BLACK "MANHOOD" AS XENOPHOBES
An Ontological Exploration of the Hegelian Dialectic

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There are continuities of masculinity that transcend cultural differences. (Gregor, 1985, p. 209)

Often the history of our struggle as Black people is made synonymous with the efforts of Black males to have patriarchal power and privilege. . . . Until Black people redefine in a nonexist revolution-ary way the terms of our liberation, Black women and men will always be confronted with the issue of whether supporting feminist efforts to end sexism is inimical to our interests as a people. (hooks, 1989, p. 178)

Too many Afrikan American scholars have looked at the Black situation in America from a European sociological framework, and in doing so, their work has been instrumental in distorting reality. . . . Therefore, without the proper tools to analyze, many Black men have defined their lives as Black duplicates of the white male ethos. (Madhubuti, 1990, pp. 60-61)

Black masculinist scholarship cannot afford to accept, approve, and adopt the same cultural, social, and political agendas as traditional White masculinist scholarship. The two areas of gender theory share some commonalities, however, there is a distinction

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that emerges at the intersection where gender meets culture (Connor, 1995). Similarly, feminist and masculinist theories do not begin with the same pretext; however, the two should be equifinal with a teleological end grounded in liberation (hooks, 1981, 1995b). All feminist theories proceed with reference to an oppressed condition. Certainly, all masculinist theories cannot begin this way. So, it is not the aim of masculinist scholars to propose methods by which men can free themselves from matriarchal subjugation. But, both sets of theories do seek to define and liberate the self, whether for individual or community well-being.

Clearly, the disciplinary perspective of gender theorists colors the individual discussions of gender discourse in general and masculinist scholarship in particular. I am no different. The communicationist posture this article adopts presumes that identity is cocreated via interaction. Consequently, masculine reality is considered to be socioculturally constructed and maintained (Hecht, Collier, & Ribeau, 1993). It is important to note that postmodern and postcolonial gender theoreticians have effectively argued against the establishment of an "essentialist" way of knowing (Dyson, 1993, 1996; Gilroy, 1995; hooks, 1989, 1995b; West, 1993). This is an epistemology characterized by an unchallengable and unchanging approach to African American cultural particularity. Gilroy (1995) launches a surprisingly broad-based indictment against Black nationalist thinkers as proponents and self-proclaimed gatekeepers of Black authenticity. Although I cannot agree that all Black nationalist thinkers believe they are spokespersons for "true Blackness," it is important to remind ourselves that gender theories cannot rightfully reduce Blackness (or Whiteness for that matter) to a singular perspective. There are certainly variegated perspectives that contribute to the foundations of communicated Black and White existences; these perspectives must be considered when constructing liberatory masculinist theory.

Presently, a major segment of scholarship pertaining to masculinity is anything but liberatory for the African American community. Within this article, I will explore how the ongoing national conversations about Black gender identities are encapsulating and
defining Black masculinity and manhood. This discussion will be divided into two parts, with each section followed by a critique: the European American perspective/analysis and the African American perspective/analysis/response. The article will end with implications and future directions for Black masculinist research. I do not intend for this article to be completely definitive but rather a heuristic step toward exploring the communicative and conceptual dimensions of Black masculinity and its incumbent xenophobia of Black manhood.

THE EUROPEAN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE/ANALYSIS

Whether it is the intent of European American thinkers to impose a universal, hegemonic view of masculine reality on the world is not the question. Anything that is not labeled with a culturally descriptive prefix is most often naively accepted and considered appropriate for general consumption by scholarly and nonscholarly audiences. As a result, it becomes the sustaining voice of all Americans regardless of culture until contested and many times empirically proven otherwise. The European American scholarly perspective on gender has crystallized its stance over the years. Hapgood (1979) commented almost two decades ago about the natural order of gender hierarchy, and his ideas were very reminiscent of eugenicist ideology. He contended that many societies have been described as matrilineal (i.e., being able to trace one's lineage through the mother's line and back to women as queens) but that no evidence exists that suggests that women as a group have ever ruled over men as a group. Hapgood concludes from this that it must be the natural order of the universe that allows men to remain as patriarchs. Therefore, it is their responsibility to protect and save their families, communities, and countries from instability and ultimate depletion.

Various fundamentalist organizations such as the Promise Keepers have continued the tradition of assigning men to the role of family patriarch. Christian organizations like this one use the Bible
to support their claims to a predesigned hierarchy (Trent & Colson, 1996). The Nation of Islam has also been charged with endorsing patriarchy. In Ain't I a Woman, hooks (1981) explains that E.U. Essien-Udom, a representative of the Black Muslims, observed that the feminine ideal was to be understood as the women's recognition that the man is the primary breadwinner and head of the household. The Black female embrace of this notion of male dominance was also commented on by hooks. She protests against maintaining this sense of "glorified manhood" (p. 109) within the Black community. In a subsequent work titled Killing Rage: Ending Racism, hooks (1995b) challenges all masculinist scholars to redefine the masculinist posture toward the solidarity of the Black family and Black male-female relationships. She, like too many other gender theorists, makes the mistake of presuming that books like Stoltenberg's (1994) The End of Manhood: A Book for Men of Conscience are appropriate critiques and prescriptions for restoring gender justice to all communities. These texts have no regard for cultural particularity. Stoltenberg contends that men socially construct "women acquisition" networks in which they find themselves accountable and loyal to other men while treating women as commodities to be acquired, spent, and jettisoned. This diagnosis cannot be applied whole cloth to all masculine behavior, and at the same time, it cannot be denied that this attitude is present within the Black community. Whereas I would not agree that environment predetermines behavior, social constructionism argues that context does influence behavior. This might explain why several African descendants in America have adopted this commodification approach. Nonetheless, it is interesting that the literature is replete with support of this phenomenon being indicative of the European American male ethos. This particular masculine analysis, dominated by European American males, describes this male ethos as being preoccupied with power, material acquisition, competitiveness, and hedonism (Ani, 1994; Connor, 1995; Goldberg, 1976; Gregor, 1985; Hapgood, 1979).

Identifying people as resources is nonunique in an American economy driven by an ongoing rivalry between manufacturers of consumer products and services. Consultants, trainers, and organi-
zational researchers constantly refer to people as human resources that must be properly managed for optimum productivity. Even the personnel offices of major corporations and public industry organizations are still labeling their departments human resources. This subliminal message suggests that people are to be manipulated to achieve desired ends, even if that means “biting one’s tongue” to appear politically correct. Political correctness is an accommodating and culturally sensitive approach to human interaction, which is not received well by White males. Thibodaux (1994) is one among several authors who writes about the lunacy of political correctness, proposing that this exhausting code-switching behavior be eradicated and/or not taken seriously. Jackson’s (in press) cultural identity study provides empirical evidence that European American males do not feel the need to code switch. The research findings of his triangulated study conclude that code switching (or what his study coins the *negotiation of cultural identity*) is a minority-group phenomenon and not considered necessary behavior for European Americans. African American men have historically felt the need to function with a double consciousness or a negotiated cultural identity that is constantly in flux from one cultural identity position to another. This was and is still being done with the understanding that complete denial of either frame of reference will restrict alternatives, choices, interaction, personal growth, and financial security (Akbar, 1990; Harper, 1996; Ogbonnaya, 1994; Staples, 1982; Wilson, 1987). The reported findings of Orbe’s (1997) recent series of phenomenological studies indicate that Black men are constantly “playing the part” in Black-White communication episodes. These results concur with that of Jackson’s (in press) research and lend further credence to the idea that communicative code switching is a minority group phenomenon.

Ambivalence is not positively perceived by the African American male community. It complicates the ontological landscape, announcing the answer before the question has been asked. It also appears to be an innocent solution to intercultural communication incompetency (Collier & Thomas, 1988; Hecht et al., 1993) but simultaneously lessens the significance of African American cultural particularity. The problem with endorsing this paradigmatic
solution is the implied communication competence standards that define normal and proficient behavior as White-sanctioned behavior. Hence, abnormality is a power-laden attachment to nondominant cultural behavior. The real questions to be considered are the following: Who determines competence and by what standards? Is not competence always going to be defined by the most powerful interlocutor? What does the theory of communication competence say about its authors' worldviews? It could be argued that there are more similarities than differences among African American and European American males, and this may be true in several instances. But, the reality is that European American men have not experienced estrangement from and fragmentation of an integral cultural self. Their humanity has not been questioned and their freedoms remain unsullied, producing a different sensibility with respect to how they view the world. The Black masculine subject is concerned about validation. The question is who validates the Black male's masculinity? Is it one or a combination of the following: White males, Black females, other Black males, or some other operating force?

Fanon (1967) argues that masculine ontology is designed to explain the human condition from the vantage point of the White man; therefore, others' existences are only validated via Whiteness (p. 110). Fanon also indicates Hegel's (1899/1956) contentions regarding self-consciousness, which conclude that self-consciousness is a dependent and interactive phenomenon. Hegel and O'Neill (1996) philosophically assert that persons are dialectically juxtaposed and serve as mirrors validating the presence of the other. As a result of this juxtaposition, when the mirror image moves, the other must do the same or else one of the two becomes displaced because the counterpart can no longer serve its validating function. There are three obvious strategies that, when employed, may satisfy the existential equation: recede, proceed, or maintain the same position. Receding involves retracting and reconstituting an entirely new stance and defending it. To proceed would be to reorient one's position to the new space defined by the moving image. Maintaining the same position is a stagnant, indifferent choice. After a long history of acquiescence and accommodation, the first
strategy is what Black masculine behavior seeks to accomplish as it assumes the authority to define itself. Immediately, this resistance to conformity poses a challenge to a deeply rooted American hegemonic patriarchy owned by White men. It is perceived as an unacceptable type of disobedience. And the media performs a ritual drama that accents and confirms the perceived barbarity and delinquency of African American males as an attempt to chastise them for their digression.

In an effort to uncover the causes and motivations for counterproductive masculine behavior, Goldberg's (1976) narrative analysis points to Freudian interpretations of deviancy. His psychohistoric interpretation of masculine behavior provides a useful explanation of macho rigidity. Goldberg is one of very few masculinist thinkers who accents xenophobic tendencies of masculine subjects. Xenophobia is generically defined as the extreme fear of strangers almost to the point of hatred. When applied to masculine studies, xenophobia refers to the fear males have of reaching manhood—a mature, responsible, spiritually grounded self-conscious state. Goldberg, Gray (1992), and Kimmel (1995) come the closest to a healing-centered discourse concerning masculinity that may be applicable to Black masculine liberation. Even still, these theories are framed in culture-general rather than culture-specific terms. Gilmore (1990) introduced to culture-general masculine discourse three very important facets that already existed in Black masculinist research: submasculine distinctions, culture specificity, and rites-of-passage studies. His anthropological examination of varying cultural definitions of manhood is one of the first efforts European American masculine studies have made to diversify social meanings. By distinguishing between masculinity and manhood, though the explanation was a bit unclear, Gilmore makes another significant contribution. For years, Jawanza Kunjufu, Haki Madhubuti, Naim Akbar, Molefi Asante, and Nathan Hare have sought to establish culturally grounded African rites of passage to be transported from Africa and used for African American boys and girls. But, Gilmore concentrates his writings on cross-cultural differences in rites-of-passage ritual ceremonies, which is yet another refreshing research feature to his credit.
The European American perspective of Black masculinity has generally been equated with White masculinity, presuming that American culture is universally lived and understood the same by all American inhabitants. Of course, this is faulty logic and is one of the major points of contention presented in Black masculinist research by Black male scholars (Akbar, 1990; 1995; Madhubuti, 1990). The limitations of European American masculinist research can be characterized as follows:

1. poses as universal or culture general,
2. maintains a competitive male ethos,
3. seeks validation from males only,
4. is patriarchal,
5. is materialistic or acquisition oriented, and
6. is hegemonic or nonambivalent.

The strengths of the most contemporary European American masculine studies are that many of them are psychologically, sociologically, and relationally driven research studies.

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE/ANALYSIS/RESPONSE

When considering the African American analysis of Black masculinity, it is critical that the Black feminist and womanist views be discussed. The Black male scholars’ views are an integral component to the discussion involving analysis and implications for Black masculinist future research.

Traditional feminist perspectives concentrate on identifying the dynamics associated with patriarchal control and limited access to resources. African American feminist scholarship has continued this approach without acknowledging the fundamental space that African American males occupy in feminist discourse, until recently. VanZant (1996) and hooks (1995b) are two leading proponents of community healing, advocating more of a coalescence between the two gender counterparts and less of a commentary on
the Black male plight (Dyson, 1993; Gibbs, 1988). A description of the cultural conjoinment Black men share in the lives of Black women is generally declining in Black feminist discourse (Staples, 1973; Steady, 1981; Young, 1989). This conundrum raises complex questions about the scope and objectives of contemporary gender construction in this area of Black feminist scholarship. Because the primary objective of Black feminist discourse must be liberation (Aldridge, 1990; Collins, 1991; Gordon, 1987; hooks, 1995b; Walker, 1983), these studies must address negative behaviors and symptomatic conditions of Black men and must also propose remedies for healing. If there is no proposed cure then these inquiries become monotonous replicas of extant research and, therefore, are insignificant (hooks, 1995b). It is antithetic to the community-oriented African American cosmology to disengage the Black male community when defining the Black female self, and vice versa. Any analysis of the African American male identity is incomplete without critical discussion of the role the African American female plays in the African American male’s self-definition (Madhubuti, 1990). Each must maintain an integral involvement in the other’s development, validation, and healing process. So, rather than apply the Western competitive ethos to the African American ontological condition, progressive African American gender scholarship must find solutions, which will assist in restoring ma’at to African American womanhood and manhood suffrage.

Often, Black feminist discourse typifies Black men as patriarchal (Collins, 1991), sexual conquistadors, macho rigid (Andersen & Hill-Collins, 1994), less oppressed (Wallace, 1970), “unlikely providers/protectors” (hooks, 1995b), and, paradoxically, as healing agents (Vanzant, 1996). The scholarly perspectives taken by African American gender theorists are as follows: literary/biographical, postmodern/counterhegemonic, Afrocentric/neonationalist, political/conditionist, and popular cultural. Many contemporary literary authors such as Terry McMillan, Julia Hare, bell hooks, Susan Taylor, and Iyanla Vanzant are creating commentary. This valuable tradition has been paralleled by contemporary Black male writers such as Nathan McCall, Herb Boyd, John Edgar Widemann, Richard Majors, Don Belton, Walter Mosley, and Amiri Baraka.
The contribution these types of writings offer is providing an emic narrative analysis that is self-reflective and rooted in lived experiences.

The leading writers of the postmodern approach to Black masculinity are Michelle Wallace, Paul Gilroy, bell hooks, Cornel West, Gloria Hull, Marlene Connor, Philip Brian Harper, and Michael Eric Dyson. Although they vary in their interpretations of Black masculinity, each of them engages in a revolutionary paradigmatic critique that is already being applied to other human phenomenon. Postmodern theory critically examines the functionalist presumptions of Stalin’s dialectical materialism—the notion that the substance of something can be measured by what it is not. This absolutist stance toward cultural reality is reminiscent of Hegel’s dialectic (Hegel & O’Neill, 1996). Essentially, the internalized xenophobic tendencies of African American masculinity represent an attempt to create, develop, manage, define, and defend a space for a self-constructed African American manhood. Dyson’s (1993) postmodern analysis theorizes about this communicative space and assesses what gives voice to the Black masculine subject. Dyson implies that the Black masculine subject is characterized by a distinctive physiognomy. Nonverbal and verbal manifestations of this culturalized manhood find their ultimate premium in their uniqueness. It is not just articulated by the clothes one wears but how they are worn. The style of the hair, the masculine posture, and the nonintimidated persona are all external indices of psychocultural transformation. This is an important shift from other-defined manhood to self-defined manhood. By accepting agency, Black males embrace the possibility of reinventing themselves. Until this is accomplished, however, any rebirth is stagnated and ambivalence is invited into their universe of survival strategies.

Afrocentric/neonationalist conceptions of Black masculinity propose a distinction between being a boy, a male, a man, and a masculine subject (Akbar, 1990; Madhubuti, 1990). Akbar (1990) explains the distinctions best:

A male is a biological entity. . . . One need not look beyond the observable anatomical characteristics to determine that he is a
male. . . . Maleness is also a mentality that operates with the same principles as biology. It is a mentality dictated by appetite and physical determinants. This mentality is one guided by instincts, urges, desires, and feelings. He is in this mentality a whining, crying, hungry, and dependent little leech. . . . The next stage in the transformation from the biologically bound definition of “male” is the development of the “boy.” The movement is determined by the development of discipline. Once the mind has become disciplined, the boy is in a position to grow into reasoning. . . . When the primary use of your reason is for the purpose of scheming or lying then you are fixated in the boyish mentality. . . . The thing that transforms a boy into becoming a man is knowledge. (pp. 3-12)

Masculinity is a descriptive term that accompanies each stage of development. This idiomatic expression captures the essence of a perceptual category in flux. A male, as described by Akbar, would understand his masculinity to mean macho rigidity or machismo—a jewel to be protected by him and respected by everyone. The boy would perceive his masculinity as an extension of himself that must be exposed to obtain individual pleasures or resources. The man would interpret masculinity to be a self-conscious facet of his identity, which promotes stability, cohesiveness, humility, sensitivity, self and cultural awareness, and spiritual connectedness within the family (Madhubuti, 1990). Black masculinity does not always necessitate a pejorative prognosis.

Afrocentrists assert the importance of Black manhood not only being clearly defined but also explored to determine what the definition says about the definers. Images of the Black male in the popular press depict him as unemployed, homeless, homosexual, criminal, communicatively incompetent, and sexist (Chen & Starosta, 1996; Hecht et al., 1993). These polyphonic representations of the Black male posture provide an inadequate and limited commentary, but they reflect the behavioral confirmations of the definers. None of the aforementioned images presented in the literature truly addresses Black masculine personhood but rather the conditions of the Black male in a Western hegemonic context. Before adequately discussing the condition and context, however, the pretext must be examined and understood. The persistency of these images facilitates a one-dimensional critique of
an intricate Black masculine subject. As Madhubuti (1990) suggests in *Black Men*, progressive Black masculinist thought must begin with an established self-definition by Black men and/or women. Fanon (1967) predicts that if the Hegelian dialectic (Hegel & O’Neill, 1996) is practiced and reified by Blacks, then only one destiny can result: "Whiteness." This would be counterproductive to liberation, because the Black masculinist voice would be missing from the constellation of healthy gender identities. This invisibility will probably end, as it so often does, in assimilation, an altercast for self-definition and ultimately xenophobia (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 1995).

The political/conditionist writings allude to the crisis condition of the Black male, endlessly labeling him an endangered species in a crisis situation that only leads to decimation or genocide (Hutchinson, 1994). The statistical figures relate to the Black male’s life expectancy, infant mortality, suicide, unemployment, and homelessness rates (Dyson, 1993). For example, Madhubuti (1990) recites statistics from Howard University’s Institute of Urban Affairs:

For the 15.5 million Black men in the United States, life expectancy is 62.9 years compared to 68.9 for White men; infant mortality is 27.6 per 1,000 for Black people compared to 14.1 for Whites; and Black male infant mortality exceeds that of Black females. Admission rates to mental clinics and hospitals is 998 per 100,000 for Black male in-patients (whites 642.1) and 873.4 per 100,000 for Black male out-patients (whites 599.4). (p. 69)

Many scholars tend to introduce their analyses of Black masculinity with quoted statistics escorting a fatal image of the Black male (Orbe, 1997). Gibbs (1988) and Wilson (1987) are two well-cited sources of this type of literature. The politicization of the Black masculine image is in stark contrast to that of the White male image. This parallels the juxtaposition between Black feminists and White feminists. The struggle is different and so is the discussion of that struggle in the separate gender discourses. Politics can be interpreted as who gets what, when, and how. It reflects a distribution of resources and advocates an agenda that will benefit its sub-
scriber. The overwhelming presence of Black male crisis literature should be critically examined to ascertain the political agendas of its authors (Hutchinson, 1994). The critique offered here is not to say that these writings are not insightful or valuable but that they valorize a tragic condition that seems hopeless. The focus needs to be on liberation.

Dyson (1995) is the leading masculinist scholar and critic of Black popular cultural production in the discipline of human communication studies. His critiques range from Spike Lee’s Malcolm X and Matty Rich’s Straight Out of Brooklyn to John Singleton’s Boyz-n-the-Hood. His often postmodern critiques render these films to be paradoxical representations of Black male reality. Dyson asserts this claim as follows:

Now that they have escaped the fiercely maintained artistic ghetto that once suffocated the greatest achievements of their predecessors, black artists have reinvented the urban ghetto through a nationalist aesthetic strategy that joins racial naturalism and romantic imagination. (p. 109)

Although not in the discipline of human communication studies, hooks argues quite effectively against films depicting Black men as masculine patriarchs of the Black family such as in The Color Purple. Her analysis extends beyond film and television into photographic art and paintings. One of her latest works, Art on My Mind (hooks, 1995a), concentrates on female images as positioned commentaries in gallery artwork. The innovativeness of these critiques offers yet another dimension to the study of politicized Black male and female subjects.

The limitations of African American research on Black masculinity can be characterized as follows:

1. It attempts to use culture-general paradigms rather than ones rooted in African American culture. Many of these paradigms were constructed with the European American male as the exemplary subject.
2. It is saturated in conditionist ideology and less concerned about healing-centered approaches.
3. It is unclear about who validates Black masculinity.
4. It is not as focused on reconstructing an emically defined sense of manhood.
5. Much of the literature presumes that masculinity is a pejorative term.
6. Much of the literature is uncritical and unclear about the distinctions between the terms male, boy, man, and masculinity.
7. Some of the literature still concentrates on patriarchal control of the Black family. Equality, as bell hooks summons, is seen as unreal from this limited perspective.
8. Not enough empirical research is being conducted.

The strengths can be found in its changing direction. Much of the recent research (in the past 5 years) has begun to address each of the weaknesses listed. From the most liberal to the most conservative African American masculinist thinkers, the themes of self-consciousness and commitment to self-definition have been paramount. Probably most important is the fact that Black scholars from many disciplines are joining the national conversation on Black masculinity.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR BLACK MASCU LINIST RESEARCH

Nowhere in masculine studies will you find agreement on the definition of Black manhood. Very few studies even mention that boyhood and manhood might be different. Instead, pluralistic perspectives on Blackness and masculinist identity emerge. These multilexical theories must continue, but they must also share a common goal of liberation. Several steps in that direction would begin by strengthening the aforementioned limitations. Some scholars argue that the widening of approaches and theories on African American identity are due to authors’ adopted world hypotheses (Asante, 1988, 1990; Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 1995). It is both an advantage and a hindrance to have these multiple interpretations of gender reality. The clear advantage is the multitextual presence of themes and approaches; naturally, this defies a unitary
framework for examining a very complex phenomenon. The disadvantage is that persons who are seeking to understand more about their indigenous selves may still lack direction after reading the body of extant research.

It may be that these unrooted individuals will find themselves conforming to the principles of the Hegelian dialectic (Hegel & O’Neill, 1996)—disengaging their real selves—and installing an altercast that serves as either a temporary or permanent vault for self-definition (Horney, 1980). The African American masculinist literature reviewed in this article convincingly demonstrates that a person’s worldview, self-definition, and interpretations of manhood and masculinity ultimately determine his or her sense of attachment to a certain ontological condition. Invisibility is but one of those conditions. When it becomes a viable option, it also becomes a devastating reality that embraces the other. Consequently, Black manhood emerges as xenophobe.

Future research should be directed toward empirical studies. It would be fascinating to have interpretive, functionalist, and/or triangulated inquiry relating to the following gender themes:

1. how young Black males define their own Black manhood,
2. the role Black men and women feel they play in each other’s validation,
3. the perceived distinctions between Black and White manhood,
4. intracultural communication competence as a variable in Black male-female relationships, and
5. a critical study of White women as potential negotiators of gender identity.

These topics are just an initial list of possible gender studies that would extend the present analysis beyond its philosophical parameters. Sociology, psychology, anthropology, English, theology, and economics scholars have already contributed significantly to the national conversation on Black masculinity. It is time for Black masculine research to be extensively examined within the communication discipline so that our analysis may move from margin to center. Only through happenstance do feminist researchers make
mention of Black masculinist ontology. In the forthcoming 21st century, however, this ulterior fascination must subside and scholars must prepare to lend theoretic space for credible nontraditional scholarship in gender theory. The reconstruction of the philosophic plane in communication studies may be paralleled to the exigencies experienced in other disciplines, such as sociology and psychology.

Future gender research must examine the gender theory literature very carefully. The nature and scope of scientific inquiry proposing to define Black masculinity must be clearly initiated. Gender has been a focal point of critical communication inquiry for more than a decade. Increasingly, communication scholars have imported the works of anthropologists, psychologists, sociologists, historians, and literary experts to encase our own gender commentaries. Frequently, our theories have also been exported to define and describe cultural nuances within workplace organizations and elsewhere. Gender, like race, however, poses complex and often avoided questions and disturbs the guilty consciences of traditionalists. And, it is sad that they can be labeled traditionalists, because the term implies a loyal attachment to a certain historical legacy. In this case, the legacy has failed to inscribe the cultural heritages of marginalized global communities. The nature of this exclusionary canon formation and perpetuation is the impetus for the introduction of Black masculinist studies. Led by bell hooks, Patricia Hill-Collins, Audre Lorde, and Michele Wallace, the Black feminist movement has heightened its presence within contemporary gender scholarship. Womanist scholars, such as Angela Davis, have chosen to separate themselves from the label asserted and defined by White females (i.e., feminism) to accent the distinctive political and cultural challenges confronted by Black women in the struggle to define self. White males have already developed an extensive body of masculinist responses and theories. Kimmel and Messner (1995), although not the first to respond, have emerged as leaders in the national discussion concerning men as gendered beings in their edited volume titled, Men's Lives. This anthology includes the works of African American, Chicano, Jewish, and European American male and female scholars. African American men have already created their own gender commentaries but have not formed a
coalition nor have they formally introduced themselves as masculinist scholars. Jawanza Kunjufu, Haki Madhubuti, and Na’im Akbar write extensively about Black boys maturing to manhood. Nathan Hare and Jawanza Kunjufu concentrate on Black male rites of passage. So, the articulations of a Black masculinist approach already exist. But should there be a formally established Black masculinist perspective?

Extant gender research examines the communicative, sociological, and psychological dimensions of male behavior. That should continue and it should be culturally specific. If Black masculine theory is described as a set of explanations that stipulates a defining relationship between Black males and their environment, then certainly communication scholars should create this brand of theory. However, if its primary function is to illustrate its opposition to feminine ways of knowing, or to simply react to the content of feminist discourse, then the venture is counterproductive and unworthy of pursuit. The major project confronting the African American intellectual is liberating the masses from ignorance and negative self-evolvevement. A formal inauguration of Black masculinist thought must begin with this premise. As with all gender scholarship, Black masculine theory must explore the following: the causes, influences, and motivations for behavioral tendencies; the history of injustice to marginalized groups; the identity issues that constrict or expand self-knowledge and relationships with others; and proposed solutions for the restoration of balance among males and females. These pronouncements will represent the totality of complexes that engage culture-intensive theories such as Afrocentricity, negotiation of identity, oppositional rhetorics, postmodernism, ethogenicy, phenomenology, feminism, and Marxism.

The challenge, in its most parsimonious essence, is to relieve hegemonic discourse from its nomothetically necessitated post and to offer a viable replacement of nascent paradigms that produce refreshing and revealing discourse about the efficacy of communicated masculine identities.
NOTES

1. The terms *Black* and *African American* are used interchangeably throughout this article, just as are *White* and *European American*.

2. Young (1989) defines authenticity by referring to what it is not. She posits, "Inauthenticity refers to posturing an African American identity of values and commitment but secretly seeking validation from Whites."

3. In the 18th and 19th centuries, well-reputed natural scientists, anthropologists, and philosophers such as Johann Blumenbach, David Hume, Arthur de Gobineau, Georges Cuvier, and Carl Von Linnaeus announced their belief in eugenics. This theory indicated that the improvement of mankind could be hastened through White dominance, because Whites had the purest of blood, the most superior intelligence, and the most reflective energy. It was the sincere belief of scholars like Hegel that without the White man, Blacks would have no culture (see Hegel’s *Philosophy of History*, 1899/1956, for more details). Of course, now in the 20th century this same line of argumentation can be inferred from *The Bell Curve*. This notion of a necessitated ontological dialectic among Blacks and Whites will be discussed in this article.

4. West and hooks have led the intellectual discussion of emotions as market values that have been commodified and negotiated in gender relations as though they are material products (see West, 1993, *Keeping Faith: Philosophy and Race in America*).


6. For a discussion of communication competence and intercultural communication competence, see Chen and Starosta (1996). Hecht et al. (1993) provide a concise overview of other theoretic and empirical research studies that pertain to this paradigmatic theme. Essentially, communication competence is defined as the skills, knowledge, and motivation one has to achieve effective interaction with others. Hecht et al. suggest that it can be defined as the match between the ascribed and avowed identities of each interactant.

7. Horney (1980) describes three forms of the self: real, actual, and idealized. The real self is the indigenous self. The actual self is who an individual is at any given time, whether it is professional, wife, daughter, sibling, or some other role. The idealized self is who an individual would like to become. If a Black person has self-hatred or feels isolated from the Black community then their behaviors will mirror that of European Americans if she or he finds a European American-centered identity more suitable.

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