Policing and the Clash of Masculinities

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Abstract

In 2014 and 2015, the news media inundated U.S. society with reports of brutal killings by police of black men in major American cities. Unfortunately, police departments do not typically keep data on police killings of civilians. The data that do exist show, however, that at least for a five-month period in 2015, there was a disproportionate rate of police killings of unarmed black men.

There is no question that race and class play a key role in the nature of policing that occurs in poor black urban neighborhoods, but the relationship between police officers and their victims is not only about race and class. It is also about gender. Black men, especially those living in poor neighborhoods, are the common victims of police scrutiny, stop and frisks, arrests, incarcerations, and killings. White men are almost invariably the police personnel who kill unarmed black males in the streets. Performances of masculinity by the police and their victims exacerbate this problem.

This article uses multidimensional masculinities theory to analyze the intersection of race, gender, and class at which this problem occurs. It evaluates the crucial role gender plays in the formation, education, training, and work behavior of police officers. It also discusses how black civilian men’s performances of masculinity may play a role in their treatment by police officers, and when combined with the police officer’s performance of masculinity, may turn deadly. The article concludes that an understanding of masculinities studies should lead to important policy changes in the gathering of evidence, research, education and training of police, and to a reassessment by all communities in the United States of what exactly makes men masculine. These understandings, combined with policy changes, may help prevent further police violence perpetrated on innocent victims.

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I. INTRODUCTION: POLICING STORIES

In 2014 and 2015, the news media inundated U.S. society with reports of brutal killings by police of black men in major American cities.¹ These stories shocked average white Americans. Until recently, the media has only sporadically covered police abuse of black citizens. Therefore, it appeared that the killings represented a recent escalation in police brutality. In fact, media reports may reflect a significant increase of killings by the police, or increased attention to a decades-old problem, or both, but police departments do not typically keep data on police killings of civilians.² What the data that exist do show, however, is that at least for a five-month period in 2015, there was a disproportionate rate of police killings of unarmed black men. In response to the shootings of the past year, The Guardian conducted a study that found that in the first five months of 2015, there were 464 people killed by police in the United States. Of those 464, one hundred and two were unarmed. Twenty-nine percent of those killed by police were black; fourteen percent were Hispanic/Latino, and 50% were white. Blacks represent only 13% of the country’s population, but were killed at a disproportionate rate of 29%. Even more revealing, unarmed blacks were killed at slightly more than twice the rate of unarmed whites (32% vs. 15%). Twenty-five percent of Latinos killed were unarmed.³ Moreover, nearly all of the persons killed – 95% – were men.⁴

¹ See infra notes 31-33; 49-58; 233-38; 240-41; 247 & accompanying text.
⁴ Id.
These statistics are merely preliminary, but they raise cause for concern. It is not only the statistics, however, that are telling. Many members of the black community believe that the disproportionate police presence in the black community, mass incarceration of black citizens, and the killings of unarmed black men by police are related. Black communities claim that police departments have besieged them for decades.\(^5\) Due to the now infamous “War on Drugs” instituted by the Reagan administration,\(^6\) and the “broken windows” strategy of policing,\(^7\) law enforcement


\(^7\)This theory comes from an article published in The Atlantic that argued that disorder that is not addressed leads to more serious criminal activity in the area. See James Q. Wilson and George L, Kelling, Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety, [online] Available at: http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1982/03/broken-windows/304465/ (last visited July 21, 2015). As a result of broken windows theory, a number of police departments initiated police practices that focus on misdemeanors and small crimes such as graffiti and loitering. See BERNARD E. HARcourt, ILLUSION OF ORDER: THE FALSE PROMISE OF BROKEN WINDOWS POLICING 1 (2001). There has been significant criticism of the broken windows theory and policing strategies resulting from it. See, e.g., HARcourt, supra at 6-22 (concluding that broken windows theory and order maintenance policing are failures that have led to increased unnecessary incarceration). See also Bernard E. Harcourt and Jens Ludwig, Reefer Madness: Broken Windows Policing and Misdemeanor Marijuana Arrests in New York City, 1989-2000, 6 CRIMINOLOGY & PUB. POL’Y 165, 171 (concluding that the increase of misdemeanor marijuana arrests in New York City actually increased serious crime rather than decreasing it). On the other hand, there is substantial support for the conclusion that broken windows theory, at least when applied in a community policing, non-militarized method of policing, can have positive effects on crime in certain neighborhoods. See e.g., GEORGE L. KELLING and CATHERINE M. COLES, FIXING BROKEN WINDOWS: RESTORING ORDER AND REDUCING CRIME IN OUR COMMUNITIES, 4, 17-22 (1996) (arguing that the “demand for order permeates all social classes and ethnic groups,” and describing the positive effects of foot patrols in poor, black neighborhoods). It may not be the “broken windows” theory that causes problems, but the increased militarized presence of police in black communities that leads to the hyperincarceration of black men in prisons and jails. See also Inimai M. Chettiar, More Police, Managed More Effectively, Really Can Reduce Crime, [online] Available at: http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2015/02/more-police-managed-more-effectively-really-can-reduce-crime/385390/ (last visited July 27, 2015) (explaining that even if the police are not stopping or arresting people, police presence can deter crime and arguing that the introduction of a computerized system, CompStat, has led to a ten percent decrease in crime and does not need to lead to more militarized policing or stops and frisks).
focuses its efforts on poor and predominantly minority urban communities. As a result, black male youths are incarcerated at a much higher rate than their white counterparts. Michelle Alexander has labeled the ever-increasing imprisonment of black men, “The New Jim Crow,” comparing the mass incarceration of black men to the laws in the U.S. South that mandated segregation of black and white citizens after the Civil War.

The fact is that American neighborhoods are still highly segregated, and the militarized police presence in black and other minority communities far outweighs that in white communities. While police officers attempt to justify their focus on black communities by the high arrest rate compared to the low arrest rate in predominantly white neighborhoods, this reasoning seems circular. A similar focus on college campuses where white students predominate, for example, would likely yield arrest rates for illegal drugs that are similar to or higher than those occurring in black neighborhoods. The research shows that blacks do not disproportionately use drugs illegally.

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8 Loïc Wacquant, Racial Stigma in the Making of America’s Punitive State, in RACE, INCARCERATION, AND AMERICAN VALUES, 57, 59, 63 (Glenn C. Loury, ed.) (2008) (arguing for use of term “hyper-incarceration” rather than “mass incarceration” and noting that geography is important to hyper-incarceration); Frank Rudy Cooper, Hyper-incarceration as a Multidimensional Attack: Replying to Angela Harris Through The Wire, 37 WASH. U. J. L. & POL’Y 67, 70-71 (2011) (noting that “hyper-incarceration is actually targeted by gender and locale as well as race).
9 NAACP, Criminal Justice Fact Sheet, http://www.naacp.org/pages/criminal-justice-fact-sheet (last visited July 6, 2015) (stating that African Americans are incarcerated at six times the rate of white Americans, and that African Americans represent nearly one million of the approximately 2.3 million persons incarcerated).
12 I am indebted to Frank Rudy Cooper for this insight, which he articulated in a joint talk we gave at Seattle University Law School.
13 See ALEXANDER, supra note 10, at 99.
The U.S. Department of Justice (“DOJ”) has completed investigations of the Cleveland, Ohio and the Ferguson, Missouri police departments as a result of a series of shootings in Cleveland and the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson. Other cities’ departments are also currently under investigation. The President of the United States has also appointed a Task Force that has written a report on police shootings of unarmed black citizens.

There is no question that race and class play a key role in the nature of policing that occurs in poor black urban neighborhoods, but the relationship between police and their victims is not only about race and class. It is also about gender. Black men, especially those living in poor neighborhoods, are the common victims of police scrutiny, stop and frisks,\textsuperscript{14} arrests, incarcerations, and killings. White men are almost invariably the police personnel who kill unarmed black males in the streets. Performances of masculinity by the police and their victims exacerbate this problem.\textsuperscript{15}

This article uses multidimensional masculinities theory to analyze the intersection of race, gender, and class at which this problem occurs. It evaluates the crucial role gender plays in the formation, education, training, and work behavior of police officers.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{14}“Stop and frisk” is the term for the police strategy of stopping persons on the street. “Stop and frisk” occurs when the police lack probable cause to arrest, but can articulate a reasonable suspicion that the person stopped is engaged in criminal activity. If the officers can meet this standard, it is legal to stop and frisk the suspect under the Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which forbids unreasonable search and seizures. In \textit{Terry v. Ohio}, 392 U.S. 1 (1968), the United States Supreme Court sanctioned “stop and frisk” based on lesser evidence than probable cause. Many believe that this decision opened the door to wholesale searches of black youths.

\textsuperscript{15}By describing the unarmed men who are killed by the police as “victims,” I do not take the position that police engaged in the killings do not necessarily have a defense. It may be that at least in some cases the police’s fears are “reasonable,” when viewed from the police perspective. Nonetheless, unarmed minority men killed by the police are victims because they lose their lives where the police responsible for the killings may or may not be prosecuted.

\textsuperscript{16}This article deals with masculinities performed by male police officers in the use of excessive force against suspects in the community. Of course, female police officers can also engage in excessive use of force. But women represent a small percentage of the police forces, especially in smaller communities in
It also discusses how black civilian men’s performances of masculinity may play a role in their treatment by police officers, and when combined with the police officer’s performance of masculinity, may turn deadly.\textsuperscript{17} The article concludes that an understanding of masculinities studies should lead to important policy changes in the gathering of evidence, research, education and training of police, and to a reassessment by all communities in the United States of what exactly makes men masculine. These understandings, combined with policy changes, may help prevent further police violence perpetrated on innocent victims.\textsuperscript{18}

For purposes of this article, masculinities is: 1) a social structure that empowers masculinity over femininity and men over women; 2) a series of behaviors deemed “masculine” by society or groups of society; and 3) the actual performance or “doing” of “masculine” behaviors. This article employs multidimensional masculinities, which considers race, sex, class, and other identity characteristics along with gender, paying careful consideration to the context of the particular situation.\textsuperscript{19} It identifies masculine police practices and the masculine gender of the job of policing itself and analyzes how police departments and individual police officers respond to societal concepts of masculinity as they intersect with race and class.

\textsuperscript{17} I do not blame the victim, but I demonstrate how the complex mix of police and neighborhood masculinities may lead to tragedy.

\textsuperscript{18} Some police who kill unarmed men of color may be intentionally racist and classist, but absent the subtle and not-so-subtle messages of what it means to be a man, and the importance of masculinity to the job of policing, many male police officers would seek ways to resolve conflicts that do not lead to the killings of unarmed minority men.

The article also discusses how men in minority populations perform masculinity in public and explores how those performances interact with the police’s “doing” of their masculinity, sometimes with deadly results. *In essence, there is a clash of masculinities between the police and the minority male population that creates a dance that often leads to tragedy.* The irony is that all too often the victims who police kill do not always display a hypermasculine performance, but because of stereotypes of black men as threatening and dangerous, police are more likely to use deadly force when faced with black male subjects, whether they are hypermasculine or not. Moreover, *the gendered nature of these killings is often invisible to observers and investigators.* Even the President’s Task Force and the DOJ investigations paid little or no attention to the importance of masculinity performances to the outcomes. This article fills the gap.

Part II describes the empirical findings on police killings of civilians. These data clearly show that police use excessive force in poor minority urban neighborhoods. Some of the data also supports the presence of racial bias, both conscious and implicit, in the police behaviors, but the reports ignore the importance of gender. Part III explains masculinities, multidimensionality, and critical race theories and the connections among them. Part IV analyzes how multidimensional masculinities theory can explain the conflict between police and the black community, and, in particular, the pursuit of black men by (mostly white male) police officers. Part V offers a proposal for more accountability of police departments; it posits that understandings of masculinities and how they interact with racism must inform education and trainings in the police academy. Part VI concludes that new understandings about masculinity, combined with increased research into new models of community policing that emphasize the importance of
eliminating hypermasculine behaviors should lead the way. With effort, these types of programs will provide for a safer environment for men of color in the United States and will lead to improved community policing.

II. EMPIRICAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF POLICE BEHAVIOR

A. USE OF FORCE STUDIES

Police use of force is not randomly distributed throughout the community, but is concentrated in neighborhoods with a higher percentage of blacks and Latinos.\(^\text{20}\) Police use of deadly force “is greatest in the most populated cities and in cities with the highest murder rates.”\(^\text{21}\) Police are more likely to kill blacks in large cities with higher black murder rates and with more families headed by single women. In cities with black mayors, however, the percentage of blacks killed by the police declines.\(^\text{22}\)

While the race of those living in the neighborhood actually does predict prevalence of police killings of civilians, studies that have tried to demonstrate that race of the officer and victim affect individual police officers’ decisions to shoot or not to shoot yield mixed findings.\(^\text{23}\) These studies use computer simulations in which the study subjects play the role of police, and are told to shoot using the computer keyboard or joystick if the suspect has a weapon, and not to shoot if the suspect does not have a weapon.\(^\text{24}\) Studies measure both reaction times and error rates. Some of these studies

\(^20\) Kim M. Lersch, et al., Police Use of Force and Neighbourhood Characteristics: An Examination of Structural Disadvantage, Crime, and Resistance, 18 POLICING & SOC. 282, 295 (2008). This study did not have the race of the individuals against whom force was used. It merely had the neighborhood and the percentages of minorities vs. non-minorities in the neighborhood. Id.
\(^22\) Id. at 854.
\(^24\) Id. at 357.
identify a clear link between race of the suspect and the officer’s speed and/or willingness to shoot, whereas others do not.\textsuperscript{25}

Unfortunately, these individual studies suffer from various methodological problems because they fail, in many ways, to reflect real-life situations.\textsuperscript{26} One of the best individual experiments methodologically corrects many of the problems in earlier studies, but its results, too, are confusing. In \textit{Toward a Comprehensive Understanding of Officers’ Shooting Decisions: No Simple Answers to This Complex Problem}, William T.L. Cox, Patricia G. Devine, E. Ashby Plant, and Lauri L. Schwartz explored the influence of suspect race, officer race, and neighborhood characteristics on the officers’ shooting patterns, by using real police officers instead of students as their subjects.\textsuperscript{27} The results were mixed. When measuring reaction times in response to still photographs, officers were more likely to shoot armed black suspects more rapidly than armed white suspects. In contrast, when responding to video simulations, the opposite occurred. When measuring error rates, the only race bias found was that subjects, responding to video simulations correctly failed to shoot unarmed black suspects more than unarmed

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\textsuperscript{25} See e.g., J. Corell, et al., \textit{The Police Officer’s Dilemma: Using Ethnicity to Disambiguate Potentially Threatening Individuals}, 83 J. PERS. & SOC. PSYCH. 1314 (2002) (demonstrating link between race of suspects and shooting); L. James, et al., \textit{Results from Experimental Trials Testing Participants’ Responses to White, Hispanic and Black Suspects in High-Fidelity Deadly Force Judgment and Decision-Making Simulations}, 9 J. EXPER. CRIM. 189 (2013) (demonstrating participants were less likely to shoot at minority suspects).

\textsuperscript{26} Many of these studies use undergraduate students at computers as proxies for trained officers in the field. Students, however, lack the training or experience of police officers and may not reflect how a police officer would react. \textit{See Cox, et al., supra note 23, at 356.} Many studies measure the effect of race of the shooter and/or the suspect without taking into account other environmental factors such as neighborhood, time of day, and context. \textit{Id.} Many use static photographs of suspects rather than dynamic videos. The static photos do not necessarily reflect the dynamic nature of a typical situation in the field. \textit{Id.} Some studies measure reaction time or error rates, but few studies measure both to see if there is a difference in the results. \textit{Id.} at 360.

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Id.} at 358.
white suspects. There was no pattern of a tendency to shoot unarmed blacks over unarmed whites.\textsuperscript{28}

The most important finding of the Cox study seems to be that changing environmental factors and using more complex, active video simulations yielded different results in police shooting experiments.\textsuperscript{29} This study demonstrates the complexity of using these types of experiments, even with real police officers as the subjects, to predict how officers will and do react in on-the-ground situations. It clarifies that science is far from determining whether race of officer and/or race of suspect are significant in police killings of civilians, and that there is much difficulty in attempting to measure and predict the racial effects from these types of experiments. Fortunately, while these studies are not conclusive, we do have important theory, combined with actual investigations of real police departments that can shed further light on the problem.

B. INVESTIGATIONS OF REAL POLICE DEPARTMENTS

Given the weakness of the lab studies discussed in Subsection A above, it makes sense to take a careful look at uninterested investigations of real police departments. These investigations, completed by the Justice Department, Civil Rights Division (“DOJ”) either in response to lawsuits brought alleging a pattern or practice of unlawful police behavior or to one or more police killings of unarmed civilians, contain valuable information about masculinity and race in police use of force. Because of limited resources, the DOJ cannot study every location where killings of unarmed men take place or even where there are serious allegations of racist police forces. But within the past

\textsuperscript{28} Id. at 362.
\textsuperscript{29} Id. at 363.
two years there are two completed reports of police departments whose members have erroneously killed black unarmed civilians: Cleveland, Ohio and Ferguson, Missouri. 

These two case studies represent untold hours of work by DOJ investigators and attorneys who examined many witnesses and documents relating to the behavior of two Midwestern police departments, one in a large city, and the other in a smaller one. These reports provide important information about police behaviors as they occur on the ground. Although the reports do not necessarily reflect what occurs in other cities in the United States, neither should they be ignored. They provide a valuable piece of empirical evidence that tends to verify the thesis that a clash of masculinities – black and white – leads to deadly results in the streets of the United States.

1. Cleveland, Ohio, Division of Police

Cleveland, Ohio had a number of troubling incidents that led to a DOJ investigation. For example, in November 2012, a black couple drove past a police station and the car backfired. The police believed that the couple had shot at the police and began a high-speed pursuit with sixty police cars and about one hundred police. Police eventually cornered the couple in a parking lot. Cleveland police fired 137 shots into the car, killing both occupants. When police searched the car, there was no gun in the car. One officer, a white male, Michael Brelo, fired forty-nine shots into the car; fifteen of the shots occurred as Brelo stood on the hood of the car and fired down at the couple through the windshield. He was charged and acquitted of two counts of voluntary manslaughter.30

• **Tamir Rice**

In November 2014, two Cleveland police officers arrived at a park where it was reported that a young man appeared to waive a gun. Within two seconds of arriving at the park, one of the policemen, Tim Loehmann, shot Tamir Rice in the abdomen. Rice, a twelve year-old African American boy, who was playing with a toy gun, died the next day of gunshot wounds. When Tamir’s fourteen year-old sister heard the shots, she ran toward Tamir to help him. Loehmann’s partner, Frank Garmback, wrestled her to the ground, handcuffed, and threw her in the police car, as Tamir lay bleeding on the snow-covered ground. Neither Loehmann nor Garmback made an attempt to help Tamir. An FBI agent arrived four minutes later and tried unsuccessfully to resuscitate Tamir.

Loehmann, the rookie policeman who shot Tamir, had resigned under pressure from his previous police job in Independence, Ohio, because of his poor performance.

Both Loehmann and Garmback are white. Even though Tamir Rice was not engaged in

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hypermuscular performances and did not directly confront Officers Loehmann and Garmback, the officers reacted to him as if he were an adult black male who was threatening them or others and therefore challenging their masculinity.

These are only two of a series of troubling incidents that led to a DOJ investigation of the Cleveland Division of Police (“CDP”) for potential use of excessive force. The DOJ conducted the investigation jointly with the United States Attorney’s Office for the Northern District of Ohio. Overall, the Investigation found that the CDP engaged in a pattern or practice of both deadly and less lethal force, as well as tactical errors by CDP officers that endangered themselves and the public. In sum, the Report mentions four general findings:

- The unnecessary and excessive use of deadly force, including shootings and head strikes with weapons;
- The unnecessary, excessive or retaliatory use of less lethal force including TASERS, chemical spray and fists;
- The use of excessive force against persons who are mentally ill or in crisis, including cases where the officers were called exclusively for a welfare check; and

with the grand jury to indict the two men. The DOJ began an investigation into the Cleveland Division of Police (“CDP”) as a result of other instances of deadly force and found, only a few weeks after Tamir Rice’s death, that the CDP had created a pattern and practice of using unreasonable force in violation of the Fourth Amendment. See Part II.B.1. supra. On May 26, 2015, the DOJ settled a class action lawsuit against the City of Cleveland for a civil pattern and practice of unreasonable use of force in violation of the Fourth Amendment. U.S. v. Cleveland, Settlement Agreement, May 26, 2015, http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/editorial/bs-ed-freddie-gray-20150425-story.html (last visited July 7, 2015).

34 United States Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, and United States Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio, Investigation of the Cleveland Division of Police, December 4, 2014.

35 TASER is the registered trademark of a weapon that fires electric current that stuns the object, often causing neuromuscular incapacitation.
• The use of poor and dangerous tactics that places officers in situations where avoidable force becomes inevitable and creates unnecessary risk.\(^{36}\)

The Investigation found systemic deficiencies responsible for the pattern or practice. In particular, it found a failure to establish “effective and rigorous accountability systems.”\(^{37}\) Individual officers also bear responsibility, according to the Report, for their own actions.

Investigators were particularly troubled by the failure of police officers to report, and properly document force incidents, as well as their supervisors’ endorsement of questionable and unlawful conduct by the officers.\(^{38}\) Some investigators, for example, admitted that they conduct investigations with the purpose of casting the police officer’s behavior in the most favorable light possible. Many stated that they find an officer guilty of misconduct only if the evidence against the officer proves a violation beyond a reasonable doubt.\(^{39}\) The Report concluded that this is an unreasonably high standard that departments use to judge police misconduct. In fact, the Cleveland Report states this standard has led to discipline extremely rarely, and when there is discipline it is often for minor procedural offenses.\(^{40}\)

The authors of the Report expressed special concern because a previous investigation in 2004 had identified a pattern or practice of constitutional violations and the same structural deficiencies and had made recommendations for change, but there

\(^{36}\) See Investigation of the CDP, supra note 34, at 3.

\(^{37}\) Id. at 4.

\(^{38}\) Id. at 5.

\(^{39}\) Id.

\(^{40}\) Id. at 5.
was little or no effect. The Report emphasized that the CDP’s failure to police itself had led to an inability to work with community groups and members. It noted that the CDP operated in a militarized fashion, which reinforces the views of community members that the CDP is an “occupying force” rather than a partner in the community.

The Report also mentioned that although investigators did not focus on CDP’s search, seizure, and arrest practices, the force investigation revealed arrests, stops, and seizures that appear to be unconstitutional, and supervisors wrongfully reviewed search and seizure reports without seeking additional information justifying the officers’ behavior.

The Report found a number of deadly force violations as well, including officer shootings at suspects who posed no immediate threat to officers or others, and hitting people in the head with officers’ guns where use of deadly force is not justified. It also found excessive use of less lethal force, including use of TASER guns, chemical sprays, and strikes to bodies of suspects who pose little or no threat to the officer or the public.

Finally, the Report found that the policies were unclear, training of police was inadequate, police did not write proper force reports, and supervisors did not adequately investigate force reports.

The Report took no position on racial profiling, but it emphasized that there were serious issues between minority populations and the police. Interviews of African

41 Id. at 5-6.
42 Id. at 6.
43 Id.
44 Id. at 14-17.
45 Id. at 18-19.
46 Id. at 19.
Americans revealed that the community believes that CDP officers are verbally and physically aggressive toward them because of their race. Moreover, officers resisted community members’ attempts to file complaints. Given this, the Report recommended a “comprehensive community policing strategy” that would enable law enforcement agencies and the people they serve to create an atmosphere of trust and develop solutions to the community problems.

2. Ferguson, Missouri Police Department

- *Michael Brown*

In August 2014, a white police officer, Darren Wilson, shot and killed Michael Brown, an unarmed black teenager in Ferguson, Missouri. Wilson had noticed Brown and his friend walking in the middle of the street, and told them to move to the sidewalk. When Wilson realized that Brown and his friend met the description of two suspects alleged to have stolen cigarillos, he parked his car at an angle, blocking traffic. Brown approached Wilson’s police car, and there was a scuffle over Wilson’s gun. Department of Justice investigators credited Wilson’s report that Brown grabbed Wilson’s gun, and Wilson shot at Brown from his car. As Brown and Wilson scuffled, Brown challenged Wilson’s masculine authority, stating that Wilson was too much of a “pussy” to shoot Brown. Wilson got out of his car and chased after Brown who ran away;

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47 Id. at 49.
48 Id.
49 Department of Justice Report Regarding the Criminal Investigation into the Shooting Death of Michael Brown by Ferguson, Missouri Police Officer Darren Wilson, March 4, 2015. (DOJ Michael Brown Report).
50 Id.
51 Id.
52 Id.
Brown turned around and began to move toward Wilson. Wilson shot at Brown. Brown was hit with six bullets in his head and torso, and died of multiple bullet wounds. He was unarmed. There was conflicting testimony whether Brown’s hands were up in a position of surrender as he approached Wilson. Wilson told investigators that Brown charged him in a threatening manner.

The DOJ performed two investigations: one of the incident surrounding Michael Brown’s death and another into the Ferguson Police Department’s (“FPD”) use of force. It produced two reports. The DOJ investigation of the individual shooting of Michael Brown concluded that the evidence was insufficient to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Officer Wilson’s shooting of Michael Brown was objectively unreasonable, and that he willfully shot Brown in violation of Brown’s Constitutional right to be free from unreasonable force. In effect, Michael Brown challenged the masculine authority of Officer Wilson when he approached Wilson’s car and grabbed onto his gun. Given what

53 The DOJ credited Wilson’s and other witnesses’ accounts that Brown was approaching Wilson because, according to the DOJ, the statements did not change over time and were consistent with the physical evidence, including the autopsy. Id. at 7-8; 13-16.
56 See DOJ Michael Brown Report, supra note 49.
57 Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department, United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, March 4, 2015 (DOJ Investigation Ferguson Police Department); DOJ Michael Brown Report, supra note 49.
the DOJ viewed as Brown’s aggressive stance, it concluded that Wilson’s shooting of Brown was not unreasonable.

Nonetheless, the broader investigation of the FPD found that the City and Municipal Court used arrests and court dates to raise revenue rather than to protect citizens’ safety. The Report, which excoriated the FPD, found numerous constitutional violations in searches, seizures, arrests, and use of force; it also highlighted a lack of training and a failure of supervisors to investigate use of force allegations. Officers routinely made arrests without probable cause.  

Offense reports created by the officers themselves demonstrate that the officers see criticism and insolence as grounds for arrest, and even supervisors have condoned unconstitutional practices as retaliation for lawful opposition to the police’s exercise of its authority.  

The Report also found that many of the procedures at Ferguson had a disparate impact on black citizens. Moreover, the Report concluded that there was significant evidence of intentional discrimination. With reference to racial bias, the Report states, “Ferguson’s approach to law enforcement both reflects and reinforces racial bias, including stereotyping. The harms of the Ferguson’s police and court practices are borne disproportionately by African Americans, and there is evidence that this is due in part to intentional discrimination on the basis of race.”

In particular with reference to the use of force, the Report found that FPD engages in a pattern of excessive use of force that disproportionately harms African Americans.

59 See DOJ Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department, supra note 57, at 18.
60 Id. at 26.
61 Id. at 4.
The overwhelming majority of the force used against community members – nearly 90% – is against blacks, even though blacks represent only 67% of the population.\(^\text{62}\)

Moreover, 85% of the vehicle stops, 90% of citations, and 93% of arrests made by FPD officers are directed at black members of the community.\(^\text{63}\) Officers use TASERS, where less force or none at all would be advised; they also release dogs on unarmed suspects.\(^\text{64}\)

The Report lists telling statistics:

- Police are 2.07 times more likely to subject African Americans to a search during vehicular stops even though African Americans are 26% less likely to have contraband found on them during a search. African Americans are 2.00 times more likely to receive a citation and 2.37 times more likely to be arrested following a vehicular stop;

- Police officers use force against African Americans at disproportionately high rates, accounting for 88% of all cases from 2010 to August 2014 in which an FPD officer reported using force. In all 14 uses of force involving a canine bite for which there is information about the race of the person bitten, the person was African American;

- Police officers are more likely to give multiple citations during a single incident to African Americans; blacks received four or more citations on 73 occasions between October 2012 and July 2014, whereas non-African Americans received four or more citations only twice during that period;

- African Americans account for 95% of Manner of Walking charges; 94% of all Fail to Comply charges; 92% of all Resisting Arrest charges; 92% of all Peace

\(^{62}\) Id. at 28, 4.

\(^{63}\) Id. at 4.

\(^{64}\) Id. at 28.
Disturbance charges; and 89% of all Failure to Obey charges;

- African Americans are 68% less likely than others to have their cases dismissed by the Municipal Judge;
- In 2013, African Americans accounted for 92% of cases in which an arrest warrant was issued;
- African Americans account for 96% of known arrests made exclusively because of an outstanding municipal warrant. 65

Investigators found evidence of intentional discrimination and racial animus based on: 1) “consistency and magnitude” of racial disparities in treatment by police and courts; 2) direct communications among police and court personnel that exhibited prejudice against blacks; 3) other communications that demonstrated courts and police harbored racial stereotypes; 4) background and context surrounding the FDP’s disparate enforcement; and 5) the city’s consistent use of practices known to have disparate impact on blacks and failure to correct the situation.66

The Report also found that the use-of-force review system is “particularly ineffectual.”67 Officers often do not report use of force at all.68 Supervisors almost never investigate force incidents. When they do, they do not interview witnesses or seek to review footage of a jail incident or examine videotapes from TASERS. They merely summarize the officer’s version of events.69

65 Id. at 62.
66 Id. at 70-71.
67 Id. at 38.
68 Id.
69 Id. at 39.
In sum, the DOJ Report on the FPD is a devastating account of constitutional violations by the police directed in particular at African American community members. It blames a failure of leadership and effort to put into practice training programs for the officers, failure of supervisors to use their authority to teach officers constitutional means of conducting themselves, and failure to punish officers for acting unconstitutionally. Furthermore, the Report reveals many instances of direct evidence of persons in authority making derogatory comments about black members of the community, as well as engaging in racial stereotyping.\textsuperscript{70} Finally, the investigation finds many members of the black community who stated that FPD officers had used racial epithets in dealing with members of the public.\textsuperscript{71}

These reports comprise important data points about what occurred in Cleveland and Ferguson, and may potentially indicate behaviors that are responsible for shootings in other urban settings. But they do not discuss the importance of gender – masculinity, in particular – to the results in these cities. One likely reason is that masculinity is considered so natural that it is often invisible to onlookers. Race and class are extremely important to the behaviors described in the DOJ reports, but without an understanding of masculinities, the analysis is missing the third leg of a three-legged stool. Masculinities is a hidden explanation in these reports. Part III explains masculinities theory, and how it relates to race and class.

\textbf{III. Masculinities Studies and Critical Race Theory: Hegemony, Privilege, and Subordination}

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Id.} at 72-73.
\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Id.} at 73.
A. AN INTRODUCTION TO MASCULINITIES THEORY

Masculinities experts are feminists who believe that a study of men and masculinities appropriately supplements feminist understandings. Both feminists and masculinities theorists believe that gender is a social construction. Femininity and masculinity do not result from female and male biology. Rather, they are socially constructed through structures that reinforce gender roles and societal messages to boys and girls, men and women.

Masculinities theorists posit that men accomplish masculinity by working to conform to societal expectations in different contexts.\(^72\) Masculinities theorists conclude that feminism neglects the hierarchical relationships among men and how those relationships affect both men and women.\(^73\) While feminism may see men as an undifferentiated powerful mass that imposes its power to harm women,\(^74\) masculinities theory sees a gender structure that requires men to “act like real men.”

Even though the definition of “real men” is contested and changing, the term “hegemonic masculinity” describes the ideal masculinity that has the most power at any given time and place.\(^75\) In Western culture, the hegemonic masculinity focuses on competition, aggression, independence, control, and capacity for violence.\(^76\) It ordinarily describes the upper middle class white male professional who represents the ideal version

\(^{73}\) MASCULINITIES AND THE LAW: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPROACH (Frank Rudy Cooper and Ann C. McGinley, eds., 2012).
\(^{74}\) NANCY E. DOWD, THE MAN QUESTION: MALE SUBORDINATION AND PRIVILEGE 16 (2010); MESSERSCHMIDT, supra note 72, at 45.
\(^{75}\) R.W. CONNELL, MASCULINITIES 77-8 (2d ed. 2005).
of masculinity because of the important relationship between masculinity and breadwinning.

Masculinities theorists argue that there is constant pressure on men as individuals to aspire to the hegemonic form of masculinity.77 While many men attempt to conform to the societal ideal of the hegemonic male, most men find reaching the ideal an impossible goal, and “develop varied forms of accommodation, reinterpretation, and resistance to ideologically hegemonic patterns.”78

In fact, many men feel significant pressure to conform to norms of masculinity that are more respected in their local social cultures. These forms of masculinity are “subordinated” or “oppositional” masculinities. Men who accomplish subordinated or oppositional masculinities are less wealthy and powerful than men engaging in hegemonic masculinity; they perform masculine behaviors in opposition to (and at times threatening to) hegemonic masculinity.79 Often these men perform their masculinity in a more physical or powerful, hypermasculine way. Examples of men who establish their worth through hypermasculine performances are blue-collar workers in factories, policemen, and firemen,80 or young black men from poor urban neighborhoods who adopt the “cool pose,” a version of hypermasculinity that emphasizes toughness and invincibility.81

77 CONNELL, supra note 75, at 121-4.
79 MESSERSCHMIDT, supra note 76, at 11-12.
81 See Part IV.B.4. infra for a description of “cool pose.”
Despite their lower status, subordinated masculinities are extremely powerful in setting norms of masculine behavior in urban poor and working class communities. The victims of police violence and the police themselves predominantly hail from these communities. The victims often come from poor or working class minority urban communities; the white police predominantly come from white working class communities.

But masculinities are not merely individualized competitive behaviors. Rather, masculinities, as used here, comprise a social structure based in gender and around which many institutions revolve. Men are taught from boyhood not to appear like a woman (“don’t throw like a girl”) and not to be gay. While views of homosexuality continually change, many parents and teachers insist that boys act like boys, which means that they should not display any feminine or “effeminate” characteristics. Some of these “effeminate” characteristics include demonstrations of caring and emotions, which are associated with being a woman. (“Boys don’t cry.”). Men as a group reap the “patriarchal dividend,” the privilege in power and resources of being male, but because of the pressures placed on individual men to be appropriately masculine, they often feel powerless.

Furthermore, the intersection of masculinity with different classes and races affects the relative privilege or disadvantage that a particular man might have. Viewing subjects through the lens of masculinity combined with lenses of race and class helps explain what happens, for example, when citizens challenge the police.

82 See DOWD, supra note 74, at 62.
83 Id.
84 CONNELL, supra note 75 at 79.
Before delving more deeply into masculinities theory in the specific context of police and their victims, the next subsection discusses some primary concepts of critical race and multidimensionality theories, and how these concepts support an understanding of masculinities and race in the policing context.

B. A PRIMER ON CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Critical race theory is an interdisciplinary theory in law that draws on a number of fields in the social sciences such as history, sociology, and ethnic studies. Critical race theory posits a number of concepts, two of which are important to this article. First, race is socially constructed yet materially relevant. Second, while certain groups in society continue to express racism overtly and consciously, eliminating overt racism is not sufficient because implicit or unconscious forms of racism still remain as a result of our history that are intractable and often invisible to white people. As Michael Omi and Howard Winant conclude, race is neither merely an ideological construct, nor an objective condition.

1. Socially Constructed but Materially Relevant

Critical race theory explains that race is socially constructed but at the same time materially relevant. Persons of different races have distinguishing physical characteristics. These physical characteristics such as phenotype are, however, not biologically determinative of personality, traits, intelligence, or other important personal characteristics. In fact, the biological difference is unimportant, but society has


86 Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *The Theoretical Status of the Concept of Race, in Race, Identity, and Representation in Education* 3, 4-7 (Cameron McCarthy, et al., eds. 2005).
constructed important differences. History and its social effects have created race. That is, in the United States, because of the history of slavery, Jim Crow,\(^\text{87}\) and discrimination, black race has social meaning. Because U.S. society has inscribed onto black bodies a meaning that is inferior to that of white bodies, blackness is material in society even though the differences between black people and white people would not be material absent our culture. Because of our history, the creation and the continuation of social categories of race, blackness is relevant in that it is associated with strong stereotypes and prejudices that affect the way that society and institutions are structured and the way individuals act within these institutions.

Blackness is socially constructed as inferior to whiteness. But even though there is no important biological difference, many blacks have identifying physical characteristics, such as phenotype, that, combined with the social construction of race, make blackness a material disadvantage in the United States. This is what critical race scholars mean when they say that race is socially constructed, but material at the same time.

2. Structural Bias Expressed Implicitly

The second important concept of critical race theory is that although society disapproves of overt racism, racism still exists. Anthony Greenwald and Marzarin Banaji, along with a number of other social scientists, conclude, based on significant empirical support, that implicit racism is prevalent in our society; a large percent of those who believe that they are not racist actually harbor unconscious or implicit racist views.\(^\text{88}\)

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\(^{87}\) See supra note 11 for a history of Jim Crow laws.

This implicit bias is harmful to blacks because it affects policies and practices built into the very structure of the law and society. It may also be responsible for individual reactions based on stereotypes society teaches its members from birth.

3. Critical Race and Multidimensional Masculinities Theories

Critical race and masculinities theories overlap in important ways. First, like critical race scholars who believe that race is socially constructed, masculinities scholars conclude that gender is socially constructed. While there are real physical differences between men and women, the meaning and importance of the differences exist primarily because of social messages and structures. Moreover, gender itself is social: it has no meaning outside of the social context in which it exists. Multidimensional masculinities theory, which incorporates intersectionality theory’s insight that unique identities form at the intersection of two or more identities,\(^{89}\) considers a person’s identities as they play out in the context of a particular situation. For example, a black male employee in a blue-collar workplace such as the police force would likely have more power than a black female police officer. On the street, however, because of the nature of policing and stereotypes about black men, a black man would likely draw more negative attention from the police than a black woman. In essence, the power of the black man vis a vis a black woman differs depending on the setting.\(^{90}\)

This multidimensional approach is crucial to the understanding of police killings of black male suspects in the streets of the United States. As we shall see below, black male criminal suspects, even when they do not act in hypermasculine ways, may receive


\(^{90}\) McGinley and Cooper, supra note 85, at 6-7.
differential treatment by the police. This may be due to overt racism, but in most cases it is more likely that it relates to implicit understandings of the menace and threatening nature of black males, and how those understandings play out in the unconscious minds of police officers who try to control what they consider to be a dangerous situation. These implicit prejudices against black men do not merely result from the facts before the police at the time of the shooting, but also follow a lifetime of messages regarding the danger of black men in our society. In essence, police appear to see black males through a veil of danger that they would likely not apply to white men or black women. The danger is both racialized and gendered.

This article deals with the violence that the state via police officers renders upon black male citizens and the relationship that this violence has with structural forms and individual performances of masculinity. But it is important to understand that masculine structures and performances occur on both sides. That is, society often views black men as having a failed or hyper form of masculinity. This view persists as a result of hundreds of years of treatment and attitudes toward black men. In turn, some black men have responded with oppositional masculinities, reinforcing stereotypes about black male hypermasculinity. Some black men adopt “cool poses” that involve criminality and/or hypersexuality. The state, in turn, has reacted by employing an unprecedented militarized police presence in poor black neighborhoods. Most recently, this is the result of Ronald Reagan’s “War on Drugs.”

While it is nearly impossible to prove cause and

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91 See Part IV.B.2. infra.

effect, it is undeniable that U.S. society has created the conditions under which a 
militarized police force kills black men at an alarming rate.\textsuperscript{92}

It is also important to understand that there is hope for change. The demographics 
of police departments are changing. Where in the 1970s blacks made up about six 
percent of sworn officers in the approximately three hundred largest police departments 
in the United States, by 2006, in cities of over 250,000 people, twenty percent of officers 
were black, and fourteen percent were Latino.\textsuperscript{93} This number was up from eighteen and 
nine percent, respectively in 1990.\textsuperscript{94} For most of the cities in the sample, the rise in ratios 
of minority police officers did not merely reflect a rise in the cities’ minority populations. 
In fact, the ratio of police officers who are of color has risen well above the ratio of 
blacks and Latinos in the cities’ populations.\textsuperscript{95}

Law professor David Alan Sklansky explains that these changes mean that the 
police force is no longer a monolithic group of persons with the same voice and same 
ideas. Today, what used to be an insular subculture of sameness “is itself now being 
transformed, segmented, and rendered more porous by the growing diversity of the police 
force.”\textsuperscript{96} This increased diversity has not radically changed police departments, and for 
operational purposes, blue (the usual color of police uniforms) is still blue (police 
officers’ shared identity). Between service calls, however, police officers are a less 
cohesive group.\textsuperscript{97} This may be a good thing; there is some hope that change will open

\textsuperscript{92} See id.
\textsuperscript{94} Id.
\textsuperscript{95} Id. at 1215.
\textsuperscript{96} Id. at 1240.
\textsuperscript{97} Id. at 1232.
police departments to important reforms.\textsuperscript{98} For this reason, this article is particularly timely. Part IV discusses the social and historical background leading to police killings of civilians and the importance of masculinity to these attacks.

IV. EXPLAINING THE CONFLICT BETWEEN POLICE AND BLACK MEN

A. PERFORMING MASCULINITIES THROUGH WORK AND CRIME: THE IMPORTANCE OF CLASS

International statistics on the gender of perpetrators of violence uniformly demonstrate a severely unbalanced sex ratio; men perpetrate ninety to one hundred percent of the violence globally, and women are responsible for less than ten percent of violence worldwide.\textsuperscript{99} Ironically, most criminologists working before the end of the twentieth century never concerned themselves with the issue of gender in studying violence, and particularly, ignored the importance of masculinity in studying crime.\textsuperscript{100}

Criminologist James Messerschmidt broke with this tradition. He explains that the most salient predictors of crime are gender and age of the “criminal.” Young men engage in crime at a much higher rate than older men or women of any age do. But there is a significant difference based on class and opportunity concerning when a man “ages out” of crime. In poor urban neighborhoods men engage in crime at higher rates, not only to survive, but also to perform masculinity, and, therefore, they “age out” later than men in working class neighborhoods do.

Messerschmidt explains the connections among masculinity, race, class, and crime. Unlike earlier sociologists who saw crime as resulting from male biology,

\textsuperscript{98} Id. at 1240.
\textsuperscript{100} MESSERSCHMIDT, supra note 72, at 1.
Messerschmidt posits that crime itself is a means of performing or accomplishing masculinity.\textsuperscript{101} Men and boys of different classes have different relationships to crime and accomplish their masculinity by engaging in different types of crimes.

1. \textit{Upper Middle Class White Boys}\textsuperscript{102}

Upper middle class (predominately) white boys construct their masculinity through academic achievement because academic success is tied to breadwinner status.\textsuperscript{103} For these boys and men, work in the paid labor market, competitiveness, personal achievement, ambition, and responsibility are indicators of masculinity.\textsuperscript{104} Although young men value independence in school, the school environment imposes an authoritarian regime that limits independence. Nonetheless, upper middle class white boys succumb to the control of the school.\textsuperscript{105}

Outside of the school, upper middle class white boys react to the “emasculating” control of school and restore their power by engaging in “age-specific forms of criminality.”\textsuperscript{106} Youth crime is a source of “masculine realization” that allows young men to bond with one another.\textsuperscript{107} They engage in crimes that impress other boys such as

\textsuperscript{101} \textit{Id.} at 79-80 (1993).
\textsuperscript{102} I do not mean to “essentialize” the experiences of the groups I discuss in this subsection. Clearly, not all white middle class men or black men, etc. are the same, but these observations are generalizations based on Messerschmidt’s study of these groups.
\textsuperscript{103} MESSERSCHMIDT, \textit{supra} note 72, at 93.
\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Id.}
\textsuperscript{105} \textit{Id.} at 94.
\textsuperscript{106} \textit{Id.}
\textsuperscript{107} \textit{Id.}
vandalism, mischief, and pranks. This behavior restores the masculinity and independence that the boys lose when constrained in school.108

2. *Working Class White Boys*

Working class white boys often find the school experience rigid and emasculating.109 They define their masculinity in contraposition to academics because they see physical labor as providing the only truly masculine jobs.110 School has no value for them, and they create an “unstructured, counterschool group that carves out a specific masculine space within the school.”111 They use fighting as a means of demonstrating their masculine superiority over teachers and upper middle class white male students and female students.112 Fighting is a means of “constructing an opposition masculinity as collective practice.”113

Outside of the school, working class white boys disproportionately commit hate crimes. Hate crimes are public forms of masculinity that permit working class white boys to demonstrate their masculine superiority over gays and members of other races.114 Many of these white working class boys are from families that do manual labor, and many of them have the opportunity to work during the school year and in the summers in jobs that are labor intensive.115 Their occupation at work reduces their opportunity for street crime as compared to their lower working class counterparts who are ordinarily

\[\text{\textsuperscript{108}} \text{Id. at 95. White middle class boys who are unsuccessful at school often perform their masculinity in other ways. They steer clear of the physical aggression working class boys engage in, but they hang out in groups, and engage in criminal acts such as vandalism. Id. at 66-67.} \]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{109}} \text{Id. at 97.} \]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{110}} \text{Id.} \]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{111}} \text{Id. at 98.} \]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{112}} \text{Id.} \]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{113}} \text{Id. at 99.} \]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{114}} \text{Id.} \]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{115}} \text{Id. at 101-102.} \]
racial minorities. But these white working class boys continue to engage in property crimes in a way that “reflect[s] their lack of dependence on stealing for income.” These “intermittent thefts” are valuable not because these boys need the money but as a means of constructing an “autonomous, independent, and daring opposition masculinity.” These boys’ masculinity constructions and performances reflect class, race and gender. As adults, police ordinarily come from this social class, the same group responsible for most hate crimes.

3. Lower Working Class Racial Minority Boys

Messerschmidt explains that poor and working class boys who are members of racial minorities have little or no access to paid labor. They do not see school as a means of improving their lot. For many of these boys, the street and crime become their future. In school, these boys resist the teachers’ assertion of control because they see it as “violative of their masculine rights to autonomy, independence, and control.” They resort to disorder and violence in school to construct their masculinity in a way that differentiates themselves from the working class white children.

Outside of school, street gangs and street violence become means of accomplishing “opposition masculinity.” Many boys drop out of school and engage in robberies. “Robbery provides a public ceremony of domination and humiliation of

116 Id. at 101.
117 Id.
118 Id. at 102.
119 Id. at 102.
120 Id. at 104.
121 Id.
122 Id. at 104-5.
123 Id. at 105.
others.”124 Group robberies entail greater violence and provide the opportunity to prove to friends that a boy has no fear.125 As Messerschmidt notes, “The robbery setting provides the ideal opportunity to construct an ‘essential’ toughness and ‘maleness’; it provides a means with which to construct that certain type of masculinity – hardman. Within the social context that ghetto and barrio boys find themselves, then, robbery is a rational practice for ‘doing gender’ and for getting money.”126

Because minority youths have few economic opportunities, they take longer to age-out of crime than do white working class boys.127 Some of these minority youths join gangs. Doing so is an expression of masculinity. Opposing gangs struggle for domination in a way that allows them to accomplish their masculinity.128 In the United States, these youths live in the neighborhoods that are often targeted by the police.

B. GENDER, RACE, CLASS, POLICE OFFICERS AND BLACK SUSPECTS

1. Gendered Policing

Police work is gendered male.129 As law professor Leigh Goodmark notes, “Policing shares a number of attributes with all-male institutions like sports teams or single sex schools: a need for dominance, an emphasis on masculine solidarity, and the insistence that others within the group be protected … , a focus on physical courage, and the glamorization of violence.”130 Masculine traits that researchers identify in male police officers include: “combative personalities, resistance to management, a propensity

124 Id. at 107.
125 Id.
126 Id.
127 Id. at 109.
128 Id. at 111.
129 Id. at 175.
toward violence and use of weapons,” stoicism, hardness, decisiveness, lack of emotion, strength, domineering and controlling personalities. Moreover, in their work, male police officers denigrate female officers as well as women in the community as a means of enhancing their own masculinity, and that of the department.

It was not until the 1970s that women entered the police force, and once they did, women were often relegated to work that was coded feminine, such as dealing with juveniles or victims of domestic abuse; women did not rise to the level of upper management. Even today, female police officers represent a small minority of the forces across the country. The U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics calculates that among the largest thirteen cities, in 2007, female police officers ranged from nine to twenty-seven percent of the force with a median of seventeen percent. The smaller the force, the smaller the percentages of women on the force. In local police forces and sheriffs’ offices, female officers ranged in 2007 from a low of four percent in the smallest departments and offices to a high of fourteen percent in the departments and offices of over one hundred officers. Men doing police work have greater authority than their female colleagues. Moreover, police work enables men to construct their masculinity.

Female and male police officers perform femininity and masculinity as they work: when men and women are partners, the men often dominate the partnerships, control the shift, and conduct interviews of witnesses and victims while the women author the

131 Id. at ___ (citations omitted).
132 Id. at ___.
133 MESSERSCHMIDT, supra note 72 at 175.
135 Id.
136 MESSERSCHMIDT, supra note 72 at 175.
reports and do the paperwork. Male officers take domestic violence less seriously than female officers, and are often themselves responsible for domestic violence. Female police officers experience stress caused by sex- and gender-based harassment and discrimination in these predominantly male, hypermasculine jobs. Special paramilitary forces such as SWAT teams are particularly hypermasculine. Extreme masculinity may prevent women from assuming equal roles on SWAT teams. Moreover, a recent study demonstrated that men generally do not believe that women are qualified for SWAT teams, but women disagree. Women have left SWAT teams because of the bad treatment received by male SWAT team members.

Law professor Frank Rudy Cooper explains that male police officers demonstrate two important characteristics that derive from their need to prove their masculinity. The first, command presence, is the ability to demonstrate control over a situation. Command presence describes an aggressive means of policing, a masculine method of control that is antithetical to negotiation and problem solving. Masculinity serves as a structure within policing and police forces and also governs how individual police officers perform their gender. An authoritative presence is sometimes necessary, especially when linked to masculinity, but it is also subject to abuse. Second, police officers expect respect; male police officers construe challenges to their authority as

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137 Id. at 176.
138 See Goodmark, supra note 130, at 114. (explaining the problem of the prevalence of male police officers as domestic abusers).
139 Messerschmidt, supra note 72, at 181.
140 Mary Dodge et al., Women on SWAT Teams: Separate but Equal?, 34 POLICING 699, 707 (2011).
141 Id. at 705.
142 Id. at 707.
144 Id. at 694.
challenges to their masculinity\textsuperscript{145} that deserve punishment. Police officers often use excessive force against persons who resist arrest or show a lack of respect.\textsuperscript{146}

This need to punish disrespect comes from a culture of honor that requires men to act in a way that preserves and promotes their masculinity in the face of challenges coming from other men.\textsuperscript{147} In fact, Cooper argues, male police officers engage in “masculinity contests” with members of the neighborhood they are policing. These contests cannot result in both sides’ retaining their masculinity. One of the participants will cede to the other’s greater power, and will emerge as less masculine. The police officer begins with the premise that he has greater masculine power, a premise that the civilian might challenge. But when civilians do challenge the police officers’ authority (and, therefore, masculinity), the police officers will reassert their authority by engaging in behavior that “emasculate[s] suspects and elevate[s] their own masculine esteem.”\textsuperscript{148}

What is crucial to understand is that black males from poor urban neighborhoods, too, place a premium on being treated with respect. Because they have little else, respect is of utmost importance.\textsuperscript{149} When police expect respect from the suspects in the community and those suspects expect respect from the police, there can arise a clash of masculinities.

Law professor Angela Harris notes that the importance of hypermasculinity to police work “emerges in the very qualifications for the job” which emphasize a military

\textsuperscript{145} \textit{Id.} at 697.
\textsuperscript{146} Anthony J. Micucci and Ian M. Gomme, American Police and Subcultural Support for the Use of Excessive Force, 33 J. CRIM. JUST. 487, 490 (2005).
\textsuperscript{147} See Cooper, \textit{supra} note 143, at 697.
\textsuperscript{148} \textit{Id.} at 701.
\textsuperscript{149} See TA-NAHISI COATES, BETWEEN THE WORLD AND ME (2015).
metaphor in organization and rhetoric. As we shall see below, the increased militarization of the police is not accidental. It has occurred as a result of a combination of the War on Drugs by the Reagan administration, and a response to fear of terrorism as a result of the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City in 2001.

Harris explains that masculine culture is deeply embedded in street policing. The police form a brotherhood that relies on a division between the police and the criminals—a mentality of “us vs. them.” She likens police to what “street gangs aspire to be: sovereign protectors of turf, defenders of the innocent, and possessors of a monopoly on violence and moral authority.” Even when individual policemen engage in obvious criminal behavior while on the job, there is a “blue wall of silence” and the officers close ranks to protect their member from outside investigations. The code of silence makes it difficult to detect use of excessive force and to investigate it when it happens. Fellow officers shun and ostracize those who break the code.

Because police officers see themselves as guardians of “nice” (predominantly white) neighborhoods, and enforcers of the law against a “community of savages,” the

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150 Angela P. Harris, Gender, Violence, Race, and Criminal Justice, 52 STAN. L. REV. 777, 793 (1999-2000).
151 *Id.* at 794.
152 *Id.*
153 *Id.* at 795, 797-8.
154 See Micucci and Gomme, *supra* note 146, at 490.
155 *Id.* at 491. A recent example of the “blue code of silence” and the importance of police officers’ honor is the reaction New York City police demonstrated to Mayor Bill De Blasio when he ordered that after the Eric Garner case, that New York City police attend a three-day “retraining” program. *See* Part VI *infra* for a description of the Eric Garner case. De Blasio noted that he had warned his biracial teenage son about the dangers of the police. Soon after, in an unrelated incident, two New York police officers were gunned down. When the mayor spoke at the downed police officers’ funerals, many members of the police department turned their backs on him. Alex Altman, *Why New York Cops Turned Their Backs on Mayor de Blasio*, [http://time.com/3644168/new-york-police-de-blasio-wenjian-liu-rafael-ramos/](http://time.com/3644168/new-york-police-de-blasio-wenjian-liu-rafael-ramos/) (last visited July 12, 2015).
156 See Harris, *supra* note 150, at 797.
racialized “other” becomes the symbol of criminality. Police officers enhance their own masculinity by aligning themselves with what they see as “the just” and protecting them from intrusion by racialized criminals.

Harris explains that black officers, too, engage in the most violent behavior directed at black suspects because police work gives black officers an opportunity to gain the privileges of hegemonic masculinity. And, because the suspects are labeled criminals, not blacks, African American police officers can do the police work without betraying their race.  

Harris speaks of police officers’ gender violence in the specific context of a brutal sexual assault by New York police officers on a male suspect. Officer Volpe forced a broomstick up Hatian immigrant, Abner Louima’s anus and stuck the broomstick in Louima’s mouth as another officer held Louima down. Volpe’s colleagues who witnessed the attack remained silent at least until the investigation got underway. The assault simultaneously enhanced the masculinity of the officers involved by demonstrating that their manhood was superior to that of the suspect, and also demeaned the masculinity of Mr. Louima. The other officers who witnessed the event and the police department also benefitted from the assault and the resulting silence of the officers who witnessed the assault. Louima, as Harris explains, represented a racialized, criminal threat to the officers’ masculinity and to the masculinity of the New York City

157 Id. at 798.
158 Id. at 778.
159 Id.
Police Department.\textsuperscript{160} Volpe’s assault on Louima demonstrated that he and his colleagues and the entire department were manlier than Louima.

The police killings of black male citizens that I describe in this article are less intimate than the violation of Abner Louima, but they equally represent gender violence. Police officers need to demonstrate their superior masculine power over those whom they patrol. The reason for many of these killings may be race- and gender-based in that white police officers refer to racialized and gendered stereotypes of black men to judge the dangerousness of the situation; the officers are too quick to resort to deadly force. Moreover, the excessive use of force enhances the masculinity of both the individual officer and his department and serves as a message to the black male “savages” that the police department is superior to them. Unfortunately, American media and even many scholars do not acknowledge the importance of gender – masculinity – to the killings of black male suspects. It is crucial to understand this link in order to assure new training and policies that direct themselves at correcting the clash of masculinities.

2. \textit{Poor Black Neighborhoods, Drug Arrests and Convictions}

While there is no longer formal housing segregation, there is significant racial segregation in housing in U.S. cities. Particularly, the poor neighborhoods in U.S. cities are predominantly black, and in many cities, Latino. In 1982, the Reagan administration announced its War on Drugs,\textsuperscript{161} curiously, at a time when drug use was in decline in the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{160} Id. at 798.  
United States. A few years later, as crack cocaine became prevalent in poor black neighborhoods in Los Angeles and began to spread to urban areas across the country, the Reagan administration “hired staff to publicize the emergence of crack cocaine in 1985 as part of a strategic effort to build public and legislative support for the war.” As Michelle Alexander, author of *The New Jim Crow* explains, the media campaign was immediately successful, with images of black crack “dealers” and “whores,” all of which “seemed to confirm the worst negative racial stereotypes” about black citizens living in poor black neighborhoods. The Anti-Drug Abuse Act, passed by Congress in 1986, called for significantly more onerous sentences for persons convicted of using or distributing crack cocaine than its counterpart, powder cocaine, and imposed these sentences on the possession, use, or distribution of far less crack than powder cocaine. This law disparately affected black communities because crack cocaine was more common in black communities, whereas powder cocaine was more common in white communities. It was not until 2010 that Congress amended the law in an attempt to equalize the punishment for crack and powder cocaine.

To be clear, as of 2006, a much larger percentage of crack cocaine users were non-Hispanic whites (67 percent) than non-Hispanic blacks (17%), but crack cocaine was more prevalent in poor black communities than powder cocaine was. More illegal

162 *ALEXANDER, supra* note 10, at 7.
163 *Id.* at 5.
164 *Id.*
166 *Id.*
drugs were making their way to poor inner city neighborhoods and the War on Drugs led to arrests and convictions for drug offenses to rise dramatically.\textsuperscript{168}

The War on Drugs did not focus only on crack cocaine, however. This “War” led to increased vigilance by police of poor minority communities in major cities that has lasted over thirty-five years. Bernard Harcourt and Jens Ludwig found that by the year 2000, in New York City, for example, there was a huge increase in misdemeanor charges of smoking marijuana in public view. The pattern of these arrests disproportionately affects African Americans and Latinos.\textsuperscript{169}

In large part because of the War on Drugs, and the mandatory sentencing laws that imposed much longer sentences on convicted drug users and sellers, the U.S. penal population in both state and federal prisons rose dramatically from about 300,000 to more than 1.5 million from 1980 to 2013.\textsuperscript{170} Drug convictions account for most of the increase, and most of the drug convictions are of blacks and Latinos from poor urban neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{171} Today, the United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world. Although there is a perception among U.S. citizens that poor blacks are very violent, violent crime is not responsible for the spike in imprisonment.\textsuperscript{172} A recent study by Jason Carmichael and Stephanie Kent concludes that increases in size in city police forces result from income inequality, and racial threat caused by an increase in blacks

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{168}] Alexander, supra note 10, at 5-6.
\item[\textsuperscript{169}] See Harcourt and Ludwig, supra note 7, at 165.
\item[\textsuperscript{171}] Id.
\item[\textsuperscript{172}] Id. at 101.
\end{itemize}
living in segregated neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{173} Thus, it appears that the income inequality in the United States that surged during the Reagan administration and still increases today may have caused the increased surveillance of black neighborhoods in major cities in the United States. Such increased surveillance, in turn, likely caused the dramatic rise in arrests, convictions, and incarcerations of black citizens.

According to Alexander, the United States imprisons today a larger percentage of its black population than South Africa did at the height of the apartheid era.\textsuperscript{174} In fact, there are poor black neighborhoods in U.S. cities where seventy-five percent of young black men have been or likely will be imprisoned at some time during their lifetimes.\textsuperscript{175} Overall, if the trend continues, one third of young African American men living in the U.S. will spend time in prison.\textsuperscript{176} As Alexander notes, the rates of drug crimes committed by blacks do not explain the disproportionate number of blacks imprisoned for drug-related offenses. Importantly, people of all races use and sell drugs at “remarkably similar rates,” but the police have concentrated on poor black communities.\textsuperscript{177} And, it appears that the hyper vigilance of poor black communities has not reduced serious crime in those neighborhoods. A study by Bernard Harcourt and Jens Ludwig reveals, in fact, that in New York City, increases in arrests for misdemeanor marijuana charges actually led to an increase in the severity of crime in the neighborhood, rather than a decrease.\textsuperscript{178}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{174} ALEXANDER, \textit{supra} note 10, at 6.
\textsuperscript{175} \textit{Id.} at 6-7.
\textsuperscript{176} \textit{Id.} at 9.
\textsuperscript{177} \textit{Id.} at 7.
\textsuperscript{178} See Harcourt and Ludwig, \textit{supra} note 7 at 171.
\end{flushleft}
Because many states remove the right to vote permanently from convicted felons, a very large percentage of the U.S. urban black male population no longer has the right to vote, even in national elections. Moreover, imprisonment not only affects the franchise to vote, but also makes it extremely difficult for these men to gain employment once they are released from prison.179

The Supreme Court’s increasingly narrow interpretation of the Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which guarantees the right not to submit to unreasonable governmental search and seizures, has made it easier for the police to make drug arrests.180 A series of decisions has unleashed the power of the police in drug and other arrests. Primary among these decisions are *Terry v. Ohio*,181 *Schneckloth v. Bustamonte*,182 *Whren v. United States*,183 and *Ohio v. Robinette*.184

These cases give broad discretion to the police to stop nearly anyone based on limited, and often, pretextual reasons. Police power to stop and frisk combines with the discretion that the police department has to determine which neighborhoods to target and which persons to stop, either on the street or in cars, to create an unreasonably intrusive presence of the police in poor black neighborhoods. The discretion results in a disproportionate number of blacks stopped and frisked. For example, in 2014, New York

179 ALEXANDER, *supra* note 10, at 149-51. Moreover, felons are not eligible for food stamps and may be evicted from public housing. If felons are homeless, their children are placed in foster care. *Id.* at 145-8.  
180 *Id.* at 63-8.  
181 392 U.S. 1 (1968) (permitting officers to stop and frisk persons upon an “articulable suspicion” but absent probable cause).  
182 412 U.S. 218 (1973) (holding that police do not have to prove that a person who was not in custody and gave consent to a car search after a stop for a traffic violation knew he had a right not to consent).  
183 517 U.S. 806 (1996) (permitting officers to stop a person for a traffic violation even if it was a pretext for a drug search).  
184 519 U.S. 33 (1996) (holding that police do not have to tell suspects about their right to refuse to consent when they are subject to a pretext stop).
City police officers stopped people 46,235 times. Eighty-two percent of those stopped were totally innocent. Fifty-five percent of those stopped were black; twenty-nine percent were Latino, and twelve percent were white.\footnote{Stop-and-Frisk Data, New York Civil Liberties Union, \url{http://www.nyclu.org/content/stop-and-frisk-data} (last visited July 3, 2015). Unfortunately, there is a disproportionate percentage of blacks and Latinos stopped, and a very high percent of persons stopped who are innocent. At least in New York City the numbers of stop and frisks has dropped substantially since 2012. In 2012, police made 532,911 stops in New York. The ratios of blacks, Latinos, and whites stopped, however, continues to remain approximately the same. \textit{Id}. The drastic reduction in stops likely resulted from a lawsuit that challenged the constitutionality of racially-profiled stop and frisks and the election of Mayor William De Blasio, an opponent of stop and frisks. \textit{In Floyd, et al. v. City of New York}, 959 F. Supp. 2d 540 (S.D.N.Y. 2013), the court held that the New York City Police Department was liable for a pattern and practice of racial profiling and unconstitutional stops. Once De Blasio was elected, the City dropped its appeal and began the remedial process ordered by the court. \url{https://ccrjustice.org/home/what-we-do/our-cases/floyd-et-al-v-city-new-york-et-al} (last visited July 3, 2015).} Blacks were stopped at more than twice their ratio to the population. Latinos were stopped at a very slightly higher percent than their ratio to the population, and whites were stopped at only slightly more than one-third of their ratio to the population.

But discretion is not the only story. There is a major change in the amount of funding and other resources available to state and local governments to fight the war on drugs. The federal Drug Enforcement Agency (“DEA”) funds state and local police for training, intelligence, and technical support. These grants have led to a significant focus on minority members of the community and to countless arrests.\footnote{The United Census Bureau, State & County QuickFacts \url{http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/3651000.html} (last visited July 6, 2015).}

Furthermore, policing transformed from “community policing” to “military policing” with the passage of the Military Cooperation with Law Enforcement Act, which allows and encourages the military to give local police forces access to military

\footnote{ALEXANDER, supra note 10, at 73-4.}
intelligence, research, and weaponry for drug enforcement.\textsuperscript{188} The availability of funds and equipment has led to increased militarization of police forces in poor black neighborhoods in large part because of the substantial incentives given for militarization. These funds became available beginning in the late 1990s to add a military component to support drug enforcement.\textsuperscript{189} SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) teams formed in many localities to fight drugs. In fact, many police forces use SWAT teams to conduct raids and arrests that used to be ordinary police work. Police use new equipment and tactics learned through trainings regularly in poor neighborhoods to serve no-knock warrants on citizens in the middle of the night.\textsuperscript{190}

Perhaps even more influential to local police departments are the financial incentives the civil forfeiture law creates to engage in paramilitary operations.\textsuperscript{191} A law amended in 1984 permits local police forces to keep the majority of cash and assets seized as a result of a drug raid, granting to local police a huge stake in the illicit drug market.\textsuperscript{192} Originally, the law gave local police departments up to 80\% of the cash, cars, homes, and other property they collected during drug raids, even where no one was ultimately arrested.\textsuperscript{193} Congress amended the civil forfeiture rules in 2000, but there is a serious question whether the reforms go far enough.\textsuperscript{194} Michelle Alexander notes that for the first time in 2000, there was an “innocent owner” defense, but the government’s

\textsuperscript{188} Id. at 73-84. The Reagan Administration supported the Act, and subsequently, Presidents Bush and Clinton increased the provision of military equipment, technology, and training to local police officers with the understanding that the police would make drug interdiction a top priority. Id. at 77. President Obama increased the money available for drug enforcement through the Byrne grant program. Id. at 84.
\textsuperscript{189} Id. at 73-4.
\textsuperscript{190} Id. at 74-5.
\textsuperscript{191} Id. at 78-80.
\textsuperscript{192} Id. at 78-9.
\textsuperscript{193} Id.
\textsuperscript{194} Id. at 81-2.
burden of proof is low – it must demonstrate only by a preponderance of the evidence that the property was involved in a drug crime, and there is no attorney’s fees provision for a person who successfully challenges the forfeiture. Without attorney’s fees, most poor blacks suffering from forfeiture do not have the funds to challenge it.\textsuperscript{195} While Alexander’s book points to the crucial role that race plays in the jailing of African American men, she does not focus on the importance of gender to the hyper incarceration of black men in the United States. The next subsection focuses on this issue.

3. Stereotypes: \textit{The Bad Black Man vs. the Good Black Man}

Stereotypical tropes define African American men in the United States. Sociologist Catherine Harnois states, “[T]he controlling images … work to justify continued racial segregation and inequality. They emphasize a kind of deviant black masculinity that is defined against a normative, middle-class, heterosexual white masculinity.”\textsuperscript{196} Law professor Frank Rudy Cooper explains that our society represents black men in bipolar fashion. Cultural images of black men include the Bad Black Man and the Good Black Man.\textsuperscript{197} The Bad Black Man is animalistic, criminal and hypersexual.\textsuperscript{198} Blanks were treated as chattel during slavery, and the image of black men as beasts persists even today.\textsuperscript{199} Moreover, black men have suffered from identification with criminality and unrestrained sexuality for centuries in Europe and the

\textsuperscript{195} \textit{Id.} at 83.
\textsuperscript{198} \textit{Id.} at 876.
\textsuperscript{199} \textit{Id.} at 877-8.
United States.200 Toward the end of slavery, there was a fear that freed black men would prey upon white women, and an expressed need for white men to control and repress black men in order to protect white women.201 This fear increased after emancipation of the black slaves because black men had political and property rights similar to those of white males.

But more important, white supremacist masculinities were threatened by the freedom of black male slaves, and the perceived threat to the white male’s income and exclusive right to “pure” white women.202 Assuring that black men and masculinity did not challenge white masculinity, white male supremacists regularly lynched and castrated black men wrongfully accused of attempting sexual relationships with white women.203 Ida B. Wells demonstrated that lynching was usually related to black business success.204 Nonetheless, lynchings and castration assured the superiority of white men over black men, and white women.205

The image of black man as hypersexual, violent, and bestial continues today, and appears in media portrayals of the news.206 While there are some good depictions of

200 Id. at 878.
201 Id. at 879.
202 James W. Messerschmidt, Men Victimizing Men: The Case of Lynching, 1865-1900 in MASCULINITIES AND VIOLENCE 125, 137 (Lee H. Bowker, ed. 1998).
203 Id. at 140, 143-6.
205 See Messerschmidt, supra note 201, at 147-8.
206 During the writing of this article, a 21 year-old white young man entered a historical black church in Charleston, South Carolina and gunned down nine black victims. Reportedly, before he began shooting, he blamed blacks for “raping our women.” Ralph Ellis, et al., Shooting Suspect in Custody After Charleston Church Massacre, http://www.cnn.com/2015/06/18/us/charleston-south-carolina-shooting/ (last visited June 21, 2015). A webpage created by the perpetrator before the shooting contains a racist manifesto that blames blacks for crime on whites in the U.S. See Brendan O’Connor, Here Is What Appears
blacks in society, these are not predominant or strong images in popular culture. Furthermore, when positive images do prevail in popular culture, they are dismissed as the exception, thereby reinforcing the “truth” of the negative images, and justifying the continued unequal treatment of black men.207

Many African American men, not only those who belong to the stereotyped lower classes but also those who are middle and upper middle class, suffer intense scrutiny by the police. Consider the arrest of Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., a distinguished African American Harvard Law professor, when he attempted to open his front door in his upper middle class neighborhood after arriving home from vacation. Police, responding to a complainant who believed that Gates was an intruder, went to Gates’ home. By this time, Gates has gotten into the home, and a police officer asked Gates for his identification, which Gates provided. Gates’ driver’s license had his home address, and thereby verified he was not an intruder. Nonetheless, the officer asked Gates to step out onto the porch, and Gates refused. When Gates finally stepped out onto the porch, the officer arrested Gates for disorderly conduct. A report conducted on the incident blamed both men and stated that race, class, and a lack of respect for police authority were responsible for the conflict. The Committee investigating the incident did not even see that gender, combined with race and class, was a primary motivating factor of the incident.208 While

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207 See Harnois, supra note 196, at 96.
Gates challenged the officer’s masculine authority when he refused to step out onto the porch, the officer also challenged Gates masculine self-respect and right to be treated as any middle class man living in the neighborhood. But there may have been some resentment in the officer’s arrest of Gates because Gates, as a black man, did not belong in the upper middle class, predominately white neighborhood. Gates had achieved a higher class than the officer had done, and therefore, he threatened one of the basic masculine identities of the officer: his role as breadwinner. Here, we have a clash of race, class, and masculinity.

African American parents of all classes describe “the talk” that they feel compelled to have with their teenage sons about how to react if the police stop or try to arrest them:

If you are stopped by a cop, do what he says, even if he's harassing you, even if you didn't do anything wrong. Let him arrest you, memorize his badge number, and call me as soon as you get to the precinct. Keep your hands where he can see them. Do not reach for your wallet. Do not grab your phone. Do not raise your voice. Do not talk back. Do you understand me?  

This is a painful reality in contemporary U.S.

The Good Black Man image is also an enduring trope. Like Uncle Tom, from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, the antebellum novel, the Good Black Man today is assimilationist; he performs his race and gender in a way that makes white people comfortable. He avoids complaining about racism and is ingratiating and compliant. But, as Cooper explains, the default position for black men is that they are Bad Black Men, angry and threatening.

Even if police do not consciously adopt the stereotypes of black men, the press constantly bombards society with messages about black men as dangerous, angry, and threatening. These images create attitudes about black men that may lead to differential treatment of black and white men in police encounters. Especially because police officers do not achieve the hegemonic masculinity of the upper middle class white male, black men who achieve the hegemonic masculinity by living in an upper middle class white neighborhood and earning substantial incomes may pose a threat to the working class white policeman.

4. Performance of Masculinity by Black Men

Moreover, the stereotypes may affect how some black youths perform their masculinity. Harris notes that the history of slavery has contributed to black men’s

211 Cooper, supra note 197 at 882.
214 Ratliff, supra note 213, at 25-6.
view of who they are. African American men have always felt “emasculated” by the culture of white masculinity because of their inability to compete for hegemonic masculinity, which includes control over their own women.\textsuperscript{215} Culturally, black men have been stereotyped as weak and childlike and also as dangerous and threatening but unintelligent.\textsuperscript{216} As a response, some African American youths have adopted the “cool pose,” a “rebellious” form of masculinity that opposes hegemonic masculinity and presents black masculinity as superior to white masculinity.\textsuperscript{217}

Americans view black male youths as crack dealers, even though the vast majority of crack dealers – 67 percent – are white.\textsuperscript{218} This view comes from the widespread presumption of black male criminality in our society.\textsuperscript{219} But even many of those black men who do deal illegal drugs, are misunderstood. Black men do not decide to deal drugs out of whim, but rather, their decision often results from economic necessity.\textsuperscript{220} Many sell drugs to provide for their families who live in poverty, and have no other means to make sufficient income.\textsuperscript{221} A number of black men who were once drug dealers have made fame and fortune by creating and performing rap music, which describes the reasons for their former lives as drug dealers. These lyrics, although fully admitting of illegal drug use and dealing, also discuss the background in which this
behavior occurs – a dysfunctional family, no help from society, a lack of education, and little or no economic opportunity.\textsuperscript{222} According to sociologist Kamesha Spates,

[S]elling drugs is more about survival and less about being labeled as deviant. Contrary to popular belief, many of these men entered the drug game to counter notions that black men are unable to provide for themselves or their families. Though many of them were still kids themselves, their attempts to ‘man-up’ resulted in their willingness to take desperate measures.”\textsuperscript{223}

An ethnographic study by researchers Michael Pass, Ellen Benoit, and Eloise Dunlap supports Spates’ conclusion.\textsuperscript{224} Their interviews of ninety-four low-income black men demonstrates that when asked about manhood and masculinity, the subjects’ most prevalent response was that real men are responsible to provide for themselves and their families.\textsuperscript{225} In essence, low-income black men share many of the same views about the markers of manhood as their white middle-class counterparts. Yet, only thirty-six percent of the sample reported that they had legal jobs as their primary source of income. The authors concluded that poor black men provided for their households in accordance with the resources that were available to them. In other words, if necessary, black men resorted to illegal means to support their families. The authors noted, “It is clear that [the

\textsuperscript{222} Id. at 144-6. Bell hooks argues that men who produce rap and hip-hop music as a means of criticizing American society, however, are making money from the capitalist system and supporting white male patriarchy. See bell hooks, Don’t Make Me Hurt You: Black Male Violence in MEN AND MASCULINITIES 93, 101 (Stephen M. Whitehead, ed., Vol. IV., 2006).

\textsuperscript{223} See Spates supra note 218, at 148.


\textsuperscript{225} Id. at 173.
men] want to be seen as providers and protectors, responsible for people they care about, despite not having success in employment that is considered essential to the hegemonic image of masculinity.”

Michelle Alexander argues that some black young men in poor neighborhoods embrace gangsta culture as a political act of resistance and defiance. The black youths who embrace the stigma of criminality see their behavior as a way of lessening the demeaning stigma. As Alexander states:

For those black youth who are constantly followed by the police and shamed by teachers, relatives, and strangers, embracing the stigma of criminality is an act of rebellion—an attempt to carve out a positive identity in a society that offers them little more than scorn, contempt, and constant surveillance.

These performances are attempts to define one’s manhood, to express masculinity in a way that gives the young men power over those who pursue them, and an identity they can embrace. Unfortunately, this identity performance is often harmful to the individual, and can also increase the strength of society’s stereotypes about black men living in poor minority neighborhoods. Alexander likens the gangsta culture on Black Entertainment TV to a “minstrel show” for an audience of white, suburban teenagers.

Law professor Athena Mutua recognizes the important anti-racist message of Kanye West and other rap musicians, but she also recommends that black men instead engage in

226 Id. at 179.
227 ALEXANDER, supra note 10, at 169-72.
228 Id. at 171.
229 Id. at 173-5.
progressive black masculinities.\textsuperscript{230} That is, black men, according to Mutua, need to reject patriarchal control over black women and embrace feminism. She argues that black men’s embrace of concepts of ideal masculinity hurts black women, black men, and black communities. In other words, black men are harmed by “gendered racism.”\textsuperscript{231}

Even those black youths who do not engage in the black gangsta culture are often misunderstood if they engage in the “cool pose” by wearing some of the symbols of gangsta culture such as the hoodie, the sagging pants, the hat turned backwards. These symbols say “criminal” to white America, and likely to the police who work on the streets in the poor neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{232} But these symbols of masculinity should not be misunderstood.\textsuperscript{233} Most young men, whether black or white, in poor or wealthy neighborhoods, represent themselves as masculine through clothing and other symbols that are powerful in their own local cultures.

- \textit{Freddie Gray}

Freddie Gray could have been one of these men. Gray and his sisters were raised by a disabled mother who was addicted to heroin and who could not read.\textsuperscript{234} He and his

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{231} Id. at 6.
\item \textsuperscript{233} Daniel Goleman, \textit{Black Scientists Study the ‘Pose’ of the Inner City}, http://www.nytimes.com/1992/04/21/science/black-scientists-study-the-pose-of-the-inner-city.html (last visited July 5, 2015) (concluding that the “cool pose” is often misread by teachers, principals, and police officers as an attitude of defiance; it is actually a way to maintain integrity and suppress rage); see also Richard Majors and Janet Mancini Billson, \textit{COOL POSE: THE DILEMMA OF BLACK MANHOOD IN AMERICA} xi (1992) (arguing that “cool pose” is a strategy that can be used to demonstrate pride and masculinity, but can also, when used as a mask, have negative effects).
\end{itemize}
sisters suffered lead poisoning from high lead levels in the walls in their rented home in an impoverished neighborhood in Baltimore, Maryland. As a result, he was four years behind in school. By the time of his death at age twenty-five, Gray had been arrested more than a dozen times, and convicted a few times for heroin and marijuana possession. He had spent two years in jail. On a fateful day in April 2015, Freddie Grey walked outside in Baltimore and made eye contact with a police officer. The rest is history. Freddie began to run away and the police apprehended him and pinned him to the ground. The police dragged Grey to the back of a police van. By the time Gray arrived at the police station, he was not breathing. He was hospitalized for a week and died. His autopsy showed that Gray died from a “high energy impact.” Officers had placed Gray into the van with handcuffs and ankle cuffs. Contrary to policy, the officers did not belt Gray in. This permitted Gray to hit his head due to sudden deceleration of the van. The state medical examiner’s office ruled the death a homicide. Many believe that Freddie Gray had a “rough ride,” a term commonly used by Baltimore police for the intentional placement of a suspect in a police van with handcuffs and no seat belt and making sudden stops that can cause serious injury.

235 Id.


238 Rough rides or “nickel rides” are common in other police departments, and have led to serious injuries and law suits against police departments. Manny Fernandez, Freddie Gray’s Injury and the Police ‘Rough Ride,’ http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/01/us/freddie-grays-injury-and-the-police-rough-ride.html?_r=0 (last visited June 4, 2015). There are two investigations by the DOJ regarding the Freddie Gray incident; one will study the specific incident surrounding Gray’s death, and the other will study the police department. On May 8, 2015, the DOJ opened a civil pattern and practice investigation into the Baltimore
Prosecutors charged six officers with crimes ranging from second-degree murder to false imprisonment. A grand jury later indicted the officers for similar charges. The police officers were five men and one woman. Freddie Gray was black. Two of the male officers were black, as was the woman. Three male officers were white.

5. “Heroes” versus “Thugs”

In sum, male police officers accomplish masculinity by acting tough in arresting poor black male suspects. This is not only an individual accomplishment, but the result of a number of structures including the normative masculine definition of militarized policing, the society’s fear of the “other,” the War on Drugs, and the increased arrests and incarceration of black men.

Individual officers, who are predominately male, usually hail from white working class neighborhoods. They reject the hegemonic white upper middle class masculinity that they cannot achieve, considering it a weak, wimpy persona. But that upper middle class white masculinity still holds significant power, and working class white men need


President Obama needlessly inflamed tensions in Baltimore after Freddie Gray’s death and may also have given cover to conservative whites when he designated the high school boys who, in protest, set fire to a drugstore in Baltimore as “thugs.” Subsequently, there was a vigorous national debate as to whether the term “thugs,” constitutes a racial slur. Traditionally, the term did not have a racial connotation, often referring to working class white ruffians who demonstrate hypermasculine behaviors, but more recently the term refers to black men who engage in violence. Today, the word is considered a more polite way of saying the “N-word.” See The Racially Charged Meaning Behind the Word “Thug,” http://www.npr.org/2015/04/30/403362626/the-racially-charged-meaning-behind-the-word-thug (last visited July 8, 2015).
to accomplish their own version of masculinity. In place of upper middle class masculinity, working class white male police officers create their own brand of masculinity, a tough hypermasculinity. This persona comes into contact with the black males in the poor neighborhoods that the police officers work. In part due to inaccurate stereotypes of the bad black man, and in part due to hypermasculine performances put on by some black youths in poor minority communities, the police officers see the black youths as the “other,” “savages” that the police need to control. It is “us versus them.”

Playing the role of the hypermasculine cop whose job is to save the community from the “badasses,” some police officers absorb the message that black men are criminals, even when those black men before them do not adopt the role of hypermasculine “badass.” This stereotyping of black men may be conscious or unconscious, but in either event, it leads to the use of excessive force on black male suspects, which escalates to severe abuse and, even killings. This hypermasculine behavior by the cops actually accomplishes their own brand of masculinity because they now have vanquished evil, as they see it, in the name of society. In their minds, they are “heroes,” and their victims are “thugs.” While the majority of the cops are white and male, some women and men of color, given a sense of hegemonic power, also combine with white male police officers to constrain the “thugs.”

V. MASCULINITY AND POLICE SHOOTINGS

The theory of masculinities suggests that there are at least two different types of subordinated or oppositional masculinities engaged in competition for primacy on the streets in the United States. The police, whose (white) working class masculinity is subordinated to the upper middle class hegemonic masculinity, perform their masculinity
in a hypermasculine, tough way, emphasizing physical strength and control, demanding respect and honor for themselves and their compatriots. When challenged, the police reinforce their masculine identities by engaging in abusive tactics toward other men who also do not meet the definition of hegemonic masculinity of the upper middle class.

These other men are often black, and because of stereotypes about black men, police view them as dangerous and threatening. These stereotypes encourage the predominantly white police officers to use excessive force to protect themselves and society; the stereotypes also justify use of excessive force against the dangerous “other.” The use of force, in turn, enhances the masculinity of the police officers who engage in it, and of the department in which they work.

While the stereotypes of black men are rooted in history, some black men in the community themselves also engage in hypermasculine performances of black masculinity – oppositional masculinities – to counter the stigma of being poor black men. These performances by some young black men, which represent them as drug users and criminals, create forms of masculinity that oppose both the hegemonic masculinity and the hypermasculinity of the police. Ironically, these hypermasculine performances by young black men, many of which do not include illegal behavior, enhance the stereotype of black men as criminal and dangerous, thereby reinforcing a cycle of violence between the police and black men.

What is particularly odd, however, is that the police do not merely assert their masculinity by focusing on those men who practice hypermasculinized black criminal masculinities; rather, it appears that the police do not always distinguish between the black youths who engage in hypermasculine performances and other black men in the
community who do not. Thus, it appears that many black men who become victims of excessive force by police departments do not necessarily challenge the police through use of their own forms of hypermasculinity. In essence, the police seem to assume a type of criminal hypermasculinity of black men living in poor urban neighborhoods.

- Walter Scott

The case of Walter Scott, a fifty-year old black man, who was gunned down by a white police officer in North Charleston, South Carolina, is a good example of this phenomenon. In April 2015, Officer Michael T. Slager, pulled over Walter L. Scott because his car had a broken taillight. Scott ran, his family believes, because he feared Slager would arrest him for failure to pay child support. Slager followed Scott, and a scuffle ensued. Scott broke away again, and Slager pumped bullets into Scott’s back as he fled. After the eighth shot, Scott collapsed. Slager called the police and reported that he had shot Scott, but he told the dispatcher that Scott had grabbed the policeman’s TASER gun.241 Unbeknownst to Slager, however, an uninterested witness recorded the incident on his cellphone. The recording demonstrates that Scott was about fifteen feet away with his back turned to Slager when Slager shot him repeatedly. After Scott dropped to the ground, Slager approached and handcuffed the lifeless Scott. Slager returned to where he stood earlier, picked up an object that appears to be his TASER, and dropped it next to Scott’s body, in an effort, many believe, to back up Slager’s false story.

that Scott had grabbed his TASER. Scott, who was unarmed, died of multiple gunshot wounds.242

There is no indication that Scott challenged Slager’s authority or that he engaged in a hypermasculine performance of his masculinity. There was no allegation that he showed disrespect. Like Tamir Rice, a twelve year-old boy who was playing in a Cleveland park, Walter Scott clearly did not perform his masculinity in a way that was threatening or oppositional to the police. While Freddie Gray, the Baltimore man who was fatally injured on his way to the police station, had a number of arrests on his record, there was no evidence at the time of his death that he had done anything to challenge the police other than making eye contact and running away. Michael Brown comes the closest to challenging the police’s masculinity. His fatal mistake may have been approaching the officer’s car and engaging in a scuffle over the officer’s gun. By the same token, the facts are disputed in the Michael Brown case, and it is unclear whether the college-bound young man demonstrated anything close to dangerous or criminal masculine behaviors. In essence, the clash of masculinities, whether real or imaginary, led to unnecessary killings of black men. These killings must stop.

As noted above, there are at least two completed investigations by the DOJ as well as a Task Force created by the President of the United States. The Task Force makes

important recommendations concerning how to improve policing in U.S. cities. The Task Force recommends, for example the following general concepts:

- Building Trust & Legitimacy;
- Policy & Oversight;
- Technology & Social Media;
- Community Policing & Crime Reduction;
- Training & Education; and
- Officer Wellness & Safety

All of the Task Force’s recommendations should be implemented quickly.

But I fear that police killings of black men will still continue without an understanding of the gendered, cultural nature of the killings. It may be more difficult to change our culture than to establish new rules about training, policing, and reviewing police behaviors. These rules are vital to assure the proper results, but education of police should include understandings about how gender – especially concepts of masculinity – lead to killings by police. Police academies should take seriously the damage that excessive hypermasculine behaviors and attitudes can create, and train their students in how masculine performances are often invisible because of how normal they seem to society. Moreover, police departments should renew these understandings about masculinity so that police officers understand the difference between acting professionally and acting masculine.

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An ethnographic study of a police academy by two sociologists demonstrates that much of the behavior in the police academy training reinforces hidden beliefs in the superiority of masculinity and the inferiority of female police officers. These trainings not only harm women, but also harm the male police officers and the departments because they teach police officers that masculinity is a vital criterion for professional police work. In fact, the messages of masculinity are invisible to many who engage in the training, but the training is effective. A hidden curriculum of masculinity, “taught obliquely by teachers and students, instructs students about the particular form of masculinity that is lauded in police culture, the relationship between extreme masculinity and police work, and the nature of the groups that fall ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of the culture of policing.”

Making masculinity visible to police trainees and police, and requiring their supervisors to address excessive masculine practices are necessary changes that should underlie the new rules and regulations concerning police behavior. Building the work around concepts of competence, community policing, and safety and rewarding officers who engage in safe, community practices should eliminate unnecessary hypermasculine practices and assure better relationships with the community. This proposal is consistent with the Task Force’s recommendation that police departments decrease their military models and engage in community policing.

244 See Anastasia Prokos and Irene Padavic, ‘There Oughtta Be a Law Against Bitches’: Masculinity Lessons in Police Academy Training, 9 GENDER, WORK, AND ORG. 349, 440 (2002) (concluding that the police academy training had a hidden curriculum that lauded masculinity and conveyed that male officers were superior to female officers).
245 Id. at 440.
246 Id.
The following steps should help rid police departments of excessive masculine behaviors that lead to unnecessary killings:

- a national database on police killings that includes the characteristics of the police personnel and the victims, such as race and gender, and the neighborhood where the killing occurred;
- empirical research into the importance of masculinity to police officers’ use of excessive force;
- empirical research on new models for police trainings that focus on de-gendering the police force, the reduction of masculine behaviors and reactions;\(^{247}\)
- empirical research on alternative methods of supervising and investigating police use of force that would have a more productive result;
- creation of models for police trainings and continuing education that not only encourages community policing, but that also work to reduce efforts of police to prove masculinity through the use of excessive force;
- accountability of supervisors for a reduction of racism and masculine behaviors in the police department;
- affirmative hiring and promotions of black and other minority men and women as police officers; and

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\(^{247}\) As Valoria Vojdik explains, it is not sufficient merely to allow women into an all-male environment. It is necessary to change the culture so women can thrive. Masculine culture is based on the concept that men are superior to women. The culture needs to be dismantled. A positive side-effect of destroying the hypermasculine culture is that there may be less use of excessive force when it is no longer considered positive to prove oneself through the use of force. See Valorie K. Vojdik, Gender Outlaws: Challenging Masculinity in Traditionally Male Institutions, 17 BERKELEY WOMEN’S L. J. 68, 74-5 (2002).
• a public interest campaign that demonstrates the importance of masculinities to the clash between the police and male suspects.

VI. CONCLUSION: REDUCING MASCULINITIES: REDUCING KILLINGS

• Eric Garner

In July 2014, Eric Garner, a 43 year-old, 395-pound black father of six stood on a street corner in Staten Island, New York. Residents had complained about drug dealers who frequented the location. Two plain-clothes police officers, responding to their superior’s call to go to the site, approached Garner and accused him of illegally selling cigarettes. They attempted to handcuff Garner, who told them to leave him alone and pulled his arms away. One of the officers, Daniel Pantaleo, a white male, placed Eric Garner in an illegal chokehold and wrestled him to the ground. When Garner was prone, the other white male officer applied pressure to his back. Garner, cried repeatedly, “I can’t breathe,” as he lay on the ground under the officers’ pressure. Backup to the police arrived, including a couple of sergeants. One of the sergeants, a woman, reportedly told the officers to “ease up,” but they failed to do so.

The officers called for medical assistance, but the emergency medical technicians, who arrived in a few minutes, did not give Garner oxygen, even though his breathing was labored. When the medical team put Garner into the ambulance, he was in cardiac arrest, and they finally gave him oxygen. But it was too late. Garner was pronounced dead approximately 45 minutes later at the hospital. The New York City medical examiner’s
report stated that Garner died because of the chokehold and chest compression. Garner was unarmed.248

Garner’s treatment raises serious questions about the “broken windows” theory of policing, and the police officers’ motivations for holding him down, but it is clear that the officers acted in a hypermasculine way in their attempt to subdue the suspect. Not only did they subdue him; they also killed him, even though he posed no threat to the officers or to others. Police killings of black civilians has led to the “Black Lives Matter” movement, a community of protesters who dispute the treatment of blacks, especially black men by the police. This protest should also recognize that masculinities, when combined with racism and classism, can have corrosive effects on the police departments and the communities they serve.


There are other police killings of minority victims from summer 2014 through early summer 2015. One example is the shooting of Antonio Zambrano-Montes, Pasco, Washington. In February 2015, a man who was later described as “disturbed” reportedly threw rocks at the police. They pursued him on foot. He ran with his hands up and turned to face the police. The police fired 17 shots at him. Zambrano-Montes died of multiple bullet wounds. See Julie Turkewitz and Richard A. Oppel, Jr., Killing in Washington State Offers ‘Ferguson’ Moment for Hispanics, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/17/us/killing-in-washington-state-offers-ferguson-moment-for-hispanics.html# (last visited June 4, 2015). There ensued a study by the Tri-City Special Investigations Unit, which issued a report on the killing that was delivered to the prosecutor’s office. Tyler Richardson, Investigation into Deadly Pasco Police Shooting Turned Over to Prosecutor, http://www.tri-cityherald.com/2015/05/28/3582370/investigation-into-deadly-pasco.html (last visited July 7, 2015).
Case studies suggest that training that provides individual officers with appropriate skills, combined with an organizational framework of internal and external accountability can reduce police use of force.\textsuperscript{249} Moreover, a study demonstrates that hypermasculine workplaces such as oil-rigs can become much more productive and less dangerous places when the focus is on safety and training that seeks to eliminate hypermasculine behaviors.\textsuperscript{250} More research is needed to set up programs for training of police that would focus on the positive aspects of policing and community relations.

Leadership is a key component of successful programs. These training programs, if they are to work to prevent needless police killings of black male citizens, should include education on masculinities, and how masculinity is not only built into the structure of society, but also how individuals perform to accomplish their masculinity. This self-awareness of individual police officers and their supervisors, along with new efforts to reduce the militarization of our police forces, should help reduce excessive force by police officers.


\textsuperscript{250} See Robin J. Ely and Debra E. Meyerson, \textit{An Organization Approach to Undoing Gender: The Unlikely Case of Offshore Oil Platforms}, 30 RES. IN ORG. BEHAV. 3 (2010).