Black Aesthetics and Panther Rhetoric: A Critical Decoding of Black Masculinity in *The Black Panther*, 1967–80

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Abstract

This article provides a critical decoding of black masculine representations in the Black Panther Party newspaper – *The Black Panther*. Through a random sample of 100 issues inclusive of 1316 articles from 1967 to 1980, the analysis focuses on both the aesthetic and rhetorical devices that construct black masculinity. These depictions do not turn on agendas to install 'positive' images in order to contest 'negative' ones, but are concerned with a recuperation of power and self-determinism to reframe the terms of debate over those representations. Findings challenge earlier assumptions that black nationalist (and specifically Black Panther) conceptions of black masculinity were predicated solely on essentialized, fixed, and patriarchal identities, and posit that these representations yielded a fluid and socially constructed notion of a black self founded upon a resistive politic.

Keywords
black masculinity, black nationalism, Black Panthers, media, representations

> In some cases, those who raise issues about gender are responding to what they think is the one-sided portrayal of the Black Panther Party as some all-male, macho revolutionary group. – Kathleen Cleaver, *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party* (2001: 126)

> [Huey P. Newton was] not a man…not a woman… just a plain-born child. – Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power* (1992: 243)

Introduction

This article demonstrates how divergent representations of black masculinity were reflected, (re)produced, and circulated within the official newspaper-organ of the Black Panther Party (BPP). 'As the official voice of the BPP, *The Black Panther* provided information on the organization's ideologies, activities, and internal affairs. It also included

coverage of "mainstream" news events, community political struggles, and revolutionary liberation movements around the world' (Davenport, 1998: 193). Recognizing the dense intertextual nature of this media, this article aims to unsettle the predominant framework by which both scholars and laypersons view and understand such representations of black masculinity as an extension of essentialized 'identity politics' within nationalist organizations.

Further, this work excoriates those that charge, as former 1960s activist Todd Gitlin posits, that the black left engaged in a putative decline into parochialism (1995). It contests scholars like Doss (1998), Gilroy (1993), Hobsbawm (1996), Lefkowitz (1996) and Lefkowitz and Rogers (1996) who deride the intellectual dimensions of nationalism ad nauseam, and it contests historian David Burner's assertion that black power engendered a 'narcissistic absorption in the group content of self-identity' (1996: 50) and a 'solipsistic examination' (1996: 81) of the self. While these surmises could be drawn in certain instances, such wholesale conclusions are untenable. After all, how could the BPP project be an essentialist enterprise if it possessed divergent artistic, political, social and cultural manifestations along the lines of black masculinity alone?

By essentializing the BPP and the black nationalist agenda *writ large*, a straw man for attacks is propped up under the nominal phrase of 'vulgar militancy', or juxtaposed as possessive of a hyper-singularity of purpose within the framework of Garvey-esque 'Back to Africa' movements. Resisting the tendency to reify black nationalism into a myopic hagiography or romanticized iconography, many scholars demonstrate that black nationalism is constantly in the process of (re)formation and self-critique, resulting in a wide array of distinctive forms (Anderson, 1983; Moses, 1996; Pickney, 1976; Stuckey, 1987; Van Deburg, 1997). There is no fundamental black nationalist tradition or definition, and missing this point can 'result in an ahistorical, teleological, interpretation of black nationalism as an historical phenomenon' (Robinson, 2001: 6). 'Black nationalism,' as Wilson J. Moses points out, 'assumes the shape of its container and undergoes transformations in accordance with changing intellectual fashions in the white world' (in Robinson, 2001: 5).

This article gestures toward the realization that representations of black masculinity among revolutionary organizations like the BPP are historically structured by and against dominant discourses of gender and race. As modern innovators in aesthetics, cultural vision, and political agendas, the BPP both challenged and reproduced dominant cultural assumptions regarding subject positioning during the 14-year (25 April 1967 to September 1980) publication of *The Black Panther* (hereafter *TBP*).[1] Accordingly, the BPP in general, and *TBP* in specific, are particularly emblematic of the complex array of everyday struggles surrounding the categories of race and gender as well as how those categories constrained and enabled the social construction and representation of black masculinities in the public sphere. Various observers, for a number of reasons from mass media coverage, government infiltration, to shortsighted self-representation, have assumed that the male-centered gunplay and machismo confrontations with police represented the quintessence of the BPP. Yet, the evidence from *TBP* presented here indicates that a paradigm shift regarding the BPP, black nationalism, and 'identity politics' is

needed. The images and narratives in *TBP* do not present a picture of a 'fixed' or 'essential' type of nationalism or masculinity, but rather, represent a progressive and categorically resistive rearticulation of dominant ideologies as refracted through the registers of gender and race that further reinforces the notion of multiple and contested masculinities and nationalisms (Robinson, 2001).

Through an analysis of a random sample of 100 issues from 1967 to 1980, I first consider how the structural conditions in the inner-city communities, to which the newspapers were directed, gave rise to cultural adaptations that were embodied in specific codes of black masculinity. I argue that these adaptations led to an active BPP environment in which a complex and heterogeneous black masculinity was enacted. Second, I delineate the various components that make up the codes of black masculinity as constructed in *TBP*. Third, I demonstrate that the components of black masculinity came together in two distinct registers:

1) the formation of black masculinity that was politically self-determined with a streetwise reputation, and
2) the exertion of a (counter-)hegemonic black masculinity that both contested dominant registers of sexism and racism while it relied upon them.

Fourth, I argue that *TBP* provides a window into the meaning-making aesthetics and rhetorical strategies of BPP ideology in specific, and black nationalism in general, to represent various thematics of self-determined and counter-hegemonic, as well as hyper-violent and patriarchal, black masculinity.

Analytic Framework

Recent years have witnessed a resurgence of research on identity, culture, and reactionary and revolutionary ideologies amidst the ontological constructions of black masculinity (Anderson, 1999; Booker, 2000; Collins, 2004; Duneier, 1992; Fagan and Wilkinson, 1998; Harris, 2006; hooks, 2003; Mutua, 2006). Although many scholastic trends simultaneously exist, the majority of the research maintains that black men represent the Scylla and Charybdis of modern society (Hughey, 2008); as either unsophisticated, emasculated victims (Clark, 1965; Elkin, 1959; Fanon, 1970; Marriott, 2000; Moynihan, 1965; Staples, 1982) such as Frantz Fanon's remark that 'the black man is not a man' (1970: 7), or as ultra-masculine, pathological monsters (Franklin, 1984, 1985; Glasgow, 1980; Oliver, 1989), as evidenced by Dinesh D'Souza's observation that 'for many whites' black men collectively ushered in 'a revival of barbarism in the midst of Western Civilization' (1995: 527).

If not encapsulated by an emasculation/dysfunction dichotomy, representations of black masculinity are cast into simplistic binary oppositions of a positive/negative, good/bad scope that privileges dominant ideology vis-à-vis Eurocentric aesthetics and normative discursive frameworks. *TBP* was caught in a crisis of identity – trapped

between the tensions of a quest for white approval and the push to move past internal-ized racism, feelings of inferiority, and active repression. Mirroring this dynamic, many analysts argue that black masculine media forms should reflect both positive and nega-tive aspects in order to present a balanced picture. Conversely, others argue that all forms of black male representation should be positive in scope to combat predominant agen-das, as well as unintentional forms, of anti-black racism. Drawing upon Stuart Hall who stated, '"Black" is essentially a politically and culturally *constructed* [emphasis in original] category' (in West, 1999: 130), the project of *TBP* is illuminated as a third kind of approach that eschews the previous two. It was rather an attempt to *reconstruct* black mas-culinities as non-fixed, multiple, fluid subjects that transcend either 'balanced' or 'posi-tive' images. [B]ell hooks (1990: 72) writes:

> Discussions of representation among African Americans usually occur within the context of emerging identity politics, again with the central focus on whether images are considered 'good' or 'bad'. The idea of a good image is often informed simply by whether or not it differs from a racist stereotype … Issues of context, form, audience, experience (all of which inform the construction of images) are usually completely submerged when judgments are made solely on the basis of good or bad imagery.

So also, Stuart Hall (1997: 274) writes:

> The problem … is that adding positive images to the largely negative repertoire of the dominant regime of representation increases the diversity of ways that 'being black' is represented, but does not necessarily displace the negative. Since the binaries remain in place, meaning continues to be framed by them. The strategy challenges the binaries – but it does not undermine them. The peace-loving, child-caring, Rastafarian can still appear, in the following day's newspapers, as an exotic and violent black stereotype.

The search for comparisons between good and bad racial representations, all predi-cated by the best of intentions in redressing imbalance, can be destructive as it fails to address questions of ambivalence or transgression. Reducing *TBP* to a conclusion that they produced either 'positive', 'balanced', or 'negative' images reinstalls their project within the scope of 'identity-politics' proper – one variant is purchased in the field of rep-resentation at the price of the repression of some other alternative form of black mas-culinity. Instead we must examine how representations of black masculinity in *TBP* transgress and cut across demands for a particular type of black masculinity. As the 7 September 1968 issue of *TBP* states:

> the only culture worth keeping is the revolutionary culture. Our culture must not be something that the enemy enjoys, appreciates, or says is attractive, it must be repelling to

the slave master. It must smash, shatter, and crack his skull, crack his eyeballs open and make water and gold dust run out. We are changing, we are deciding that freedom means change, changing from the slaves, the cowards, the boys, the toms, the clowns, coons, spooks of the 50s, 40s, 30s, into the wild, courageous, freedom fighting, revolutionary black nationalists. (7 September 1968: 12)

The act of representing black masculinity in *TBP* was what Michel Foucault referred to as a 'truth game' (1988). Truth games are practices, and specifically discourses, that are related to specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves. Drawing upon the work of Foucault, we can sketch a history of the multiple ways the BPP developed knowledge about themselves, analyzed this knowledge, and how that knowledge related to media production. Accordingly, *TBP* embodied the four registers of 'truth claims' laid out by Foucault:

> (1) technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things; (2) technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification; (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject; (4) technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. (Foucault, 1988: 18).

TBP was a 'technology of production' as a printed organ within the political economy of the media, a 'technology of sign systems' as a semiotic structure which drew upon specific signs (e.g. pigs, guns, etc.), a 'technology of power' as a written conduit of BPP propaganda and rules from the central committee, and a 'technology of the self" as an 'imagined [black diasporic] community' that sought to transform the material conditions of oppressed people as well as the economy of meaning that limited understandings of black masculinity to either that of a safe and emasculated or violently dangerous black man. Alternative masculinities were present in *TBP*, and those representations were disciplinary techniques that both constrained and enabled understandings of black masculinity as regressive and/or resistive, while they simultaneously labored to reclaim the terms of the debate used to assess black masculine representations in the first place.

Data, Methods and Analysis

Content analysis of *TBP* sets the structural methodological parameters of this investigation.[2] The inquiry into the racial and gendered meanings *TBP* symbolizes within each

Table 1.   Issues of *The Black Panther*

The Black Panther, 1967–1980			
Volume: Number (issues accessed)	Accessed	Missing	Total
v. 1: no. 1–7	7	0	7
v. 2: no. 1–3, 6–18, 26	19	7	26
v. 3: no. 1–17, 19–25, 27–32	30	2	32
v. 4: no. 1–9, 11–15, 18–30	27	3	30
v. 5: no. 1, 4, 6–18, 20–30	26	4	30
v. 6: no. 1–9, 14–30	26	4	30
v. 7: no. 1–30	30	0	30
v. 8: no. 1–30	30	0	30
v. 9: no. 1–30	30	0	30
v. 10: no. 1–28, 30–32	31	1	32
v. 11: no. 1–12, 14–25, 27–30	30	2	32
v.12: no. 1–27	27	0	27
v.13: no. 1,3–30	29	1	30
v.14: no.1–6, 10–15, 17–30	26	4	30
v.15: no. 1–30	30	0	30
v.16: no. 1–23, 25–30	29	1	30
v.17: no. 1–30	30	0	30
v.18: no. 1–7, 11–22, 26, 28–30	25	5	30
v.19: no. 1–3, 5–11	12	0	12
v.20: no. 1–9	9	0	9
	503	34	537

issue (and its broader ideological significance) is augmented by an interpretive approach. The empirical results reflect a deeper cultural code about black masculinity and adopt the contention that analysis of African American media representation is not only one of the most fruitful areas of study for discreetly measuring social life, but is also a rich repository of meaning and cultural significance. In line with the analytic framework, this article does not present the images and text in *TBP* according to negative or positive stereotypes. Rather, this work focuses on the encoded symbolic meaning of black men in *TBP* as representative of larger cultural meanings, both of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic agendas. To examine the different black masculinity codes in *TBP*, 93.67% of the issues (503 of 537) of *TBP* from 1967 to 1980, were accessed via the University of Virginia libraries' special collections and microfiche files, as well as my personal collection. The sample population (*n* = 100) was drawn through a systematic sampling method (Babbie, 2004; Strauss and Corbin, 1998) from the available population of 503 issues, which was used to achieve a sampling interval of 5.03 (rounded to 5.00).
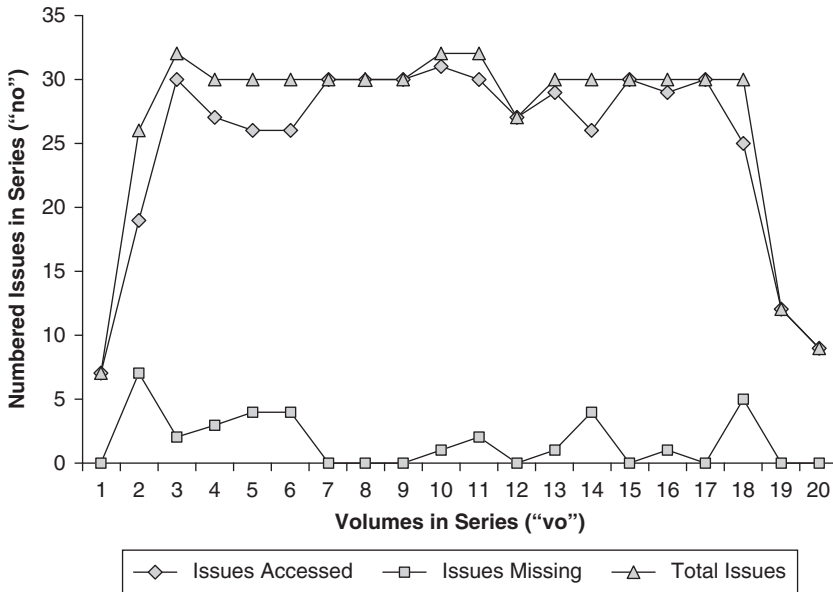
Figure 1 Accessed, Missing, and Total Issues

The sampling ratio, or the proportion of elements selected in the sample from the entire population, in this case was 0.199, a sound ratio for traditional content analysis used for populations between 500 and 1000. To formulate the random sample of 100 issues, the entire population of 503 was numbered one through five hundred and three, and one hundred random numbers were picked using a random number table (Babbie, 2004: A18) through the use of the sampling interval (every fifth issue). Once the 100 issues were collected, they were analyzed for the number of articles within all issues. Issues served as the unit of analysis.[3] The 100 sample issues contained 1316 articles in total.

Each article was coded in two stages. First, the articles were read in their entirety via a textually-adapted 'grounded theory' method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), in order to obtain an overview of the article's thrust and to search for themes relating to black masculinity. This reading was conducted from December 2005 to January 2006. Second, the articles were reviewed again and coded to determine whether seven themes of black masculinity were present (0 = no, 1 = yes). This second coding took place from January to March 2006. Specifically the following scholars' works on black nationalism and black masculinity were employed to draw out the seven themes (see also Figure 2, on page 37.)

1) *Diasporic Character* (Anderson, 1999; Gans, 1991; Glaude, 2002; Stuckey, 1987)
2) *Economic Empowerment* (Anderson, 1999; Marable and Mullings, 2003; Moses, 1996; Pickney, 1976)
3) *Afrocentrism* (Anderson, 1999; Van Deburg, 1997)

4) *Counter-hegemonic Gaze* (Russell, 1991; Stout in Dawson, 2001)
5) *Misogyny* (Bukhari-Alston, 1995; hooks, 2003; Mercer in West, 1999; Staples, 1982)
6) *Non-traditional Sexual Politics* (Bukhari-Alston, 1995; Collins, 2004; hooks, 1990)
7) *Militaristic Aesthetics* (Anderson, 1999; Fagan and Wilkinson, 1998)

The data was judiciously coded, identifying themes only when it was clear that the article reflected those different codes of black masculinity. As most themes are intimately linked, there are instances in which articles referred or referenced more than one theme at a time, thus each scoring a '1' to reflect overlapping categories. To access inter-coder reliability, an independent research assistant identified a random subset of the sample ($n = 52$ issues, $n = 629$ articles) and coded each article from March 2006 to April 2006. The researcher had no knowledge of my calculations. Agreement percentages were tabulated, reflecting how often the research assistant and I agreed that these codes of black masculinity were present (or absent) in the articles. Overall, they suggest a strong agreement: Diasporic Character (91.3%), Economic Empowerment (79.4%), Afrocentrism (92.2%), Counter-hegemonic Gaze (84.5%), Misogyny (89.6%), Non-traditional Sexual Politics (93.4%), and Militaristic Aesthetics (78.6%).

These seven themes are clearly a staple in *TBP*'s construction of black masculinity. I found each theme prominently represented in the text, but to varying degrees. Diasporic Character was the most commonly referenced theme (73%), followed closely by Economic Empowerment (62%). Militaristic Aesthetics and Afrocentrism were demonstrated in 51% and 32% of the articles, respectively. A Counter-hegemonic Gaze was present in 24% of the cases. Finally, Misogyny and Non-traditional Sexual Politics were witnessed only 20% and 12% of the time, respectively, despite common discourse that the BPP rhetoric and ideology was pervaded by either misogynistic or non-traditional, egalitarian constructions of gender and sexuality.

Social Conditions and the Genesis of the Panthers

After slavery, reconstruction, and Jim Crow, few opportunities existed for legitimate black male social mobility. The combined social forces of poverty, unemployment, family disruption, and isolation from mainstream civic participation still defined the context for many residents in poor, inner-city neighborhoods. These forces effectively disallowed, or at the least, greatly constrained, social mobility and worked to create what Elijah Anderson (1999) has called a 'code of the street'. Such features are unparalleled in predominantly white neighborhoods, even among the lower class due to the escape from structural and cultural racism that make up the 'central axis of social relations' (Omi and Winant, 1989: 61). Racism serves to legitimate and even account for intellectual, emotional, cognitive, overall social differences, and unequal stratification in society (Feagin, 2000). As a social narrative, race is central to many of the public and intellectual debates about human nature that have sporadically sent the USA and the world into spasm.
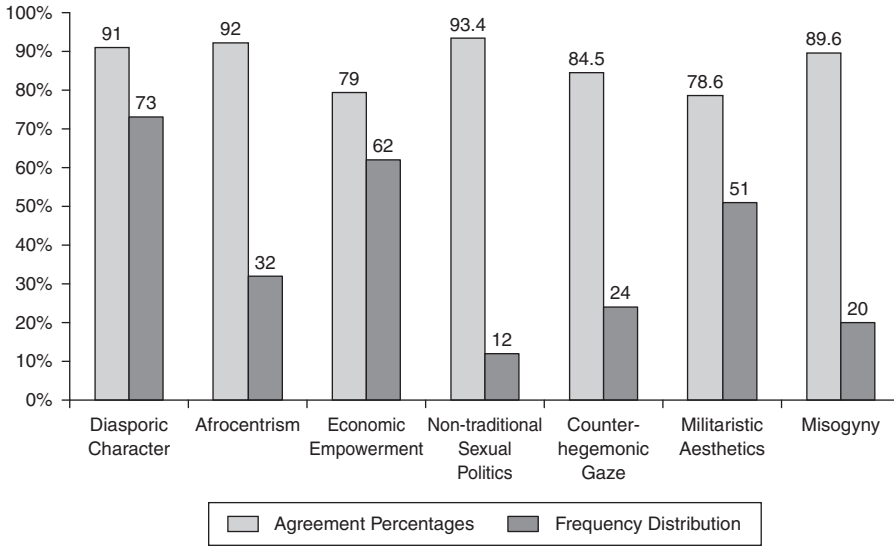
Figure 2 Agreement Percentages and Frequency Distribution

Such a context affords limited avenues to black men, and these constraints are equaled by the pressure to obtain the types of social status and roles available to people of other environments underneath a cultural logic in which individuality, meritocracy, and competition are so highly valued. Alternatives to these conventional modes of material and symbolic status attainment are thus limited to physical power, verbal perspicacity, or conspicuous consumption (Wilkinson, 1997). The contentious politics of community-police interactions only contribute to these problems – creating a culture in which arguably those most in need of the police's supposed function ('to protect and serve') are those most wary of the police due to racial profiling, brutality, wrongful accusations, and the empirical evidence of harsher and longer sentences for people of color even when controlling for socio-economic factors or educational attainment.[4]

From this milieu emerged such radical organizations and institutions as the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Robert F. Williams' 'Negroes With Guns', the Congress of African People, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, the Youth Organization for Black Unity, Deacons for Defense, Third World Women's Alliance, the National Black Feminist Organization, the Combahee River Collective, and the Malcolm X Liberation University (Bush, 1999: 20; Grant, 1968: 402–7). As Robin D.G. Kelley writes:

> black people in this country were not regarded by the state as 'the people'. Their problems
> were a drain on society and their ungrateful riots and the proliferation of revolutionary

organizations did not elicit much sympathy for the black poor. For many in the New Left, African Americans were not only '*the* people' but the most revolutionary sector of the working class. It was in this context of the urban rebellions that several streams of black radicalism … gave birth to the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in Oakland, California … By seeing themselves as part of a global national-liberation movement, the Panthers also spoke of the black community as a colony with an inherent right to self-determination. (2002: 92–5).

It was from such a context and directly out of an organizational genealogy that the BPP emerged on 15 October 1966, to consciously advocate revolutionary praxis as a response to racial and economic repression. The BPP directed their initial recruitment at young poor men, specifically 'brothers off the block' who represented the 'lumpenprole-tariat'.[5] The BPP based their rhetoric on the supposition that they were the Marxist 'van-guard' revolutionary force that would be the antithesis of racism and capitalism. However, the BPP also constantly defied Marxism and the sociological approach to Marxist theory. Political science professor Judson L. Jeffries (2002: 10–11) writes that BPP co-founder Huey P. Newton:

recruited those blacks whose backgrounds were similar to a young Malcolm X: the unemployables, gangsters, hustlers, and convicts … needless to say Newton's work with the black underclass defied the claim by sociologists that attempts at organizing and sustaining a mass organization among the lower rung of society was fruitless.

Specifically, the BPP engineered its first activities as a resistance against a specific and domineering group, the Oakland Police Department. Police repression was the material focus of the ideological push for social change by the BPP. To many in the Oakland area, police brutality was understood as more than an occasional happenstance, it was a normal and terrorizing social problem:

residential segregation was alive and well in the Bay Area. Unemployment rates were high. But African-Americans' were four times higher than whites'. An African-American with education equal to that of a white Oaklander stood more than a one-and-a-half greater chance of being unemployed … A 1966 Gallup poll found that 35% of African-American men believed there was police brutality in their community; only 7% of whites agreed. In 1966, a U.S. Senate survey in Watts found that 60% of African-American youth believed that there was police brutality; half said they had actually witnessed and experienced it firsthand …. The Oakland police department was an extension of the racist South that African-Americans had fled. Many officers were recruited from Mississippi. In 1966, 96% of the police department was white, while 45 to 50% of the population it served was not. (Taylor et al., 1995: 18).

In opposition to this narrative, the BPP attempted to assert themselves as the solution to police brutality. And through their paper this declaration found purchase.

The Voice of the Vanguard: *The Black Panther*

Soon after their founding, the BPP leadership recognized that creating and sustaining a media image on their own terms was of primary importance. Mainstream media outlets failed to report on the BPP until April of 1967 when the *San Francisco Sunday Chronicle and Examiner* placed them on page one as 'stars of a movie melodrama of revolution' in which 'the writer was captivated by Newton's physical attractiveness and the Panthers' dramatic uniform [and] the Panthers were framed as a threatening entity to be feared, particularly by whites' (Rhodes, 2007: 69–70). As a consequence of such myopic treatment, both Newton and Seale began to consider the formulation of their own media organ. Avidly reading other publications like the Nation of Islam's *Muhammad Speaks* or the 'New Left' magazine *Ramparts*, Newton and Seale quickly 'conceived of the [BPP] newspaper primarily as a propaganda tool – a means for political education and the recruitment of followers' (Rhodes, 2001: 152). Newton wrote in an early issue of *TBP*:

> Millions and millions of oppressed people might not know members of the vanguard party personally or directly, but they will gain through an indirect acquaintance the proper strategy for liberation via the mass media and the physical activities of the party. It is of prime importance that the vanguard party develop a political organ, such as a newspaper produced by the party. (20 July 1967).

TBP instantly became 'the most visible, constant symbol of the party, its front page a familiar sight at every demonstration and in every storefront-window organizing project throughout the country' (Hilliard and Cole, 1993: 149). The first issue of *TBP* proclaimed:

> So, Brothers and Sisters everywhere: righteous BLACK POWER organized is where its [sic] at. The BLACK PANTHER PARTY FOR SELF-DEFENSE really has something going. These brothers are the cream of Black Manhood. They are there for the protection and defense of our Black Community … BLACK MEN!!! It is your duty to your women and children, to your mothers and sisters, to investigate the program of the PARTY.

Another issue stated, 'We found we as citizens of this country were being kept duped by the government and kept misinformed by the mass media … [*TBP*] is the alternative to the "government approved" stories presented in the mass media' (21 February 1970: 28). As a consequence, *TBP* reached an iconic stature in the 1960s and 1970s, capturing attention from both activists and academics. The BPP 'set up distribution and sales in China, Cuba, Scandinavia, throughout Western Europe, Africa, South America, the Middle East, including Israel, indeed all over the world' (Hilliard, 2007: vii). So also, Elaine Brown (2007), former chairperson of the BPP, wrote that *TBP* was distributed 'on the streets of the United States by dedicated Party members. Nine hundred subscriptions went to the People's Republic of China alone! While early issues were only a few

pages, by the early 1970s, the newspaper settled at 32 pages, often with full-color inserts' (2007: x).

Academic attention to *TBP* reveals an array of issues. John Courtright (1974) analyzed the *TBP* and found that constant government scrutiny led to changes in BPP political rhetoric. Jim Mori (1977) examined several issues of *TBP* in order to map the historical development of BPP ideology. Carolyn Calloway (1977) demonstrated how *TBP* reflected in-group cohesion, and Charles Hopkins, whose work is one of the most substantial and serious looks at *TBP*, used the organ to demonstrate how the BPP was slowly de-radicalizing itself (1978). Charles Jones (1988) examined how *TBP* was a central target of government repression and JoNina Abron (who was the last editor of the newspaper) provided a historical overview of the internal production aspects (1993). Christian A. Davenport (1998) reviewed every issue published over a special five-year span in which the organ was a weekly, delineating overall themes, variability, and frequency. David Hilliard, former BPP Chief of Staff, re-published over 45 issues of the *TBP*, writing that it was instrumental in combining 'the pen alongside the sword' (2007: vii). Jane Rhodes (1999, 2001, 2007) demonstrated how *TBP* was a 'standard-bearer' for black nationalism and served as a counterbalance to how the BPP was reflected and maligned in mainstream media outlets. While such scholarship affords needed analyses of the purpose and utilities of *TBP* for BPP organizing, the overall functionalist underpinnings of these works tell us little about why the issues presented in *TBP* were important, what ideologies and cultural repertoires they engaged in order to capture attention, how various systems of representations structure the interpretations of the paper's content, and how these issues dialectically engaged both dominant and counter-hegemonic ideology. Accordingly, this article seeks to fill some of these gaps by examining the aesthetic and rhetorical devices that labor to construct differing forms of black masculinities in *TBP*.

It is important to remember that the *TBP* provided a critical response to the particular needs of impoverished and racially victimized African Americans. On top of this agenda, *TBP* was reflective of the early Panther ideology of an imagined, diasporic, black nationalism as developed and articulated by Huey P. Newton (Hughey, 2005b, 2007). As former BPP member Kathleen Cleaver writes, 'The Black Panthers initiated patrols to observe and prevent abusive police behavior. Newton believed it was essential to capture the *imagination* [my emphasis] of the people to spark their resistance to oppression' (in Baruch and Jones, 2002: 13). So also Jane Rhodes (2001) writes:

> Media that enabled patterns of interaction and a sense of belonging was the glue … in the absence of a 'place'. In his study of media and national identity in Britain, David Morley notes 'the imagined community is, in fact, usually constructed in the language of some particular ethnos', that accords membership in a political formation. *The Black Panther* newspaper was the principle vehicle for this nationalist language and culture. (2001: 153)

The paper played a role of central importance in the social construction of a community that re-envisioned black masculinity in important ways. As Benedict Anderson (1983) explains of the creation of community via the printed word:

> The significance of this mass ceremony [reading newspapers] – Hegel observed that newspapers serve modern man as a substitute for morning prayers – is paradoxical. It is performed in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull. Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion. Furthermore, this ceremony is incessantly repeated at daily or half-daily intervals throughout the calendar … At the same time, the newspaper reader, observing exact replicas of his own paper being consumed by his subway, barbershop, or residential neighbours, is continually reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life (1983: 39–40).

The ceremonial production, distribution, and consumption of *TBP* were necessary features of linking widely dispersed black locales and communities.

> The paper also introduced and disseminated radical symbols and rhetoric that would attract national attention: the snarling black cat (borrowed from the Lowndes County Black Panthers); the gun-toting, beret-wearing Huey Newton as leader and later martyr; and the labeling of government officials, police, and civil rights leaders as 'pigs' and 'lackeys' … These images were distributed via the newspaper. (Rhodes, 1999: 101).

While a diasporic community was being imagined, it was no stretch that the material consumption of the paper was a dream come true. According to both BPP sources and government surveillance, by 1968, the BPP was selling 125,000 copies per week of *TBP* and by 1970, nearly 140,000 copies a week were sold at nearly an average of 13 cents per copy. By 1972 the circulation topped 200,000 copies a week (Hilliard, 2007: viii; Oden, 2007: xiv), and during some months, income from *TBP* generated close to $40,000 (Seale, 1991; USHOR, 1971).

Today there are still troubling and complex aspects of racial and gender politics with respect to representations of black masculinity: from nostalgic celebrations of black middle class civil rights activism that obfuscate the sacrifices of the working and lower class, to the new formation of black male pseudo-nationalism tied to a politics of 'conspicuous consumption' within the contemporary hip-hop scene.[6] These disturbances and debates over the meaning of the black masculine subject require new contextualization, as the discursive legacy of the BPP is often evoked within these deliberations, as evidenced by the BPP 35th year anniversary conference in April of 2002 in Washington, DC, the first academic conference on the BPP in Boston, Massachusetts in June of 2003, various 40th year anniversary functions across the country in 2006, a noted article by Peter Monaghan in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (2007), recent scholarship (Austin, 2006; Cleaver and Katsiaficas, 2001; Glover et al., 2007; Hilliard, 2006, 2007; Hilliard and Cole, 1993; Hughey, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2007; Jeffries, 2002, 2006; Jennings, 1999; Jones, 1998; Jones et al., 2006; Lazerow and Williams, 2006; Major, 2007; Seale, 1991) and media presentations like Spike Lee's one-man film *A Huey P. Newton Story* (2002) starring Roger Guenveur Smith coupled with the 1995 film *Panther* directed by Mario Van Peebles.

With the BPP legacy still alive in contemporary discourse, a revisiting of the representation of the black masculine image labors to challenge three dominant ideological valences. First, it challenges the notion of a narrow and ultimately hollow essentialized black masculine nationalist. Second, it disputes the primacy of commodified and branded black bodies in the case of athletes, troubled gang warriors, and assimilated 'buppies', whereby competing and conflicting claims about (and for) black masculinity are now being waged. Third, it seeks to transcend simple dichotomies over 'good' or 'bad' representations of blackness that reinstall conservative moral discourse around the 'proper' or the 'good Negro'.

Two Registers of Black Masculinity

Although events, relations, and structures exist separately from the discursive, it is only within narrative frameworks that they can be invested with meaning. As Stuart Hall writes, 'how things are represented and the "machineries" and regimes of representation' play an initializing and formative role in the 'constitution of social and political life' (1992: 255). The seven main representations in *TBP* were found to gravitate toward two general political registers:

1) the self-determined image and
2) the (counter-)hegemonic image.

The Self-Determined Image

As Cornel West wrote in *A Matter of Life and Death*, 'Let's talk about identity-from-above as well as identity-from-below … We need to get a handle on how … whiteness, maleness, and straightness functions over time and space in relation to blackness or brownness or yellowness or womanness, or gayness or lesbianness, etc.' (1992: 21). Accordingly, *TBP* moved to recuperate a new image from 'below' by critiquing the predominant image from 'above'. *TBP* rethought this dichotomy by demystifying (used here in a Barthesian sense)[7] whiteness and masculinity so those concepts would have no univocal, objective, or natural standing.

Diasporic Character   One of the first registers in which this contestation was enacted was through *TBP*'s focus on the diasporic character of black masculinity. *TBP* often recognized black urban settings as transnational cultural meeting grounds. Urban centers are now joined by immigrants from the Carribean (Kasinitz, 1992; Portes and Stepick, 1994; Vickerman, 1994) and increased immigration from Africa (Apraku, 1991; Arthur, 2000). Accordingly, articles in *TBP* encompassed the role of black male revolutionaries in Eritrea: 'The revolution in Eritrea is part of the global anti-imperialist struggle'

(*TBP*, 31 January 1970: 12); the role of Black Power in Holland and Tanzania (*TBP*, 7 February 1970: 12, 14); and the black diasporic character of anti-imperialist resistance in Zimbabwe, Bolivia, and Palestine (*TBP*, 8 March 1970: 14).

Such recognition was underpinned by the developing analysis of Huey P. Newton who was formulating a thesis that evolved from a Malcolm X-inspired black nationalism to a Leninesque 'Revolutionary Intercommunalism' (Hughey, 2005b). Michael Jennings Jr wrote, 'A defining characteristic of Newton's philosophical legacy was his tendency to recast his ideology as necessary in order to advance a working social theory of empowerment.' (1999: 91). Scholars acknowledge Newton's constant progression in social philosophy (Hayes and Kiene, 1998; Jeffries, 2002) which was becoming ever more global and diasporic in its scope. In the 29 August 1970 issue of *TBP*, Newton issued a missive in support of the North Vietnam government: 'In the spirit of international revolutionary solidarity … in recognition of the fact that your struggle is also our struggle, for we recognize that our common enemy is the American imperialist who is the leader of international bourgeois domination' (1970: 13). This ideology was predicated on the interconnection of all 'oppressed communities' throughout the world that should unite across national boundaries to overthrow their common oppressor.

TBP often argued that no political program could function independently of an all-embracing intercommunity of diasporic people of color, especially black men: 'Many people were shocked to learn that Stokely Carmichael has developed into a leader of his people who has risen above petty local factionalism to the extent that he is able to embrace the entire population of Afro-America and black people beyond these borders' (*TBP*, 16 March 1968: 5). While Newton concentrated on the notion of a diaspora of the oppressed and Stokely Carmichael and Eldridge Cleaver concentrated on anti-black oppression in specific, they counter-balanced one another and more deeply entrenched *TBP* rhetoric in a diasporic connection between 'Power to the people' and 'Black Power'.

Afrocentrism   Another facet of *TBP*'s ability to construct a self-determined black masculine image and reputation was its focus on black men's role in Afrocentric imperatives. Implorations of volunteers to teach 'Black-centered' curricula in the BPP schools, to advocate for black studies departments in local colleges and universities, and to recuperate a sense of black political interconnectivity from African sources, were all a part of the intellectual focus of *TBP*.

While Newton often derided cultural nationalism and 'Afrocentricity' proper as 'pork-chop nationalism' that would not yield emancipatory results as a *political* agenda, *TBP* still drew upon an Afrocentric *aesthetic* agenda in order to relate the BPP platform to the rising 'Black is Beautiful' paradigm of the time. Quoting a government report on BPP activities, G. Lewis Heath (1976) wrote that the BPP was 'blessed with a theatrical sixth sense that enabled them to gain an audience and project an image [that] frightened America' (1976: 214). Their art and photographs were a powerful combination in

constructing a new image and reputation of black men that often relied upon the symbolism of African-coded items like Kente cloth and head-wraps.

As Erika Doss (2001) wrote in 'Revolutionary Art is a Tool of Liberation: Emory Douglas and the Protest Aesthetics at the *Black Panther*':

> The Panthers counted on media, both their own and that of the mainstream press, to spread their message … With their black berets and leather jackets, their Afros, dark glasses, raised fists, and military drill formation, the Panthers made great visual copy. This was no accident: the Panthers were extraordinarily astute about the appeal and influence of visual imagery as a tool for raising political consciousness … If Martin Luther King Jr tried to challenge dominant racist stereotypes by claiming black men as citizen-subjects, the Panthers subverted that civil rights image by reconfiguring and romanticizing black men. (2001: 178).

In Emory Douglas' *TBP* essay entitled 'Position Paper #1 on Revolutionary Art', he states:

> To conceive any type of visual interpretations of the struggle, the Revolutionary Artist must constantly be agitating the people, but before one agitates the people or progress as the struggle progresses one must make strong roots among the masses of the people. Then and only then can a Revolutionary Artist renew this visual interpretation. (20 October 1968: 5)

In this vein, *TBP*'s interest in representing an empowered Afrocentric form of masculinity was based on an attempt to connect a form of mythic, ethnic primordialism to the mortal danger the US social order posed to black men: from a legacy of lynching, the preponderance of black men being drafted into the Vietnam War, to beatings at the hands of police.

The (Counter-)Hegemonic Image

At times, *TBP* was full of contradictions: some issues included a decidedly socialist/communist slant that also praised black capitalism, while others held misogynistic overtones that were balanced by a praise of the women's liberation movement. Once decoded, these dialectics provide examples of the BPP as an organization that was struggling against, and relying upon, hegemonic forces. Together, they illuminate a complex and contradictory set of black masculine representations.

Economic Empowerment   Black nationalism, even among the Marxist-socialist underpinnings of the BPP, was enjoined with commoditization and entrepreneurship in the

pages of *TBP*. The paper advocated the production of distinct markets within black neighborhoods and often challenged the dominance of white and Asian-owned businesses in black communities. '[T]he social phenomena which brought the Party into being [were] economic exploitation … We call upon the people of the world to struggle with us (which they are doing) to topple Imperialism … in Standard Oil, General Motors, Bell Telephone, Chrysler Motors' (*TBP*, 19 September 1970: 11).

Such grandiose posturing was not without material action. The 10 October 1970 issue of *TBP* reported BPP members assisting in a black male workers' strike of a General Motors plant in Fremont, CA: 'General Motors is owned and controlled by a group of avaricious (greedy) businessmen, who place the highest value on profit and disregard human lives in comparison with their property and profit … General Motors are the oppressive murderers of the black people within this country … Seize control of the factories' (10 October: 6). A central tenet of BPP logic was a constant appeal to black male workers to resist and to seize control of the means of production. If this radical step did not take place, the BPP logic still installed a notion that labor exploitation could not be tolerated. The natural conclusion of that premise was either socialism or black capitalism. The former was portrayed as an idealistic yet attainable goal, while the latter was a pragmatic remedy whereby black-owned businesses would produce and distribute commodities that would become central markers of an empowered black male identity.

Counter-Hegemonic Gaze   Another feature of *TBP*'s portrayal of counter-hegemonic black masculinity was their contestation of the portrayals of African Americans that limited interracial contexts except when blacks were in positions of structural servitude. While this tradition reinforced a cultural belief in Europe's imperialistic and racial hierarchy, *TBP*'s interracial depictions and stories were usually saturated with white cops depicted as pigs hung from trees, or pigs in cop uniforms being gutted by black men carrying rifles with bayonets. Rhodes (citing Lauren Berlant) writes:

> dominant mass media circulate 'traditional icons, its metaphors, its heroes, its rituals and narratives' which provides the mechanism for a collective national identity. The Black Panther Party was intent on producing and maintaining a dissident symbolic culture. If national media are oriented toward the creation of moments of national communion – a sense of national unity – then radical media like *The Black Panther* seek to induce a sense of common outrage and grievance among the disenfranchised. (2001: 157).

Images in *TBP* evoked feelings of sincere and legitimate complaint that subverted the 'dominant gaze'. Margaret Russell (1991) explicates the 'dominant gaze' as the 'tendency of the mainstream culture to replicate, through narrative and imagery, racial inequalities and biases which exist throughout society' (Russell, 1991: 244). Russell draws from Laura Mulvey's (1975) feminist critique of Hollywood movies to suggest that popular films 'serve the political function of subjugating female bodies and experiences to the

interpretation and control of a heterosexual "male gaze"' (Russell, 1991: 244). Therefore, the use of dominant gaze can also describe a process whereby the media objectifies and trivializes the racial experiences of black people with the effect of supplying an ideological rationale for inequality based on racial distinction.

The BPP reversed this gaze in many ways. One was through a focus on black men as wielders of intellectual ideas. One article in *TBP* states:

> Freud developed psychotherapy because he found man was suffering from coercion and controlled by subconscious forces. Therapy was basically a way of unveiling these forces as a first step of regaining control of himself … On the sociological level we agree with Marx that outside forces control man's behavior patterns, and he will be frustrated until he can seize control of them and can act in his own best interest (7 February 1970: 7).

Such a coupling of Freud and Marx allied *TBP* with the stance of 'critical theory' proper. *TBP* frequently took the position that ethical propositions should not be reduced to the negative abstraction of good and bad, but (via Marx) from 'sensuous experience' (material analysis). In critiquing bourgeois morality, *TBP* reversed the dominant gaze to state that black men's own sensuous experience was de-legitimated at every opportunity. Conversely, white normativity was expressed as the foundation for social life. The BPP used activist and scholastic discourses to challenge the black male's place in both the traditional context of rank and primacy, as well as within the latter embodiment of eugenics and the then-prevalent Oscar Lewis 'culture of poverty' thesis.

Non-Traditional Sexual Politics   One of the more diverse and under-acknowledged patterns in *TBP*, especially in the latter years of its production (1974–80), was its support of divergent and transgressive alliances across sexual and gendered boundaries. For example, the 21 August 1970 issue of *TBP* includes the article 'A Letter from Huey to the Revolutionary Brothers and Sisters about the Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements', in which Newton urged an end to verbal gay bashing, called for a critical examination of black male masculinity and sexuality, and issued a call for an alliance with the developing Gay Liberation Front – making the BPP the first black nationalist organization to call for unity with an openly gay organization. Newton stated:

> Whatever your personal opinions and your insecurities about homosexuality and the various liberation movements among homosexuals and women (and I speak of the homosexuals and women as oppressed groups), we should try to unite with them in a revolutionary fashion … They might be the most oppressed people in the society.

As Robert Reid-Pharr (2007) writes:

> I would argue that his [Newton's] willingness to address topics as seemingly out of character for a black nationalist leader as sexual liberation and gay rights acts itself as

evidence of a will to break the hold that the logic of black historical and cultural profundity holds within the American imagination. Indeed he refuses altogether the split between the revolutionary theorist coolly delivering his thesis on the people's liberation and the bad, black radical lover, hotly satisfying his partner's desire (2007: 144).

Accordingly, the BPP's decision to embrace the 'unpopular' and the 'taboo' of black nationalism further indicates the multi-dimensional aspects of black masculinity that *TBP* promulgated.

Militaristic Aesthetics   *TBP* labored to de-'other' black men and refashion them into unambiguously free and strong intercommunal subjects. These images of leather clad, gun-toting black men were attempts to erase or at least diminish the memory of physical, constitutional, and psychological violence of the black male experience. Pictures of black men were often presented as highly industrious, productive, and adaptable subjects that would resist neo-colonization, police brutality, and structural racism by way of the gun. The January 1970 issue of *TBP* included artwork from Emory Douglas (inclusive of a black man pointing an AK-47 at a shivering pig in a cop's uniform) with a poem written by Elaine Brown:

> You're a man, you see/And a man must be
> Whatever he'll be or he/Won't be free.
> If he's bound up tight/He'll hold back the night
> And there won't be no life/For day.
> Well then, believe it my friend/That this silence will end
> We'll just have to get guns/And be men.

The images and text attempted to normalize such strong portrayals within a moral or political imperative for revolution. However, *TBP* did not concern its content with simple productions of positive gun-wielding black men. These symbols often worked to convey a complexity of experience: of defeats *and* victories. For example, the very first issue of *TBP* on 25 April 1967 (as mentioned earlier) was a sobering story of defeat – the death of a young black man named Denzil Dowell.

Even while *TBP* interrogated the reader's need for a black 'bad-ass', it also installed an image of a moral, scholarly, black male that could wield a gun. For instance, in capitalizing upon the centrality of Christian ideology in the black community, *TBP* wrote:

> The Black Liberation forces gave Malcolm X who is like unto John the Baptist, who prophesied the coming of another. Malcolm prophesied that his people were going to pick up the Gun and that it would be the Ballot or the Bullet. Huey P. Newton is like unto Jesus … and like Lenin, Huey created a Party, an instrument. (16 March 1968: 8)

TBP attempted a redefinition of black maleness through a radical reclamation of history, based on a combination of theological, pedagogical, and sociological ideas that were further stylized for mass appeal (Hughey, 2005b).

Misogyny   One repeated theme in *TBP* was a decidedly misogynistic flare to their articles. Most discourse surrounding the BPP's gender and sexual politics paints the BPP as misogynistic homophobes. For instance, in *Progressive Black Masculinities* (2006), M. Bahati Kuumba writes:

> the racially separatist and masculinized politics of cultural nationalism reasserted patriarchy as the movement's objective. The wide participation enjoyed by African American women in the earlier period of the struggle narrowed in the face of quasi-military and masculinized strategies adopted by groups like the Black Panther Party. (2006: 231).

In one article of *TBP*, the author asks: 'What is a black woman's chief function, if it is not to live for her man? The black woman must drop the white ways of trying to be equal to the black man. The woman's place is to stand behind the black man, so in the event he should start to fall, she is there to hold him up with her strength' (*TBP*, 28 September 1968). Because of such outrageous patriarchy dripping from the pages of *TBP*, some scholars maintain that the BPP added to its own destruction due to traditional male dominance. Rhodes (2001) writes:

> One discursive trend [in *TBP*] centred on gender roles and gender politics – a subject taken up by scholars elsewhere. While the paper's iconography celebrated strong black women carrying weapons and functioning as dedicated soldiers to the revolutionary cause, the texts tended to argue for an assertion of masculine authority and a sexual division of labour. (2001: 156).

Without question, patriarchal politics were a part of the movement just as they were outside of the movement. Doss writes, 'The Panthers also reinscribed the most egregious forms of patriarchal privilege and domination from machismo and misogyny to violence and aggression. Their heterosexist and homophobic brand of revolutionary black nationalism excluded black women and homosexuals.' (2001: 178) While Doss's statement is not without validity, it paints only part of the story.

One would be remiss if they did not acknowledge that women composed approximately two-thirds of BPP membership at its height and exercised a large amount of control of the organization, especially in its latter years (Cleaver, 2001). As Kelley (2002) writes of the BPP's ideological intersections with Maoism and feminism:

for black women in the Panthers suspicious of 'white feminism', Mao's language on women's equality provided space within the party to develop an incipient black feminist agenda … Even beyond the rhetoric, black women Panthers … sustained the tradition of carving out free spaces within existing male-dominated organizations in order to challenge the multiple forms of exploitation that black working-class women faced daily. (2002: 97).

Therefore, because of a wide array of forces aligned against the BPP, inclusive of corporate media, politicians, police officials, and the FBI, public perception of the group must be tempered with a dose of gendered reality. Women's perceived invisibility in the BPP resulted from both a complex mixture of these external factors and the BPP's androcentric style.

The Black Panther as the Negation of the Negation

The anti-oppression vitriolic of *TBP* constitutes a new black male subject directed toward an opposition of the dominant moral and ideological framework that dictate what constitutes 'good' or 'positive' black masculine images. For example, the 7 February 1970 issue of *TBP* states:

> No! [*TBP*] … is not an ordinary newspaper. It is the flesh and blood, the sweat and tears of our people. It is a continuation of the story of the middle passage, of Denmark Vessy [sic], of Nat Turner, of Harriet Tubman, of Malcolm X, and countless other oppressed people who put freedom and dignity beyond personal gain. (7 February 1970: 3).

The pages of *TBP* demonstrated a visual rhetoric surrounding the black male that can be understood as both ultra-conservative and radically progressive – but in either case *TBP* aimed toward the propagation of a coherent, nascent program with tangible benefits for the oppressed that sought to reform racial normativity itself. 'The Black Panther Party … thoroughly rejected and consistently struggled against petit bourgeois nationalism from a point of view of strong black leftist internationalism' (West, 2002: 32). Such a position (aside from the obvious Marxist underpinnings of the BPP) gestures toward the centrality of dialectic thought in the *TBP*.

TBP represents a defined resistance, a rejection of European universalism in favor of a sense of cultural integrity and distinctiveness. The BPP agenda was not predicated upon a physical separation of races. Rather, it sought a negation of everyday practices that were seen as *normatively* ethical, yet were *functionally* immoral. They avoided the naive rush to support the developing model of race relations that was grounded in a priori assumptions that humane principles guide peoples' behavior. *TBP* was visually and textually building what Lucius T. Outlaw Jr (2005) came to call a *Critical Social Theory in the Interest of Black Folks*. Outlaw writes, 'The struggle for integration on the part of black people without having first developed, cultivated, and consolidated our own group solidarity has

resulted in – and will continue to result in – the unsuccessful realization of the struggle for equality and freedom within the present scheme of things' (2005: 5).

Building upon this supposition, we can consider *TBP* black masculinity as a strategy of resistance that was a subversion of the politics of reception as it occurred through the dominant registers of the paradigms of race and gender. As Henry Louis Gates writes in *The Signifying Monkey*, quoting Mikhail Bahktin:

> ' … language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's.' Furthermore, in considering the bipartite nature of linguistic signs, Bahktin continues, 'It becomes one's own only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language … but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word and make it one's own.' (Gates, 1988: 78–9).

Gates thus argues that African-American writers, like *TBP*, 'signify upon each other's texts by rewriting the received textual tradition' (1988: 124). Their texts may be either parody or hidden polemic (or sometimes both). They are parody when they 'configure into relationships based on … repetition and revision', and they are a hidden polemic when they clash '"on the grounds of the referent itself" … the so-called Black Experience' (Gates, 1988: 110–12). While this effort was (and is) often distilled and filtered through powerful forces of commercialization that distort or dilute *TBP*, the black masculine subject inscribed upon *TBP* is, in the words of Marx, the 'negation of the negation':

> the negation of the negation, from the point of view of the positive relation inherent in it, as the true and only positive, and from the point of view of the negative relation inherent in it as the only true act and self-realizing act of all being, he [Hegel] has only found the abstract, logical, speculative expression for the movement of history; which is not yet the real history of man. (Marx, 1978: 108).

Through negating the need to play into a dialectic of representation that was set up as 'White equals good, Black equals bad', *TBP* attempted to realize, through heterogeneous representations of black masculinity, the inadequacy of the dichotomy and transcend it (and its alienation), through the 'end of [white male] history'.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 First known as the 'BLACK PANTHER Community News Service', and ultimately as the 'BLACK PANTHER Intercommunal News Service', the BPP adapted the communications slogan from FRELIMO (the Mozambican liberation organization that led the ouster of the Portuguese). See: Brown (2007: ix–xi).

2 No comprehensive study has ever attempted to measure or count *The Black Panther*'s entire publication series. This work is the first that takes into account the entire publication series from 1967 to 1980. Because of the dearth of resources on *TBP*, I must admit uncertainty about the actual number of issues printed. In lieu of an official number, all issues physically found in collections or held on hand, as well as issues missing within a numbered series, were counted. However, with the exception of 1969–73 when the paper was a weekly, the organ often changed dramatically from a weekly to bi-weekly publishing schedule without warning, and at times randomly skipped an expected publication for several weeks. The only scholar that cites the total number of *TBP* issues is Bloom (2007) who gave the number 537 (inclusive of 12,246 pages). Accordingly, after checking with several library holdings of *TBP*, my count of the estimated total population of *TBP* publications also yields a total of 537 issues. I obtained access to 503 out of the 537 issues (93.67%). By missing less than 7% (34 issues) of the entire population, the sample population is not significantly biased or affected. If, for instance, I obtained access to the entire population, the sampling ratio would have changed from 0.199 to 0.186, a modification of only 0.013. Based on $p = .05$, the Confidence Intervals (CI) for the found percentages are +/- 8.8%. The specific issues contained in the sample population to which I had access are shown in Figure 1 and a visual comparison of how closely the accessed and total issues correlate is offered in Figure 2.

3 For the purposes of this study, an article was defined as all written material at least three paragraphs in length. Photos and drawings contained within, or in conjunction with, those articles were also analyzed as a part of the article. *TBP* contains many short statements (one or two paragraphs), but these were kept out of the study in order to concentrate on what the editorial staff, writers, and contributors felt were the more space-worthy topics.

4 The first issue of *TBP* (25 April 1967) carried the headline article: 'Why Was Denzil Dowell Killed April First 3.50 a.m.'. The article included a list of unanswered questions and incongruous 'official' answers regarding the death of 22-year-old, unarmed Dowell by a police officer of the Martinez Sheriff's Department. In summation, the article stated, 'We believe we can end police brutality in our black community by organizing black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our black community from racist police oppression and brutality.'

5 The lumpenproletariat (from the German meaning 'rabble-proletariat' or 'raggedy proletariat') is a term originally defined by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in *The German Ideology* (1845[1998]). The term refers to the 'refuse of all classes', including 'swindlers, confidence tricksters, brothel-keepers, rag-and-bone merchants, organ-grinders, beggars, and other flotsam of society'. According to Marx, the lumpenproletariat had no real motive for participating in revolution, and has an interest in preserving the current class structure because they depend on the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy for their day-to-day existence. In that sense, Marx saw the lumpenproletariat as a counter-revolutionary force.

6   For instance, in *Gang Bangin' 101* rapper The Game states: 'I am Huey P. Newton with Air Force One's on.' So too, rapper Jay-Z's song *Public Service Announcement* contains the line: 'I'm like Ché Guevara with bling on/ I'm complex'.

7   Between 1954 and 1956 Roland Barthes wrote a collection of 54 (only 28 in the Annette Lavers' English translation) short journalistic articles on a variety of subjects that were published as *Mythologies* in 1957. In the text, Barthes (1957[1972]) maintains that one often accepts objects and stories as 'natural' when they are in fact an illusory reality constructed in order to mask the real structures of power in society. Barthes sees society controlled by *la petite bourgeoisie* that constructs a mythological reality and encourages conformity to its own values.

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