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Reconstituting the Object: Black Male Studies and the Problem of Studying Black Men and Boys within Patriarchal Gender Theory

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Introduction

Despite gestures towards the realization of multiple masculinities within the academy, the study of Black males remains irreconcilably fixed upon mimetic accounts of Black masculinity. These theories frame Black masculinity as compensatory or defined by their lack of real manhood. Consequently, Black men and boys are theorized as burdened by racism and the injury of white supremacy but doomed to strive for real manhood through violence, brutality, and the emulation of white patriarchal norms. Throughout various analyses of Black masculinity scholarship and Black feminist texts, Black men are defined as pathological entities who use violence to impose their will.[i] This framing of Black males does not arise from any empirical study of Black men and boys as a whole, but rather the interpretive frameworks established by racist white criminologists and feminists to make him an object of study. This object did not have a history or foundation to ground its humanity. He was the product of racist and classist theories that saw his non-patriarchal masculinity as a sign of weakness and defect rather than a culturally viable alternative to white masculine and feminine patriarchal forms. These debates of the 1960s and 1970s determined the categorical lenses through which Black males would be seen and defined well into the 21st century. These *caricatures* of Black males, which saw their only response to white patriarchal dominance through emulation, argued that Black men and boys are child-like creatures who depend on the norms of white society to provide them with an architecture of Black manhood.

This chapter will offer an analysis of patriarchy and gender from the paradigmatic perspective of Black Male Studies. By rejecting the subculture of violence or mimetic theories associated with Black masculinity by criminologists and feminists from the 1960s forward, this chapter attempts to familiarize the reader to some of the foundational arguments advanced by Black Male Studies and provide some conceptual distance from the deficit-based theories used to justify the present conceptualizations of Black men and boys within academic theory.[ii]The vacuity of Black-maleness demands it to take on any number of sex-based racial caricatures thereby exceeding the present modes of being described by gender. Throughout American history, the Black male has been defined in contradictory terms. He is raped and rapist, hyper-masculine and effeminate, hyper-sexual, and homosexual.[iii] The simultaneity of various negations imposed on one body even when in stark contradiction is of primary analytic interest to the Black Male Studies scholar.[iv] These non-sensical negations indicate the accumulation of violence that makes the disposability and death of Black males so necessary to the illusion of a thriving civil society

This liminality of the Black male borders civil society primarily through violence—as a horizon of death. This perspective has not been accurately captured by the contemporary theoretical accounts of gender and masculinity circulating within Black feminist theory or intersectionality's depictions of various Black subjectivities.[v] Black Male Studies argues that Black males, like other racialized male groups throughout the Global South, are the primary targets of patriarchal violence. Being confined to an outgroup male status, what I have previously referred to as Man-Not-ness is an indeterminate and fungible position in Western patriarchal societies that serve as the depository of negative caricatures that constitute that which is outside and threatens to doom civilization—all that is savage, barbarous; or the heinous threat to Man.

I. The Racial Origins of the 20th Century Gender Concept

Feminism often tells the story of gender's theoretical construction in the West through the works of Alva Myrdal, Simone De Beauvoir, and Helen Hacker. These authors make the case that sex/gender operates in a similar way to race and racism. Despite the references to the Negro throughout all of

these texts, the concept of patriarchy has remained defined within feminist theory as a system of oppression where men dominate women. Black male studies conceptualizes patriarchy as a racialized system of domination where lesser or primitive males and (outgroup) women are subjugated by the dominant racial class. White women used the position of the Black race, specifically the stigmas defining the Black man's place, as the basis of their formulation of the *woman*. This analysis of patriarchy in the United States is often traced to Alva Myrdal's "A Parallel to the Negro Problem" where she suggested that women and children were suppressed classes. She writes: "In every society there are at least two groups of people, besides the Negroes, who are characterized by high social visibility expressed in physical appearance, dress, and patterns of behavior, and who have been 'suppressed.' We refer to women and children."[vi] Myrdal suggests that the commonality of Blacks, (white) women, and children share originates from their subjugation by white male paternalism. "In the earlier common law, women and children were placed under the jurisdiction of the paternal power. When a legal status had to be found for the imported Negro servants in the seventeenth century, the nearest and most natural analogy was the status of women and children."[vii] Similar to the observations of the historian Willie Lee Rose, who explains that "in the nineteenth century, the phrase 'domestic institution' came to mean slavery idealized, slavery translated into a fundamental and idealized Victorian institution, the family,"[viii] Myrdal argued that:

> The ninth commandment-linking together women, servants, mules, and other property—could be invoked, as well as a great number of other passages of Holy Scripture. We do not intend to follow here the interesting developments of the institution of slavery in America through the centuries, but merely wish to point out the paternalistic idea which held the slave to be a sort of family member and in some way-in spite of all differences-placed him beside women and children under the power of the pater—familias.[ix]

Previous research has focused primarily on Myrdal's taking up of the (white) woman's relationship to the slave as the basis of gender and serving as a possible basis of Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*.[x] Unlike current configurations of gender, the introduction of the term began with the ownership of the woman, Negro, and child by the white male patriarch. The assumption was that the language of rights need not apply to these entities, because the patriarch cared for women, children, and Negroes for their own benefit. Myrdal believed that the woman and the Negro were disadvantaged similarly within under the paternal force of the white family. Myrdal believed that white men developed the notion of female inferiority along the same lines as that of Black inferiority. Myrdal explains:

> The arguments, when arguments were used, have been about the same: smaller brains, scarcity of geniuses, and so on. The study of women's intelligence and personality has had broadly the same history as the one we record for Negroes. As in the case of the Negro, women themselves have often been brought to believe in their inferiority of endowment. As the Negro was awarded his "place" in society, so there was a "woman's place." In both cases the rationalization was strongly believed that men, in confining them to this place, did not act against the true interest of the subordinate groups.[xi]

Myrdal maintained in *Nation and Family* that the new economic opportunities of the woman placed her at odds with the paternalistic forces of the home.[xii] Like the Negro, she could not control her own societal and economic destiny under the rule of the white male within the home. In this sense, Myrdal saw parity between the woman and the Negro and their *place*. Both groups were thought to be victims of paternalism because neither could live in an increasingly industrialized Western society.

While this argument has been presumed correct within academic disciplines because many researchers have asserted that race and gender are co-equal systems of oppression, race and gender functioned quite differently throughout history. Alva Myrdal suggests that white women who owned slaves claimed patriarchy as the invention of their womb and made God's providence manifest were disadvantaged by this patriarchy in the mid-20th century because the opportunities for wages and independence were thwarted by the paternalistic system designed to protect white women from external racial threats.[xiii] Unlike the Black race, the white woman was thought to be lesser than white men, but not an animal outside of the moral community of white civilization. Gunnar Myrdal explains

this very distinction in *An American Dilemma*. He explains: "In so far as the Negro can be placed lower in the biological order than the white man and nearer to the animals, *he* is also, to an extent, kept outside the white man's social and moral order."[xiv] Unlike the white woman, the Negro was of a different kind. *He* had no rights to be claimed based on his humanity and would always be the type of *being* that prayed for the favor of the white race.

Gunnar Myrdal anticipates his wife's analysis of the Negro being similar to women and children in the appendices to *An American Dilemma* but makes a key distinction. The analogy between the Negro and women and children was apt insofar as these groups did not enjoy equal rights, were thought biologically inferior and less mature, and "had to rely for their protection upon kindly considerations from their superiors."[xv] However, the Negro differed from the paternalistic position of the woman and child precisely because this race could be "classified as nearer the animal but still a man, although not a mature man."[xvi] Gunnar Myrdal explains that "unlike children, he can be assumed never to grow to full maturity. Not only the individual Negro but the Negro race as a whole can be said to be 'undeveloped' and 'childish'."[xvii] The Black race as underdeveloped and childish was not a mark of social inferiority in relation to the white man, it was a register of inferiority that defined their subordination to all white people. This argument justified the racial caste system of the South and the race relations between white and Blacks in the North. The paternalism of white men was specific. While there may have been an incentive for the white man and family to care for the Black slave, the Black man and the Black race he was thought to represent was to be ruled through violence and intimidation. This was not to be the case of the white woman who the white man saw as integral to the caste superiority of the white race.

The dependency the modern gender construct has on race is even more starkly communicated by Helen Hacker's essay "Women as Minority Group" written in 1951. Hacker reported that up to that point, the sociological literature had no account of women as a minority group. While the *American Journal of Sociology* did in fact reference racial and ethnic groups, there was no reference to women. Hacker explains that the index says to see: "Jews; Morale; Negro; Races and Nationalities; Religious Groups; Sects," and that "There is no cross-reference to women, but such reference is found under the heading "Family."[xviii] Hacker explains that the "purpose of this paper is to apply to women some portion of that body of sociological theory and methodology customarily used for investigating such minority groups as Negroes, Jews, immigrants, etc."[xix] However, it is important to note that Hacker's project was not merely descriptive, but socially prescriptive. Hacker utilizes Louis Wirth's definition of a minority group as "any group of people who because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination."[xx] The (white) woman however did not feel this affinity towards group membership based on gender as she did for race.

Unlike the Negro and the Jew, the woman does not feel that she was the object of great societal discrimination due to her group membership in the 1950s according to Hacker. This feeling would have to develop beyond the conflicts that began in the transition from a pre-industrial paternalistic society to an industrial society where white women could earn wages and gain independence from the paternalistic order of the white nuclear family. Importantly Hacker distinguishes the conditions of races from that of sexes by the extent to which the Negro is burdened by the Southern question and the Jew the violence of the Holocaust. Hacker then returns to the "original question of the aptness of the designation of minority group for women."[xxi] She concludes that while it has been indicated that "women fail to present in full force the subjective attributes commonly associated with minority groups. That is, they lack a sense of group identification and do not harbor feelings of being treated unfairly because of their sex membership," they can be understood as enduring the same social stigmas as the Negro due to the expectations of staying in one's *place*.[xxii]

To justify the idea of a hostile male class or the idea of men as a dominant group harboring antipathy against women as a class, Hacker does not depend on the historical examples of white men committing horrible atrocities against white women, instead, she appeals to the violence used to sustain the subordination of the minority racial group. She writes: "a way of examining the problematic aspects of masculine social roles is interpreting them in terms of accommodation to the new freedoms and responsibilities of women. Here again we may look with profit to the minority group literature."[xxiii] Hacker believes Horace R. Clayton's account of the guilt-hate-fear complex that

whites have towards Negroes can be used to explain the antipathy white men have towards white women. Clayton believed that it was the irreconcilable and unresolvable guilt white men felt for their treatment of the Negro that drove him to violence. Clayton believed that "persons learn to hate the object they feel guilty about so the guilt turns to hate and with it the necessity to rationalize and justify their behavior," as well as fear them.[xxiv] Hacker explains that the Negro is defined by the masculine features of the Black man and simultaneously configured next to women and the maternal through his emasculation. Explaining this phenomenon as the Ishmael Complex, or another model of ego development specific to America and the role the Black man plays in the ontogeny of the young white male, Hacker insists that the Negro (as defined by the male) is both paternal (masculine) and maternal (feminine) simultaneously. The Negro is imagined like woman in that he is "childlike, emotional, unsuited for intellectual work, morally undeveloped, all right in their *proper places*,… and occasionally blessed with homely wisdom (woman's intuition) which transcends knowledge."[xxv] Simultaneously, Hacker observed that the Black man is understood to be the apex of the masculine and the ideal sexual type of white women, because "there is also the widespread belief in the superior virility of Negro men, evidenced chiefly in the notion that their genitalia are larger than those of whites."[xxvi] Hacker writes:

> Thus we may glimpse the social roots of the mythopeic bisexual creature who plays the role of "buddy and a little bit more" in the Ishmael Complex. For only in the Negro in our society are masculine and feminine attributes so strangely conjoined. It is appropriate, therefore, that the dream image of the Ishmael Complex be colored. But, moreover, his darkness also blends into the dual maternal paternal role.[xxvii]

Black men played a substantial role in the development of white masculinity for Hacker. Her psycho-analytic accounts of the drives white men (and women) have towards Black men explain why she is able to see the Black male as the analog of the woman and why his experience can be appropriated by white women as the basis of establishing the gender category which holds women are a minority group in the mid-20th century. This appropriation of racial castration or phallicism made Black men the template for Hacker's early feminist analysis and served as the basis of theorizing women's oppression. For the Black man, gender was of him—despite the attempts to now isolate him from the construct birthed from his body.

The racial caste literature influencing feminist thinkers such as Simone De Beauvoir and Helen Hacker concludes that it is the Negro male which is excluded from the kinship relationship and violently punished for violating the proxemics of the established racial order.[xxviii] Black men were punished more harshly for criticizing or acting against the place set for the Negro under Southern segregation. Dollard argued "it was quite clear that much more antagonism is tolerated from women; they can do and say things which would bring a severe penalty had they been men. It may be that white caste members do not fear the aggression of women, so much, especially since it cannot take the form of sexual attack, or the chivalry expected of men in our society toward women in general may come into play. There are, of course, distinct limits to what a Negro woman may do, but they are not so narrow as for men."[xxix] The racial caste system dictated the sex/gender borders of racial space. In this space, racial proxemics were imposed by the relation or more appropriately the threat the Black male posed to the biological reproduction and kinship bonds of whites. Consequently, racial proxemics was the basis by which physical space was determined by the spatial organization Black maleness demanded to preserve white racial kinship. The Black woman posed no such threat to the endogamy of the white race and was therefore exploited and brutalized by the incorporation within the race/sex system of the Southern order for the white man's sexual gain.[xxx] It is fitting that Dollard refers to this dynamic as the patriarchal caste system of the South.

Our present concept of gender is understood almost exclusively as marking out the difference the female body and feminine kind has to maleness. This relationship however was not a natural division. It was constructed by white women who sought to define themselves against the 19th century idea of woman as family. To do this, the white woman used the body and experience of the Negro, specifically the Black man, as the template by which she created the idea that she was in fact a *minority group* despite the power and violence she imparted on racial and ethnic groups such as Blacks and Jews. The development of the gender construct from being analogous to the Negro's place

to a social system rooted in sharp caste distinctions is of tremendous importance to the disappearance of kinship within contemporary feminist gender theory.

II. Patriarchy as a Racial Kinship System: An Alternative Account of the Sex/Gender System

Few theoretical analyses can account for the economic stagnation, political situation, and high rates of mortality among Black males in the United States. Black men's wages have remained practically unchanged since desegregation.[xxxi] As a group, Black men make roughly fifty-one cents to every white man's dollar.[xxxii] Despite being born in the middle or upper classes, Black men the highest rates of downward mobility of any race-sex group in the U.S.[xxxiii] These economic disadvantages are compounded by the fact that Black males have the lowest life expectancy, the highest rates of incarceration, and are the only group in the U.S. where police killings are a leading cause of death.[xxxiv] Despite Black males reporting the highest rates of intimate partner victimization and contact sexual violence victimization over a 12 month period in the U.S, there has been virtually no academic interest in there suffering or theories to explain their race/sex disadvantage compared to their female counterparts and other race/sex racial and ethnic groups throughout the country. [xxxv] The combination of unemployment, incarceration, and police violence has been described as institution decimation, or a process aiming to not only lethally exterminating Black but make them non-viable entities within American geopolitical order.[xxxvi] In many regards, Black males are economically subjugated in ways comparable to if not worse than many female groups in the U.S.[xxxvii] All Black males regardless of individual identity seem to be subjected to these violent processes of death and dying.[xxxviii] Black Male Studies analyzes these effects as the consequences of being part of an outgroup male population.

Almost two decades ago, Adam Jones argued that the sex-specific killings of racialized men are a purposeful and long-standing trait of imperial patriarchal regimes. In "Gendercide and Genocide," Adam Jones argues that conflicts in modern patriarchal societies have specifically targeted battle-aged men, civilians, who demonstrate no inclination for violence but are treated as threats regardless. As Jones states, "Non-combatant men have been and continue to be the most frequent targets of mass killing and genocidal slaughter, as well as a host of lesser atrocities and abuses. The mass killing of males, particularly of "battle age" men, has roots deep in the history of conflict between human communities."[xxxix] Jones suggests the vulnerability of racialized men to gendercide (gender-selective mass killing) is an ignored but "frequent and often defining feature of human conflict, and perhaps of human social organization, extending back to antiquity."[xl] The extermination of Black men and boys in the United States operates similarly to maintain social order and racial hierarchy throughout society. This is a sex-selective strategy that attempts to remove/exclude the Black male from civil society through violence, death, and population-level strategies. As Augusta Del Zotto explains,

> In the United States, the systematic objectification and control of poor, particularly black males, likewise play an important role in maintaining the desired social order. In this case, it is informed by the long historical tradition of objectifying black males. While the black female as threat can be controlled through policies of manipulation, the black male as threat requires the implementation of policies of direct force to keep him at the margins, and policies of containment to ensure that he does not encroach upon the serenity of growing industrial parks and gated communities.[xli]

Jones and Del Zotto build their theory of male gendercide from the work of the Jamaican education theorist Errol Miller, who explains that Western patriarchal societies create rigid and violent divisions between dominant group males and alien (racialized) males.[xlii]

Miller's theory of male marginalization is laid out in *Men at Risk* (1991) and the second edition of *Marginalization of the Black Male* (1994), where he argues that modern patriarchal societies target racialized male groups because they are threats to the kinship relations of the dominant racial or ethnic group. According to Miller,

Patriarchy has historically marginalized men not covered by the covenant of kinship. Filial and fraternal bonds have always mitigated how men used power over other men who belonged to the group…Throughout history such men have been perceived as threats and treated as such. Patriarchy's treatment of such men has always been more brutal and harsh than its treatment of women. This contradictory and inconsistent feature of patriarchy has been mostly ignored.[xliii]

Miller sought to understand the function of male marginalization outside the structures of the Western metropole, a project R.W.S. Connell has only recently begun undertaking.[xliv] Outside the metropole gender-kinship relations organize the use of violence and death. Miller understood decades before Connell that hegemony was an ingroup phenomenon, while violence dictated the relation between the white kinship group and the racialized males. Only recently has Connell admitted that hegemonic masculinity does not (non-imperialistically) account for sex/gender configurations outside of the metropole.[xlv] Once racism and the actual social position of racialized males are placed within the purview of patriarchy, Miller finds the assertion that patriarchy is the domination of all men over women vastly inaccurate. Instead, Miller defines patriarchy as "that system of reciprocal social obligations in which final authority rests with older men of the kinship collective, who exercise that authority over their individual male and female members in the overall interest of the collective."[xlvi] Miller argues that the Weberian definition of patriarchy as "women and younger men being ruled by older men who were heads of household," is more useful than the feminist definition of patriarchy as a "system and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women," because the feminist understanding of patriarchy emphasizes an ahistorical claim about patriarchy not being foundationally rooted in various differentiation between kinds of men.[xlvii]

Miller concerns himself with the kingship relationships that patriarchal (Western/white) societies aim to establish and maintain against alien male groups. "My definition [of patriarchy] includes genealogy, gender, and generation and insists that recognition of genealogy is critical if the complexities of patriarchy and gender are to be better understood."[xlviii] Miller theorizes that racial patriarchies' stake in extending kinships is the basis of social organization and the rubric for how such groups design hierarchies. Miller asserts that rather than unbridled violence towards all others (i.e. not patriarchs), patriarchies aim to define kinships biologically and culturally, rigidly protecting them through violence and social institutions and practices. Violence and subordination are nuanced and specific in the work of Miller. He explains: "Gender and generation elements relate mainly to internal relations of the collective while the genealogy elements defines its external boundaries and relations…From one perspective, genealogy extends kinship to outside of the immediate circumstances of the household or family by establishing links with other collectivities through the notion of common ancestry. At the same time, by default, it defines collectivities that are not kin. This is a critical consideration both conceptually and empirically."[xlix] Miller claims that the boundary of kinship as defined by the dominant race is the border of lethal violence and disposability. "When patriarchal collectivities interacted outside boundaries where kinship could be established, whiter factual or fictive, then one group had to submit to the hegemony of the other."[l]

The violence that comes to define the boundaries of racial kinship aims to not only protect existing racial or ethnic lines of descent but exterminate the threats such entities pose to future progeny. Dominance against alien group males then is also a proleptic endeavor. By this I mean to convey how the violence and dehumanization of a selected male outgroup not only asserts the present danger of their existence to the dominant racial group but also how the existence of racialized males—Black males—are a threat to the futurity of the group—its societal dominance and demographic prosperity. Current racial hierarchies sustain by violence thereby convey the aspirational nature of racism and sexual violence against these groups of men to make them not viable— dehumanized caricatures of existential beings. The prolepsis then of racial hierarchies within a given society thereby define and determine the force of their proxemics (e.g. apartheid, segregation, etc.). This is why Miller comes to see "practices of genocide, where one collective sought the physical elimination of another, the killing of male captives, the castration of male captives and the almost permanent enslavement of men, as historical outcomes of conflicts between collectives which did not share the covenant of kinship."[li] The range of violence that these groups of men suffer under and their disproportionate selection for this kind of violence suggests for Miller that these males are

differentiated by kind, or what has been taken up more recently by myself as genre. On this basis, Miller concludes that "patriarchal collectives found it easier to incorporate women of non-kin groups than the men of such groups," and, (and this is the important part), "the external relationship of men of hostile collectives are as much an element of patriarchies as the internal relations with women of the kinship collective."[lii]

Feminist theory has tended toward emphasizing an idea of patriarchy as class warfare between all men versus all women. Despite historians such a Gerda Lerner arguing against this notion of women as an oppressed class because women have comprised many if not the majority of societies that have dominated other subjugated groups, there is a tendency to think of men regardless of their relationship to subordination as having some proximity to patriarchal power.[liii] This idea however is quite specific to later feminist theories. In 1947, Max Weber offered an analysis of patriarchy based on age and kinship relationships. Weber claimed that "Patriarchalism is the situation where, within a group (household) which is usually organized on both an economic and a kinship basis, a particular individual governs who is designated by a definite rule of inheritance."[liv] In *Theorizing Patriarchy,* Sylvia Walby suggested that Weber's definition was not the most useful to feminist analysis because "In this usage the domination of younger men who were not household heads was an important as if not more important than the element of men's domination over women via the household."[lv] She writes: "I think that the incorporation of a generational element in the definition [of patriarchy] is a mistake. It implies a theory of gender inequality in which this aspect of men's domination over each other is central to men's domination over women."[lvi]

This response by Walby is curious. At the time at which she wrote *Theorizing Patriarchy*, she addresses the relationship that kinship has to patriarchy through the work of Heidi Hartmann, however, the anthropologist Gayle Rubin argued that the sex/gender system is "the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied."[lvii] Rubin claimed that patriarchy as a term confused rather than clarified the forces and social processes that maintain sexism. Rubin believes that it is important to "maintain a distinction between the human capacity and necessity to create a sexual world, and the empirically oppressive ways in which sexual world have been organized."[lviii] The problem with patriarchy is that it assumes both of these ideas without distinction. The lexicon of patriarchy began to overshadow the processes which sustain patriarchy in societies. Rubin argues that kinship relations are central to the philosophical and physical anthropology of societies. A kinship system is "not a list of biological relatives," writes Rubin. "It is a system of categories and statuses which often contradict actual genetic relationships. There are dozens of example in which socially defined kinship statuses take precedence over biology."[lix] Kinships organized social types—"they are made up of, and reproduce, concrete forms of socially organized sexuality."[lx] Inspired by the ethological analyses of Engels, Rubin argues that the sex/gender system is empirical and observable as a system that produces the fissures and concretization of sex/gender beliefs in society. This is why Heidi Hartman emphasizes the idea of kinship as the circumstance within which the oedipal complex occurs. Hartman believes "How people meet their sexual needs, how they reproduce, how they inculcate social norms in new generations, how they learn gender, how it feels to be a man or a woman" occur within the sex/gender system.[lxi] The idea that men became patriarchal through assimilating into the holy family and Oedipal order through kinship systems was common.[lxii] The separation of patriarchal kinship by race was the contribution Black men brought to analyses of sex/gender systems in the 1970s and 1980s.

The irony of this argument made by Walby and continued by many feminist authors is that it is this distinction between groups of men—be they hegemonic, subordinate, or marginalized—that has made Raewyn Connell's work globally recognized despite being described by Weber in the 1940s, Black male sociologists in the 1980s, and later developed into the subordinate male target hypothesis by social dominance theorists in the 1990s. This is to say that there is overwhelming empirical evidence showing that patriarchy is both paternalistic towards women and lethally and sexually violent towards racialized or outgroup men.[lxiii] Walby wants to maintain an understanding of patriarchy that is exclusively about women, consequently, she believes that the "inclusion of generation in the definition is confusing. It is a contingent element and best omitted."[lxiv] Said differently, the 20th-century idea of gender and patriarchy was not the product of a systematic analysis of patriarchal societies, or even an account of patriarchy operated in Western societies. Rather, the

definition of patriarchy that emerged from these debates were driven by the need white feminists had in constructing themselves as a class external to—and victimized by—white patriarchy. The feminist definition of patriarchy was constructed to protect feminist ideology, not to explain the oppression of various groups throughout history. White feminists understood that kinship relations excluded Black men from the male classes that were described as the architects and beneficiaries of patriarchal power. Because of kinship, Black men were not permitted to join the ranks of MAN. The patriarchal system needed to protect white women from Black men and organize society so that he had the greatest distance from the dominant group. Consequently, the Black male becomes linked to patriarchy, not by his male birthright—as male or man—but through the violence feminists claimed was linked to his savagery.

III.   The Origins of Mimetic Theory

Throughout the 20th century, Black men were depicted by science to be irrational and apatriarchal. From the 1940s to the 1980s, white criminologists, ethnographers, and feminists who took their specialization to be the ghetto culture of Blacks described Black males as street men who, because they had no fathers or patriarchal role models, suffered from a female personality disorder from imitating their mothers and hypermasculinity.[lxv] Under segregation, it was decided that Black males were not and could not be men—they were thought to be feminine and in search of their manhood. As civil rights became a reality, white feminists began demonizing Black men for their aspirations to achieve manhood and political equality. In *The Dialectic of Sex*, a book published almost a decade before Michelle Wallace's *The Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*, Shulamith Firestone argued that "the relationship between the Black man and the white man duplicates the relationship of the male child to the father. We have seen how at a certain point in order to assert his ego, the child must transfer his identification from the female (powerless) to the male (powerful)."[lxvi] Firestone suggests that Black men in America have three choices: give in to the white father and become an Uncle Tom, resist the white father and be denied masculinity whereby the Black man will exploit women to prove he is still a man or what she deems the pimp complex, or simply kill the father and replace him. Firestone argued that "unless the Black man makes the first choice, identification with the father on the father's own terms, he is subject to castration."[lxvii]

This idea of the Black male driven by lack was a powerful theme running throughout white criminology and feminist theory during the 1970s, hence the appeal of psychoanalysis as a method of inferring the unconscious motivations of masculinity. With the introduction of the subculture of violence theory in 1967, Martin Wolfgang and Franco Ferracuti claimed they had found an explanation for the higher rates of homicide among Blacks.[lxviii] Their theory suggested that the high rates of Black men murdered by their spouses could be explained by the subordinate role that Black men took to Black women within the home. This is similar to Elliot Liebow's ethnographies where he documented a case of a Black woman abusing her husband because she claimed he was not a man.[lxix] White social scientists used racist stereotypes of Black men and Black women to explain social deviance and violence without ever accounting for the conditions Black people found themselves surrounded. Menachem Amir, a student of Wolfgang and Feracutti, argued that "The Negro subculture is an historically unique subculture which embodies all the characteristics of a lower-class subculture but has some of its features in a more pronounced form…The Negro subculture is characterized by the revolving of life around some basic focal concerns which include a search for thrills through aggressive actions and sexual exploits."[lxx] This subcultural inclination emerged from the ambivalence of the Negro male type. Unable to produce an authentic and positive idea of Black manhood, Amir posits that "Young boys are imbued with negative, or at least ambivalent, feelings toward masculine functions. Sexual and aggressive behavior becomes the main vehicle for asserting their worthiness. They, therefore, idealize personal violence and prowess which substitute for social and economic advantages.[lxxi]

White feminists adopted Amir's view of Black masculinity throughout their texts. Susan Brownmiller insisted that "The single most important contribution of Amir's Philadelphia study was to place the rapist squarely within the subculture of violence. The rapist, it was revealed, had no separate identifiable pathology aside from the individual quirks and personality disturbances that might characterize any single offender who commits any sort of crime."[lxxii] By making rape an intra-

racial crime, the disproportionate rates of rape within the Black community became synonymous with a cultural defect in Black men. The inability of Black men to rise within a white capitalist patriarchal society was theorized as a lack within all Black males. According to Joyce Williams and Karen Holmes, "the male sex organ became the identity of the Black male as well as his tenuous link with life itself, for while he might be given approval for uninhibited sexual activity with Black women the least suggestion of sexual behavior with white women was to invite castration and/or death."[lxxiii] Through rape, Williams and Holmes insisted that Black men found some semblance of manhood, because "in raping minority women, minority males frequently are doing no more than imitating the white male."[lxxiv] These compensatory accounts of Black masculinity asserted that poor Black males are culturally defective and motivated to rape the women surrounding them. The Black male began being theorized as a social danger due to his inclination for crime and sexual violence against all women. While the authors of this theory admit that "there is no empirical evidence…nor is there any empirical validation for either the myth of Black male sexuality or that of sex as compensatory behavior," these claims remain the basis of how Black males are theorized throughout multiple disciplines, even within intersectionality.[lxxv]

Intersectionality theorists have not shied away from utilizing these theories in their descriptions and analytic assertions about Black males. In "Mapping the Margins," Kimberle Crenshaw cites Williams' and Holmes' book as evidence that intra-racial rape is a means of social control within the racial-sexualization system. As shown above, Williams and Holmes only account for rape mimetically, where Black males are motivated towards rape through compensatory violence and the imitation of white patriarchy.[lxxvi]Similarly, Frank Rudy Cooper claims that "heterosexual black men will feel compelled to prove their manhood through acts that distance them from marginalized others. Emulation of normative masculinity thus makes it more likely heterosexual black men will seek to offset their feelings of powerlessness by subordinating others."[lxxvii] Cooper does not provide any sociological or ethnographic evidence to support his interpretations. Instead, he insists this need to subordinate others leads Black men to oppress Black women and Black gays to prove their self-worth is obvious.[lxxviii] His claim however rests solely bell hooks' theorization of Black men in *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*.[lxxix] Throughout *We Real Cool*, hooks asserts that a hypersexual Black male subculture developed as a response to racial oppression. Because white men dictated the terms of masculinity and controlled the social, economic, and political resources that made the attainment of manhood impossible for Black men, hooks suggests Black men began "Equating manhood with fucking, [and] saw status and economic success as synonymous with endless sexual conquest."[lxxx] While subculture of violence theorists focused specifically on poor, young, Black males, hooks suggests that *all* Black masculinity is sexually coercive. "In that world black males from any class, whether individually or in groups, could find affirmation of their power in sexual conquests."[lxxxi]

Previous scholars have noted the prevalence of these descriptions of Black men in feminist and intersectional literature as well as various social sciences. The conceptualization of Black men as violent misogynists and savage rapists remain a supposition of gender theory throughout Western institutions. As Richard Pitt and George Sanders explain masculinity researchers "have nevertheless reduced marginalized masculinities—particularly Black—men's masculinities to pathologized stereotypes and caricatures…whether in descriptions of it (by bell hooks), explanations for it (by Mark A. Neal), or prescriptions for managing it (by Athena Mutua), essential Black masculinity is almost always portrayed as non-normative."[lxxxii] These frameworks are well solidified and are coded as referring to Black masculinity and cultural defect. Black Male Studies locates Black manhood in the lived realities of Black men and boys—preferring facts about Black males instead of deficit-based frameworks that ignore the substantial evidence of Black male egalitarianism and gender progressivism.[lxxxiii]

IV.   Black Male Studies as Paradigm

Black Male Studies insists that the racial castration or phallicism that Black males experience within Western patriarchal societies severs them from patriarchy in ways similar to women, while nonetheless creating caricatures of Black men and boys that serve to justify their extermination. A Black sounding name, a Black male being more knowledgeable than a white person, or simply attempting to live socially can trigger violence. Similar to the analyses of Miller and social dominance theorists such a Jim Sidanius, Black Male Studies utilizes a concept of an outgroup or subordinate male group within its analysis. *The Man-Not*, however, becomes is a constitutive and persistent feature of Western patriarchal societies that is created through the simultaneity of negation and caricature. Black Male Studies argues that this *grouping* of Black men *through caricature* act as depositories of savagery and entities of evil that have endured from ethnology to our present constructs of gender.

I however argue that these racialized male groupings are as structural as they are idealistic such that social valuations tend towards the replication of the not-man antipathy through all levels of social practice, theory, and values. Contrary to the work of bell hooks and other Black feminist theories that explain the higher rates of Black male crime and violence through masculinity, Black Male Studies scholars favor more epidemiological and sociological analyses. While it is undeniable that Black males who are pushed out of society and the economy find themselves more at risk for criminal activity, this is a phenomenon that all economically and politically ostracized groups suffer. The higher risk that Black men have toward becoming perpetrators of certain kinds of violence also demands a consideration of the kinds of victimization he has to those very same kinds of violence at the hands of others. Under our present gender frameworks, Black men are theorized almost solely as perpetrators of abuse, not as victims of child physical and sexual abuse or intimate partner violence despite the overwhelming evidence showing otherwise. The interpretive framework being deployed to understand Black men and boys under intersectionality and within the Black masculinity, literature supposes pathology. It is this theoretical orientation that Black Male Studies rejects and seeks to replace with comparative study and empirically informed theory.

This peculiar racialized/outgroup male category is a feature of sociogenic processes occurring throughout various patriarchal societies. The negation of these men as non-human beings approaching savagery has similarities to other racist regimes and genocides. It is precisely this constructing of males as being in opposition to civil society that provides a grounding for conceptual analysis concerning the limits of ontology and the malleability of the Black male as a theoretical territory. As an object of thought, the Black male is deployed as a negation of other gendered bodies and groups. He is thought to occupy a patriarchal form that imposes itself through violence upon others not only sociologically but ontologically. Consequently, Black masculinity theory is absent an existential or historical content of how Black males have lived. Black Male Studies attempt to fill this lacuna of Black masculinities study by using the life stories, the lived experience, and empirically substantiated trends and patterns of Black male life as evidence against the mimetic idols used to stand in for actual analysis concerning Black men and boys. Black Male Studies offers alternative explanations of the gender category, the operation of patriarchy, and the myth of Black male mimesis that current feminist theories, be they Black or white. As a paradigmatic grounding for future study, it is not concerned with the political manifestation of its theory, but rather the analytic and social reclamation of Black male life against Black male dying and death.

Our current gender theories, be they intersectional or not, allows for Black men and boys to be represented negatively through stereotypes and abstractions of deviance. Despite the contradiction and nullification of these deleterious terms, academic theory allows Black males to be depicted as violent misogynists and abusers of women and children because these accusations determine him as a placeholder of the brute and savage in thought. Despite decades of evidence showing Black men and boys to be emotive partners, caring fathers, and supportive of women's rights and other egalitarian values more than any other group including Black women in many regards, Black males are determined to be deviant and dangerous simply because they are Black males. Because he is devoid of the humanity entailed by other human groups, he cannot refute the objecthood imposed upon him by theory to explain his behavior or character in the world. I use *object* here to convey the ability of the

Black male to be defined as not human, or outside the moral boundaries of intellectual civility. Throughout academic theory, he is defined through terms permitting his extermination within society to proceed without objection.

I am reminded of David Livingstone Smith's account of dehumanization where he states that: "Dehumanization acts as a psychological lubricant, dissolving our inhibitions and inflaming our destructive passions. As such, it empowers us to perform acts that would, under other circumstances, be unthinkable."[lxxxiv] While Smith emphasizes the subhuman aspects of dehumanization, I am interested in the *caricatures* utilized to represent racialized men as the sub-humans among us—the how and why racialized males, or in this case Black male bodies, are used to animate the logics of dehumanization. In this regard, Black male studies share a great affinity with the research in genocide and Holocaust studies.[lxxxv] Ultimately, Black Male Studies is dedicated to understanding how the disproportionate death, sexual victimization, and disregard towards Black men and boys continue without protest in theory and society as a function of knowledge.

[i] See Tommy J. Curry, "Decolonizing the Intersection: Black Male Studies as a Critique of Intersectionality's Indebtedness to Subculture of Violence Theory," in *Critical Psychology Praxis: Psychosocial Non-Alignment to Modernity/Coloniality* (Advances in Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology Series), ed. Robert Beshara (New York: Routledge, 2021), 132-154.

[ii] See Tommy J. Curry, "Black Male Studies: How the Man-Not is Establishing a Field to Disrupt the Mythologies of Racialized Men and Boys in Liberal Arts Disciplines that Assume Pathology," *The Acorn: Philosophical Studies in Pacifism and Nonviolence* 18.1/2 (2018): 51-59.

[iii] It was a common view by white racist social scientists that the lack of patriarchal masculinity made Black male sexually confused and prone to homosexuality, see Joseph Pleck, *The Myth of Masculinity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), 126-128. As a response to the idea that Black maleness cannot capture intimacy, eroticism, and ~~being~~, see Calvin Warren, *Ontological Terror: Blackness, Nihilism, and Emancipation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), and Ernest Gibson, *Salvific Manhood: James Baldwin's Novelization of Male Intimacy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019). For a discussion of the rape of Black men, see Curry, *The Man-Not* (2017).

[iv] Tommy J. Curry, "Killing Boogeymen: Phallicism and the Misandric Mischaracterization of Black Males in Theory," *Res Philosophica* 95.2 (2018):235-272.

[v] See Tommy J. Curry, *The Man-Not: Race, Class, Genre, and the Dilemmas of Black Manhood* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2017), T. Hasan Johnson, "Challenging the myth of Black male privilege," *Spectrum: A Journal on Black Men* 6.2 (2018): 21-42, and Adebayo Oluwayomi, "The Man-Not and the Inapplicability of Intersectionality to the Dilemmas of Black Manhood," *The Journal of Men's Studies* 28.2 (2020): 183-205.

[vi] Alva Myrdal, "A Parallel to the Negro Problem," in G. Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*: *The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harpers and Brothers Publishers, 1944), 1073-1078, 1073.

[vii] Ibid.

[viii] Willie Lee Rose, "The Domestication of Domestic Slavery" in *Slavery and Freedom*, ed. William H. Freehling (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 18-36, 21.

[ix] Ibid.

[x] Sabine Broeck, "Re-reading de Beauvoir 'after race': Woman-as-slave revisited," *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, 14.1-2 (2011): 167-184, and Ann T. Allen, "Feminism and Fatherhood in Western Europe, 1900–1950s," *Journal of Women's History* 26. 2 (2014): 39-62.

[xi] Alva Myrdal, "A Parallel to the Negro Problem," 1077.

[xii] Alva Myrdal, *Nation and Family* (England: Macmillan, 1945).

[xiii] See Charlotte Gilman, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1900) for an explanation of how white women did not fear the extermination of their kind as races, and weaker men did because they were protected by their sex against violence. See Stephanie Jones-Rogers, *They Were Here Property: White Women as Slave Owners in the American South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019) for a discussion of white women owning slaves.

[xiv] Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harpers and Brothers Publishers, 1944), 103.

[xv] Ibid.

[xvi] Ibid.

[xvii] Ibid.

[xviii] Helen Hacker, "Women as a Minority Group," *Social Forces* 30.1 (1951): 60-69, 60.

[xix] Ibid., 60.

[xx] Ibid., 60.

[xxi] Ibid., 62.

[xxii] For a discussion of place, see John Dollard, *Caste and Class in a Southern Town*, (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1937) and his mentee's analysis where he says "Keeping the Negro 'in his place' can be translated as keeping the Negro male in his place: the female was not a threat to anyone," see Daniel P. Moynihan, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, 1965), 15.

[xxiii] Helen Hacker, "The New Burdens of masculinity," *Marriage and Family* 19.3 (1957): 227-233, 228.

[xxiv] Ibid.

[xxv] Helen Hacker, *Engaging Helen Hacker: Collected Works and Reflections of a Feminist Pioneer*, eds. Heather McLaughlin, Kyle Green & Christopher Uggen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing, 2018), 330-356, 343.

[xxvi] Ibid.

[xxvii] Ibid., 344.

xxviii See John Dollard, *Class and Caste in a Southern Town*, 289-290. Simone De Beauvoir wrote to Jean-Paul Sartre that: "I read an excellent book, from which we absolutely must publish huge extracts in T.M. It's called Class and Caste in the South by an American sociologist—and the method's as interesting as the content. It's kind of a counterpart to your Portrait of the Anti-Semite but on the Blacks—and also scholarly in character. It contains everything on the problem of the South." (Simone de Beauvoir, *Letters to Sartre,* ed. Quintin Hoare [New York: Arcade Publishing, 2012], 431).

xxix Ibid.

xxx John Dollard, *Caste and Class in a Southern Town*, 135.

xxxi Patrick Bayer & Kerwin Kofi Charles, "Divergent Paths: A New Perspective on Earnings Differences between Black and white Men since 1940," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 133.3 (2018), 1459–1501.

xxxii David Leonhardt, "The Black-white Wage Gap is as Big as It was in 1950," *The New York Times*, June 25, 2020.

xxxiii Raj Chetty et al., "Race and Economic Opportunity in the United States: An Intergenerational Perspective," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 135.2 (2020): 711-783.

xxxiv Jennifer A. Hartfield, Derek M. Griffith, and Marino A. Bruce, "Gendered Racism is a Key to Explaining and Addressing Police-Involved Shootings of Unarmed Black Men in America," *Inequality, Crime, and Health among African American Males Research in Race and Ethnic Relations* 20 (2019): 155-170.

xxxv Susan Smith et al., *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010-2012 State Report*, (Atlanta: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2017), 18-28. For specific accounts of Black male sexual victimization, see Tommy J. Curry, "Expendables For Whom?: Terry Crews and the Erasure of Black Male Victims of Sexual Assault and Rape," *Women Studies in Communication Journal* 42.3 (2019): 287-307, and Tommy J. Curry and Ebony Utley, "She Touched Me: Five Snapshots of Adult Violations of Young Black Boys," *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* 28.2 (2018): 205-241.

xxxvi James B. Stewart and Joseph W. Scott, "The Institutional Decimation of Black American Males," *Western Journal of Black Studies* 2, no. 2 (1978): 82–92.

xxxvii Anthony Lemelle Jr., *Black Masculinity and Sexual Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

xxxviii Even among disabled Black males, there is a tendency to be sexualized and criminalized as hyper-sexual, dangerous, and super-human, see Tommy J. Curry, "This Nigger's Broken: Hyper-Masculinity, the Buck, and the Impossibility of Physical Disability in the Black Male Body," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 48.3 (2017): 321-343.

xxxix Adam Jones, "Gendercide and Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Studies* 2.2 (2000): 185-211, 186

xl Ibid., 185-186.

xli Augusta C. Del Zotto "Gendercide in a Historical-Structural Context: The Case of Black Male Gendercide in the United States," in *Gendercide and Genocide*, ed. Adam Jones (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), 157-171, 163-164.

xlii Adam Jones discusses the repetitive nature of subordinate male death., "Gendercide and Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Studies* 2.2 (2000): 185-211, 186.

xliii Errol Miller, *Men at Risk* (Kingston: Jamaica Publishing House Ltd, 1991), 342.

xliv See R.W.S. Connell, "Margin Becoming Centre: For a World-Centred Rethinking of Masculinities,' *Norma* 9.4 (2014): 217–231.

xlv R.W.S. Connell, "Masculinities in Global Perspective: Hegemony, Contestation, and Changing Structures of Power," *Theory & Society* 45 (2016): 303-318.

xlvi Errol Miller, "Male Marginalization Revisited," in *Gender in the 21st Century: Caribbean Perspectives, Visions, and Possibilities*, eds. Elsa Leo-Rhynie & Barbara Bailey (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2004), 99-133, 102. Also see *Marginalization of the Black Male: Insights from the Development of the Teaching Profession* (Barbados: Canoe Publishing, 1994).

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xlviii Ibid., 103.

xlix Ibid. 103.

l Ibid., 103.

li Ibid., 103.

lii Ibid.

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liv Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 231.

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lvi Ibid., 20.

lvii Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex" in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157-210, 159.

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lx Ibid.

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lxiv Ibid.

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lxvi Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectics of Sex* (New York: Bantam Book, 1970), 111.

lxvii Ibid.

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lxix Elliot Liebow, *Tally's Corner: A Study of Negro Street Corner Men* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 84-87.

lxx Menachem Amir, *Patterns in Forcible Rape* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1971),327.

lxxi Amir, *Forcible Patterns of Rape*, 328.

lxxii Susan Brownmiller, *Against Her Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1975), 181.

lxxiii Joyce Williams & Karen Holmes, *The Second Assault: Rape and Public Attitudes* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981), 31.

lxxiv Ibid., 27.

lxxv Ibid., 35.

lxxvi Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43.6 (1991): 1241-1299, 1266 fn.73.

lxxvii Frank Rudy Cooper, "Against Bipolar Masculinity: Intersectionality, Assimilation, Identity Performance, and Hierarchy," *University of California Davis Law Review* 39 (2006): 853-906, 900.

lxxviii Ibid., 859.

lxxix bell hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

lxxx Ibid.,66.

lxxxi Ibid., 67.

lxxxii Richard N. Pitt and George Sanders, "Revisiting Hypermasculinity: Shorthand for Marginalized Masculinities?," in *What's Up with the Brothers: Essays and Studies on African-American Masculinities*, eds. Whitney Stewart Harris, Ronald Theodore Ferguson (Harrimon: Men's Studies Press, 2010), 43.

lxxxiii Wizdom P. Hammond and Jacqueline S. Mattis, "Being a Man About It: Manhood Meaning Among African American Men," *Psychology of Men & Masculinity* 6.2 (2005): 114-126; Catherine Harnois, "Complexity Within and Similarity Across: Interpreting Black Men's Support of Gender Justice, amidst Cultural Representations that Suggest Otherwise," in *Hyper Sexual, Hyper Masculine?: Gender, Race, and Sexuality in the Identities of Contemporary Black Men*, eds., Brittany C. Slatton and Kemesha Spates (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), 85-102, and "Race, Gender, and the Black Women's Standpoint," *Sociological Forum* 25.1 (2010): 68-85; and Evelyn Simien, "A Black Gender Gap? Continuity and Change in Attitudes to Black Feminism," in *African American Perspectives on Political Science*, ed. Rich Wilbur (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007), 130-150.

lxxxiv David L. Smith, *Less than Human: Why We Demean, Enslave, and Exterminate Others* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011), 13.

lxxxv Tommy J. Curry, "Thinking through the Silence: Theorizing the Rape of Jewish Males during the Holocaust through Survivor Testimonies," *Holocaust Studies* (forthcoming).