

ADVANCES IN THEORETICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Series Foreword

Brent D. Slife, Editor

Psychologists need to face the facts. Their commitment to empiricism for answering disciplinary questions does not prevent pivotal questions from arising that cannot be evaluated exclusively through empirical methods, hence the title of this series: *Advances in Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*. For example, such moral questions as, “What is the nature of a good life?” are crucial to psychotherapists but are not answerable through empirical methods alone. And what of the methods themselves? Many have worried that our current psychological means of investigation are not adequate for fully understanding the person (e.g., Schiff, 2019). How do we address this concern through empirical methods without running headlong into the dilemma of methods investigating themselves? Such questions are in some sense philosophical, to be sure, but the discipline of psychology cannot advance even its own empirical agenda without addressing questions like these in defensible ways.

How then should the discipline of psychology deal with such distinctly theoretical questions? We could leave the answers exclusively to professional philosophers, but this option would mean that the conceptual foundations of the discipline, including the conceptual framework of empiricism itself, are left to scholars who are *outside* the discipline. As undoubtedly helpful as philosophers are and will be, this situation would mean that the people doing the actual psychological work, psychologists themselves, are divorced from the people who formulate and re-formulate the conceptual foundations of that work. This division of labor would not seem to serve the long-term viability of the discipline.

Instead, the founders of psychology—thinkers such as Wundt, Freud, and James—recognized the importance of psychologists in formulating their own foundations. These parents of psychology not only did their own theorizing, in cooperation with many other disciplines; they also realized the significance of psychologists continuously re-examining these theories and philosophies. This re-examination process allowed for the people most directly involved in and knowledgeable about the discipline to be the ones to decide *whether* changes were needed and *how* such changes would best be implemented. This book series is dedicated to that task, the examining and re-examining of psychology’s foundations.

CRITICAL PSYCHOLOGY PRAXIS

Psychosocial Non-Alignment
to Modernity/Coloniality

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women and girls, but elide empiricism and sociological contextualization that explain why various forms of evidence continue to demonstrate greater Black male disadvantage in health, education, economic (downward) mobility, mortality, police homicide, and imprisonment (Curry, 2017, 2018; Harris, 2000; Mutua, 2013). When such empirical arguments showing the peculiar and perilous condition of being Black and male in the United States are presented they are often framed as contributing to the idea that Black males are an endangered species and by effect deemed to be outside of intersectional analysis (Butler, 2013; Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays, & Tomlinson, 2013). Even when intersectional theorists concede that Black men are the primary targets of lethal violence and greater victims of patriarchal oppression in the United States, the claims concerning male privilege and dominance remain unaffected by such evidence (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008).

Black males lack structural power over Black women in American society (Johnson, 2018; Lemelle, 2010). Consequently, many of the analyses concerning Black male privilege and Black patriarchy focus on the physical threats Black males are thought to pose to Black female, queer, and trans-bodies interpersonally rather than systemic advantages in employment, economic mobility, or wealth. This article argues that the understanding of Black male patriarchy through violence within intersectional analyses is a product of Black feminism's reliance on subculture of violence theory and what came to be understood as racial-sexual stratification within racial minority groups. This article argues that the criminological formulation of Black maleness as a *threat to women* explains the seemingly fixed perspective of intersectional analyses on the sexual pathology and social deviance of Black men and boys. As such, I argue that Kimberlé Crenshaw's initial formulation of intersectional analysis depends on an understanding of racial patriarchy that is inextricably tied to dominance feminism's emphasis on physical violence and the criminological construct of the intra-racial rapist. The purpose of this chapter is to understand the content of the gender category deployed within intersectional analyses that produce an understanding of Black males' violence as an outgrowth of patriarchal oppression.

Intra-Racial Violence and the Theory of (Black) Male Dominance in Intersectionality

Throughout Crenshaw's corpus, she has commented upon the affinity shared between her theory of intersectionality and MacKinnon's dominance feminism (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Crenshaw, 2010). Recognizing the interface between intersectionality and dominance theory allows Crenshaw (2010) to conceive of the two theories "not as intractably oppositional but as setting forth similar critiques at different levels of abstraction" (p. 156). Crenshaw has described how her thinking was influenced by MacKinnon's theorization of gender and patriarchy broadly and specifically within the law. She writes, "I found MacKinnon's

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DECOLONIZING THE INTERSECTION

Black Male Studies as a Critique of Intersectionality's Indebtedness to Subculture of Violence Theory

Tommy J. Curry

Introduction

In 2017, *The Man-Not: Race, Class, Genre, and the Dilemmas of Black Manhood* introduced the first reading of Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality as an extension of Catherine MacKinnon's dominance theory (Curry, 2017, pp. 208–220). Whereas previous discussions of intersectionality argued that the theory was anti-essentialist and thereby incompatible with essentialist conceptualizations of race, class, or gender, my reading argues that the gender category, specifically the concept of woman deployed by Crenshaw, presumes a rigid historical, cultural, and sociological hierarchy of subordination of women to men. This conceptualization of "women" requires men to exhibit various group-based behaviors and motivations that can be theorized as an effect of patriarchy (Curry, 2017, pp. 197–228). Consequently, intersectionality relies on a conceptualization of gender that allows the reconstitution of Black female identity around sameness and difference (with Black men and white women) while requiring Black males to be theorized primarily through the sameness they share with "men" as patriarchs. Under intersectionality Black males are denied the reformulations afforded to Black females. Because gender operates analytically, as an assertion of Black males' hierarchical location above and privilege over Black women, Black males are depicted as being less powerful than, but nonetheless the same as, white men who strive for the patriarchal domination of women. In this sense, intersectionality functions as an analytic dictum rather than an explanatory theory, since it requires the subordination of women to be a historically salient and structural feature as well as a replicative activity within racial groups in every analysis.¹

The gender category deployed in intersectional analyses of Black males not only asserts intuitively that Black men and boys are privileged compared to Black

stance to be a compelling parallel to that of Derrick Bell's in the context of his writings on race and the law" (Crenshaw, 2010, p. 159). Where others might have seen tension—if not a contradiction—between Bell's racial account and MacKinnon's gender account, Crenshaw (2010) found coherence: "having learned to think in institutional and structural terms about the everyday features of American racial stratification, MacKinnon's efforts to do the same with respect to gender seemed perfectly reasonable to me" (p. 160). Crenshaw (2010) found resonance between the group-based analysis that she found most illuminating in theories of racial subordination and MacKinnon's group-based analysis of gender and power (p. 160). Part of the work intersectionality does, in Crenshaw's (2010) view, is to illuminate how group-based theories of racial subordination are rarely met with the criticisms of their essentialism while MacKinnon's analysis of gender subordination usually is (pp. 161–162).

MacKinnon's dominance theory argues that women are a class defined by their subordination in a patriarchal world ruled by men. In this view, womanhood is defined by, and understood because of, its susceptibility to rape and sexual violence. MacKinnon (1989) explains: "if sexuality is central to women's definition and forced sex is central to sexuality, rape is indigenous, not exceptional, to women's social condition" (p. 172). This argument suggests that "woman" is an entity that is forced to relate to the world not only through asymmetrical relationships with men but defined by their susceptibility to violence from men. MacKinnon (1989) explains, "In life, 'woman' and 'man' are widely experienced as features of being, not constructs of perception, cultural interventions, or forced identities. Gender, in other words, is lived as ontology, not as epistemology" (p. 237). When we think, or speak, of the oppression of women being the effect of how we conceptualize women and the "women particularly present" in our analysis of the real world, we are thinking about the violence affecting women that marks out their difference from other kinds of beings. As MacKinnon (1989) argues:

To speak of being treated "as a woman" is to make an empirical statement about reality, to describe the realities of women's situation. In this country, with parallels in other cultures, women's situation combines unequal pay with allocation to disrespected work, sexual targeting for rape, domestic battering, sexual abuse as children, and systematic sexual harassment; depersonalization, demeaned physical characteristics, use in denigrating entertainment, deprivation of reproductive control, and forced prostitution. To see that these practices are done by men to women is to see these abuses as forming a system, a hierarchy of inequality. (p. 15)

This idea of "woman" qua subordination has been deployed throughout Crenshaw's reflections of intersectional subordination within the Black race, specifically regarding the issues of domestic abuse and rape Black women and women

of color generally face. Contrary to the reading of MacKinnon as a gender essentialist whose idea of womanhood centers on white women's experience (Harris, 1990), Crenshaw sees the dominance frame of MacKinnon as a theory articulating the susceptibility womanhood has to violence such that all bodies designated by "woman" are also designated in relation to "men" and other bodies by the violence "women" experience. MacKinnon explains that her abstraction of "woman" operates as a composite unit that applies to all women but is not limited to any woman who claims it. So, for MacKinnon (1989):

When African-American women are raped two times as often as white women, aren't they raped as women? That does not mean that their race is irrelevant and it does not mean that their injuries can be understood outside a racial context. Rather, it means that "sex" is made up of the reality of the experiences of all women, including theirs. (p. 20)

This generality of the concept of women suggests that dominance feminism is essentialist, but not exclusively so.

Crenshaw has utilized this conceptualization of women from dominance feminism to explain Black women's sex oppression within the Black community. Emphasizing the sameness that Black women have with other women is important to understanding how sexual oppression operates in intersectionality theory. Crenshaw (2010) explains that, "Efforts to create sameness sensibility can sometimes be productive, especially in resistance to cultural and political histories that have foregrounded difference to justify or normalize dominance" (p. 179). Because Black women are sometimes oppressed as women, there is a need to articulate what oppression as woman entails in relation to men and under the system of patriarchy. In "Mapping the margins," Crenshaw (1991) analyzes a specific example of sexual dominance concerning Black women which draws from the previous work done by white feminists concerning the role that domestic violence and rape play in maintaining the subordination of women within racial groups. Crenshaw begins her analysis stating that "battering and rape, once seen as private (family matters) and aberrational (errant sexual aggression), are now largely recognized as part of a broad-scale system of domination that affects women as a class" (p. 1241). Echoing MacKinnon, *woman* is an essential category of being that explains a particular subjugation for Crenshaw. By exploring where two subordinate classes of racial subjugation and gender subjugation intersect, Crenshaw posits that at that point you would find the Black woman and the domination of women complicated by the particular subjugation of racial groups.

Crenshaw's effort to bring attention to the intra-racial dynamics of rape in the Black community relies on white feminist theories. She claims that "[h]istorically, the dominant conceptualization of rape as quintessentially Black offender/white victim has left Black men subject to legal and extralegal violence" (Crenshaw,

1991, p. 1266), so scholars were not able to understand occurrences of rape within the Black community or theorize intra-racial rape. The intersectional explanation that Crenshaw offers however relies on theories that make the subordination of women within the Black community dependent on racist theories of Black male savagery and criminality. Crenshaw (1991) insists that:

[g]enerations of critics and activists have criticized dominant conceptualizations of rape as racist and sexist. [And that] these efforts have been important in revealing the way in which representations of rape both reflect and reproduce race and gender hierarchies in American society. (p. 1266)

However, the previous literature Crenshaw relies on to substantiate this argument depicts Black males as brutish sexual predators and deviants. Crenshaw (1991) claims that “the use of rape to legitimize efforts to control and discipline the Black community is well established in historical literature on rape and race” (p. 1266), but this argument was far from well-established and was extremely idiosyncratic in the 1970s and 1980s since it was only beginning to be advanced by white feminist sociologists attempting to integrate subculture of violence theory into their gender analyses.

The only source Crenshaw gives to substantiate this “well established” fact is Joyce Williams and Karen Holmes’s (1981) *The Second Assault*, which aimed to introduce a new theory of racial sexual stratification and to show that Black men used rape for the patriarchal oppression of Black women. While this may be a now popularly accepted feminist ideology, it was rooted primarily in the subculture of violence theories about Black men’s compensatory masculinity, not any concrete scientific evidence. To get the results it desires, intersectionality must not only describe the sexual vulnerability of women and girls in the Black community but assume *as fact* that Black men rape purely for patriarchal power, as white feminists have previously theorized. In constructing sameness with white women “as women,” intersectionality consequently constructs sameness between Black men and white men as “men” and “patriarchs.”

Previous theorizations of intersectionality have only considered the construction of Black female vulnerability to patriarchy as worthy of concern. No attention has been paid to the kinds of (racist) theories intersectional feminists utilized in the *politicized* construction of Black men as perpetrators of violence against women or as participants in the group of “men” who dominate and subjugate women. Enabled by a mimetic theory of Black manhood, or a theory based on the idea that Black males aspire to imitate white masculinity and produce a culturally peculiar facsimile of white patriarchy in response to their negation under anti-Black racism, intersectionality has deployed various caricatures of Black men and boys and speculative accounts of deviance that simply cannot be reconciled with the existing empirical literature.

The Intersectionality of Black Males: bell hooks’s Role in Mimetic Theory

More contemporary theorists of intersectionality such as Frank Rudy Cooper have continued to endorse the racist theory that Black male identity is primarily driven by the imitation of white masculine norms and power. In his article “Against bipolar masculinity: Intersectionality, assimilation, identity performance, and hierarchy,” Cooper (2006) 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. (p. 900)

This need to subordinate others leads Black men to oppress Black women and Black gays to prove their self-worth (p. 859). This claim rests solely on bell hooks’s (2004) theorization of Black men in *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*.

According to bell hooks, the history of racism and Jim Crow segregation gave rise to Black hypersexuality and forced Black men to construct a compensatory phallic identity. hooks (2004) writes:

Much of the subculture of blackness in the early years of the twentieth century was created in reaction and resistance to the culture whites sought to impose on black folks. Since whiteness had repressed black sexuality, in the subculture space of blackness, sexual desire was expressed with degrees of abandon unheard of in white society. (p. 66)

Sexuality became a compensatory trait of Black men according to hooks. “The black male body, deemed demonic in the eyes of white racist sexist stereotypes, was in the world of segregated black culture deemed erotic, sensual, capable of giving and receiving pleasure,” she writes (hooks, 2004, p. 66). Because white men dictated the terms of masculinity and controlled the social, economic, and political resources that made attaining manhood impossible for Black men, hooks (2004) suggests that Black men began “equating manhood with fucking, [and] saw status and economic success as synonymous with endless sexual conquest” (p. 66). The deviance and sexual obsession of Black males were conceptualized by hooks as a product of their incompleteness—their *lack of true manhood*. Throughout hooks’s corpus, Black men and Black men’s responses to white oppression are depicted in negative terms. She writes: “Precisely because black males have suffered and do suffer so much dehumanization in the context of imperialist white supremacist

capitalist patriarchy, they have brought to the realm of the sexual a level of compulsion that is oftentimes pathological" (p. 69).

Because Black men have no positive psychical or cultural resources of resistance in hooks's work that can serve as the foundation of Black manhood, Black males tend to exaggerate the most deleterious aspects of white masculinity. Asserted to be vacuous, Black masculinity assimilates white masculinity to give itself content. As such, Black masculinity became obsessed with patriarchal sex to cope with racist oppression. According to hooks (2004):

In segregated African-American life, patriarchal sex was not only the medium for the assertion of manhood; it was also reconceptualized in the space of blackness as entitled pleasure for black males who were not getting all the perks of patriarchal maleness in arenas where white men were still controlling the show.

(p. 67)

Despite the negative societal conditions Black males find themselves in, hooks emphasizes the pathological nature of Black maleness rather than the oppressive conditions constraining Black males. Whereas subculture of violence theories focus specifically on poor, young, Black males, hooks suggests that *all* Black masculinity is sexually coercive. This point deserves emphasis. While class status accounted for the different behaviors of various groups of Black males in white sociological and criminological theories, hooks suggests the origin of Black male sexual pathology and aggression is masculinity itself. For hooks (2004), "black males from any class, whether individually or in groups, could find affirmation of their power in sexual conquests" (p. 67). In short, hooks understands Black male resistance to white supremacy and social marginalization as the internalization of the racist tropes about Black masculinity offered by white society. Black masculinity, for hooks, is merely the extent to which Black men embrace and absorb the *imago* offered by white society. hooks (2004) writes, "Through the dominant culture's fascination with the black male as a super sexual stud, [Black men] are able to mask their sense of powerlessness, their psychological sexual impotency, as well as their obsessive compulsive dysfunctional sexual habits" (p. 70).

These writings by hooks suggest that Black male violence can be best understood through mimesis (Curry, 2017). Without a culturally positive concept of Black manhood available, Black males seek to imitate the masculinity of white males. From boyhood, Black males are socialized to aspire to the violence performed by white men for hooks. She writes:

Young black males, like all boys in patriarchal culture, learn early that manhood is synonymous with the domination and control over others, that simply by being male they are in a position of authority that gives them the

right to assert their will over others, to use coercion and/or violence to gain and maintain power.

(hooks, 2004, p. 83)

Consequently, Black manhood is rooted in the emulation of white patriarchal violence. As hooks (2004) says, "Black male violence simply mirrors the styles and habits of white male violence. It is not unique" (p. 61). Poverty and social marginalization only exacerbate the violent tendencies of Black males in this view; they do not cause violence because the violence being amplified by social disadvantage is *already there*, latent but endemic to Black masculinity. Whereas compensatory violence has historically been offered as an explanation of male deviance (Cohen, 1955; Hannerz, 1969), hooks argues that for Black men societal negation is even direr because Black males embrace the racialized caricature of the beast. According to hooks (2004):

many black males explain their decision to become the "beast" as a surrender to realities they cannot change. And if you are going to be seen as a beast you may as well act like one. Young black males, particularly underclass males, often derive a sense of satisfaction from being able to create fear in others, particularly in white folks ... Showing aggression is the simplest way to assert patriarchal manhood. Men of all classes know this. As a consequence, all men living in a culture of violence must demonstrate at some point in their lives that they are capable of being violent.

(p. 45)

The disproportionate rates of violence committed by Black men as well as their "gangsta behavior" are accounted for in hooks's (2004) work by the sexist ideations of patriarchal masculinity. She asserts:

Overall the facts reveal that black males are more violent than ever before in this nation. And they are more likely to be violent toward another black person whom they deem less powerful. Much black male violence is directed toward females. Sexism and the assumption of the male right to dominate serves as the catalyst for this violence.

(hooks, 2004, p. 52)

These descriptions of Black masculinity proposed by bell hooks replicate the pathological descriptions of Black manhood offered by Martin Wolfgang and Franco Ferracuti (1967) as examples of the Black subculture of violence. Subcultures were *distinct and separate* from the dominant culture and were marked primarily by the "potent theme of violence current in the cluster of values that make up the lifestyle, the socialization process, the interpersonal relationships of individuals living in similar conditions" (Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1967, p. 140).

Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967) emphasized that the "overt use of force or violence, either in interpersonal relationships or in group interaction" (p. 158) is a product of the normative system's operation within the subcultural grouping and reflects the psychological traits and a particular worldview quite distant from the dominant or parent culture. The primary consideration of Wolfgang and Ferracuti's theory was homicide. They were interested in why Black men and Black women disproportionately utilized lethal violence and aggression regularly within their communities (Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1967, p. 154). In 1971, Menachem Amir's *Patterns in Forcible Rape* introduced a subculture of violence theory claiming to explain why poor Black men became accustomed to committing rape and how Black women as mothers and partners contributed to the transmission of these values from childhood to adulthood (p. 324).

Amir introduced the most prominent cultural explanation of Black male sexual aggression in the 20th century. Whereas previous ethnological formulations of the Black male rapist relied on ontogenic accounts of racial development, Amir introduced a theory that focused on the deviant values of Negroes and how these racial norms within the Black race produced Black male rapists (cf. Howard, 1903). He writes:

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 ... The emphasis is given by males to masculinity, and their need to display and defend it through brief and transitory relations with women. Such needs and the subsequent concerns with sex stems from growing up in a family in which the mother is dominant and the father has a marginal position ... 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.

(Amir, 1971, pp. 327–328)

Amir suggests that one can understand the sexual violence and social deviance of Blacks as having the same origin. However, the absenteeism of the Black father and the lack of patriarchal structure produced a disfigured, and more feminine, Black masculinity (cf. Brody, 1961). This patriarchal masculinity was thought to not only produce violence, misogyny, and deviance but also find meaning and purpose in rape (Barclay & Cusumano, 1967; Biller, 1968; Hannerz, 1969; Moran & Barclay, 1988). Black masculinity is presented within this theory as a distorted racial facsimile of white patriarchal culture. True masculinity results in civility and

order; Black manhood, as apatriarchal, produces sexual confusion and deviance (Pleck, 1981, pp. 126–128).

American feminists found great utility in Amir's racialist accounts of rape. Amir argued, contrary to the previous racist pseudo-science of the early 20th century, that sociology and criminology show that rape is primarily an intra-racial phenomenon and that rape is produced by the culturally peculiar notions of masculinity found within the Negro subculture. Susan Brownmiller enthusiastically supported subculture of violence explanations for rape in the Black community. Brownmiller praised Wolfgang and Ferracuti's ability to create a theory of lower-class male culture linking physical and sexual aggression, gangsterism, and masculinity together. However, it was Menachem Amir's study of rape patterns in Philadelphia that most captured her interest. Brownmiller (1975) writes:

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.

(p. 181)

Amir theorized that the same subcultural values Wolfgang and Ferracuti believed produced criminality could also explain the occurrence of rape. Amir's work offered a new territory for feminist accounts of gender to explore. Because his work was based in the study of a major urban center like Philadelphia, he both disproved the longstanding racist trope of the Black male rapist of white women, while nonetheless providing feminists with the construct of the intra-racial rapist, which would motivate the next several decades of feminist theorization in the United States.

Creating the Intra-Racial Rapist through Contra-Culture Theory

To reformulate the deviant model of the Black male rapist inherited from the work of subculture of violence theorists like Menachem Amir (1971) and Susan Brownmiller (1975), Lynn A. Curtis argued that Black males' distortion of white patriarchy best explained their higher rates of rape perpetration. Throughout the 1970s, feminists reconceptualized Black men as (intra-racial) rapists of Black women rather than (inter-racial) rapists of white women. This idea of the Black male as an intra-racial rapist owes its origin to Menachem Amir's *Patterns of Forcible Rape* but became a cornerstone of American feminists' (both Black and white) theory through the work of Lynn A. Curtis.

Unlike earlier subculture of violence theories (e.g., Wolfgang, Ferracuti, and Amir) which understood the Black male rapist to be a product of socialization,

where Black subcultural values emphasizing aggression and violence were taught to young Black men by their mothers and the sexual behaviors of Black women, Curtis argued that the Black male rapist was a unique trait of poor Black male culture. Curtis asserted that Black women had no role in the transmission of sub-cultural values of violence, because poor Black males—their masculinity alone—were the origin and cause of the disproportionate rates of homicide, rape, and sexual assault compared to other racial groups in the United States. Said differently, Curtis surmised that it was race, class, and gender—poor Black masculinity—that created the most virulent form of rape culture in America.

Lynn A. Curtis disagreed with the idea that white racial patterns of rape were the direst in American society. He specifically took issue with Susan Griffin's (1971) *Ramparts* editorial "Rape: An all-American crime." In this article, Griffin (1971) argued that "[t]he same men and power structure who victimize women are engaged in the act of raping Vietnam, raping Black people and the very earth we live upon" (p. 35). Griffin (1971) saw rape as a "classic act of domination" (p. 35). She continued, "As the symbolic expression of the white male hierarchy, rape is the quintessential act of our civilization, one which, Valerie Solanis warns, is in danger of 'humping itself to death'" (Griffin, 1971, p. 35).

Curtis (1976), however, argued that Griffin unfairly places the blame on white men for the practice of forcible rape, because "American feminists tend to gloss over or be unclear about racial patterns in their discussions of sexual assault" (p. 130). These racial patterns exclude what Curtis takes to be the greater frequency and propensity of Black men to rape women more so than white men. In his reply to Griffin, Curtis (1976) wrote:

In building to this position, Griffin cites national survey findings observing that "90 percent of reported rape is intra- not inter-racial." Yet nowhere does she reveal that 60 of the 90 percent in the national survey involved black men raping black women. Black-white rape is said to be "outrageously exaggerated"—an observation with which we agree, although Griffin is unaware that the reported rate of black-white encounters seems to be rising, at least in some places, and that it is already high in several cities. (p. 131)

Curtis's criticism of Griffin was part of a larger theoretical shift in how rape was being discussed by white criminologists and American feminists. While there was a growing recognition following Amir's *Forcible Patterns of Rape* that the majority of rapes in the United States were intra-racial, there was also an attempt to reconcile the reality that white men were the primary rapists of white women and the historical caricature of Black males as rapists that was rooted in white social and biological sciences since the mid 19th century (Curry, 2017; Lindquist, 2012; Stein, 2015).

For example in *Rape: The Politics of Consciousness*, Susan Griffin (1986) argued that "[t]he white man's open rape of Black women, coupled with his overwhelming concern for the chastity and protection of his wife and daughters, represents an extreme of sexist and racist hypocrisy" (p. 20). Griffin (1986) suggests that white men's power over white women was so restrictive that "any deviance from male-defined standards for white womanhood was treated severely" (p. 20). In Griffin's interpretation of white women's sexual victimhood, the racist myth of the Black rapist was due solely to white men inventing and executing this mythology. Because the violence against white women for defying white men was so great, white women had no choice but to accuse innocent Black men of rape. Griffin (1986) writes:

In the situation where a Black man was found to be having sexual relations with a white woman, the white woman could exercise skin privilege, and claim that she had been raped in which case the Black man was lynched. But if she did not claim rape, she herself was subject to lynching. (p. 20)

In giving this account of racism and sexism she positions the white woman as a victim to white male violence with no agency or ability to resist against the power of the white male. For Griffin (1986), "The white male has created a convenient symbol of his own power which has resulted in Black hostility toward the white bitch" (p. 20). However, she does not leave this racist trope without further comment since she believes that the fear white women have of the Black rapist is rooted in truth. According to Griffin (1986), "It is not surprising that after being told for two centuries that he wants to rape white women, Black men have begun to actually commit the act" (pp. 20–21).

To not perpetuate the myth of the Black rapist of white women, Griffin (1986) says that "[it] is crucial to note that the frequency of this practice is outrageously exaggerated in the white mythos, [since] ninety percent of reported rape is intra- not inter-racial" (p. 21). The configuration of Griffin's account of how racism and sexism have converged throughout history is not to vindicate the Black male from the horrible criminological trope of the Black rapist, but instead to recognize that the Black man may have been a rapist of white women, and as of the mid 20th century, he was primarily a rapist of the Black woman. The primary weakness of Griffin's piece is that it excludes Black male patterns of rape on Black women and focuses solely on rape between white men and white women. Curtis (1976) explains that

Much of Griffin's focus is on the relationship dynamics between white men and white women. No thought is given to separate black-black patterns, cultural or otherwise, nor to how rape by black men, especially on black women, is the symbolic expression of the white male hierarchy. (p. 131)

Curtis saw no contradiction between the claim that white male patriarchy and sexual dominance were the origin of sexual violence, historically, and that white patriarchy had been adopted and transformed by the aggressive cultural traits of poor Black men. As such, rape became a culturally pervasive trait among poor Black men and boys, so much so that this behavior ostracized them as a counterculture within poor Black ghettos. Curtis (1976) explained, "White males are the power brokers who have erected the racial and economic barriers forcing black adaptations and who have set the sexual exploitation theme in motion—without being able to similarly prevent blacks from expanding upon it" (p. 131). Curtis believed that Black males mutated and degraded white patriarchy, making it more savage and violent. Curtis (1975) presumed that Black male sexuality was compensatory and more exploitative of women than white masculinity (p. 69). As Curtis (1975) explained:

The theme of countercultural expression by Black males as extended emulation of white males also comes through clearly in the area of sexual exploitation. Few would deny that today many white males sexually exploit women ... In turn, poor Black men experience fewer restraints against expressing masculinity sexually than economically, so they may exaggerate the dominant cultural pattern even more.

(pp. 70–71)

Black males consequently possessed a more brutish sexism towards women than white masculinity. Whereas white patriarchy had paternalistic elements that sought to protect and care for women, Curtis insisted that Black masculinity was more criminogenic in nature, predicated solely on deviance, sexual aggression, and the rape of women.

In *Behind Ghetto Walls*, the sociologist Lee Rainwater (1970) suggested, contrary to the rape literature of his day, that despite their sexual objectification of women, Black boys are "remarkably patient in their relationships with girls and they rarely terminate such relationships automatically when intercourse is refused" (p. 297). Curtis insisted that Rainwater was incorrect, because the sexual excitement of poor Black males posed too great of a threat to their female counterpart. According to Curtis (1975):

It cannot be expected that those poor Black males who are exploitative will always restrain themselves when sexually excited. This is particularly so if they cannot control sex like the successful pimp and must therefore strategize against the controlling female ... On the spot and convinced that he is or should be horny, a male may not feel like leaving a reluctant female for an alternative, even if there may be an abundant supply of more willing women. His greater physical strength and willingness to use it then present a viable option.

(p. 73)

Curtis theorized Black males as sexually insatiable beasts whose very identity was tied to their predatory conquests of women. Curtis (1975) imagined Black males as being so tied to their phallus that a woman's refusal of sex, his rejection, would be incapable of being rationally understood and prompt an act of rape (p. 73). The rape of Black females by Black males in "ghetto settings" was a countercultural norm. In other words, there is nothing spectacular or abnormal in these practices since these Black males are socialized to be criminals and rapists. It is not difficult to see the direct connection between the subculture/counterculture theories of the mid-1970s and the cogitations concerning the Black male super-predator of the 1990s (cf. Bennett, Dilulio, & Walters, 1996; Dilulio Jr., 1995, 1996).

Racial–Sexual Stratification Theory as the Basis of Black Patriarchy

Joyce Williams and Karen Holmes (1981) attempted to create a system of understanding how rape acts as a mechanism to maintain social control and dominance within racial subgroups. Influenced by Lorenne Clark and Debra Lewis's (1977) theory that "[a]ll unequal power relationships must, in the end, rely on the threat or reality of violence to maintain themselves" (p. 176), Williams and Holmes (1981) understood violence as making the racial and sexual stratifications in the United States socially actual and psychologically real. Within every racial group, the violence of sexual stratification "lies in the superior physical strength of the male and is manifested in its ultimate form as rape" (Williams & Holmes, 1981, p. 26). Regarding ethnic or racial stratification, Williams and Holmes (1981) believe such violence is used to suppress revolts and explains why the "military and police are controlled by the dominant system" (p. 26). These two systems operate simultaneously in American society but affect racial minorities as well as white men and women in fundamentally different ways. Attempting to get at the ways that sexual stratification operated within racial and ethnic subgroups, Williams and Holmes theorized that the relationships between all the men and women of white dominant racial groups as well as the relationships in subordinate Black and Brown minority groups were determined by the act of rape.

Rape, or the threat of rape, is an important tool of social control in a complex system of racial–sexual stratification. Fear of rape keeps not only the female in her place, but fear of the accusation of raping a white woman keeps minority males in their place as well.

(Williams & Holmes, 1981, p. 26)

While Black and Brown men were right to fear punishment, lynching, and death for the *inappropriate rape* of white women in a white supremacist system, all women were nonetheless under constant threat of rape from all men because of patriarchy.

All women, regardless of race-ethnicity, live in a white, male-dominated society where the dynamics of male-female interaction are convoluted by the dynamics of racial power. In a racially and sexually stratified society, a high incidence of rape is predictable. Rape symbolizes not only a key element of social control working to maintain the system, but also the anger and violence engendered by such a system. Anglo-females are potentially appropriate victims for Anglo-males and are vulnerable to inappropriate rape by minority males, the latter, no doubt, symbolizing some of the anger and frustration that have grown so naturally in a system of unequal power. Minority females appear to be the appropriate victims of both inter- and intragroup rape. If they are raped by white males, it is assumed that they asked for it or were simply unpaid prostitutes. If they are raped by minority males, police and other public officials have been known to react as if this is typical in-group behavior.

(Williams & Holmes, 1981, p. 27)

Williams and Holmes (1981) suggested that "in raping minority women, minority males frequently are doing no more than imitating the white male" (p. 27). Williams and Holmes found the contracultural analysis of Curtis more amenable to their feminist anti-rape ideology because Curtis eliminated the role attributed to Black women in sustaining subcultures of violence. Contraculture theory emphasized how the sexual aggression and violence of Black males were due to the internalization of white patriarchal norms, not the subcultural values shared by all members of poor Black communities. Black women are outside of the contracultural frame, which is dominated by Black males, so they are depicted as innocent victims rather than participants in violence, as in the work of Menachem Amir. Williams and Holmes (1981) write:

Although the characteristics of a contraculture are not made entirely clear, it is seemingly comprised largely of young, Black, urban males who are in overt conflict with the dominant culture. For example, Curtis explains that the subculture of violence includes some Black females, while the contraculture is primarily a male bastion. By definition, males rape females (most of whom are also Black) outside the contraculture, and this is why "sizable numbers report to the predominantly white American police institution."

(pp. 8-9)

Racial-sexual stratification theory created a feminist account of intra-racial rape that depended on socialization, where "masculinity" became an idea shared between the dominant and subordinate groups. This idea of a shared masculinity, which is not *distinct or separate*, allowed white and Black masculinity to be theorized as the same—both being the origin of rape and sexual assault. Consequently, "the system of racial-sexual stratification has assigned Black females to be victims

and Black males to victimize" (Williams & Holmes, 1981, p. 37). Such a theory allowed the greater frequency of sexual violence, homicide, and deviance in Black communities to be interpreted as the consequence of gender rather than racism and poverty. By offering a feminist analysis in which patriarchy was the engine driving intra-racial gender dynamics, Black masculinity became a hierarchically fixed positionality within the Black race that operated the same way as in the white race due to its mimetic tendencies.

Williams and Holmes (1981) understood that "the Black male is less powerless today than ever before, but he is not powerful. The system in which he has social and economic well-being is still controlled by white males" (p. 30). Because Black males could not escape poverty (ghetto culture) some turned to violence, deviance, and alcoholism, while others adapted by "cultivating an exacerbated male sexuality which represents a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy for whites" (Williams & Holmes, 1981, p. 30). Williams and Holmes (1981) suggest that whites may have initially encouraged the uninhibited sexuality of Black males during slavery for breeding and later to bolster the idea of the Black rapist as a "means of maintaining control over all Blacks as well as over white females" (p. 31). Williams and Holmes (1981) argue that

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.

(p. 31)

In this sense, the sexual mania of the Black male was the creation of white society, a Frankenstein of white male power, that rejected the civility of the white master. While the authors admit that at the time they wrote their book "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" (Williams & Holmes, 1981, p. 35), these claims served as the motivating factors behind Black males' alleged propensity to rape Black women and remain a cornerstone of contemporary intersectional feminist thought.

Despite *The Second Assault: Rape and Public Attitudes* not being well reviewed by sociologists and rape scholars during the 1980s (e.g., Barlow, 1983; Bunting, 1983; Holmstrom, 1983), it has served as the basis of claiming that patriarchy operates in Black and Brown culture in ways that mirror that of whites.² However, rarely did these arguments follow the data presented by Williams and Holmes (1981). For instance, white males had the most feminist definition of rape, meaning that they viewed rape as "sex without the woman's consent" and were the only group to reject the idea that women's behavior was responsible for their rape (Williams & Holmes, 1981, pp. 70-71, 118-120). Black men were suggested to be the most traditional of all the sex groups concerning sex roles

beliefs and, along with Black women, showed the most support for women's liberation over whites and Mexican-Americans (Williams & Holmes, 1981, p. 132). Williams and Holmes (1981) claimed that whites and Black women appeared to be more feminist than previous research had revealed, while "only Black males demonstrated strong support for the belief that women are curious and excited about rape" (p. 134).

Hugh Barlow's (1983) review of *The Second Assault* best summarizes these contradictory findings. He writes:

Demographic factors were significant predictors in 19 of 27 regression equations, but half the time in a direction opposite to that expected; sex-role attitudes, beliefs about male-female sexuality, and minority-related rape risks each predicted some attitudes for some of the samples some of the time—but, again, often in the "wrong" direction.

(p. 949)

Barlow (1983) claims that the authors knew that their data "seem[ed] inconsistent with the theoretical arguments about racial-sexual stratification" (p. 949), but refused to explain or explore why their work seemed to offer support for subculture of violence theories of race. Throughout Williams and Holmes's work there is an insistence that, while white male patriarchy is structurally and theoretically of national and global concern, the Black male is the most pressing social threat to, and political problem for, women.

Black Male Studies as Rupture: Decolonizing Intersectional Theory

The last 30 years of intersectionality theory have shown remarkable continuity with the preexisting theories developed by racist criminologists and white feminists throughout the 1970s. Rooted primarily in the racist construct of Black manhood as imitative, a deviant mimetic imaginary of white masculinity, contemporary intersectional analyses of Black males posit their existence as primarily compensatory. While these theories of Black masculinity have endured for the last several decades, no additional evidence has emerged to support a compensatory account of Black maleness that was put forth in the 1970s. The gender theories that have produced this specific account of Black masculinity as wanting to imitate white masculinity are primarily ideological. As the sociologists Andrea Hunter and James Davis (1994) explain:

Studies of Black women emphasize how out of oppression a unique definition of womanhood was forged, one in which adversity gave rise to strength. However, the discourse around men and oppression focuses on the stripping away of manhood. It is a perspective that casts Black men

as victims and ignores their capacity to define themselves under difficult circumstances.

(p. 21)

The current gender theories begin with the assumption that Black male identity is incomplete—the expression of a negated and distorted form. Black men are interpreted as not being "real" men, but *voids of being* constructed by the discourse others have of them. There is no logical reason for theorizing Black women by their positive attributes while conceptualizing Black males through negative stigmas. One could just as easily point to disproportionate rates of crime, abuse, and deviance among Black women as the elements of abstraction. However, this approach is avoided for Black women and embraced for Black men.

The misandry aimed at Black men throughout society is reflected within *theory*. The theories about Black men in the academy, which are deployed throughout feminist and intersectional theory, reflect the popularly accepted myths about Black males as inferior and violent. Because these descriptions of Black males are called *theory* and are given disciplinary consensus, anti-Black misandry, or "the cumulative assertions of Black male inferiority due to errant psychologies of lack, dispositions of deviance, or hyper-personality traits (e.g., hyper-sexuality, hyper-masculinity) which rationalize the criminalization, phobias, and sanctioning of Black male life" (Curry, 2018, p. 267), is made axiomatic rather than objective. The hatred, fear, and negation of Black males produce frameworks that are set within disciplines and have become the cornerstone of intersectional literature and various feminist theories. While the *empirical evidence* of Black men's attitudes, psychological orientation, and behavior disproving these myths have sometimes been written by feminist authors (e.g., Harnois, 2010, 2014, 2016; Simien, 2006, 2007), these findings have not been allowed to redirect the anti-Black misandry replicated by *theory*.

The politicized constructions of Black males as perpetrators of violence against women generally, but Black women specifically, pay no attention to the empirical incongruence of such projects. Black males have endured being often erased by well-documented histories of rape and sexual mutilation at the hands of white men and women throughout slavery and Jim Crow. For over a hundred years, sociology, psychology, criminology, and anthropology construed Black males as feminine men and apatriarchal. Within their communities, Black boys have suffered heinous amounts of sexual violence at the hands of women, and continue to experience disproportionately high rates of statutory rape and sexual abuse compared to their female counterparts (Curry & Utley, 2018; Hernandez, Lodico, & DiClemente, 1993).

Black men report a higher 12-month prevalence of domestic violence victimization, rape/made to penetrate violence, and sexual coercion where women are committing a vast majority of these sexual and physical violations in the United States (Curry, 2019; Smith et al., 2017). Despite these realities, which are well

documented and evident to those who care to look, intersectionality theory has remained unquestioned concerning the psychologism at work in the constructing of Black men and boys as “patriarchal men committed to dominance,” or the assumptions operating to substantiate the compensatory logic of “Black masculinity.” This inability for Black men to be understood as *substantively different* from “men” of the dominant group is what has been referred to as intersectionality’s Black male problem (Curry, 2017; Oluwayomi, 2020).

Despite the great variety between Black men throughout American society, “many of the studies that theorize about Black manhood fail to elucidate the meaning of manhood for African American men from different socioeconomic backgrounds who undoubtedly grapple with racism but do so via a range of different vantage points” (Hammond & Mattis, 2005, p. 116). Conceptualizing Black males through negation, or their lack of manhood under racism, permits caricature to stand in for character. Starting with pathological presumptions about Black males allows theorists to imagine them as tragic figures who can only attain their humanity by enacting violence against other groups. This pathological theorization of Black male identity is not an attempt to conceptualize the humanity or cognition motivating Black men and boys, but a speculative psychology of Black male criminality. These abstractions attempt to explain the deviant behavior and the disproportionate rates of violence among a small number of Black males as character traits of the whole group.

Numerous studies have shown that Black men emphasize *manhood over masculinity* and view Black manhood as an interdependent and spiritual connection to their families and communities. Black manhood is a proactive and adaptive identity that anticipates and reflects upon the obstacles and barriers placed before Black men. Notwithstanding the barriers confronting Black men and boys collectively, Black males have developed a social and political consciousness that emphasizes the uplift of the whole community, sexual egalitarianism, and the importance of fatherhood within the Black community.³ There is overwhelming evidence showing that the values of Black manhood are positive, functional, and humanist. However, these empirical findings have not been integrated or accounted for within contemporary intersectionality theory given intersectionality’s emphasis on the criminological and the mimetic.

Black Male Studies merely exposes this ideological determinism operating within our current gender paradigms and provides the substance for the categories being deployed in intersectional analyses of Black manhood. Black Male Studies argues that Black manhood exceeds the conceptual foundations of gender theory. Because Black males are understood as adaptive and dynamic entities, Black Male Studies requires a reconstituting of the object—a freeing of constructs applied to what is thought of as object and not subject and consequently how one comes to imagine the character and attribute the traits of the group being theorized. The Black male “is not-man, but he demonstrates himself as something more than the representations offered by the West’s imagination” (Curry, 2017, p. 227). The

liminality of the Black male is not set upon a geography of thought, but rather introduces cosmogonic considerations of Black male realities. As I have explained previously, Black males perceive “the world from an undisclosed place where thinking is needed but that theory/thought/reason has not yet corrupted” (Curry, 2017, p. 227).

Conclusion

Intersectionality has utilized various feminist theories that continue subculture of violence thinking about Black men and boys. While intersectional feminists often claim that intersectionality leads to a clearer social analysis of power and hierarchies throughout society and within groups, the categories and claims of intersectionality fail to distinguish themselves from previously racist theories that sought to explain race, class, and gender based on subcultural values. This chapter is the first to interrogate the theories used to construct the gendered categories and the assumptions behind Black male positionality under intersectional analyses. Contrary to its promises for more liberated Black identities, intersectionality merely replicates the pseudo-science of racist criminology and presents decades-old theories as cutting-edge gender analyses. In short, while intersectionality has allowed Black women to create nuanced experiences and epistemological accounts of Black womanhood, the very same theory has confined Black male experience to the perpetration of violence and defined Black manhood as *lesser*—merely the exemplification of white masculinity’s pathological excess.

Notes

- 1 Two years after *The Man-Not* introduced a reading of intersectionality alongside MacKinnon’s (1989) dominance theory, Devon Carbado and Cheryl Harris (2019) incorrectly insisted they were the first to consider this relationship.
- 2 I could only find three published reviews of this work (Barlow, 1983; Bunting, 1983; Holmstrom, 1983).
- 3 There is overwhelming evidence that Black men are the most gender-egalitarian and politically progressive group in the United States (Blee & Tickamyer, 1995; Gooley, 1989; Hunter & Davis, 1992; Hunter & Sellers, 1998). There is also substantial evidence that Black men are the best fathers and father children in their community who are not their progeny (Jones & Mosher, 2013; McDougal III & George III, 2016).

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12

BETWEEN CRITICAL (WORLD) PSYCHOLOGY AND TRANSDISCIPLINARY PRAXIS

Robert K. Beshara

Critical psychology is a critical attitude *vis-à-vis* psychology, but the book's vision is to go further than that: beyond both mainstream and critical (Euro-American) psychology, and even beyond the discipline of psychology altogether. How is your chapter contributing to the actualization of a critical (world) psychology premised on transdisciplinary praxis?

Hans Skott-Myhre and Kathleen Skott-Myhre

The chapter “Subversions of Subjectification” (Chapter 3) goes well beyond a critique of mainstream psychology to call into question the very foundations of psychological concepts such as agency, self, and the individual unconscious. Traversing 21st-century capitalism, the chapter founds its critique of psychology, not in a general critical attitude, but in a definition of critical as inherently Marxist. While its field of inquiry and proposals for praxis are transdisciplinary, its underlying analytics are derived from a Marxist analysis of capitalism. From this perspective, psychology is seen as an instrument of capitalist appropriation, rather than separable from a critique of how capitalism functions. The chapter suggests that a Marxist analysis of 21st-century capitalism must engage the ways in which the mode of production has shifted and morphed, inclusive of modes of subjectivity. To do this, it engages a transdisciplinary set of analytics that include Marxism, post-Marxism, Taoism, post-humanism, post-colonial critique, post-modernism, and theories of immanence. From this analysis a political project is proposed that is intended to be responsive to current capitalist modes of appropriation and control.

of *πίσος*, criticism of mainstream psychology via Ignacio Martín-Baró, Virgilio Gaspar Enriquez, Jacques Lacan, and Slavoj Žižek and not in the way of William S. Burroughs, but in the way of the Frog that witnesses the rise of a new Hong Kong identity. Transdisciplinary praxis goes beyond the boundary of knowledge, beyond truthing and de-truthing; it is a return to its origin: a testimonial.

Tommy J. Curry

"Decolonizing the Intersection" (Chapter 11) dares to insist that the assumptions of Black manhood offered by intersectionality depend on errant feminist theorists dedicated to the scientizing of the myth of the Black male rapist. Because intersectionality depends on a psychologism of male domination, the theories used to construct the idea of a Black masculinity, which imitates white masculinity, must be interrogated. We can only begin to rethink the racialized male once we have reformulated his fundamental drives, his motivations and desires, for humanity. If Black theories like intersectionality merely hide the origin of their Eurocentric assumptions behind the identity of Blackness or Black woman-ness we will never be truly critical of our thinking and myths serving as the basis of our theories. The sacred creeds must be thoroughly investigated for their remnants of colonial thought just as our othered categories of being are. My chapter introduces Black Male Studies as the foundation of this decolonial mandate by bringing history, sociology, criminology, and philosophy to bear on the question of "how should we think of Black manhood?"

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