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# The Intersection of Race and Gender

Teaching Reformed Gender Ideologies to  
Black Males in the Context of Hegemonic Masculinity

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**ABSTRACT**—Hegemonic masculinity traditionally excludes those who are not members of it including women, gay men, lower-class white men and non-white men. Black men have historically been characterized as the most oppositional to hegemonic masculinity. However, even in this opposition, some black men strive to create a concept of masculinity for themselves in the context of traditional, white constructs. The unfortunate consequence of this goal is the overcompensation some black men have taken to in order to prove their manhood. In response to the economic and political disempowerment some black men face, this paper introduces models of a reformed definition of black masculinity in order to give some black men the opportunity to emerge as productive citizens in their own communities.

**KEY WORDS**—hegemonic masculinity, black men, gender, black church

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## Introduction

**B**Y DEFINITION, HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY EXCLUDES AND dominates all of those who fall outside it, particularly black males. The term, popularized by sociologist R. W. Connell, refers to a specific dominant group of men who maintain power and legitimacy through the subjugation of others. Donaldson (1993) explained that the concept is about power and the formation, and subsequent destruction, of social groups. Heterosexuality, homophobia, misogyny and the exclusion of non-white men are the bedrock of hegemonic masculinity (Donaldson, 1993). Accordingly, hegemonic masculinity positions itself above others in order to claim dominance over these groups. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) contended that, indeed, hegemonic masculinity places itself above other forms of masculinity so that it requires other men to situate themselves in relation to it. The group typically defined as members of hegemonic masculinity are white, middle and upper class, heterosexual males. Kimmel and Ferber (2000) described the holders of hegemonic power and entitlement as white, straight and middle-class males. Collins (2004) contended that white, propertied, heterosexual men control the very definition of masculinity, and they use this definition to measure their own identity and that of other men. As such, hegemonic masculinity becomes an impossible paradigm for non-white males, lower-class white males and others to uphold as the construct is inherently designed to exclude these groups.

Riccardelli, Clow and White (2010) defined the term as a role, perspective, behavior or personal characteristic that determines the culturally normative way in which masculinity is expressed. The cultural normativity required for the legitimacy of hegemonic masculinity essentially means that those deemed as “others” have to be willing participants. Without the subjugated others, hegemonic masculinity would have no groups upon which to dominate. It can only exist under the terms that willing participants legitimize their own subjugation and readily accept these terms as “normal.” In their critique of the term, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) offered that some of the central concepts of hegemonic masculinity are the cultural consent, institutionalization and marginalization of others that create an environment where this type of masculinity can thrive. Schaeff (1992), in her description of hegemonic masculinity, coined the socio-cultural term “The White Male System,” a system in which all members of society participate in order to give the system its legitimacy. Schaeff (1992) compared this

system to the pollution in the air in that it is so pervasive and culturally accepted that most hardly recognize its presence. The author further acknowledges the innate sense of superiority within the system, which requires the participation of others as inferior in order to be considered effective (Schaefer, 1992).

## Black Masculinity in the Context of Hegemonic Masculinity

Despite the participation of subjugated and degraded groups, most strive to construct their own identities and behaviors in accordance with hegemonic ideals. This is especially the case with some black males, who often struggle to validate their own masculinity based on standards to which they can never meet by virtue of the fact that the system was designed to exclude them. A study conducted by Dancy (2011) found that African-American, college-aged males tend to employ a double consciousness, where they attempt to think and act according to others' cultural expectations for African-American men. Schrock and Schwalbe (2009) asserted that marginalized black men often resort to certain manhood acts in order to prove and validate their manhood. These acts can include demonstrations of aggression, violence and sexual conquests (Schrock and Schwalbe, 2009). The representations of black men in mass media as aggressive thugs and promiscuous womanizers are aimed at refuting the claim that black men are less than, weak and not completely men (Collins, 2004).

Furthermore, due to the political and economic power that is denied to some black men, they often attempt to assert power where they can. Some research indicates that black men often feel inadequate due to the pressure they feel to conform to white standards of masculinity as protector, provider, and disciplinarian (Roberts-Douglass & Curtis-Boles, 2013). In attempt to compensate for this pressure, some black men, particularly young, lower-income black males, use marginal social locations where power can be asserted through drugs, criminal acts and interpersonal violence, which perpetuate the crime that plagues many low-income, African-American neighborhoods (Collins, 2004; Fagan & Wilkinson, 1998; Oliver, 2006; Payne, 2006; White & Peretz, 2010). Stated differently, some marginalized black males attempt to demonstrate masculinity where they can in lieu of adopting the hegemonic model. At best, these acts and depictions are trivial attempts at proving an elusive concept not meant for some black

men. Black masculinity is then reduced to a response or reaction to a system designed to be pitted against them. While these acts certainly are not the actions of all lower-income black males as most marginalized black men exercise resiliency in their attempt to maintain a family and career despite the overwhelming hurdles they face, some black males resort to these destructive behaviors due to a lack of coping skills and resources (Anderson, 1999; Hunter & Davis, 1994; Madhubuti, 1990; White & Cones, 1999).

Economic obstacles due to the recent shifts away from a labor-based economy to a service-based one only makes the traditional, “breadwinner” model, where men are expected to earn the majority of the household income, rooted in hegemonic masculinity even more elusive for lower-income black males. Oliver (2006) contended that the expansion of low-wage, service-oriented jobs along with high-wage, high-skill technology jobs creates a hostile environment for employment of black males, who previously worked in high-wage, labor-oriented jobs, particularly in the context of racial discrimination. This further undercuts black males’ ability to achieve the hegemonic paradigm as the potential to earn higher incomes has become increasingly more difficult.

For some black males who are able to achieve the ideals of hegemonic masculinity typically through the attainment of a high level occupation, the task of remaining at such status can be daunting. Cornileus (2012) conducted a qualitative study of a group of black men who all held professional positions in large companies (500 or more employees) at mid-level management or higher. The study found that black males endure four major repressive structures, which make their ascension to a high level position particularly more difficult in comparison to white males and others including black women. Specifically, the participants revealed that the stereotypes that are assigned to black men such as that of the “angry black man,” thug, pimp or womanizer can serve to undermine black men’s ability to reach higher ranks in corporate America. Furthermore, even those black men who seek to assimilate to white culture in order to gain higher level employment fear backlash from their white counterparts for being smarter or more educated. Participants in the study noted that they often had to downplay their credentials and intelligence in order to not appear threatening to white males. Another repressive structure experienced by the subject group was the inherent policies and practices in corporate America, which exist to propel white men into leadership positions while relegating black males into lower level positions leading them to ultimately hit

the proverbial “glass ceiling.” Many participants commented that they lost support from their white male peers once they reached a certain level of success. This study illustrates that even black males who are able to reach the requirements of hegemonic masculinity still remain in the margins due to the egregious obstacles placed in front of them. Hegemonic masculinity is a system that does not make it easy for non-white males to achieve such status, because, as previously stated, it requires the subjugation of others to remain in tact.

Cornileus (2012) further contended that while some black males may be able to achieve hegemonic masculinity through the attainment of successful, executive level careers, the number of such black males is relatively small in comparison to those who do not meet such status. Taylor (1998) offered a plausible explanation for this relegation of black males to the margins of society by white males when he stated, “Black progress exacts or imposes a personal cost to their position of power and privilege” (p. 124). In other words, the attainment of hegemonic masculinity by black males seeks to undermine the power of hegemonic white males. This supports the notion that even some successful black males, who act as breadwinners of their households, were not intended to be a part of hegemonic masculinity.

## A Historical Perspective

As black masculinity has been constructed in the context of both societal norms and racial oppression, decades of historical events have occurred that sought to both improve and erode the black community leading up to the current crises found in many poverty-stricken black communities. A major turning point that led to increased rights and visibility for African Americans was the civil rights movement of the 1960s. During this period, many blacks galvanized around their common interest in undoing racial oppression, segregation and economic disenfranchisement through the founding of several key national groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) that organized collective resistance efforts such as protests, marches, sit-ins, court battles and boycotts (Jalata, 2002). These groups and their initiatives, organized through the black church, gave black men a common identity as justice seekers and freedom riders. Black women and men with a different approach such as the Nation of Islam and the Black Panther Par-

ty still rallied and fought for the same issues, and some black men with a more militant perspective often framed their masculinity around the identity of foot soldiers in the fight for justice and advancement of black people (Anderson, 1999; Hughey, 2009; Jalata, 2002; Wendt, 2007). The civil rights era resulted in much advancement for blacks including the desegregation of schools, the economic opportunity act of 1964 and the voting rights act of 1965 (Brown-Nagin, 2014).

Unfortunately, the aftermath of the civil rights era led to a continual decline of lower-income, black neighborhoods. Despite the many efforts and advancements of the civil rights era, political and economic disenfranchisement still remain problematic in the decades since, which have led to the unfortunate consequences of violence in many black communities as black males struggle to survive and define their identities in this context. One of the major factors and negative influences that led to a decline and the ultimate destruction of lower-income black communities was the “War on Drugs” policy declared by President Richard Nixon in 1971 (Hall, 1997). This policy ushered in the mass incarceration of black males and subsequent breakdown of the African-American family (Hall, 1997). Although the “war on drugs” was largely a response to young, white adolescents’ drug use, the majority of the policies resulted in the over policing of black males to the extent that this initiative essentially replaced chattel slavery with the prison system as a modern version of the plantation (Hall, 1997). The dire consequences of the incarceration of black males, in the years following the civil rights era, led to more unemployment, poverty and broken families as black women were forced to play the role of both parents. Policy designed to “help” black women such as welfare did nothing more than enforce dependency on this system as it punished women for interaction with males, which only further eroded the black family (Hall, 1997). Thus, the criticisms of racially-motivated policies ostracized marginalized blacks from mainstream civic participation and placed them in a state of decline with the combined social forces of poverty, unemployment, family disruption and isolation (Hughey, 2009). The horrifying effects of such policies meant to reduce drug use left the black community in a state of crises despite the legal and political improvements brought in by the civil rights movement.

The introduction of crack cocaine into the black community in the 1970s and 1980s created economic opportunity for neighborhood street gangs, which eventually led to the cause of much of the violence experienced in

the black community. While street gangs are most often associated with high crime, they also serve a purpose for its members. Anderson and Dyon (1996) contended that inner city, minority gangs served as a source of survival and economic opportunity for its members. The authors further asserted that in the context of a society where access to upward mobility is denied to them, members of gangs can often find attractive the respect, safety and power allowed by the gang culture. In a society where fathers and male role models are scarce, certainly gangs can appear to be an alternative for male guidance especially for lower-income, black adolescents who struggle to define their identities in a world that continually rejects them. The unfortunate consequence of this desire for a male role model is the territorial violence initiated by many gangs, which only further destroys the black community.

### Current State

The lingering consequences of poverty, unemployment, institutional racism and the drug policies have crippled many low-income black communities. A 2013 Pew research study found that the unemployment rates among blacks is double that of whites, a statistic that has remained consistent over the last six decades (Desilver, 2013). The reason cited for this persistent gap is racism as blacks, particularly black males, are often last to be hired and the first to be fired (Desilver, 2013). According to the most recent data made available by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013), the unemployment rate for black males ages 16 and older is 14.2, which is more than twice the rate of white males of the same age range at 6.8. Since poverty is often highly correlated with violence, the high crime rates in lower-income, black communities still persist. In major metropolitan areas such as Chicago, a city known for its extremely high crime rates, violence becomes a daily part of the young black male experience. According to the Chicago Police Department statistics, in 2013 the murder rate reached 299 with the majority of the murders taking place in low-income minority neighborhoods and the majority of the victims being black males. While Chicago may be an extreme example, many low-income, black neighborhoods endure unnecessary violence at the hands of adolescents, who seek validation in a society that continually undermines them. Consequently, the black family has also continued to struggle. Data from the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2014) cited that 67 percent of black children were born to single-parent families.



This vicious cycle of violence, incarceration and broken families provides a valid argument for the reevaluation of black masculinity.

However, violence in lower income, black neighborhoods among young males is not simply a response to unemployment and poverty according to Bryant (2011). The author contended that the historical acceptance of violence against some African Americans in the United States created an environment where young, impoverished African American males are more willing to engage in such violent behaviors against one another. In other words, this country's long standing tradition of racial violence against some blacks allows young, impressionable black males to believe that it is acceptable to perpetuate such violence on one another as society has done to them for hundreds of years.

### Reconstruction of Black Masculinity

In consideration of the definition of hegemonic masculinity, which inherently excludes black men and others, a reconceptualization of black masculinity needs to take place. Educators, community leaders, mentors and parents face the difficult task of providing a definition of masculinity that takes into consideration the specific racial, economic and social struggles that are indicative of the lived experiences of black males. Collins (2004) suggested an “uncoupling” of the concept of dominance from that of strength so that black men can be considered strong despite their political and economic displacement. In other words, the definition of masculinity for black males can no longer be linked to the subjugation and domination of others in order to be considered validated and strong as a male. Some black men do not need to act overly aggressive, commit crimes against one another and belittle women to overcome the stigma of weakness that hegemonic masculinity attaches to them (Collins, 2004). Under new terms, black men can be strong, masculine men without the need of the same standards as identified in hegemonic masculinity. Collins specifically suggested the separation of dominance from economic, sexual and physical definitions of strength, where these constructs no longer narrowly define what it is to be a man. For example, a paycheck does not determine manhood just as sexual engagement with multiple women does not define a man.

Collins' suggested framework for a reformed definition of black masculinity is consistent with much of the current research on the topic. Cowdery, Scarborough, Knudson-Martin, Seshadri, Lewis and Mohoney (2009) as-

served that since the black experience has been mostly about survival, the European standard of equal power based on individual rights cannot hold in the black community. Indeed, it is nearly impossible to live up to a standard of equal rights and independence in a system that constantly robs both black men and women of such. Instead, Cowdery et al. (2009) suggested a system of “pulling together” reminiscent of the collectivist cultures in African societies so that black men are no longer tied to the ideas of self-reliance, independence and complete domination. In a qualitative study on young, African-American males, Roberts-Douglass and Curtis-Boles (2013) found that African-American male adolescents and young adults are capable of constructing their own definitions of masculinity even in the context of white masculinity. Hall, Morales, Coyne-Beasley and St. Lawrence (2012) acknowledged that the definition and perception of a man is fundamentally different from that of an African-American man.

### Teaching New Definitions of Black Masculinity

In the context of the previous discussion, educators, community leaders, mentors and parents now need a new paradigm for black males. The subsequent sections of this paper will offer suggestions on strategies, methods and models that address the critical need for this new definition. These strategies and teaching methods are meant to begin a conversation in hopes that future research will be conducted to further expound on the ideas presented here. Furthermore, these models were constructed using the contributions of the previously cited authors as guidelines to provide more of a research-based approach to the conceptual frameworks. While these models are constructed for the teaching of young, adolescent black males from lower-income black neighborhoods, they can also be applied to the larger black male population. For example, middle-aged black males from higher-income areas can still benefit from the proposed concepts since there are many problems that African Americans, particularly males, face as a whole.

### New Models for Black Males

The representation of the traditional, hegemonic man is that of a breadwinner, who provides financial support for his family and wields dominance over women and children. This depiction is an unfair portrait of manhood

for some black men as they have been marginalized to the point where access to the economic status required for this paradigm is simply out of reach. Glauber and Gozjolko (2011) contended that the racial discrimination faced by black men prohibits them from acquiring the type of jobs that can single-handedly support a family, which makes the model of “breadwinner” rather elusive. Due to the extreme racial disparities that some black men must endure, they are often denied access to the resources that will allow them to embody the traditional, hegemonic role (Harris, Palmer, & Struve, 2011).

An opposing, but fitting model for some black men can be the role of *community leader*. As a community leader, instead of breadwinner, value is placed on a man’s ability to uplift and support his family and community with or without financial means. In this archetype, the focus is placed on other values such as the passing on of morals, values and ideals of respect to other African-American males. The community leader paradigm emphasizes masculinity in a more positive direction away from the unreachable, unattainable standards of hegemonic masculinity. As community leaders, some black males can still claim and hold onto identities of masculinity as leaders, who are required to lead younger generations down a better path. Community leaders can take on and serve to resolve social issues that constantly undermine the black community such as police brutality, domestic violence, poverty and economic disenfranchisement in order to rebuild the black communities that have suffered the most from institutional racism. They can also serve to take the place of civil rights leaders lost from generations past such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Medgar Evers and Whitney Young. This archetype places power back in the hands of black men in a manner that is not only attainable, but also advantageous to the black community.

Recent research indicates that male role models and mentors help younger black males to create positive identities for themselves. A study conducted by Howard, Rose and Barbarin (2013) found that African-American parents identified positive male role models as the most important element in constructing a positive gender identity for their sons and young black males in general. In the same study, strength and leadership were also identified by participants as important qualities in the rearing of black males (Howard et al., 2013). In a similar study, Roberts-Douglass and Curtis-Boles (2013) found that the examples set by the participants’ fathers during their formative years had a profound impact on their concept of masculinity as African-American men. Cooper, Brown, Metzger, Clin-

ton and Guthrie (2013) found in their study that social support from the community was associated with a more positive psychological adjustment among African-American boys. This study also noted that this type of community support provided protection against the deleterious effects of racial discrimination (Cooper et al., 2013). These studies provide evidence that a community leader model may be applicable to African-American life and standards for living as the research focused on the positive results of community support over monetary means. Therefore, the concept of the “breadwinner” is one that not only excludes black men, but also does not support and uplift black males and their communities in ways that the alternative model of community leader can.

A second model that helps to redefine black masculinity is the model of the *family man* over that of the “womanizer,” who gains his manhood through the sexual exploitation of women. In contrast, the family man reveres his role as the backbone of his family with emphasis on creating a positive and egalitarian relationship with his partner. This paradigm counters the traditional role of womanizer that many black males have taken to in absence of economic and political power. Collins (2004) explained that relegating masculinity to the function of one’s penis requires constant reassurance in the form of multiple sex partners, domination of a partner in a domestic relationship and fathering multiple children by multiple women. Clark (2005) suggested a separation of hyper-masculine and phallocentric behaviors from black masculinity in order to allow space for intimacy including homosocial interactions regardless of sexual orientation. Gaston (1986) asserted that the struggles of some black men are inextricably linked to black women and the black family, which makes it even more crucial for black men to redefine their existence within the family construct. The family man model seeks to undo the unnecessary sexual expression of masculinity by emphasizing the importance of the family unit over hyper-sexuality. Collins further suggested that some African-Americans look back to non-Western ideals of sexuality and relationships, which tend to emphasize an open expression of feelings and emotions, the embracing of sensuality and eroticism as expressions of the body and the commitment to a spirituality that mandates expressions of such. Accordingly, the family man archetype embraces emotional expression and the connection between the body and its capacity to be erotic and sensual in the confines of a respectful intimate relationship.

Collins (2004) additionally supported the use of African familial para-

digms as a framework from which black families can work. For example, in some African cultures, the family is the single most important factor in societal status (Lauras-Lecoh, 1990). Adults are often not recognized as legitimate without being in the construct of a family, which includes parents, children and extended family members (Lauras-Lecoh, 1990). Furthermore, African children are often the responsibility of the entire familial group rather than just the biological parents (Lauras-Lecoh, 1990). The family man archetype uses these cultural factors as guidelines in shaping the behavior and familial interactions for black males. This paradigm emphasizes a more collective approach to the rearing of children and places more value on the family unit as opposed to individualistic standards in efforts to help rebuild the black family. The family man ultimately finds his value and self-worth through the successes of his children and other family members over monetary gains as found in many African cultures, which take the rather elusive goal of sole earner and dominant authority out of the definition of masculinity.

This model additionally emphasizes the egalitarian nature of the African-American household. Since many black men lack the financial resources to single-handedly support a family, the black family often includes a spouse who also contributes to the family's financial resources, which makes the family structure more egalitarian. Glauber and Gozjolko (2011) found that new African-American fathers actually decreased their amount of paid work with the advent of children. The authors suggested that the reason for this could be due to the egalitarian structure of the black family, where women also contribute to the household finances, which allows the men to spend more time at home as opposed to increasing work hours to provide for additional family members (Glauber & Gozjolko, 2011). In a random sample of 35 African-American parents, Hill (2002) found that, overall, regardless of social class and sex, most participants advocated for an egalitarian household with shared gender roles. Hunter and Sellers (1998) contended that some black men's persistent experiences with unemployment and their awareness of the elusiveness of the breadwinner role led to a shift in gender role attitudes among African American men where they recognize the importance of both men and women in and outside of the home. Much of the research that examines African American families and gender roles support similar findings where black families tend to embrace an egalitarian familial structure more than whites (Broman, 1991; Bryant & Beckett, 1997; Davis & Greenstein, 2009; Kane, 2000;

Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993; Stanik & Bryant, 2012). However, according to Glauber and Gozjolko (2011), while more traditional black men may employ an egalitarian family arrangement in their household, their beliefs regarding gender roles may still indicate a more traditional view where women are expected to be in the home. This may indicate that an egalitarian household among some African Americans may be one of necessity due to discrimination rather than actual belief system.

A final model that contrasts the ideals of hegemonic masculinity is the archetype of *protector* as opposed to *violationist*. As previously stated, violence and crime have been other routes black males have taken in efforts to prove their masculinity in the absence of economic power. Collins (2004) contended that the expression of masculine dominance through physical aggression has done nothing but damage the black community with the continual incarceration of black men. The author further suggested the protective advantages of physical strength (Collins, 2004). Consistent with Collins' proposal, this model proposes the use of physical strength and aggression for protective purposes instead of criminal purposes. A protector will use his physical strength to help the less advantaged and those unable to defend themselves such as children and the elderly. As Collins articulated, this type of man will put his strength in service to the community (2004). Through his model, some black men are still able to exert their physical strength, which affirms their masculinity but in a more positive direction. Howard et al. (2013) found that the performance of masculinity through sports and manual labor to be important in the definition of masculinity for black men. This model seeks to use this desire for performance in that it will not strip away the physical aspects of masculinity.

Protectors, like community leaders, can serve the black community by protecting it from the continual threats that damage it such as crime, police brutality and domestic violence. As previously discussed, this model places emphasis on the strengths of black men and does not include the burden of monetary value on them. Instead, this model proposes that some black men use physical aggression and strength to rebuild their communities and protect it from the negative consequences of structural and institutional racism. This archetype seeks to uplift black males in the context of a positive type of power that serves their communities rather than undermine them.

In teaching these models to some black males, educators and community organizations need to implement curricula and mentoring programs

that stress these models over traditional hegemonic masculine models. Lesson plans and activities can include side-by-side pictures and descriptions of each model with the goal of learners to ascertain the positive aspects of the redefined models over the traditional ones. It is the responsibility of educators, community leaders and mentors to emphasize the importance of these redefined models in context of the particular struggles of African-American men.

#### THE COMMUNITY LEADER

- Supports his community
- Mentors young African-American males
- Exemplifies the positive values, morals and ideals of the black community
- Demonstrates respect
- May not be financially wealthy, but does not see money as a way of being a man

#### THE FAMILY MAN

- Places his family as priority over other concerns
- Acts as a role model to his and others' children
- May stay at home with children while his partner works
- Views masculinity as an opportunity to support his community
- Holds an egalitarian relationship with his partner
- Expresses emotion
- Rejects victimization of women

#### THE PROTECTOR

- Services the community
- Defends those who cannot help themselves such as children and the elderly
- Rejects the use of physical strength for the purpose of crime and violence
- Refuses to use his strength to intimidate others

### New Teachers, Mentors and Leaders

In addition to new models for the reconstruction of black masculinity, black males, particularly adolescents, need teachers, mentors and leaders who

set the example and act as representations of successful black males (Cartwright & Henriksen, 2012; Gordon, Nichter, & Henriksen, 2012; Palmer, Davis, & Maramba, 2010; Wyatt, 2009). As previously stated, mentorship and positive role models create a solid foundation for positive male identity among black men. A study conducted by Cornileus (2013) identified black male mentors as a key relationship in the facilitation of black males to establish their identities, develop their agency and work ethic, define their value systems and garner support in their careers. This significant factor in the development of a black male identity indicates that black male educators and mentors are needed for the teaching of knowledge about masculinity. Gaddis (2012) contended that same-race mentors inspire a more trusting relationship between mentor and mentee due to the assumed sympathy and knowledge a mentor of the same race may have for the circumstances of the mentee. A study conducted by Ensher and Murphy in 1997 found that interns assigned to same-race mentors experienced a higher quality relationship when compared to interns paired with cross-race mentors. Moreover, other research suggests that minorities have lower levels of cross-race trust (Costa & Kahn, 2003; Rudolph & Popp, 2010; Simpson, McGrimmon, & Irwin, 2007; Smith, 2000). Some black male educators have the unique opportunity to act as surrogate fathers for fatherless boys as well as help to bring their respective communities together in efforts to raise future leaders in the black community. Kafele (2012) strongly supports the use of black male mentors and educators in order to give black male youth the opportunity to learn from those with whom they can identify. The author further referenced a “role model crisis” due to the lack of fathers in African-American households and in schools. This highlights the specific needs of black males in creating new standards for masculinity.

### Inclusion of the Black Church

As previously stated, the black church was instrumental in the gains made during the civil rights era as many of the aforementioned organizations came out of the black church. Perhaps a look to the past participation of the black church is in order to address the current issues the black community faces. Gaines (2010) contended that the black church could have a particularly significant impact on the black community as the largest and most dominant black institution. The author further suggested the



reenergizing of the black church in order to reconstitute its role in the black community in the same manner as it did during the civil rights era. Gaines offered that the economic power held by the black church could only seek to advance community efforts. Since the black church remains such a powerful influence in the black community, it is possible that the black church could be instrumental in the identification, mobilization and education of black men as community leaders, family men and protectors (Barnes, 2005; Littlefield, 2005; Moore, 2011; Shipp & Branch, 2006; Swain, 2008). During the civil rights era, the black church was the driving force behind community engagement through the education and mobilization of its congregants and community members (Gaines, 2010). The same blueprint the church used for community involvement in past years can be applied to the trials of today.

Becker (1972) took the role of the black church a step further with his indication that the church not only mobilizes its people, but it also defines and authenticates the role of black masculinity. The author further contended that the black church has defined and shaped black masculinity throughout the years since its inception during slavery. According to Becker, there are four aspects of black manhood that have been emphasized by the black church which include leadership and self-assertion, independence, black identity and vocation. Ndlazi (2004) contended a similar sentiment about the role of the church in masculinity as it remains a purveyor of social responsibility and can help redefine the role of men in the black community. As such, the black church can play a key role in the application of the proposed models to its community members and congregants. The influence the church has over black masculinity could be useful in the creation of this new definition of black masculinity especially as a mobilization force. These models are designed to be more than mere suggestions of masculine ideals. They are also guidelines for community involvement of black males, and the black church could certainly use its political and economic status to advance such involvement.

### New Rules for a New Definition

Teaching a reformed type of masculinity also entails the rejection of traditional hegemonic masculinity, which can be an extremely difficult task since it permeates through nearly all aspects of Western society. Schaeff

(1992) asserted that the “White Male System” is everywhere in our culture, and our emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual survival depends on the constant participation in it. Therefore, undoing the indoctrination of hegemonic masculinity to develop a new system for black males will be daunting. One strategy to combat the ideals of hegemonic masculinity is to change the language and the way education is approached. This can be done through the rejection of previous beliefs and messages such as:

- “Get a job. You’re not a man until you can pay your own bills.”
- “Real men support their families by being the head of household.”
- “Strong, independent men don’t listen to women.”
- “You can’t let a woman take over.”
- “Two men together is unnatural. That’s so gay.”

These messages serve to undermine a new definition of black masculinity by supporting traditional masculinity. These messages must be carefully eliminated when teaching impressionable, young black males. It is possible that some educators, mentors and community organizers will need specific training to undo the cultural acceptance of these beliefs. Curricula and community programs need specific language such as the following in order to promote a more positive male identity.

- “A man supports his family with the input of his partner.”
- “Real men provide protection and support to their communities.”
- “A paycheck does not define a man.”
- “Racial discrimination and the perception of others cannot take away your manhood.”
- “The best father provides his children with love, and he does this by modeling it for them.”

Kafele (2012) founded a program called the Young Men’s Empowerment Program in Essex County, New Jersey that has similar methods and strategies described here. In this program, young, high school aged black males participate in “Power Monday” meetings led by black males who mentor the students on leadership, parenting, relationships, community development and other pertinent topics. These types of programs along with the models and strategies presented here can make major strides in creating a new type of masculinity for black males that no longer ties them to a system designed for their ultimate demise.

## Discussion

Some black men have been unnecessarily held up to standards that require their subjugation to survive, which makes the system of hegemonic masculinity one that is impossible for them. As such, the current black system that is surely a response and reaction to hegemonic masculinity involves a practice of destructive behaviors that only seek to further damage and erode the black community. The only suitable solution to this enormous problem is to create a new system based on the strengths of the African-American community and the struggles that are pitted against them. The proposed models in this paper anticipate that continued research and discussion will begin in order to rectify current, persistent problems among some African Americans. These models include a different perspective of masculinity to include the community leader, the family man and the protector as opposed to the traditionally accepted “breadwinner” model. The implementation of such models will require the participation of black male role models, mentors and educators. Furthermore, these educators will have to construct a different language around these models to reject normalized ideas of manhood.

In consideration of the aforementioned social and societal issues that some African Americans must face, these models serve to analyze whether or not the more European construct of individualism appropriately serves the black community. Evidence of violence and poverty in the black community indicates otherwise. As Collins (2004) supported, it may be due time for African Americans to reconsider a more collectivist approach to the resolution of its problems since it is likely that an individualistic mind frame will not appropriately confront larger, systemic issues. Jalata (2002) asserted that individuals cannot exist outside of a collective, cultural identity. The white identity that has been forced upon the black community is one that is seemingly unbecoming, and a reevaluation of a more appropriate identity is in order. Additionally, a redefined masculinity for some black males can help build community bridges that have eroded over time due to the unfortunate consequences of systemic racism. As a community, black men and women must bind together to better address the issues and backlashes caused by hegemonic masculinity as it is highly unlikely that outside influences or forces will undo these persistent problems for the black community.

Additionally, the proposed models seek to present a liberated view of masculinity, where it is not tied or confined to the constructs of authority and power over others. Certainly, one can have or feel a sense of intrapersonal power and value without the need to dominate others. Conversely, these

models seek to offer some black males (both young and old) the opportunity to construct an identity of self-worth thereby giving them the power to uplift their communities and rectify the societal issues they face. In the evaluation of these models, the concept of power must be divorced from ideas of dominance and oppression. Instead, power can be thought of as a tool to increase the social status and well-being of the black community.

These models offer a starting point and possible contribution to a resolution for issues that plague some black males and communities. They are not designed to be a singular, end-point answer. Rather, the societal issues that African Americans face will most likely need a multi-modal approach where several members of the black community contribute a bevy of approaches and resolutions that can address these issues from all sides.

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