

TAKING IT TO THE PEOPLE:
TRANSLATING EMPIRICAL FINDINGS
ABOUT BLACK MEN AND BLACK
FAMILIES THROUGH A BLACK PUBLIC
PHILOSOPHY

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Public philosophy has often meant a practice of thinking and commenting on the realities of the world that exceed the original boundaries of philosophy as a discipline. For Black scholars, however, scholarship has always been public and engaged the realities and sufferings of Black people and the world at large. Rather than debate the merits of whether or not philosophy should be publicly engaged, especially when considering the matter of race, this essay argues that a Black public philosophy is needed to correct the spread of misinformation, racist propaganda, and ill-informed theorizations given to the public under the banner of the Black public intellectual. The authors believe that Black public philosophy, a practice that offers theories to the public rooted in empiricism, historical findings, and an analysis of Black people's political circumstances in the United States, is necessary to socialize Black Americans away from the pathological accounts offered to account for their deviance and disadvantage.



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“the definitive role of the black public intellectual [is] interpreting the opaquely black heart of darkness for whites.”

—Adolf Reed

Public philosophy—its meaning, impact, and regard as philosophy—has been the topic of both trepidation and concern throughout the academy since the turn of the century. As scholars become more focused on the pragmatic and real-world consequences of academic scholarship to oppressed and marginalized communities, the task set before disciplines was how to assess scholarship (e.g. publications, speeches, podcasts, & blogs) that not only directly engaged the public, but concerned itself with problems specific to the public. Traditional academic disciplines simply did not know where to establish borders between academic publication and public intellectualism. Some pragmatist scholars such as Nathan Crick argued that it is fallacious thinking to suggest that “the Ivory Tower exists as a place with high walls that shelter an elite class of thinkers kept separate from the practical problems of their age.”¹

Such separations, Crick explains, are the result of the modern university’s adherence to Aristotelian delineations between the *epistème*, which is thought to be contemplative knowledge like that of science or philosophy, and *technè*, which is productive knowledge like that of art or rhetoric.² Inspired by the work of John Dewey, Crick concludes that the aesthetic production of knowledge—like that of art or rhetoric that engages and is produced by the work, *technè*—is always a form of *praxis*. It was not until May of 2017 that the American Philosophical Association offered a statement of support urging philosophy departments in American universities and its organizational members to recognize public philosophy, or a practice of philosophy that “engages with contemporary issues as well as work that brings traditional philosophies to non-traditional settings” as a

¹ Nathan Crick, “Rhetoric, Philosophy, and the Public Intellectual,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 39.2 (2006): 127-140, 130.

² *Ibid.*

“growing site of scholarly involvement.”³ Other traditions of academic production however require no such analytical exegesis or apologia regarding their relationship with the public and its problems.

Black Studies, for instance, founded in 1968 at San Francisco State University by the sociologist Nathan Hare begins with a quite different assumption. Hare argued that Thorsten Veblen’s *The Theory of the Leisure Class* and *The Higher Learning in America* give an account of American education as a product of a leisure class mentality that sought to “conspicuously display their apartness from the manual worker through the attachment of prestige to non-productive endeavor. Thus education, which was largely private at the time and afforded only by the well-to-do, emphasized the abstract as over against the practical.”⁴ University education socialized students to reproduce middle class goals and behaviors. Hare writes, “As middle class aspirants began to emulate the leisure class, and education was largely socialized, the principle of exclusiveness was reinforced by the need to stern the flood of recruits to professional occupations.”⁵ Unlike the white-bourgeois university still processing the consequences and trying to halt the influx of Black scholars into the university, Hare conceptualized Black Studies as a socially engaged and activist endeavor. To concern one’s self with the impact that racism has on the Black community was to engage in activist scholarship that not only reoriented mainstream white theories about Black Americans, but sought to re-socialize Black Americans all-together.⁶

Over the last several decades however the direction and goals of Black Studies have been largely questioned. Authors such as Fabio Rojas have argued that the financial contributions of foundations like Carnegie and Ford redirected the activist and nationalist focus of Black Studies scholarship towards more discursive and multicultural

³ American Philosophical Association, “APA Statement on Valuing Public Philosophy,” <https://www.apaonline.org/page/publicphilosophy>

⁴ Nathan Hare, “The Challenge of the Black Scholar,” *The Black Scholar* 1.2 (1969):58-63, 58.

⁵ Nathan Hare, “The Battle for Black Studies,” *The Black Scholar* 3.9 (1972): 32-47, 32.

⁶ Joyce Ladner, *The Death of white Sociology: Essays on Race and Culture* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1973).

formulations of American race and racism.⁷ Similar analysis has been put forth by the philosopher Sylvia Wynter who has argued that “...Black Studies as a whole, were to find their original transgressive intentions defused, their energies rechanneled as they came to be defined (and in many cases, actively to define themselves so) in new multicultural terms as African-American Studies; as such, this field appeared as but one of the many diverse ‘Ethnic Studies’ that now served to re-verify the very thesis of Liberal universalism...”⁸ Black Nationalism and the Black Arts Movement’s attempt to redefine the Human was thwarted by the rise and popular acceptance of Marxism and Black feminist thought and literature which “took as one of its major targets the male and macho hegemonic aspect of the black nationalist aesthetic and its correlated Black Arts Movement, even where black women had played as creative a role as the men...”⁹ This bourgeois-ization of Black Studies committed newly minted Black scholars to endorsing Black feminist historiographies and theories of Black politics which resulted in a distancing and endorsement of the stereotypes of poor young Black men. As Wynter explained in “No Humans Involved”:

it is this category of the jobless young black males who have been made to pay the "sacrificial costs" (in the terminology of Rene Girard's *The Scapegoat*, 1986) for the relatively improved conditions since the 1960s that have impelled many black Americans out of the ghettos and into the suburbs; that made possible therefore the universal acclamation for the Cosby-Huxtable TV family who proved that some black Americans could aspire to and even be drawn inside the

⁷ Fabio Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement became an Academic Discipline* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2007), 131-166.

⁸ Sylvia Wynter, “On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory, and Re-Imprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being, of Désetre,” in *Not Only the Master’s Tools: African-American Studies in Theory and Practice*, eds. Lewis R. Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2006), 107-169, 109.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 110.

sanctified category of Americanness in its present form.¹⁰

The consequence of the growth of a Black intellectual class in the university and society more generally was a distancing from the condition of poor young Black males, and ultimately an endorsing of the phobic-inspired lens of whites who viewed Black males more generally as dangerous, violent, and anti-woman. Despite the historical antecedents of these views residing in the early white supremacist writings of white feminists, segregationists, and racist white sociologists, this pathologization of Black men and boys has been identified by Elaine Brown as a “new racism” which is particularly anti-[Black] male.¹¹ According to Brown, the targeting of Black men and boys remains undiagnosed among Black feminists because their solidarity around woman-hood utilizes an anti-male ideology that excludes Black men from the reformist and coalitional ethos of gender studies, and specifically works against forming a revolutionary Black praxis.¹²

The Black public intellectual has been scrutinized over the last several decades for presenting inaccurate and in some cases pathological views of the community and audience they claim to represent. For example, the political theorist Adolph Reed has claimed that the intellectual progenitors of the Black public intellectual are not Black radicals, but more accommodationist conservative Black figures like Booker T. Washington. For example, Washington had to give lip-service to the racial inferiority of Black people popular with white progressives at the turn of the century to secure their financial backing.

There is a tension that becomes apparent in the figure of Booker T. Washington for the Black public intellectual—that of the dual audience, according to Reed. Prominence, wealth, and visibility are not based on the relevance of the Black public intellectual’s

¹⁰ Sylvia Wynter, “No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to My Colleagues,” *Voices of the African Diaspora; The CAAS Research Review* 8.2 (1992): 13-16,

¹¹ Elaine Brown, *The Condemnation of Little B: New Age Racism in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002).

¹² Elaine Brown, “Proud Flesh Interview: Elaine Brown,” *Proud Flesh: A New Afrikan Journal of Culture, Politics & Consciousness* 1.2 (2003): 1-14.

pronouncements to Black audiences. Black people largely do not control media outlets or possess the nepotistic structures that determine the ascent of an individual Black scholar at will. Because the institutions cultivating Black public intellectuals are managed by white liberals (progressives, feminists, etc.), white liberals direct the discursive content, determine the audience, and provide the platforms for Black public intellectuals. This reality, writes Reed, “reflects an important complication facing black intellectuals; they need to address both black and white audiences, and those different acts of communication proceed from objectives that are distinct and often incompatible.”¹³ Reed suggests that the definitive posture of this class of intellectuals is one of consensus designed to attack the mythical threats of ideological extremism. “Their political utterances exude pro forma moralism, not passion. Their critiques are only easy pronouncements against racism, sexism, homophobia, anti-Semitism or equally easy dissent from a lame Afrocentricity that has no adherents among their audience anyway,” writes Reed.¹⁴ The pronouncements of Black public intellectuals, especially in regard to race and gender, are impervious to empiricism and fact, because the stringent critique of the alleged cultural foundations, the Black episteme so to speak, is mythological. As Reed explains, “The posture of the black public intellectual is a claim to speak from the edges of convention, to infuse mainstream discourse with a particular “counter-hegemonic” perspective at least implicitly linked to one’s connectedness to identifiably black sensibilities or interests...[this] posture is flimflam that elides the dual audience problem.”¹⁵

No clearer case exists in the minds of the authors than the problem that is our point of focus in this article—the theoretical and popular conceptualization of the Black male and his relationship to the Black family at large. Adolf Reed’s infamous essay names a select cadre of scholars whom he takes to be representative of misrepresentations

¹³ Adolph Reed, “What are the Drums Saying Booker?: The Curious Role of the Black Public Intellectual,” in *Class Notes: Posing as Politics and Other Thoughts on the American Scene* (New York: The New Press, 2000), 77-90, 81.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 83.

the Black public - their intelligence, their actual conditions, and their cultural foundations of knowledge. However, the growth of the Black public intellectual class over twenty years later has been simultaneously accelerated by technology and social media and also less attended to because the Black public is no longer solely engaged by media appearances and speaking engagements, but through Twitter, Facebook, and various iterations of popular blogs and periodicals.

Today, Black public intellectualism is rewarded often in place of a scholar's communication to the public of empirical research or findings that substantiate the position, rhetoric, and expertise of said Black public intellectual. Instead of research, it is not uncommon to find moral pleas against the Black community - condemnation framed as socio-cultural critique and commentary of the Black community for not adhering to the politics or moral commitments of Black scholars in the academy.

Said differently, Black public intellectualism is not an endeavor which aims to communicate the findings of Black intellectuals; rather, the Black public intellectual takes on a charismatic persona of an oracle. Such individuals are usually legitimized by a doctorate and a position in an academic institution, but rarely seek to share actual research that offers evidence of a much narrower scholarly expertise. Instead the Black public intellectual, dedicates much of their time offering opinions on any number of fields be it economics, geopolitics, or contemporary race relations in the United States, regardless of the actual field their doctorate may have been obtained. Often the "expertise" of the Black public intellectual is connected to buzzwords or commonly accepted tropes like: white supremacy, misogynoir, intersectionality, or other identity rhetoric and how these tropes can be used to explain a seemingly infinite number of social phenomena and political crises. Currently, Black public intellectualism often undergirds its progressive gender politics through an unquestioned promulgation of pathological theories of Black men and boys as dangerous, hyper-masculine, and sexually predatory.

We argue here that public philosophy is a necessary component of the resocialization and education of the Black public

away from their fear and criminalization of Black males. The use of empirical findings and evidence amongst scholars in the academy is limited because humanities disciplines operate within paradigms that elide empirical evidence in favor of narratives that reify the experience of the individual scholar or experiences of the group the scholar claims to be a member of. Black public intellectualism requires no rigor or evidence to substantiate the claims of their public pronouncements. Replacing research with morality, public intellectualism regarding American race relations and the problem of the Black male succeeds by the extent to which it extends feminist generalizations of Black men as hyper-masculine and predatory. We argue as well that public philosophy is a more efficient means of countering the pathological theories of Black men and boys held not only by society at large, but intra- racially, or amongst members of the Black public themselves. By directly engaging the Black public through an explanation of alternative theories concerning the sociological condition and possible futures of Black men and boys in the United States, the authors argue that Black public philosophy can reorient the gender frames used to explain Black male incarceration, homicide, and deviance beyond models which assume hyper-personality traits and deficits amongst this population.

The Relationship between the Caricatures of Black Males in Gender Theory and the Stereotypes Propagated throughout Social Media

Unlike white men, who still occupy many of the positions in universities throughout the country, Black and Brown men are the two most under-represented groups in the U.S. academy. According to Anne McDaniel, a demographer concerned with the Black gender gap in education, “the historical trend in college completion for blacks is not marked by the reversal of a gender gap that once favored males, as it is for whites, but rather entails a longstanding female

advantage.”¹⁶ Black men have always been outnumbered in undergraduate as well as graduate ranks in the United States. The economist Amadu J. Kaba explains: “By the mid-1970s, more black females had enrolled in colleges and universities in almost all levels than black males. In 1976, of the 1,033,000 black students enrolled in higher education institutions, 563,100 (54.5%) were women and 469,900 (45.9%) were men.”¹⁷ “In 1976, of the 943,400 black students enrolled in undergraduate institutions, 512,700 (54.3%) were women and 430,700 (45.6%) were men. . . In terms of graduate enrollments, out of the 78,500 black students enrolled in graduate programs in higher education institutions in 1976 (excluding non-resident aliens), 46,500 (59.3%) were females and 32,000 (40.7%) were males.”¹⁸ Since 2000, Black men have comprised less than 40% of the associate, professional, and doctoral degrees awarded to African-Americans.¹⁹ According to the most recent American Association of University Professors report, there are roughly 48,000 Black male and about 70,000 Black female professors at Title IV colleges or universities in the United States.²⁰

Unlike the history of white Americans in higher education, Black men have always been outnumbered by their female counterparts in college enrollment and degree attainment. The gender inversion between Black males and Black females in the professoriate is a result of the dire under-representation of Black males historically in the student body. While Black men are amongst the most underrepresented groups in the academy, Black men are not gifted

¹⁶Anne McDaniel, Thomas A. DiPrete, Claudia Buchmann, and Uri Shwed, “The Black Gender Gap in Educational Attainment: Historical Trends and Racial Comparisons,” *Demography* 48 (2011): 889-914, 891.

¹⁷ Amadu J. Kaba, “Progress of African Americans in Higher Education Attainment: The Widening Gender Gap and its Current and Future Implications,” *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 13.25 (2005):1-32, 2.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 2012* (Washington D.C: U.S. Department of Education, 2012), <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=72>.

²⁰ John W. Curtis, *The Employment Status of Instructional Staff Members in Higher Education, Fall 2011* (Washington D.C.: American Association of University Professors, 2014), 54-55.

with the voice and recognition of being the most marginalized. As a group they are denied a standpoint epistemology. Despite always being outnumbered by their female counterparts in education, the targets of affirmative action in hiring and graduate education are racialized female groups. This ideology is so contrary to fact that many gender scholars will argue adamantly that Black males enjoy various privileges despite their physical under-representation and being a race-sex minority. Because they are undesirable, their lesser numbers as students and professors are multiplied such that they are imagined to comprise the majority of Blacks in universities and classrooms despite all evidence to the contrary.

This demographic disparity has had dire consequences for both the production and authoring of theories concerning Black men and boys in the United States. The under-representation of Black male bodies has corresponded to the erasure of Black males' voices—their experiences—within gender theory. Black males do not constitute a significant population as students or professors in universities. As such, theories about Black men and boys are written from the perspective of those groups who interact with and interpret this group.

The fear, the trepidation, the internalized hatred, whites and many Blacks have of lower class Black males expresses itself in the psychoanalytic motivations attributed to Black males throughout history. Today, this gender disparity is reflected in the kinds of theories and interpretive schemes used to explain Black men's higher rates of poverty, unemployment, downward mobility, and violence. Hyper-masculinity, a term originally used to express a female personality disorder Black men acquired in female headed households, due to the absence of Black fathers, has now become a catch-all phrasing used to explain both the beginning and end of Black male malfeasance.²¹ Black public intellectualism now interprets Black

²¹ Allan Barclay & D.R. Cusumano, "The Study of Man: Testing Masculinity in Boys without Fathers," *Transactions* 5 (1967): 33-35; Patricia Moran & Allan Barclay, "Effects of Father's Absence on Delinquent Boys: Dependency and HyperMasculinity," *Psychological Reports* 62 (1988): 115-121; Henry Biller, "A Note on Father Absence and Masculine Development in Lower Class Negro and white Boys," *Child Development* 39.3 (1968): 1003-1006; Ulf Hannerz, *Soulside: Inquiries*

males—America’s enduring social problem—to white liberals. Discussions of Black men and boys that remind America of its failure, pointing to its systematic repressive apparatus that refute any claim the U.S. has to being a democracy, are denied within disciplines and by various journals. Michael Eric Dyson, for example, argued on the popular television show *The View* that “13% of Black men voted for Donald Trump; part of that is patriarchy and sexism. Black men, who believe it or not, believe some of the same cooked over values of patriarchy.”²²

No evidence is needed to reach such a conclusion. There is no need to survey the attitudes, the political or sociological motivation of the minority of Black men who voted for Trump, or even a consideration of the complexity for Black men asked to vote for a candidate like Hillary Clinton, who said that young Black men were super-predators, “kids with no conscience, no empathy, we can talk about why they end up that way, but first we need to bring them to heel.”²³ Dyson does not acknowledge nor even recognize the irony of suggesting that Black men are sexist and patriarchal for not voting for Clinton when over 80% of Black men in fact did vote for her, or consider that any issue could be more important than Clinton’s gender to a Black male voting public. 13% did not follow suit, so the 4% of Black women that voted for Trump or the 6% of educated Black women that did as well is inconsequential to his analysis.²⁴ The explanation for any behavior of Black men and boys that is outside the political morality of progressives or deemed undesirable is explained to be caused by patriarchy, misogyny, or hyper-masculinity.

Black males remain as objects—the phobias of other groups’

into Ghetto Culture and Community (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 118-120.

²² Michael Eric Dyson, “The View June 4, 2018 ABC: Michael Eric Dyson; View Your Deal,” Youtube Video, 26:45, June 4, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=099jmHp_fm.

²³ Hillary Clinton, “1996: Hillary Clinton on “superpredators” (C-SPAN),” Youtube Video, 1:15, February 25, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0uCrA7ePno>.

²⁴ We assume that Michael Eric Dyson is using CNN’s “Exit Poll,” November 23, 2016, <https://www.cnn.com/election/2016/results/exit-polls>.

imagination. Such accounts found throughout Black masculinity studies suggest that Black men are primarily mimetic beings who seek to imitate the character and power of their white male oppressors. Contemporary theories concerning Black men and boys begin with the assumption that they are sexist, homophobic, and misogynists. Despite decades of evidence showing that Black men have always been more gender progressive than white men and women, and over the last decade have actually surpassed Black women's gender consciousness in many regards,²⁵ there is a tendency to conceptualize Black males as defective, in need of repair, and dangerous.

To be clear: though we have attitudinal and survey data reaching back to the early 1980s showing that Black men are not only not sexist, but the most gender progressive group in America—a disposition we argue emerges from their experience of anti-Black misogyny—liberal arts disciplines endorse gender theories that cast Black males as pathological, misogynistic, and aspiring patriarchs.²⁶

²⁵ Evelyn Simien, *Black Feminist Voices in Politics* (New York: SUNY Press, 2006), and "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. Also see 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 Catherine Harnois, "Race, Gender, and the Black Women's Standpoint," *Sociological Forum* 25.1 (2010): 68-85, 82-84.

²⁶ Ruby Lee Gooley, "The Role of Black Women in Social Change," *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 13.4 (1989):165-172; Kathleen M. Blee and Ann R. Tickamyer, "Racial Differences in Men's Attitudes about Women's Gender Roles," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 57 (1995): 21-30; Andrea G. Hunter and Sherrill L. Sellers, "Feminist Attitudes among African American Women and Men," *Gender & Society* 12.1 (1998):81-99; Andrea G. Hunter and James Earl Davis, "Constructing Gender: An Exploration of Afro-American Men's Conceptualization of Manhood," *Gender & Society* 6.3 (1992): 464-479; Catherine Harnois, "Intersectional Masculinities and Gendered Political Consciousness: How Do Race, Ethnicity and Sexuality Shape Men's Awareness of Gender Inequality and Support for Gender Activism?," *Sex Roles* 77 (2017):141-154; and 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.

They have politically shared the values of intersectional political thinking, supported women candidates, and endorsed the importance of women socially more than any group of men in the United States, and to a greater extent than white women for decades, and have surpassed Black women in this regard as well over the last decade. Despite this evidence, there is a tendency in the academy to recodify many of the tropes we reject as racist into gender theories. For example, while one may be apt to reject the idea that Black men are dangers to women as little more than a racist caricature, there is a compulsion to accept this very same claim once it is expressed as a gendered idea where Black men—because they are hyper-masculine—aim to dominate and oppress women to reclaim their masculinity.

Anti-Black Misandry and Black Public Culture

America is inundated with negative stereotypes of Black men and boys through media, journalism, and even Black public intellectual culture. It is not uncommon for major Black online journals to endorse articles and opinion pieces that depict Black men as violent deviants and dangerous misogynists. One of the most popularly circulated and discussed recently was Damon Young's "Straight Black Men are the White People of the Black Race." In this article Young writes "It feels counterintuitive to suggest that straight black men as a whole possess any sort of privilege—particularly the type of privilege created for and protected by whiteness. In America, we are near or at the bottom in every relevant metric determining quality of life... Intraracially, however, our relationship to and with black women is not unlike whiteness's relationship to us. In fact, it's eerily similar."²⁷ Completely overlooking the effects of incarceration, poverty, previous exposure to violence, or even the reality of Black male victims of domestic abuse and child (sexual) abuse, Young offers assertion upon assertion concerning straight Black men. He suggests for instance that

²⁷ Damon Young, "Straight Black Men are the White People of the Black Race," *VSB.com*, September 9, 2018, <https://verysmartbrothas.theroot.com/straight-black-men-are-the-white-people-of-black-people-1814157214>.

We're the ones whose beatings and deaths at the hands of the police galvanize the community in a way that the beatings and sexual assaults and deaths that those same police inflict upon black women do not. We're the ones whose mistreatment inspired a boycott of the NFL despite the NFL's long history of mishandling and outright ignoring far worse crimes against black women. We are the ones who get the biggest seat at the table and the biggest piece of chicken at the table despite making the smallest contribution to the meal.²⁸

Young suggests that Black men's disproportionate rates of abuse are evidence of Black men's privilege and power over Black women. He suggests that Black men as a group pose a danger to the women and girls in their communities, saying "And nowhere is this more evident than when considering the collective danger we pose to black women and our collective lack of willingness to accept and make amends for that truth."²⁹ A subsequent article by Veronica Wells suggested that the only appropriate word to describe Black men's relationship to Black women is terrorist. Wells argues "for years, decades even, Black women have been trying to tell the entire Black community that one of our biggest threats in the world is the very Black men we've birthed."³⁰

This idea was echoed by two leading Black feminists, Amber Phillips and Jamilah Lemieux, visiting The Breakfast Club when Amber Phillips said "Black men are the number 2 cause of death for Black women under 50."³¹ On social media hashtags like #BlackMenAreTrash become popular to collectively express the

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Veronica Wells, "Because Harasser is Just Not Enough: Why I Consider Calling Black Men Terrorists," *MadameNoire.com*, September 27, 2017, <http://madamenoire.com/842761/because-harasser-is-just-not-enough-why-i-consider-calling-black-men-terrorists/>.

³¹ Jamilah Lemieux and Amber Phillips, "Jamilah Lemieux & Amber Phillips Discuss Cultural Journalism with The Breakfast Club," Youtube Video, December 13, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QcF8Pbmz1bQ>.

pathological descriptions of cishet Black males. Early this year, #TheRootArticles was created to collectively condemn the slanted stories blaming Black men for homophobia, domestic abuse, and the collective suffering of the Black community.

There are countless examples that could be used to demonstrate this point, though a literature review of the misandric misrepresentations of Black men is not the purpose of this article. However, we believe it is necessary to both contextualize and analyze these stereotypes. Public debates and conversations concerning Black men and women is nothing new to Black journalism. Unlike these pundits, previous generations of Black intellectuals recognized the vulnerability of Black males within patriarchy and often published academic articles in Black magazines like *Essence*, *Jet*, or the *Negro Digest*. In contrast today social media and the proliferation of online blogs have drawn consensus around Black men as violent, patriarchal, and homophobic without any real appeal to evidence, whether sociological or psychological. Today, stereotypes and first-person accounts or *theory* dictate the conclusion of discussions about Black men. In the 60s for example, the *Negro Digest* published "The Frustrated Masculinity of the Negro Male" by Dr. Nathan Hare.³² This article argued that American society created obstacles specifically designed to prevent Black men from being providers and protectors for their families. Hare argued that one of the main components of patriarchy depended on the ability for men to work, and by preventing Black men the ability to work or find employment, it prevented them from being recognized societally as men.³³ Quoting Killens, Hare explains: "The one thing they will not stand for is for a black man to be a man."³⁴ Well into the 1980s, Black scholars such as Alvin Poussaint, a professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, continued to publish social commentaries backed by clinical studies on Black male personality, deviance, and stereotypes.³⁵ Poussaint

³² Nathan Hare, "The Frustrated Masculinity of the Negro Male," *Negro Digest*, August 1964, 5-10.

³³ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁵ Alvin Poussaint Jr., "What Every Black Woman Should Know About Black Men," *Ebony* 37.10 (1982): 36-41.

emphasized that the growing economic and educational gap between Black men and women would produce various negative associations of Black men generally with lower class violence and deviance. This economic gap placed Black males in a downward trajectory that impacted their life chances and specifically increased their representation in the prison industrial complex. Mass incarceration displaced Black men from their families and communities. Robert Staples, a noted sociologist of Black families, cautioned that the societal negation and demonization of Black men not only affected how the world saw the Black male, but also how Black mothers and caretakers socialized their Black sons.³⁶

Throughout the 1980s, *Ebony* magazine kept a close eye on the widening gap between Black men and women throughout American society suggesting that the inequalities between uneducated, poor, and unemployed Black men and Black women would produce problems concerning the more educated and socially mobile Black female counterpart.³⁷ The economic displacement of Black men became even more noticeable in the 1990s. Dr. Poussaint explained that “Middle-class Black women complain that they feel devalued by Black men who are sexist and treat them disrespectfully. These women are also troubled by Black men who reject them by courting White women, claiming Black women as a group have ‘an attitude.’ Although they are not preoccupied with Black women courting White men, Black men do, in turn, complain of being devalued by Black women.”³⁸

Following decades of a deliberate program to institutionally decimate Black men and boys economically, politically, and socially, Black males did in fact emerge as an underclass in America.³⁹ At the dawn of the 21st century, mass incarceration, poverty, and contemporary gender theories emphasizing the disproportionate

³⁶ Robert Staples, “The Mother-Son Relationship,” *Ebony* 39.12 (1984): 74-79.

³⁷ Editor, “How to Close the Widening and Dangerous Gap between Black Men and Women,” *Ebony* 40.4 (1985): 60-66.

³⁸ Alvin Poussaint Jr., “Stop the Male Bashing and Infighting,” *Ebony* 48.4 (1993): 86-95, 89.

³⁹ James B. Stewart and Joseph W. Scott, “The Institutional Decimation of Black American Males,” *Western Journal of Black Studies* (1978):82-92 for the relationship between Black male incarceration and societal viability.

deviance of Black men and boys successfully synchronized Black masculinity to criminality and danger.⁴⁰

Black male studies scholars and Black family scholars have long understood the relationship social conditions and institutional white racism have to theory. There has long been an inter-disciplinary and multi-methods consensus concerning the perceived danger and violence Black men pose to society amongst (white) social sciences.⁴¹ Social dominance theorists, psychologists looking at the perceived size and aggressiveness by whites of Black men, economists evaluating agentic behavior, and even political scientists evaluating American attitudes concerning violence all show that Black men are perceived as more violent and dangerous than white men and women and Black women.⁴² The stereotypes of Black men which insist that Black men are more dangerous, more sexually predatory, and by effect phobogenic and anti-social, drive many of the policies and perceptions of Black men by whites and other Blacks. It is the culmination of these sex specific phobias that denote what Black male studies scholars identify as 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-

⁴⁰ For a discussion of how stereotypes about Black males being criminals and dishonest effect employment, see Ronald B. Mincy, eds., *Black Males Left Behind* (Washington D.C.: The Urban Institute Press, 2006).

⁴¹ Lawrence E. Gary, ed., *Black Men* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications Ltd., 1981).

⁴² Jim Sidanius and Felecia Pratto, *Social Dominance: An Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Melissa McDonald, Carlos D. Navarrete, and Jim Sidanius, “Developing a Theory of Gendered Prejudice: An Evolutionary and Social Dominance Perspective,” in *Social Cognition, Social Identity, and Intergroup Relations*, Roderick Kramer, Geoffrey Leonardelli, and Robert Livingston, eds., (New York: Psychology Press, 2011), 189-220, 190; Robert W. Livingston and Nicholas A. Pearce, “The Teddy Bear Effect: Does Having a Baby-Face Benefit Chief Executive Officers?,” *Psychological Science* 20.10 (2009): 1229-1236; Colin Holbrook, Daniel Fessler, and Carlos David Navarrete, “Looming Large: Racial Stereotypes Illuminate Dual Adaptations for Representing Threat versus Prestige as Physical Size,” *Evolution and Human Behavior* 37 (2016): 67–78; Corrine McConaughy and Ismail White, “Racial Politics Complicated: The Work of Gendered Race Cues in American Politics,” Working Paper.

https://apw.polisci.wisc.edu/APW_Papers/mcconnaughy_white_2015.pdf.

masculinity) which rationalize the criminalization, phobics, and sanctioning of Black male life.”⁴³ Much of the theory that is publicly supported as Black radicalism merely reorients decadent white theories of Black men’s lack and anti-sociality as intersectional gender theory.⁴⁴

This recodification of racial claims as gendered claims is often utilized in interpreting incidents of abuse or the disproportionate rates of intimate partner violence or intimate partner homicide. In this way, particular incidents of violence by Black males are taken to be demonstrations of some prior ontological presumption about Black masculinity that would not hold up to scrutiny, or be entertained as legitimate, if made as a racial proposition about Blacks. Because racial claims are interrogated sociologically by comparing the behaviors or conditions of whites and Blacks in ways that gender claims about Black males are not, there is an assertion that Black men simply are deviant and violent without any comparison to their female counterparts or other groups who inhabit similar circumstances. Black men have never been the leading cause or the second leading cause of death for Black women, and certainly not through intimate partner homicide. This statistic was not only retracted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, but also revised and excised from several governmental reports and publications as an error.⁴⁵ As Carolyn West, a psychologist

⁴³ Tommy J. Curry, “Killing Boogeymen: Phallicism and the Misandric Mischaracterizations of Black Males in Theory,” *Res Philosophica* 95.2 (2018): 235-272, 267; and William A. Smith, Chanel Jones, Jalil Bishop, Tommy J. Curry & Walter Allen, “You Make Me Want to Holla and Throw Up My Hands: Campus Culture, Black Misandric Microaggressions, and Racial Battle Fatigue,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* (2016):1-21.

⁴⁴ See Tommy J. Curry, *The Man-Not: Race, Class, Genre, and the Dilemmas of Black Manhood* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2017), and “Haterz in the Midst: Reflections on the Sequestration and Vitiating of African Male Identity in the Academy,” *Illinois Committee of Black Concerns in Higher Education Journal* (2000): 28-33, and “Michael Brown and the Need for a Genre Study of Black Male Death and Dying,” *Theory and Event: Special Issue on Michael Brown and Ferguson* 17.3 (2014), and “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.

⁴⁵ Jacquelyn C. Campbell et al., “Assessing Risk Factors for Intimate Partner

specializing in intimate partner violence, writes: “Black Americans are not inherently more violent than other ethnic groups. In fact, many of the racial differences disappear, or become less significant, when researchers control for socioeconomic status.”⁴⁶ Other scholars have been clear that framing the disproportionate rates of intimate partner violence as solely belonging to perpetration by Black males is erroneous. Multiple experts on domestic violence in the Black community have realized that the failure to recognize bidirectional abuse, Black male victimization, and Black female perpetration is ideological.

The research provides no support for a conclusion that African Americans have an inherent biological or cultural propensity for violence; rather, the stressors and oppressive systemic forces that disproportionately affect African Americans place them at greater risk for domestic violence...despite the overrepresentation of African American male victims of domestic violence and female-perpetrated homicides, there is a dearth of literature on Black male victims. This omission seems to reflect an assumption that males alone are responsible for intimate violence and are not themselves harmed by abuse. On the contrary, data show that for African American males as well as females, “involvement in abusive relationships is likely to result in depression, stress, and

Homicide,” *NJJ Journal* 250 (2003): 14-19, 18; Glenn Kessler, “Fact Checker: Holder’s 2009 Claim that Intimate-Partner Homicide is the Leading Cause of Death for African American Women,” *The Washington Post.com*, December 18, 2013, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2013/12/18/holders-2009-claim-that-intimate-partner-homicide-is-the-leading-cause-of-death-for-african-american-women/?postshare=9491470635302968&tid=ss_fb; Eric H. Holder Jr., “Attorney General Eric Holder Speaks at Domestic Violence Awareness Month Event,” U.S. Department of Justice, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/speech/attorney-general-eric-holder-speaks-domestic-violence-awareness-month-event>.

⁴⁶ Carolyn West, “Living in a Web of Trauma: An Ecological Examination of Violence among African Americans,” in *The Wiley Handbook on the Psychology of Violence*, eds. Carlos A. Cuevas and Callie Marie Rennison (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), 649-665, 649.

alcohol abuse”—outcomes placing the entire family system at risk.⁴⁷

Social context, ecology, and the antecedents to Black male violence are thought to be irrelevant when theorizing about Black males. The overwhelming assumption of Black men’s hyper-masculinity stands in for the conditions that give rise to intimate partner violence and deny the realities of bidirectional abuse amongst Black men and women historically. For over forty years, various studies have shown intimate partner violence and homicide rates between Black men and women to be comparable.⁴⁸ Domestic violence is a complex social issue with multiple causes and correlations in the Black community.⁴⁹ As Shareefah N. Al’Uqdah, Calisda Maxwell, and Nicholle Hill explain: “IPV [Intimate Partner Violence] is not attributable to one singular cause, but is a product of multiple factors. These factors include: residing in disadvantage neighborhoods, unemployment, low SES, experiences of racism, and the social, political, and historical remnants of racism that have resulted in a process of projective identification within the African American community.”⁵⁰ The racist stereotypes surrounding Black

⁴⁷ Kathleen Malley-Morrison, Denise A. Hines, Doe West, Jesse J. Tauriac, and Mizuho Arai, “Domestic Violence in Ethnocultural Minority Groups,” in *Family Interventions in Domestic Violence*, ed. John Hamel and Tonia L. Nicholls (New York: Springer, 2007), 325.

⁴⁸ C.A. Field & R. Caetano, “Longitudinal Model Predicting Mutual Partner Violence among White, Black, and Hispanic Couples in the United States General Population,” *Violence & Victims* (2005): 499-511; and R. Caetano, Ramisetty-Mikler, S., & Field, C. A., “Unidirectional and Bidirectional Intimate partner violence among White, Black, and Hispanic couples in the United States,” *Violence & Victims* 20 (2008): 393-396; and Robert Hampton & Joan Kim, “Domestic Violence in African American Communities,” in *Domestic Violence at the Margins: Readings on Race, Class, Gender, and Culture*, ed. Natalie J. Sokoloff, Christina Pratt (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 127-141.

⁴⁹ Tommy J. Curry and Ebony A. Utley, “She Touched Me: Five Snapshots of Adult Sexual Violations of Black Boys.” *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* 28.2 (2018): 205-41.

⁵⁰ Shareefah N. Al’Uqdah, Calisda Maxwell, and Nicholle Hill, “Intimate Partner Violence in the African American Community: Risk, Theory, and Interventions,” *Journal of Family Violence* 31 (2016): 877-884, 880.

men enable white institutions as well as Black intellectuals to scapegoat Black males as the sole perpetrators of violence in Black communities. These pundits continue to assert that IPV resides in the pathological masculinity of Black men. Poverty, racial oppression, and trauma are not explanatory factors for these critics. Empiricism, or a basic knowledge of intra-racial violence amongst Blacks, is not required to speak about Black men or boys, or their relationship with their own communities. As the aforementioned authors state: “Blaming African American men solely for the high rates of IPV in the African American community diminishes service providers’ willingness to counteract the larger societal factors that also contribute to IPV within the African American community, thereby maintaining such negative environments that perpetuates IPV.”⁵¹ The continued support for the ill-informed theories and negative caricatures of Black men by scholars and social media commentators merely perpetuates the conditions and dis-affective personality disorders linked to intimate violence in Black communities.

Black public philosophy plays a vital role both in deconstructing the racist mythologies which accumulate around the Black male body, and perhaps more importantly, in engaging the Black public as to the ever-present dangers of accepting theories without context. It is the job of the Black public philosopher to marry theory to the lived realities of the Black community and connect the antecedent structural inequities to behaviors that are thought to reside within Black (male) deficiencies. This kind of public philosophy ruptures the popularity of ongoing cultural mythologizations of Black male life by showing that the consensus based popularity of these theories, which assert themselves to be correct despite the evidence, is rooted primarily in the confirmation bias of white racist institutions and policymakers that propagate its intellectual and disciplinary stature.

⁵¹ Ibid., 879.

Destroying the Myth of Black Male Non-Involvement with the Black Family

Currently, there are a number of controlling images of the Black family led by negative stereotypes perpetuated by the media and social media. The former president Barack Obama repeated this “myth of the absent Black father” throughout his presidency suggesting that the absent Black father is responsible for the problem of the “single Black female household” in a Father’s Day address in 2008 and again in 2013 at Morehouse’s commencement when he urged Black male graduates of Morehouse to stay in the home and be good fathers.⁵² Even the noted cultural critic bell hooks has written that “Since so many black males uncritically accept patriarchal thinking, they continue to believe that children do not need a fathers care as much as they need mothers... Parenting is a difficult, arduous, time-consuming job that men are not eager to do. In this way black males are no exception. From slavery on many black males have chosen to avoid parenting. They breed children they have no intention of raising.”⁵³ This long enduring myth continues century long myths concerning Black men as deserters, pimps, and womanizers. The racist caricature of Black men as hyper-sexual becomes a peculiar masculine trait that endangers women and children in these narratives.⁵⁴

The idea that most if not all Black men are deserters and do not care about their family and children has been disproven a number of time over the years. Most notably, the recent CDC 2013 Father Involvement study reported that among the 10,403 father surveyed, a

⁵² Politico Staff, “Text of Obama’s fatherhood speech,” *Politico.com*, June 15, 2008, <https://www.politico.com/story/2008/06/text-of-obamas-fatherhood-speech-011094>;

Barack Obama, “Read President Obama’s Commencement Address at Morehouse College,” *Time.com*, June 2, 2016, <http://time.com/4341712/obama-commencement-speech-transcript-morehouse-college/>.

⁵³ bell hooks, *We Reel Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* (Routledge: New York, 2004), 97-98.

⁵⁴ Lawrence E. Gary, “Introduction,” in *Black Men* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications Ltd., 1981), 1-17.

higher percentage of Black fathers were more involved in the day to day activities with their child when compared to white fathers.⁵⁵ The study reported that 27 percent of Black fathers took their children to or from activities every day compared to 20 percent of white fathers. Forty-one percent of Black fathers helped their children with their homework every day compared with 29 and 28 percent of Hispanic and white fathers, respectively. In spite of the overwhelming evidence that shows Black men are actively involved in their children's lives many people are invested in perpetuating the myth of the absent Black male father. An article published in *The Dallas News* entitled "Why does the myth of the absent black father persist?" states that "Our society has a negative impression of black men that is automatically imposed on black fathers. When black boys exhibit negative behaviors, there is often an automatic assumption of an absent father."⁵⁶ The negative impressions of Black men are predicated on stereotypical views of Black men shown repeated in the media. One example of the willingness of people to embrace these stereotypes can be found on the many blog posts and YouTube videos with Black women still holding on to the myth due to their personal experiences with men. One video posted in response to the CDC report argued that since there was a high number of Black men not in the home there is no possible way they are involved in their children's lives.⁵⁷ Reading the commentary under this video you can clearly see there are a large number of people who agree with her assessment of why the CDC study is incorrect purely based on their experience. One person posted (M Night) in response to the aforementioned video that: "At the end of the day, Black people just have to look around at their families, friends and acquaintances and see that Black men aren't in the home

⁵⁵ Jo Jones, PhD.; Williams D. Mosher, PhD; Division of Vital Statistics. *Father Involvement with Their Children: United States, 2006-2010*. National Health Statistics Reports. CDC. No 71, Dec 20, 2013.

⁵⁶ Louis Harrison and Anthony Brown. "Why does the myth of the absent black father persist?" *Dallas News*.
<https://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/commentary/2017/06/16/myth-absent-black-father-persist>. 2017 accessed April 7, 2018.

⁵⁷ Cynthia G, "Did The CDC Really Debunk The Myth Of Absentee Black Fathers?," *YouTube.com*, March 28, 2018, <https://youtu.be/tln1Jlb9tcw>.

actively raising their kids.”⁵⁸ There were many comments which echo similar sentiments about the absences of Black men in the family unit.

Previous research done by Robert Staples studying Black families clearly demonstrated that Black men have always played an active role in the lives of their children and other children in the community whether they were married to the mother or not.⁵⁹ In studies by Gillette (1960) and Daneal (1975) which are both cited by Staples, he points out that Black middle-class fathers participate more in their child’s care than do their white counterparts and are very child-oriented.⁶⁰ Collin’s essay, “The Meaning of Black Motherhood,” published in Staples’s *Black Family Studies* discussed the role that Black men in the communities play by stepping in and becoming father figures to Black boys whose fathers are not in the picture.⁶¹ Collins refers to these male figures as “Other Fathers,” which is very similar to what she describes as “Other Mothers,” women in the community who fulfill the mother role when the mother is not in the picture. Other Fathers provide the financial support while Other Mothers provide emotional support and guidance. One must ask why we readily accept the term/concept of Other Mothers but are resistant to the idea that Other Fathers exist in the Black community. Although a number of these studies are from the 70s, they demonstrate the role Black fathers have historically played in the Black family.

These findings are far from antiquated. A recent study by McDougal and George investigated the role of social fathers in the Black community.⁶² Twenty-four Black social fathers were interviewed regarding the role they played in the life of the children and why they became involved in the rearing of the children. Social

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Robert Staples. *The Black Family: Essays and Studies*, (Belmont: Carnegie Learning 1999).

⁶⁰ Robert Staples. “Masculinity and Race: the Dual Dilemma of Black Men.” *The Journal of Social Issues*. 1978. 169-183.

⁶¹ Patricia Hill Collins, “The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture,” in *The Black Family: Essays and Studies* (Belmont: Carnegie Learning, 1999), 156-166.

⁶² Serie McDougal III and Clarence George III, “I Wanted to Return the Favor”: the Experiences and Perspectives of Black Social Fathers.” *Journal of Black Studies*. 2016, Vol 47(6) 524-549.

fathers are defined as “resident or non-resident stepfathers, mothers’ romantic partners, grandfathers, uncles, and many other family associates who demonstrate parental behavior and act as fathers or father figures to a child.”⁶³ The results revealed there were four major reasons Black men became involved raising non-biological children: package deal concept, the need for a male role model, passing on a blessing, and biological father inadequacy. This article provides a qualitative example of the current way Black males view their roles in the Black family. A recent article by Brandan McLeod investigates the impact that spending time in prison had on the amount of parental involvement Black men had with their children.⁶⁴ The results from this study indicated that spending time in prison did not have a negative impact on the amount of parent involvement Black fathers had. Said differently, even when Black fathers are incarcerated during their lifetime they still remain actively involved in the lives of their children. In an effort to correct the stereotypical view of the Black family, Black Public Philosophy can play a major role by providing an outlet for scholars who study the relevant empirical research to speak openly about the issues facing the Black community backed with evidence.

Black public philosophy needs to draw from the insights of early Black family scholars who understood that internalized racism and disciplinary training affect how we think about Black families and the people that comprise those units. La Frances Rodgers-Rose’s *The Black Women* clearly articulated how racial oppression—not personal choices or cultural pathology—created the condition of the current state of the Black family.⁶⁵ Rodgers-Rose’s book not only provides evidence of personal stories but also empirical evidence to support the narrative. The Black family has been a subject of study for many years and has largely been viewed through the pathological lens of white social scientists. Joyce Ladner’s book *The Death of White Sociology* gives

⁶³ Ibid., 526.

⁶⁴ Branden A. McLeod, “Penalties: Examining Fathers’ Involvement amidst the Collateral Consequences of Previous Criminal Justice Involvement.” *Urban Social Work*, Vol 1(2) 144- 164.

⁶⁵ LaFrances Rodgers-Rose, *The Black Woman* (Sage Publication: 1980).

verifiable evidence of how white social scientists have always viewed Black people as well as Black families as deviant.⁶⁶ Ladner's argues the measures being used to evaluate Black people and Black families were based on racist scientific measures and did not accurately depict the Black Family. Today we see a resurgence of similar rhetoric when it comes to the study of Black families and the responsibility has landed solely on the "degenerate" Black male body.

Concluding Thoughts

Public philosophy is necessary to try to combat some of these negative stereotypes being perpetuated by false information based on personal experiences and the internalization of stereotypes rationalized through oral histories, propaganda, and bias. While it is something of a cliché, and vacuous with regard to the aforementioned program of misinformation to suggest that philosophy is the pursuit or love of wisdom, there is a sense of philosophy that can directly address the internalization of racist stereotypes amongst the Black community. In "On Derelict and Method," Tommy J. Curry argues that "philosophy is an activity of inquiry into the world which is supposed to guarantee its practitioners some level of assuredness in the ways we interpret the realities before us."⁶⁷ Unlike other traditions of philosophy that proceed from the intuition of the *a priori* or the moralization of their political values as axiomatic and virtuous, our view of philosophy attempts to offer some schematic association between empirically situated truths and what we can reasonably suggest should guide our interpretation of reality given these truths. Far too often Black philosophy finds itself to be dictated by political ideals that are not substantiated by the information available to scholars. This is often the case with how Black philosophers understand the problem of

⁶⁶ Joyce Ladner. *The Death of White Sociology: Essays on Race and Culture* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press: 1973).

⁶⁷ Tommy J. Curry, "On Derelict and Method: The Methodological Crisis of African-American Philosophy's Study of African-Descended Peoples under an Integrationist Milieu," *Radical Philosophy Review* 14.2 (2011):139-164, 144.

racism and whiteness given what we know about implicit bias, racial formidability, and social dominance, but also implicates our understandings of categories we deploy in analysis or advocacy in the real world, like gender. Many Black philosophers working in the areas of race, class, and gender simply do not appeal to history, sociology, economics, or the archives of Black activism throughout the centuries, to ground their predictions about Black poverty, sexual violence amongst Blacks in the United States, etc.⁶⁸ As such, what is often reflected in peer-reviewed articles and subsequently disseminated to the public are particularly slanted historiographies isolated from criticism or investigation by the consensus of particular constituents that regard any inquiry into the assumptions of their particular frame as offense. Decades ago, Stuart Hall warned that the very concept of identity could not be trusted as the foundation of cultural studies or a full account of social phenomena:

Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. Moreover, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity - an 'identity' in its traditional meaning (that is, an all-inclusive sameness, seamless, without internal differentiation).⁶⁹

Public philosophy problematizes the unitary narrative of the self that seems obvious. It is never the case that all women, or all Black women, or the Black woman, or Black masculinity is in fact apparent

⁶⁸ See Tommy J. Curry and Max Kelleher, "Robert F. Williams and Militant Civil Rights: The Legacy and Philosophy of Preemptive Self-Defense," *Radical Philosophy Review* 18.1 (2015): 45-68; and Tommy J. Curry and Gwenetta Curry, "On the Perils of Race Neutrality and Anti-Blackness: Philosophy as an Irreconcilable Obstacle to Thought," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, (Forthcoming).

⁶⁹ Stuart Hall, "Who Need Identity," in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, eds. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 1996), 5.

and acting in unison with historical force at the moment of examination. As Hall explains, “The unity, the internal homogeneity, which the term identity treats as foundational is not a natural, but a constructed form of closure, every identity naming as its necessary, even if silenced and unspoken other, that which it 'lacks'.”⁷⁰ There is no one experience that represents all others. In a sharp departure from the identitarian logics deployed in Black public intellectualism, both as the medium of discourse and the calculus of analysis, the authors suggest that Black philosophical inquiry into social phenomena—*Black public philosophy*—when based on empirical evidence, should emerge as tentative but reproducible. By this the authors are suggesting that philosophical analysis, when applied to material conditions and limited by the parameters of concrete social phenomena, should emerge as a possible theory of the relationship of circumstances amongst many other hypotheses made possible by the consideration of facts. Said differently, “If we take African-American philosophy to be philosophical activity, then we should expect, by necessity of being philosophy, that Africana philosophy should result in the same methodological rigor—some assuredness in the ways that Africana people have used to interpret their realities.”⁷¹ How we think about and consider a problem can produce any number of possible interpretations given the evidence, but attending to the evidence, previous literatures, and findings, regarding a problem should not lend itself to infinite varieties of counter-factual conclusions. For example, while there may be several different ways to theorize the disproportionate rate of intimate partner violence amongst Blacks in the United States, the previous literature and CDC reports documenting the existence of Black male victims since the 1970s rule out theories that suggest there are no Black male victims of IPV or Intimate Partner Homicides (IPH). Given the closeness of the number of reported victims, theories that can explain what has previously been described as bidirectional violence amongst Black couples and families should be given preference to those that cannot. Why? Because given what is known, the theory has to both postulate a tentative cause but

⁷⁰ Stuart Hall, “Who Needs Identity,” 5.

⁷¹ Tommy J. Curry, “On Derelict and Method,” 144.

limit itself to what is actually known about that which is theorized.

Public philosophy can serve as a corrective to the mainstream mythologies posing as theory accepted as authoritative in the Black community. In the case of Black men and boys, this mythological discourse is utilized to deleterious effect. In our contemporary landscape to be a Black public intellectual of recognizable status is to endorse a political intersectionality that advocates for a coalition ethos prioritizing the marginalization of other identity groups above the concrete disadvantage and suffering of specific racial and ethnic minorities. Said differently, the coalitional logics of today's popular intersectional norms demand an engagement and endorsement of women generally, LGBTQ battles for recognition, and a condemnation of racism and sexism, but discourage radical programs that build solidarity with indigenous struggles, migrant workers, or Third World anti-colonial movements. This is of course not to say that the issues facing LGBTQ persons or women are not important, but rather to argue that the violence and exploitation of these groups are explained by the force of systems that have in many ways been developed and tested on Black Americans. This explanation does not negate the experiences or marginalization of these groups, rather they focus the attention not on the identitarian calculus of marginalization, but the material consequences of actual, material, oppression. This means that HIV risk, domestic violence, and homicide are analyzed based on their occurrence and propensity in relation to poverty, neighborhood, and socialization of the groups involved, not the mystical interiorization of patriarchy, homophobia, toxic masculinity, etc.

As such, the dominant narratives of Black political progress are progressive, not radical; they require no actual empirical verification or explanation beyond the generalizable gesture to the identity of a selected group of perpetrators. If Black men disproportionately commit violence against women, then Black masculinity is anti-woman and misogynistic. Even though one could imagine that Black men are the majority of the perpetrators of domestic violence against women, it does not hold that the majority of Black men are perpetrators of domestic violence. In theory however

it is this stereotype, or fallacy, that is accepted as true. As Wynter explained a decade ago, the Black feminist intervention into gender centered on the macho caricatures of Black men as the negative element in the Black community. Today, it is this caricature of Black men as violent that explains why Black communities are disproportionately dangerous, homophobic, and misogynistic. Scholars who argue that Black males, and consequently the larger Black community, should be understood through a lens that prioritizes racism, classism, and urban segregation (i.e. structures, institutions, etc.) are considered to be regressive, or worse yet designated as 'hotepts,' because they do not endorse the misandric stereotypes of Black men and boys, and the alleged dangers they pose to the Black family, and the women and children in their communities more broadly.⁷²

⁷² <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/hotep>