an image that attracted heavy clapback. After @BlackMenAbroad calls one of his female viewers a “feminist whore”, other Black women come to her defense. For instance, @sydneylanae99 asks “What is wrong with you?” and @nubienna argues:

So you claim that black women or women in general have no boundaries or respect for themselves, yet when they refuse to be approached by a man that addresses them as “aye” you bash them? If the reason why women these days are still single is because they want a man to approach them with respect and polite greetings then I support it. Women who want respect from a man aren’t the problem., men like you, men

who feel they are entitled to a woman are.” Others comment: “Lmaoooooo (laughing my ass off) self-hating is a disease.”

Another woman states: “We are single because we demand respect? Are you a man or a boy? Grow the fuck up!”

@Peoticvides had quite a bit to say. She argues:

“We don’t wonder why we are single but why we can’t find someone good enough for us. We don’t want to be recognized as “aye”. We want to be called by our names. We don’t want to just “chill”, we want a relationship. We don’t want to send nudes because we respect our bodies. These are things that you should think about before posting. I don’t know if you just like the attention or if you’re just trying to state what you believe in, but if you truly want black women to stop doing whatever you think is wrong then you need to give them a reason to change.”

She comes back again later and writes:

“You say nobody’s perfect but you still continue to judge them or you expect them to perfect. And if you want someone to change you need to change first. Set an example so people start looking up to you not going against you. And I’m not saying that women don’t make mistakes because we do but don’t keep telling them they are, tell them what they can do to meet your standards or make up for those mistakes.”

While each of these images may be read as hostile towards Black men and Whites, the clapback is a significant means by which Black women, who feel attacked by these images and post, engage with others who may be ignorant to their experiences and relates through conversational dialogue, and defend their true identities. The clapback

theme is so important because it provides a rare platform opportunity for Black American women to actively challenge compromising narratives created by other groups about them. Black women who engage in clapback are effectively soldiers for Black American women collectively often put themselves in the line of fire for verbal and mental abuse to give voice to the truth of so many others who are often ignored.

Much of the clapback like @Poeticvides' in the comment section called out the frequent irony and hypocrisy in @BlackMenAbroad's posts and dialogue, which I discuss further below.

Hypocrisy

The final theme I find in the data includes hypocrisy, which is apparent in the irony especially in terms of @BlackMenAbroad's posts and dialogue. Coupled with this was the presence of antagonistic associated hashtags. For example, under an image used to debase or dehumanize Black American women (see Figure 22 pasted below), @BlackMenAbroad often associates the image with hashtags which were originally created to uplift and celebrate Black women like #BlackGirlsRock, #BlackFeminist, or #AfroCentric.



Figure 22. “Fuck Saving These Hoes”

Although the image itself is not ironic, the hashtags associated with it are. They include #BlackFeminist and #blackfeminism. These tags were originally created to celebrate Black feminism and its inclusion of intersectionality as a core aspect of the movement. Black feminism celebrates the diversity of experience by all women of color, and works to promote equity in realms of gender, but also self-efficacy and empowerment for women from marginalized groups. It is ironic that the poster would use these tags to promote the destruction and dehumanization of Black women through images and dialogue contained on the @BlackMenAbroad page.

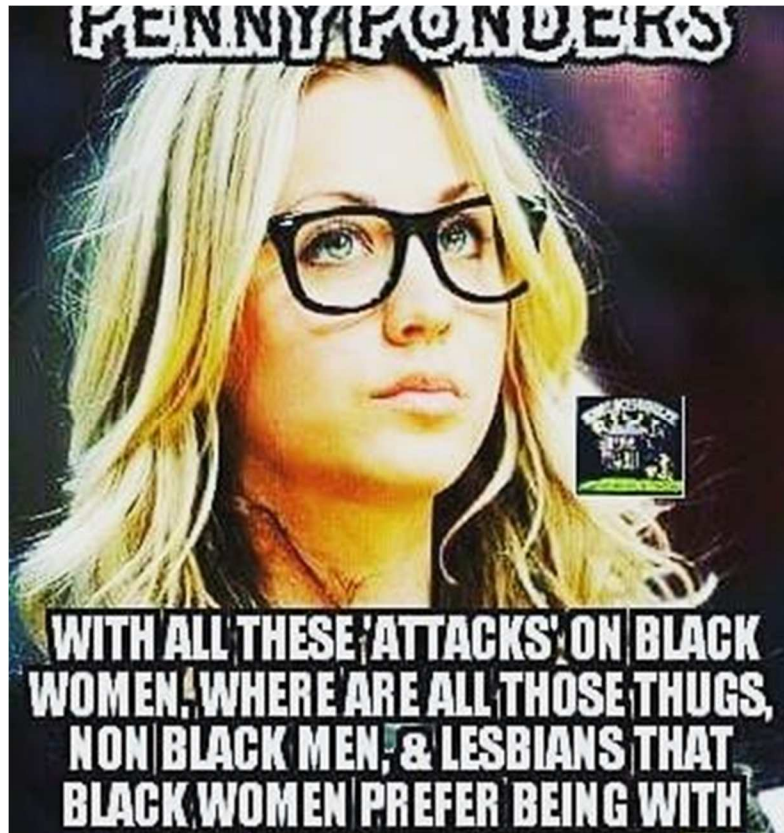


Figure 23. “Penny Ponders” posted under #blackmenabroadmovement by @BlackMenAbroad, 21 likes

Following this post, a comment reads:

Hmm good thinking... We're wondering where those slow-black™ primate's (sic), white boys, Asian guys and Black lesbian's (sic) aren't defending the black women's honor? Speaking of honor: what do black American women know anything of honor and moral concepts?

@BlackMenAbroad goes on to ask his fellow black male viewers why they should want to value, respect, and protect women that don't value them. He claims that the men at BlackMenAbroad™ can find women elsewhere who appreciate and cherish

them and they “don’t have to do anything”. Besides overlapping with the theme comparing Black American women to other women, this image evokes irony to me given evidence that Black women commonly “show up” for Black men and the Black community more generally (Collins 2000; Ritchie and others). More anecdotally, with all the recent killings of unarmed Black American men by police and discussions of criminality and linked perceptions of race and crime, “every day” and celebrity Black American women are always on the front lines ready to defend and protect Black men, even to death. Although historical evidence does not indicate that the same support is found for “foreign” and White female celebrities.

The poster also uses antagonistic hashtags associated with the image including #blackgirlsrock.

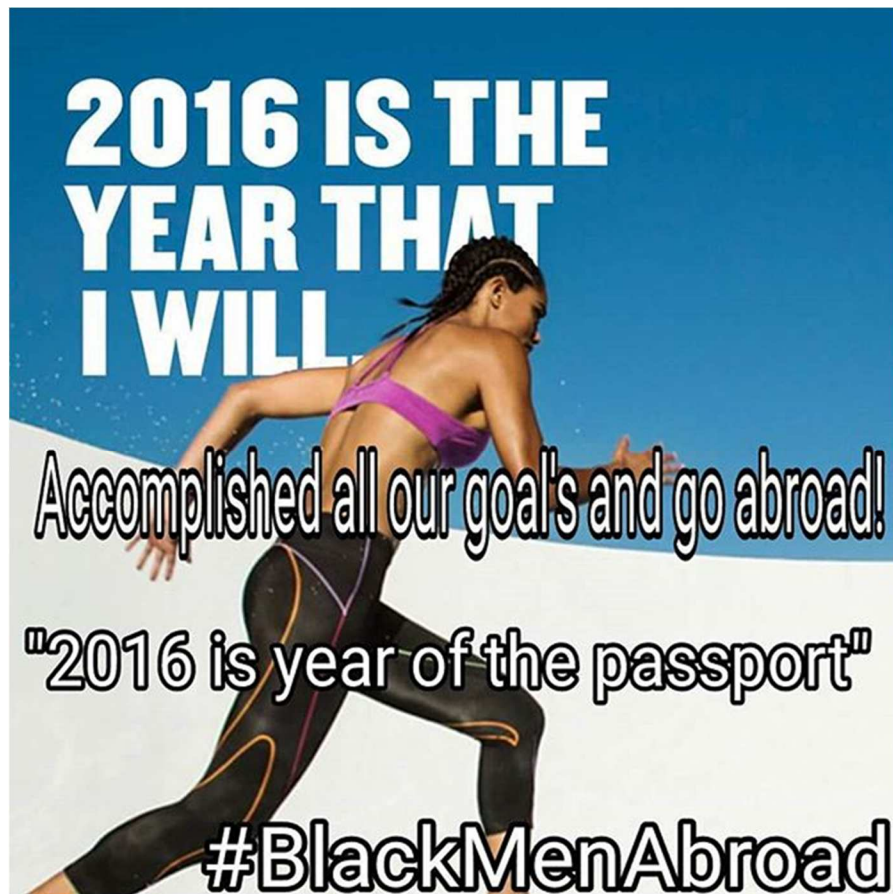


Figure 24. "Irony", 35 likes

This image was the most ironic to me. The Black woman being used to promote @BlackMenAbroad's "movement" contradicts previous posts and disparaging comments he has made about Black American women collectively. This woman embodies strength, initiative, endurance, and beauty, all qualities which @BlackMenAbroad does not associate with Black women in other posts. The text overlay itself is ironic. Why is this Black woman's image being used to promote a Black male agenda to escape Black American women?

We agreed with Huey!

"What's the point of
talking if nobody
ever learns?"
- Huey Freeman

@BlackMenAbroad™



Figure 25. "Huey Freeman", 11 likes

Huey Freeman is a Black American character from the Cartoon Network adult animated sitcom "The Boondocks". Huey is only 10, but he is a profound civil and human rights activist and revolutionary. Both Huey, and his younger brother Riley were created and voiced by Black American actress, comedian, and television director Regina King (pictured below).



Figure 26. Regina King

Would @BlackMenAbroad's movement agree with Huey if they knew who was behind the character? The hashtags associated with the image are also ironic and hypocritical considering the poster's previous images and comments. These tags include #educational and #communication.

he Average Home Has Two Washing Machines

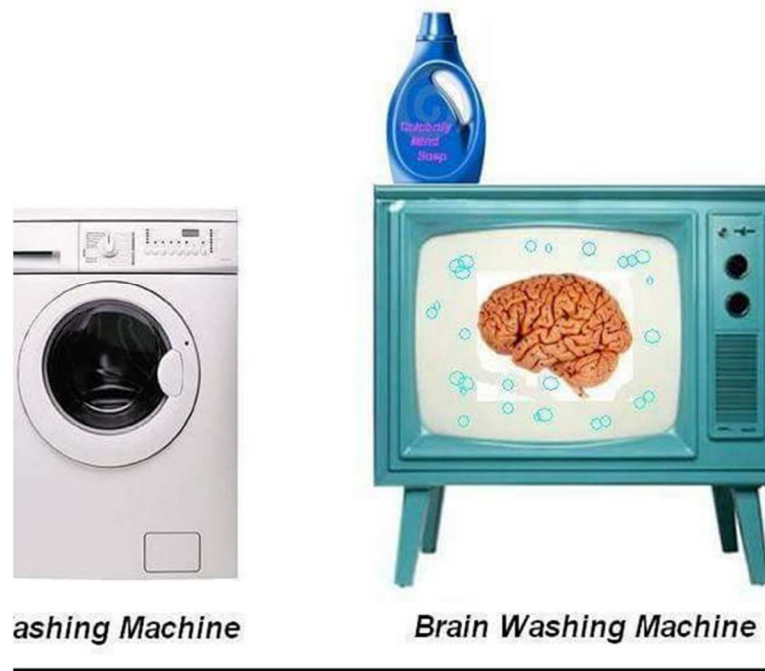


Figure 27. “Brainwashed”, 7 likes

This image was also ironic and hypocritical coming from @BlackMenAbroad. He claims in both the image and caption that other Americans who watch television are brainwashed. He states in the comments “We @BlackMenAbroad™ attend to apply critical thinking matter’s and aren’t intrusive of being brainwashed sheeple. We’re awakening to everything!” Sheeple is a term for individuals and collective groups that are easily led like sheep. While I do see the point of the image, and can understand how messages, advertisement and images on television can through continuos exposure shape people’s perceptions of reality. The same argument can be made though, for social media. Like television, the messages and agenda that @BlackMenAbroad are pushing for their

“movement” through Instagram teeter on a dangerous balance, because messages and rhetoric like this which Black Americans are often exposed to while utilizing social media can also overtime shape or distort perceptions of reality, self, and others.

The hashtags associated with the image further reinforce this irony and hypocrisy, including #sheeple, #bigbrotherwatching, #wakeupsheep, #oneworldunited, and #criticalthinking. @kenkigal also picks up on this theme and claps back in the comments saying:” Not based on some of these posts...”

Figure 7, “So Educated...” also exemplifies use of antagonistic hashtags by the poster.

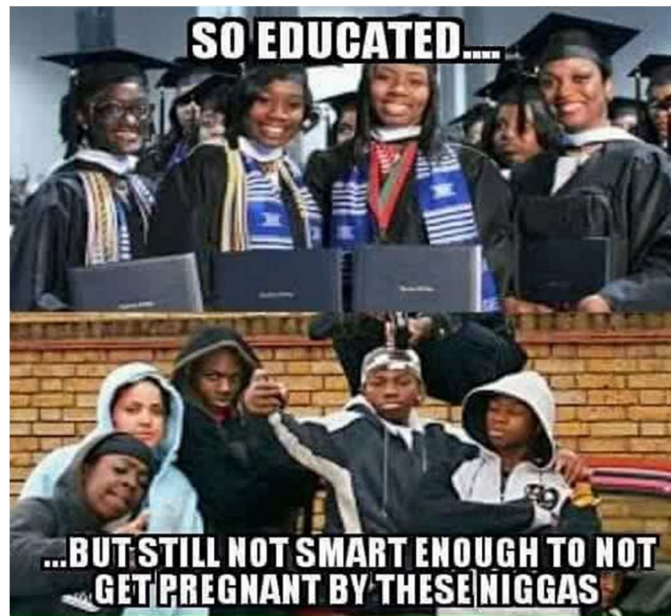


Figure 28. “So Educated...”

These tags include #blackgirlsrock, #educatedblackwomen, #degrees, and #blackwomenmatter. Also ironic is the posters comment in the caption area stating, “What’s good of education if one’s lacks the basic premise: Common sense?”

This theme of Irony/Hypocrisy was interesting because the @BlackMenAbroad page often participates in behavior which they warn Black male viewers especially to be vigilant of. For example, the page often warns viewers against “sheeple” or people who are easily fooled and persuaded like sheep and rely on the media to inform them, yet the administrators seem to have done this very thing in many of their posts by believing and promoting stereotypes about Black women that simply do not apply to the whole group. By doing this, perhaps even unknowingly, the page has aided in divisiveness between Black men and women in the community.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

As a child, I read Virginia Hamilton's "The People Could Fly", a priceless collection of African and Afro-American folklore and tales. As I grew older I would read slave narratives and the stories of individuals who were once unfree in the South which I resided. Absorbing this priceless history at such a young age notably contributed to my identity and sense of awareness as a Black American girl. With this contribution in mind coupled with introduction to sociological literature throughout college (as mentioned in earlier chapters), I became interested in black identity formation in present society and the impact which historical institutions such as slavery might still bare on our selfhood. This knowledge has led me to focus on the current quality of black romantic partnerships and the perceptions of Black American women which make us "undesirable" partners in mate selection processes.

This research and content analysis of digital media Instagram hashtags has opened my eyes to some of the painful realities that the Black community must face. Black women especially seem to bear the brunt of criticism and degradation from not only white society, but from some Black men as well. It became very emotionally taxing for me at times during the coding process. Overtime I have learned to shield myself from harmful media content which often portray Black Americans in compromising light. I don't watch the news anymore because of the countless police shootings and other acts of

violence or stereotyping of Black people that so often go unpunished. I frequently take social media “fasts” and abstain from using various sites and spaces to again limit my exposure to harmful or compromising content. Some of the images in this analysis were truly painful to analyze. I knew on one hand that these images were not an accurate representation of me, but also could not help but feel the shame and disappointment which had been meant for Black women collectively.

It takes strength to live in a society that says you aren’t beautiful. I struggled against internalization process that I have discussed in previous chapters, and tried my best to detach completely from my own experience and disappointment to get through each image. The fact that a “BlackMenAbroadMovement” even exists is hard to conceptualize. No other race is pushing collectively for “flight” from their communities in pursuit of foreign partners. The stereotypes and language being used by the @BlackMenAbroad page to describe Black women – especially African American women - shows the exercise of dominant gender power, which Black men may use to compensate for racial oppression. By debasing and dehumanizing Black women, the @BlackMenAbroad page in essence “elevates” Black men as superior, and worthy of women of more “value” from differing ethnic and racial groups. This is exactly what Fanon describes with his argument about “liberation of the man of color from himself” (Fanon 1952).

@BlackMenAbroad often calls on Black male viewers to obtain passports, learn a new language, and travel abroad to find women who will show them “respect.” This respect which is so sought after does not seem possible with Black women in American

society because of the constant reminder of blackness and “sealed fate” in regard to racial relations and success. Men like those on the @BlackMenAbroad page may feel that by choosing Black American women they are doomed to a life of struggle and unhappiness. White and other non-Black American women, however, provide hope for the possibility of acceptance by “ideal” society, and serve as a communication of assimilation into mainstream society. With this assimilation into mainstream society come perceived benefits such as higher socioeconomic stability and overall better quality of life (King & Allen 2009).

The images in my content analysis also speak to my argument for the importance of utilizing black consciousness theory to discuss the changing marriage dynamics in Black communities. The @BlackMenAbroad page spouts negative ascriptions of Black American women without having an awareness of historical significance or the ability to view Black women as individuals in the same way Black men want to be seen. The administrators seem to fall in the pre-conscious stage of the black consciousness spectrum, often showing absorption of white racist stereotypes of African American women. They are hostile and antagonistic toward enrichment of black consciousness and believe stereotypes of African Americans to be true. Yet, despite the apparent lack of awareness and bashing of Black American women despite variety and uniqueness, the page @BlackMenAbroad and #BlackMenAbroadMovement have both continued to gain success and support.

There are three main points that I took away from this methodological analysis and research. First, social and digital media can either be used for bad or good; as

powerful tools to uplift communities and groups for good cause, or to serve as another form of toxicity to individual psyche. The images posted by the @BlackMenAbroad page and #blackmenabroadmovement do the latter. The page and hashtag attract individuals with similar mindset or those who may be in a vulnerable state in relation to society, and looking to blame a group for problems they experience. Both sources could have used their platform to uplift both Black men and women, and encourage resistance of the internalization of white supremacist ideology, but the low levels of black consciousness exhibited by administrators instead makes Black American women the enemy.

Upon completion of the content analysis, I began thinking about the dangers of digital media, which often come presented as harmless material but secretly work to promote some other motive. Through conceptualizing this “movement” being pushed by @BlackMenAbroad, I began to think of cults. Notorious leaders like Jim Jones, Charles Manson, and Marshall Applewhite who were all able to use their charisma and messages promising “better lives” to potential followers as weapons of mass destruction. These cults were so successful because they attracted individuals who were in a vulnerable state in life, looking for any way to escape the realities of the lives they were being forced to live. The cults seemed to be the answer to individual problems. I find similarities between some of the methods used by cult leaders to attract loyal followers and the @BlackMenAbroad movement. Language and content are key. The page often speaks out about not falling victim to rules and norms that society sets in place, and fleeing one’s current environment or state of being in pursuit of something “better”. Those Black men sympathizing with the @BlackMenAbroad page may feel trapped or frustrated by their

current place in American society and desperately looking for an escape and possibility for “better” life. For them, the answer may not be joining a cult per say, but following @BlackMenAbroad’s “advice” and pursuing non-Black women in other countries. The question then becomes “Does racism, oppression, and violence all dissipate following the successful migration of Black men from the US to a foreign country?” I believe this is something time will tell. Unfortunately, many of the cult followers learned a dash too late of the true motives behind their movements, which was often omnipotent power and control by the leader. Similarly, in this rush movement to foreign land in pursuit of foreign women may have an undesirable ending. Black men like those on the @BlackMenAbroad page may learn that race and discrimination may become even more intense in areas where less people of color reside. Additionally, they may find that the non-Black women they pursue are open to interracial relationships to an extent, but are significantly less able to support or empathize with their Black male partners in issues of race. This would leave many Black men in the same, or perhaps even worse a state than when they started the movement.

Second, I surmise that this “movement” is really a socioeconomic strategy by many Black men to gain mobility and acceptance by dominant culture into society. By rejecting Black American women, they also symbolically reject their own blackness in the quest for whiteness, which is described in *Black Skin, White Masks* (Fanon, 1952). These decisions are not necessarily based on love or appreciation of the individual woman, but a campaign for “respect” and attempt to acquire some form of new found power and control.

Although I only analyzed 51 images, I have collected thousands over the past year from Instagram, which display similar or harsher sentiment toward Black American women. To be sure, constant exposure to images through use or contact with digital media such as displayed on the @BlackMenAbroad page may have mental and emotional effects on the African American women to whom they are focused. As shown in the clapback theme, many Black women took issue with the content being circulated through the @BlackMenAbroad page and #blackmenabroadmovement. When they attempted to speak out about their own experiences and deviations from the unforgiving stereotypes and characteristics ascribed to them, many were silenced through verbal assaults and mocking from the @BlackMenAbroad page.

My research is here to speak for those women. Although there are so many examples of successful, loving, nurturing, and innovative Black American women, they all somehow get caught in the same trap of a single narrative. This narrative is not harmless as some may perceive, but works to discourage even men in our own communities from seeing us as worthy and valuable human beings and partners. Digital media and spaces like Instagram have provided platforms for people like those on the @BlackMenAbroad page to spout their views and opinions, which often perpetuate negative stereotypes which reinforce the single narrative of the Black woman.

Through the dialogue and content of the #BlackMenAbroadMovement, Fanon's perspective on the "quest for whiteness" can be observed. Comments under some of the images showed conversations between the @BlackMenAbroad administration and some of their white followers. Followers would show support or agreement with content and

the @BlackMenAbroad page would reply with enthusiasm, often in networking attempts to gain more followers, and even funding to help expand the “movement”. When Black women commented, however, the tone and attitude of the @BlackMenAbroad page changed dramatically. The administrators were far from kind, often calling their Black female viewers “whores” and “sluts”, despite never having met them. One Black woman in the comments mentioned that she too had pursued an interracial relationship and had a white husband, with the @BlackMenAbroad page responding and calling her a “black bedwench”. This language is still used today, despite having been used as a derogatory term for Black women whom were often raped or forced to serve as concubines for white slave masters. Again, the language and manner used to silence Black women throughout this analysis must have detrimental psychological and spiritual effects on the Black women who are subject to them.

Finally, this project has provided a new avenue for future research including reasons why Black American women are not choosing interracial partners at equal rates as Black men. I suspect that Black women are perhaps less confident in approaching White men because of historical taboo, traditional gender beliefs, and stereotypes about White men also perpetuated through various forms of digital media. In addition, interracial children who are the product of interracial partnerships also create an opportunity for new research. There have been many recent instances of interracial celebrities opening up about their experience with racism from non-Black parents. Identity formation of interracial kids and their juxtaposition in often having to choose one race over the other, while not really being accepted by either would be interesting to

study through the lens of digital social media. There are many different areas of extension from my research, but it has created a starting point by investigating this growing division between Black men and women, and the transracially perpetuated Black woman single story. This study is important to consider in analysis of demographic changes in the future, and social implications stemming from such change.

Knowing this, I can internalize some of the images and ideology less. Even while being disappointed by movements such as these, I also understand the years of alienation and dehumanization which created it. Self-hatred is a deeply engrained process, and it takes time and exposure for people to overcome such an internal obstacle. At any rate, the skill of detachment is essential to Black women who commit to this type of research. Degrading and generalizing Black American women's individual and collective as an attempt to justify interracial pursuits is no doubt insolent, but is a reality that we must face. It is imperative to continue in this line of study if our goal as social scientists and advocates is to cultivate a society where every culture and is valued, supported, and included. In working toward my goal of change for the narratives of Black Americans, this research has given attention to one of the many products of historical influence on the state of Black ideologies today.

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APPENDIX A

FIRST TALLIED CODE SHEET

First Tallied Code Sheet Including All Original and Emergent Themes (Before Combining)

Prevalent Themes	Number of Instances Theme Present	Number of Likes/ Views Associated with Theme
Not Beautiful	50	254 likes, 286 views
Hyper-sexual	45	112 likes, 313 views
Single Mother	36	114 likes, 217 views
Emasculating	16	179 likes, 92 views
Abrasive	9	167 likes, 257 views
Covetous	8	61 likes
Other: Emergent Sub-Themes		
Irony/Hypocrisy	61	271 likes, 142 views
Clapback (Comments in opposition to Poster's content, Defending Black American women)	49	205 likes
Black American vs. African/ Other women	39	279 likes, 217 views
Promotion of Black men/Silence on Black women	37	467 likes, 217 views
Abrasive language by poster	31	101 likes, 165 views
Sexism/ Misogynoir	28	176 likes

Antagonistic	26	153 likes, 56 views
Silencing/Engaging Black American women	21	192 likes, 92 views
Dehumanization of Black American women	20	179 likes, 378 views
Generalization/Assumption	18	265 likes, 211 views
Black Masculinity	6	150 likes
Anger Toward Blacks/Americans generally	6	41 likes
Anti-Religious	4	77 views, 12 likes
/Minimizing Black Female Accomplishment	3	52 likes

APPENDIX B

CHART DEPICTING ORIGINAL THEMES

Chart Depicting Original Themes

(#dontdateblackwomen, #dontdateblackgirls, and #blackmenabroadmovement)

