

T.H.U.G.L.I.F.E.: AN ANALYSIS OF ADOLESCENT BLACK MALES'
FIGURED MANHOODS AND THEIR QUESTS FOR MANHOOD

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

In a patriarchal society, such as America, males are socialized to adhere to a hegemonic manhood legitimizing the subordination of all women and men deemed feminine. For black males, “traditional” norms and roles associated with the dominant ideology ignore the structural discrimination that impede upon their ability to meet these standards. Currently, there is a limited understanding of black males’ figured manhoods hence this study was created in response to a call to explore the figured manhoods of black males throughout the different stages of their lives to further the deconstruction of black manhood. This study explored the figured manhoods of 12 adolescent black males (age 16 to 18) enrolled in an alternative education program facilitated by the U.S. National Guard utilizing a descriptive case study approach guided by the following research questions: (1) What are the figured manhoods of 12 adolescent black males enrolled in an alternative education program; (2) How were their figured manhoods formed?; and (3) In what ways, did their figured manhoods guided their quests for manhood? A thematic analysis of the participants Discourse revealed that: (a) they viewed manhood as a status achieved via the fulfillment of the provider and protector roles in relation to themselves and their families; (b) their figured manhoods were socialized through direct interactions with agents of socialization and indirect encounters with America’s social institutions; and (c) their quests for manhood were determined by their figured manhoods coupled with their perception of opportunities available to them to achieve manhood status.

Keywords: black manhood, figured manhoods, adolescent black males

**TO JOE JACKSON-PARKS,
EVERYTHING THAT I DO IS SO THAT YOUR LEGACY CAN LIVE THROUGH ME
LIVE, LEARN, MOVE ON**

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Hip-Hop icon Tupac (2Pac) Amaru Shakur is known for having the letters THUGLIFE tattooed across his abdomen. Unbeknownst to most, THUGLIFE is an acronym - T.H.U.G.L.I.F.E - which stands for The Hate U Gave Little Infants Fucks Everybody. Tupac used his body to remind the world that the socialization of the figured worlds of marginalized people “fucks everybody” – both the privileged and the disadvantaged. Figured worlds are “sociohistorical, contrived interpretations of imaginations that mediate behavior and inform participants outlooks” (Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte Jr., & Cain, 1998, p. 52). Said differently, Tupac used his platform to shed light on the effect that Capitalism – “an economic system based on the private ownership of wealth, which is invested and reinvested in order to produce profit” (Giddens, Duneier, Appelbaum, & Carr, 2014, p. 397 - has on us, members of society, in which it shapes our identities, our status in relation to others, as well as our pursuit of the “American Dream”.

In this dissertation, I will expand 2Pac’s theory (T.H.U.G.L.I.F.E.) beyond social class, to include race and gender, by exploring the figured manhoods of Black males. Unlike masculinity, which is a multiplicity of gender practices enacted by men whose bodies are assumed to be biologically male (Pascoe, 2012), I define manhood as the socially constructed status afforded to males who perform the expected gender practices (masculinity) of their ascribed sex in a given society. It is essential to distinguish between manhood and masculinity, seeing that the former indicates a social status whereas the latter refers to the performance of one’s gender. Thus, manhood is achieved when males enact the appropriate norms, or gendered practices, associated with their sex – these norms are formed via socialization of figured worlds. The phenomenon manhood is the foundation of the term ‘figured manhoods’ due to its ability to influence the

development of the identity known as ‘man’ as well as the context of meaning and action for the social position ‘manhood’. Drawing from the work on figured worlds by Holland et al. (1998), figured manhoods is the socially constructed realms as to what a man is, how they are recognized, which actions are significant, and what outcomes differentiate men from boys and women.

At the core of ‘figured manhoods’ is figured worlds, which Holland et al. (1998) defines as “socially and culturally constructed realms of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others” (Holland et al, 1998, p. 52). Identities are formed through participation in the organized activities within figured worlds. These activities provide the loci for identity development along with the context for meaning and action assigned to social positions and social relationships. However, there is a bilateral relationship between individuals and their figured worlds seeing that figured worlds develop and evolve over time in response to the practices of its participants within institutions that shape the activities, discourses, and performances of identities.

Figured manhoods are formed and transformed in communities of practice, through participation in activities organized by figured worlds (Holland et al, 1998). Benwell and Stokoe (2006) would add that identities are the product of Discourses within these figured worlds, with ties to social arrangements and practices. Discourse (Big D), not to be confused with discourse (little d), combines language, actions, and ways of thinking with the usage of various symbols to enact a socially recognizable identity (Gee, 2010). For this study, the social recognizable identity is “man” which is assigned to those that achieve manhood status. So, a critical analysis of Discourse would provide insight into the figured manhoods of twelve adolescent Black males

– specifically how agents of socialization and social institutions have shaped their figured manhoods. In doing so, this dissertation aids in the deconstruction of Black manhood by examining a population that has been largely unattended to in the limited studies on adolescent Black males’ figured manhoods. The dissertation will: (a) explore twelve adolescent Black males’ figured manhoods; (b) identify the social institutions, as well as the agents of socialization, that informed the construction of these figured manhoods; and (c) examine the influence that the twelve adolescent black males’ figured manhoods had on their quests for manhood. By attending to these elements, the findings will contribute to the deconstruction of Black manhood and Black masculinity via: (1) expanding the literature on Black males by adding the Discourses of adolescent Black males (age 16 to 18); and (2) identifying the social institutions, along with their practices, that affect Black males figured manhoods.

The remainder of this chapter will be used to produce insight into the logic behind the study and its design, beginning with the problem statement. The problem statement will be followed by a more elaborate explanation of the purpose of the study including the research questions used to guide the study. Then, a statement as to the significance of the study as well as its limitations. In addition, a list of key terms will be provided as a reference for those that may not be familiar with the terminology used throughout the dissertation.

Problem Statement

America is an Imperialist White Supremacist Capitalist Patriarchal (IWSCP) society structured to maintain systems of inequality that privilege members of one group at the expense of others (hooks, 2004). White supremacy – the notion that the white race, and their corresponding ideals, are superior to all others – is the needle used to weave the threads of oppression in order to maintain the position of power and privilege afforded to those ascribed

white. The threads of this tapestry (IWSCP) - imperialism, capitalism, and patriarchy - maintain the illusion of a beautiful America as they contribute to the perpetual marginalization of Americans classified as “Other”. America’s ideals, such as patriarchy - the systemic oppression of women and marginalized males in a culture or society (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) - are deemed legitimate and made functional when one or more of the threads are woven together to make it appear as though the ideals are structural foundations of society rather than social constructs. As a result, America’s gender hierarchy is maintained due to corresponding social norms, cultural images, and behavioral patterns that maintain the dominant figured manhood in America (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005)

Manhood in America

Simply put, manhood is a socially constructed status afforded to males who perform the expected gendered norms of their ascribed sex in a given society (Gilmore, 1990; Pascoe, 2012). In America, manhood status is guided by heteronormativity - the legitimization of heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships, affording power and privilege to both men and women that adhere to ‘traditional’ sexuality’s standards (Cohen, 1999) - grounded in white supremacy, reinforced by patriarchy, and supported by capitalism (Kimmel, 1999; Kimmel, 2012; Newsom, 2015). The prevailing ideology promotes a dominant Discourse - steered by straight, white, middle class, native-born males (Kimmel, 2012) - that presents males in America as a homogenous group. As a result, all males are forced to decide as to whether they will put on America’s white supremacist, patriarchal, heteronormative masks decorated with strokes of anti-femininity, homophobia, emotional restrictiveness, competitiveness, toughness, and aggressiveness (Newsom, 2015; Wade & Rochlen, 2013).

Black Manhood

One of the biggest issues with the homogenous approach to males in America is that it indexes the belief that all males are affected the same – completely negating the impact that intersecting identities (i.e. race, class, age, sexuality, religion, etc.) have on males' ability to achieve manhood status. For Black males, adherence to America's dominant ideology on manhood increases the likelihood that they will be incarcerated in their minds, bound by the interlocking chains of patriarchy and racism (hooks, 2004). Born with the shackles of patriarchy and racism, Black males are then challenged to escape the master narrative imposed upon them, overcoming the barriers that shape their social interactions within America's social institutions (Cose, 2002). As a result, Black males are then made both "victims and participants in their own destructions due to their response to broader sociological and economic forces that undermine their ability to develop an appropriate expression of manhood" (Hunter & Davis, 1992, p. 468).

Like most of the literature around Black males and Black manhood, Hunter and Davis's (1992) argument alludes to Black males lacking an "appropriate" expression of manhood. The only way to confirm or negate such an assertion is to go to the source, Black males. Doing so will inevitably shed light as to whether Black males truly lack an appropriate expression of manhood; and if so, reveal the institutional influences as well as broader sociological and economic forces that shape Black males' figured manhood (Pleck, Sonenstein, & Ku, 2004). Currently, the empirical evidence about Black manhood is limited. Yet, it is necessary if Black manhood is to be deconstructed. Without a holistic understanding of Black manhood, any attempt to explain Black males' figured manhoods is flawed. Therefore, the legitimacy of theories on Black manhood (i.e. Cool Pose), as well as assertions made about Black males, must be reconsidered due to the lack of empirical evidence to support such claims. The current study

is intentional about filling the current gaps in the literature by focusing on one of the many populations missing in the literature on Black males figured manhoods – adolescent Black males, ages 16 to 18. Doing so will clarify the ways in which Black males lack an ‘appropriate’ expression of position them to identify or create alternatives that empower them to resist America’s dominant ideology.

Adolescent Black Males

To deconstruct Black manhood, scholars must conduct research exploring the phenomenon at each stage over the course of the Black male lifespan – i.e. childhood, adolescence, emerging adults, adulthood, etc. (Bowman, 1987). Adolescence, ages 13 to 18, is a critical stage in need of exploration in regards to Black manhood due to it being the period in which identity formation is taking place (Erikson, 1994). During this time, adolescent Black males are developing their understanding of who they are as Black males (an intersection of their racial and gender identity along with additional social identities) in relation to society – a process that is heavily influenced by the institutions, agents, and ideologies of society. Furthermore, the potential barriers that they may encounter during this stage of their lives are likely to play a significant role in the challenges that they will experience as young men of color and beyond.

In order to better inform ourselves of the systemic barriers that shape Black males’ figured manhoods and guide their pursuit of manhood status, future scholarship on Black males must bring the voices of adolescent Black males into the conversation. If we continue to ignore the voices of adolescent Black males, then we will aid in the perpetuation of the master narrative imposed upon Black males due to our inability to showcase that Black males are not a homogenous group defined by the intersection of their race and gender; thus, Black males’

figured manhoods vary for a number of reasons, moreso due to the nurturing of Black males rather than their nature.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to aid in the deconstruction of Black manhood by exploring the figured manhoods of 12 adolescent Black males enrolled in an alternative education program facilitated by the National Guard of a state in the Midwest. To deconstruct manhood, we must acknowledge that the dominance of men in any patriarchal society, not just America, is a direct result of structural inequalities maintained through a socialization guided by the notion that males are the dominant gender group. Furthermore, an adequate deconstruction of manhood must include an analysis of race, class, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation among other things to expose the realities of oppression, discrimination, and social injustice that are directly connected to gender roles (O’Neil, 2015). Furthermore, the deconstruction of Black manhood is necessary to either identify or develop an ‘appropriate’ expression of manhood that would position Black males to discover who they are outside of the gender binary, allowing them to explore aspects of life deemed “feminine” in order to discover the female within (Spiller, 2000). The accumulation of findings would provide critical insight into the figured manhoods of Black males and may reveal that Black males do not need to develop a more ‘appropriate’ expression of manhood because it already exists.

Research Questions

A case study approach served as a means to achieve the aforementioned purpose of the study. The purpose of a case study is to “catch the complexity of a single case” (Stake, 1995, p. xi), which, in this case, was the figured manhoods of twelve adolescent Black males enrolled in an alternative education program facilitated by the National Guard of a state in the Midwest. An

exploratory case study was used to probe the phenomenon – Black manhood – in hopes of showcasing the need to further investigate Black manhood to deconstruct it. Exploratory case studies are used to identify the questions and hypotheses necessary to develop future studies that will investigate a phenomenon that lacks adequate preliminary research and/or if the study is limited by the environment in which it takes place (Yin, 2018). Rather than focusing on each individual participant, the twelve adolescent Black males as a group formed the focus of the case study. As a result of focusing on these males holistically, the findings can be used to develop future research projects that examine Black manhood on a larger scale. According to Yin (2018), questions that ask how or why in regard to a social phenomenon should be explored utilizing a case study approach. Thus, the following questions guided the design of the research project:

1. What are their figured manhoods of 12 adolescent black males enrolled in an alternative education program facilitated by the U.S. National Guard?
2. How were their figured manhoods formed?
 - a. What agents of socialization molded their figured manhoods?
 - b. What social institutions shaped their figured manhoods?
3. In what ways did their figured manhoods guide their quests for manhood?

Significance of the Study

In her call to liberate Black males, bell hooks (2004) urged those who claimed to be concerned with the fate of Black males to engage in the process of radicalizing a critical consciousness among Black males that would empower them to challenge patriarchy and save their lives, as well as the lives of those that they oppress. According to structural symbolic interactionism, a change in the meaning of self will result in a change in social behavior which can result in a change in society (Serpe & Stryker, 2011). In other words, the deconstruction of

Black manhood is necessary to position Black males to resist America's dominant manhood ideology.

The findings from this dissertation will contribute to the deconstruction of Black manhood and Black masculinity by: (1) expanding the literature on Black males via the inclusion of Black males' Discourses; and (2) shifting the conversation around Black manhood and Black masculinity from nature to nurture by identifying the social institutions, along with their practices, that affect Black males figured manhoods. In addition, the findings will: (a) equip scholars with insight as to future studies necessary for the examination of Black manhood; (b) inform policy analysts of institutions in which they should assess the potential impact that the interpretation and implementation of policies, within those institutions, have on Black males' figured manhoods; and (c) inform practitioners of external factors that should be taken into consideration when developing initiatives to serve Black males. Most importantly, the findings will reveal that Black males' figured manhoods are socially constructed, nurtured within America's social institutions; proving that at the same time that Black males are engaging in the process of reconstructing what it means to be a Black man, it is essential that systemic change be made to address the ways in which society (social institutions and agents of socialization) imposes racist, patriarchal chains upon Black male bodies.

(De)limitations of the Study

As is the case with any study, there are both delimitations and limitations to the study. The delimitations - conscious decisions made in the design and execution of the study – made in response to the limitations and current literature will be explained first. Then the limitations – factors that could not be controlled for – incurred during the study will be described. Together, the (de)limitations of the study established the boundaries in which the study was conducted.

Delimitations. One of the biggest issues with the literature on Black manhood is that there is a lack of adequate empirical evidence. With this in mind, there were a series of decisions made in designing the study to help address the current gaps in the literature. The literature tends to use manhood and masculinity interchangeable – ignoring that the performance of one’s masculinity allows them to achieve manhood. Therefore, this study will focus on deconstructing the participants’ figured manhoods – e.g. what does it mean to be a man – not their performance of their masculinity. Furthermore, the current literature lacks the voices of Black males from diverse backgrounds – e.g. class, age, sexuality, etc. Although much of the literature on Black males’ views of Black manhood and Black masculinity claim to be looking at adolescence (13 to 18), they have typically focused on emerging adults (18 to 24) seeing that their participants were usually enrolled in an undergraduate program at a post-secondary institution. This study will focus solely on adolescent Black males, but late adolescence (16 to 18) due to the age requirement of the program in which data was collected.

Limitations. Overall, the site in which data was collected created unforeseen limitations to the study. Due to the structure of the alternative education program, access to the participants was limited. The participants were only on site for six months total, and access was not granted to them until the third month. During their time on site, the participants schedules were extremely structured which affected data collection as a whole – the type of data being collected as well as when it could be done. Although the site had the potential to impact the participants’ views on manhood and their quest to achieve it, it was not the focus of the study. Therefore, the policies and practices within the program were not included in data collection or analysis; despite the fact that they resulted in a significant number of potential participants kicked out prior to data

collection as well as two participants not completing the study due to being kicked out of the program.

Key Terms

The following is a list of key terms that will be used throughout the manuscript. I have provided them to ensure that you, the reader, have clarity as to what is being communicated as I seek to put various disciplines in conversation with one another to provide insight into the interdisciplinary phenomenon that is Black manhood.

- i. Adolescent Black male(s) (ABM): adolescent Black male(s) age thirteen to eighteen.
- ii. African American: American-born individuals with African ancestry
- iii. American Patriarchy: the political-social system in which white men inherently dominate, are superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially women, and endowed with the right to dominate the weak and to maintain this dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence. (hooks, 2004)
- iv. black: individuals or groups in the African diaspora more broadly, inclusive of African Americans
- v. black Masculinity: refers to black males' performance of gendered norms to position themselves to achieve manhood status
- vi. Capitalism: an economic system based on the private ownership of wealth, which is invested and reinvested in order to produce profit" (Giddens et al., 2014, p. 397)
- vii. Discourse: not to be confused with discourse, Discourse combines language, actions, and ways of thinking with the usage of various symbols to enact a socially recognizable identity (Gee, 2014)
- viii. Figured Manhoods: the socially constructed realms as to: (a) what a man is; (b) how men

are recognized; and (c) which actions and outcomes are significant in differentiating men from boys and women.

- ix. Figured Worlds: a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others (Holland et al., 1998)
- x. Gender: the “psychological, social, and cultural differences between male and female” (Giddens et al., 2014, p. 259) “the biological and anatomical differences distinguishing male and female” (Giddens et al., 2014, p. 259).
- xi. Gender Role Conflict (GRC): a psychological state that occurs in response to socialized rigid, sexist, or restrictive gender roles resulting in negative consequences (restrictions, devaluation, or violation) for oneself and possibly others (O’Neil, 2015).
- xii. Gender Role Strain (GRS): The cultural standards for masculinity, implemented through gender socialization, have potentially negative effects on males. Gender role socialization of restrictive roles increases the likelihood that they will develop one of the types of gender role strain: (1) discrepancy strain; (2) trauma strain; and (3) dysfunction strain. (Pleck, 1995)
- xiii. Hegemony: covert and overt ways that ruling groups normalize patriarchal ideologies and marginalize others’ ideologies to maintain power and dominance. (Gramsci, 1971)
- xiv. Heteronormativity: the legitimization of heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships, affording power and privilege to both men and women that adhere to sexuality’s ‘traditional’ standards (Cohen, 1999).
- xv. Institutions: Durable systems of established and embedded social rules that structure social interactions (Hodgson, 2006, p. 13)

- xvi. Institutionalization: The action of establishing a norm in the culture of an organization, institution, or society.
- xvii. Manhood: using Pascoe's definition of masculinity (see below) to expand upon based on Gilmore's (1990) definition of manhood which he defines as the approved way of being an adult male in any given society, manhood is operationalized as the socially constructed status afforded to males who perform the expected gendered norms of their ascribed sex in a given society
- xviii. Marginalized Groups: groups in which one or more of their primary identities has come to signal innate inferiority (Cohen, 1999)
- xix. Masculinity: a multiplicity of gender practices enacted by men whose bodies are assumed to be biologically male (Pascoe, 2012)
- xx. Masculinity Norms: there are two types of norms associated with masculinity: (a) absolute and (b) relational. The former dictates how men should act because they are men; whereas the latter dictates how men should act in relation to others (Sinn, 1997)
- xxi. Masculinity ideology: An individual's internalization of cultural belief systems and attitudes towards masculinity and the role of men (Levant & Richmond, 2007)
- xxii. Patriarchy: the systemic oppression of women and marginalized males in a culture or society (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005)
- xxiii. Sex: "the biological and anatomical differences distinguishing male and female" (Giddens et al., 2014, p. 259)
- xxiv. Socialization: the process by which persons acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that make them more or less able members of their society (Kerckhoff, 1989)
- xxv. Structured Symbolic Interactionism: one of two views of symbolic interactionist

perspectives that argues that focus on everyday life (traditional view) neglects broader issues of power, politics, and society. Thus, they redefined symbolic interactionism to recognize the reciprocal nature of self and society – society shapes self, which shapes social interaction (Serpe & Stryker, 2011).

xxvi. white Supremacy: the notion that the white race and the ideals deemed legitimate among them are superior to all other races

Summary

Historically, the views on black manhood have been socially constructed since black males were enslaved prior to stepping foot on American soil. The sociohistorical practices used to control the black male mind and body have been used to try to strip black males of a manhood ideology that counters the American “man” – straight, white, middle class, native-born males that perform the appropriate norms that would deem them masculine. To combat these efforts, it is essential that future studies aid in the deconstruction of black manhood with the intent to liberate Black males of the standard of manhood imposed upon them.

Deconstruction of black manhood will either: (a) identify an alternative manhood that better equips black males to overcome the barriers imposed upon them; or (b) establish the foundation in which black males can redefine what it means to be a black man in America and the quests that they must embark upon to achieve it. Either way, the current deficit perspective used to describe the phenomenon - black manhood and black masculinity – must be addressed to stop the perpetuation of a black male master narrative used to guide the socialization of black males throughout America’s social institutions.

This study attempts to change the current path of the literature by addressing gaps that continue to be ignored. A critical analysis of the Discourse enacted by twelve adolescent Black

males enrolled in an alternative education program, facilitated by the National Guard of a state in the Midwest, will be used to: (a) explore the twelve adolescent Black males' figured manhoods; (b) identify the social institutions, as well as the practices within those social institutions, that constructed the twelve adolescent Black males' figured manhoods; and (c) examine the impact that the twelve adolescent Black males' figured manhoods had on themselves and others as they strived to achieve manhood. This case study is only one of many studies, along with an ample amount of additional research, that needs to be conducted to supply all the necessary pieces to the puzzle that is Black manhood. However, the findings from this study can be used to ensure that at least one of the pieces is available when it comes time to put the puzzle together – which is only half the battle.

Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature

Despite America's diverse population, there is a dominant ideology around manhood that shapes figured manhoods in America. Interdisciplinary in nature, scholars from various backgrounds: (a) sociology; (b) psychology; (c) human development; (d) education; (e) gender & women's studies; and (f) black studies to name a few, have shed light on the ways in which America's hegemonic manhood "fucks everybody" - including those that perform or reject it (Connell, 2005; Faludi, 1999; Kimmel, 2012; O'Neil, 2015; Pleck, 1995; Tolson, 1977, and more). The understanding of the ramifications of such a rigid ideology are limited due to the discourse around manhood that perpetuates the view of males as a homogenous group guided by one notion of what it means to be a man. Seeing that all men are not created equal, it is impossible for them to be affected the same by America's dominant ideology around manhood—especially black men due to the intersection of their race (Cose, 2002; hooks, 2004; Neal, 2005; Staples, 1982).

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature on black manhood - identifying the strengths and limitations in regard to the knowledge of black males' figured manhoods. Figured manhoods are the socially constructed realms as to: (a) what a man is; (b) how men are recognized; and (c) which actions and outcomes are significant in differentiating men from boys and women, shaped by social-cultural factors – such as race, class, gender, etc. First, I will examine the foundation of black males' figured manhoods by deconstructing manhood in America: (a) its building blocks, gender and masculinity; as well as (b) the effect that manhood has on males in America. Then, I will review the literature -both theoretically and empirically - around black manhood, including black masculinity, to provide insight into black males' figured manhoods. A review of the literature will identify the gaps that need to be addressed to

deconstruct black manhood as well as position black males to construct, or highlight, a figured manhood that liberates them from the racist, patriarchal prison in their minds (hooks, 2004). Furthermore, this chapter will provide a clear understanding of the problem – black males’ maladaptive figured manhoods – and justification for this study as a contribution to the deconstruction of black manhood.

Deconstructing Manhood in America

For this dissertation, manhood is defined as a socially constructed status afforded to males who perform the expected gendered practices (masculinity) ascribed to the bodies of those assumed to be biologically male (based on Gilmore, 1990; Pascoe, 2012). Manhood is achieved through the performance of the adequate norms expected of males in a given society. Seeing that the performance of masculinity results in the acquisition, or loss, of manhood, the phenomena of manhood and masculinity are not interchangeable nor are they mutually exclusive. The deconstruction of manhood in America requires an in-depth understanding of its pillars: (a) gender and (b) masculinity, and how they co-create figured manhoods.

Gender. Sociologist and feminist scholar Connell (2000) points out that, “to understand men and masculinity, we must first have some idea of how to understand gender” (p. 17). First, it is imperative that any discourse around manhood and masculinity clearly differentiate between gender - the “psychological, social, and cultural differences between male and female” and sex – “the biological and anatomical differences distinguishing male and female” (Giddens, Duneier, Appelbaum, & Carr, 2014, p. 259). Gender is not biological, it is cultural; meaning that it is a social practice that designates what bodies do in response to the ideologies that govern it.

In other words, we come into the world sexed but will develop a gender over the course of our lives. The process in which we learn what it means to be male or female in a given

society takes place via gender socialization (Giddens et al., 2014, p. 259). The socialization of each gender is guided by the ideologies around gender and power within a society's gender order. Connell (2000) breaks down the formation of a gender order as follows:

Masculinity and femininity must be understood as gender projects – dynamic processes of configuring practice through time, which form their starting points in gender structures. Gender configurations emerge in collective processes guided by culture or ideology within institutions. The patterning of these relations within an institution are called gender regimes. The patterning of gender regimes along with the gendered patterning of culture and personal life form the gender order of a society.” (p. 28-29)

Said differently, gender orders are formed by gender systems composed of institutions that construct gender projects (masculinity and femininity) via the culture and ideologies within those institutions. In most gender orders, the dominant ideology used to construct masculinity and femininity is patriarchy - the systemic oppression of women and marginalized males in a culture or society (Holter, 2005) – which grants men superior status to women. The dominant ideology (e.g. Patriarchy) is then legitimized within social institutions, resulting in the construction and maintenance of gender projects (masculinity and femininity) via gender socialization.

In patriarchal societies, power and status is afforded to males that adhere to “traditional” norms associated with man. Bussey (2011) reminds us that “anticipatory outcomes, such as the power and statuses afforded to males, provide the motivation to enact gendered conduct” (p. 613). Thus, gender – unlike other social identities (race, class, sexuality, etc.) - is consistently salient due to its association with social consequences. “Traditional” norms are the product of heteronormative - the legitimization of heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships, affording power and privilege to both men and women that adhere to sexuality's ‘traditional’ standards

(Cohen, 1999) - ideals as to distinct standards appointed to each group within the gender binary: (1) man and (2) woman. These standards are referred to as masculinity for men and femininity for women. As a result, the gender order of one's society constructs the cement, that is masculinity, used to fill the foundation of all male's figured manhoods.

Masculinity. Masculinity, according to feminist scholar Connell (2000), is “a social construction of gender practices that refer to the male body but is not determined by male biology.” (p. 29) Sociologist C.J. Pascoe (2012) would add that masculinity is “a multiplicity of gender practices enacted by men whose bodies are assumed to be biologically male” (p. 6). In other words, masculinity is the expected gender performance of males whereas its counterpart, femininity, is the expected gender performance of females. Any adherence to a masculinity-femininity binary negates the reality that some people are born intersexed. Furthermore, it perpetuates a heteronormative understanding of both gender and gender performance.

Masculinities. Connell (2005) argues that there are multiple masculinities within any given society, each associated with different positions of power: (1) hegemonic masculinity; (2) complicit masculinity; (3) subordinate masculinity; and (4) marginalized masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is the dominant form of masculinity, empowered by gender inequality and subordinate forms of masculinity due to its alignment with patriarchy. Complicit masculinity describes men who benefit from hegemonic masculinity but do not enact it. Subordinate masculinity describes those oppressed by gendered practices associated with hegemonic masculinity – e.g. gay men. Marginalized masculinity refers to men who are denied privilege afforded to their gender due to their intersecting class or race – e.g. black men. Masculinities are not genetic, nor fixed within a given social structure. They are produced to

maintain the structure of a society, developed through social interactions, and maintained within social institutions (Connell, 2000).

It is important that we recognize that masculinities are shaped via social interactions with agents of socialization – people or groups integral in our socialization - within social institutions guided by society’s ideologies (e.g. patriarchy). From birth, members of society are assigned genders (boy or girl), based on their sex (male or female), and socialized over the course of their lives to perform the appropriate norms (masculine or feminine) to achieve the constructed gendered status (man or woman). These gendered practices are developed over time through social interactions that take place at all levels of a given society: (a) societal; (b) institutional; (c) interpersonal; and (d) intrapsychic. They can be challenged and reconstructed as circumstances change (Connell, 2000). Thus, males become men through social interactions that influence the development of masculinity ideologies which shape their figured manhoods (Levant & Richmond, 2016; Pleck, Sonenstein, & Ku, 2004).

Masculinity ideologies. In the field of men’s studies, masculinity ideology is defined as, “an individual’s internalization of cultural belief systems and attitudes towards masculinity and the role of men” (Levant & Richmond, 2007, p. 131). Due to the subjectivity of figured manhoods, “it is hard to assess one’s masculinity, as well as femininity, because it differs within various social groups” (Pleck, 1975, p. 75). This is a reminder that the performance of identity – specifically gender identity for this dissertation - is situational (Blumer, 1969).

Yet, there is still a stratification of masculinity ideologies prevalent in every society structured around the gender order. The dominant ideology around gender, as it pertains to men, defines the norms imposed upon males in that society. According to Sinn (1997) there are two types of norms associated with masculinity: (1) absolute norms and (2) relational norms.

Absolute norms dictate how men should act simply because they are men whereas relational norms determine how men should act in relations to others - women, children, etc.

Despite the composition of both types of norms, Pleck, Sonenstein, and Ku (1995) point out that masculinity ideologies tend to be grounded in absolute norms with little acknowledgement of relational norms – reducing flexibility in regards to the norms and behaviors of men. In addition, these norms tend to be molded by: (a) homophobia; (b) type A behavior; (c) patriarchy; and (d) and pride (Thompson Jr., Grisanti, & Pleck, 1985). However, adherence to or rejection of hegemonic masculinity ideologies, and their correlating norms, is likely to result in the development of a gender role conflict and a gender role strain.

Gender role conflict. O'Neil (2015) defines gender role conflict (GRC) as:

A psychological state in which the socialized male gender role has negative consequences for the person and others. GRC occurs when rigid, sexist, or limiting gender roles result in restriction, devaluation, or violation of others and oneself. The ultimate outcome of this kind of conflict is the restriction of human potential of the person experiencing it or a restriction of another person's potential. (p. 42)

The likelihood of a man developing a gender role conflict will remain as long as the current gender order remains intact – perpetuating outdated gender roles while maintaining gender inequality.

At the root of men's gender role socialization and hegemonic masculinity ideologies are men's conscious and unconscious the fear of femininity (O'Neil, 2015). This fear of femininity has developed into four patterns of gender role conflict: (a) Success, Power, and Competition; (b) Restricted Emotionality; (c) Restricted Affectionate Behavior Between Men; and (d) Conflicts Between Work and Family Relations. O'Neil (2015) describes the following patterns as:

Success/Power/Competition refers to personal attitudes about success pursued through competition and power. Restrictive Emotionality is defined as having restrictions and fears about expressing one's feelings as well as finding words to express basic emotions. Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men represents restrictions in expressing one's feelings and thoughts with other men and difficulty in touching them, and Conflicts Between Work and Family Relationships reflects the experience of restrictions in balancing work, school, and family relations, resulting in health problems, overwork, stress, and a lack of leisure and relaxation. (p. 47)

Gender role conflict has been operationally defined in psychological domains (cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and unconscious), situational contexts, and personal/interpersonal experiences (devaluations, restrictions, and violations) (O'Neil, 2015).

Ultimately, GRC results from restrictive gender roles that significantly impact the mental health of all males guided by maladaptive norms. Gender role conflicts are initiated during childhood when family, peers, and additional agents of socialization teach boys gender specific traits that may be adaptive in one situation and maladaptive in another (Wester, Christianson, Vogel and Wei, 2007). Unfortunately, men are likely to develop a gender role conflict whether they are conforming to or deviating from the hegemonic masculinity ideology due to the fact that gender is as much a sociopolitical issue as it is psychological and interpersonal (Wade & Rochlen, 2013; O'Neil, 2015). To make things worse, most men are prone to develop a Gender Role Strain, in response to their Gender Role Conflict.

Gender role strain. Originally coined the Sex Role Strain by psychologist Pleck (1981), Gender role strain (GRS) posits that restrictive masculinity ideologies have the potential to negatively effects males. The gender socialization of gender performance that takes place

throughout the course of one's lifespan has been identified as the catalyst for GRS to develop (Pleck, Sonenstein, & Ju, 2004). Men that develop a GRS are likely to experience depression, anxiety, and sexual aggression resulting from high levels of distrust, detachment, inhibition, and hostile behaviors (Wester et al., 2007).

To date, there are three types of GRS: (a) discrepancy strain; (b) dysfunction strain; and (c) trauma strain (Pleck, 1995). Discrepancy strain results from a long-term failure to fulfill male role expectations, resulting in negative psychological well-being due to negative social feedback and self-judgement. Meanwhile, trauma strain is the aftermath of a successful fulfillment of male role expectations achieved despite a traumatic socialization process. Like trauma strain, a dysfunction strain results from the fulfillment of male role expectations, but negative consequences result because of the dysfunction of prescribed gendered characteristics.

Pleck et al. (2004) reminds us that the type of strain that one may experience is heavily influenced by the institutions and social interactions that individuals will encounter. Thus, the intersection of social identities (race, class, sexuality, etc.) in conjunction with their masculinity ideology will factor into the likelihood that males will experience a gender role strain as well as the type of strain.

Since gender provides the foundation, the norms (absolute and relational) associated with masculinities serve as the building blocks used to construct figured manhoods. Despite the evolution of different masculinities in relation to power, each individual will develop a subjective masculinity ideology via the intersectional lens that they view masculinity and the role of men in society. However, the socio-political nature of masculinity increases the likelihood that all males will experience a Gender Role Conflict coupled with one or more types of Gender

Role Strain. Together, masculinity and gender, shape the discourse around manhood as well as the reinforcement of figured manhoods.

Manhood. Anthropologist David Gilmore (1990) describes manhood as, “a precious and elusive status beyond mere maleness, a hortatory image that men and boys aspire to and that their culture demands of them as a measure of belonging” (p. 17). In other words, the social construction of manhood renders the practices associated with it subjective to the culture in which males are being socialized to adhere to as a means of belonging. Gilmore’s (1990) exploration of manhood throughout the globe resulted in the conclusion that manhood is typically achieved through adherence to the “Three Ps of Manhood”: (a) Provide; (b) Protect; and (c) Procreate. In other words, manhood is a socially constructed status achieved through the appropriate performance of subjective gendered practices that determine whether males belong in a given culture. Furthermore, Gilmore argues that although there are cultural differences in the rites of passage to manhood, rarely will the three Ps not be taken into consideration when differentiating between boys and men – manhood in America is no different.

Meanwhile, historian Steve Estes (2005) defines manhood as “an economic, social, and political status ideally achievable by all men” (p. 7). In his definition, Estes alludes to the power associated with manhood status that affords economic, social, and political influence to those that achieve it. The keyword in Estes’s definition is “ideally” alluding to the illusion that all males can achieve manhood. However, Estes ignores that fact that the structure of one’s society may result in socio-political barriers that decrease the likelihood that some males achieve manhood in comparison to their same gender peers with different social identities (e.g. race, class, sexuality, etc.).

Each scholar would agree that manhood is a status achieved through the performance of the ascribed norms associated with the male body in a given society – typically referred to as masculinity. The norms associated with manhood are subjective based on one’s culture. The actions required to achieve manhood as a rite of passage in one culture may be deemed unbecoming of a man in other cultures – these cultures can exist in the same country, or even the same community (Gilmore, 1990). However, Jackson II and Dangerfield (2002) argue that viewing manhood as a status positions it to be seized in contrast to a person’s sense of being that cannot be revoked.

Seeing that the performance of masculinity results in the achievement or forfeiture of manhood, the two phenomena (manhood and masculinity) are not interchangeable nor are they mutually exclusive. Simultaneously, both manhood and masculinity are shaped by socio-cultural factors (such as race, class, gender, etc.) while at the same time they provide the lens through which figured manhoods are developed. Masculinity, in conjunction with gender, is a pillar of manhood. Ergo, an analysis as to how masculinity influences manhood as well as the ways in which the two phenomena work together to contribute to the oppression of marginalized males – males incapable of meeting the rigid standards used to differentiate men from everyone else – is necessary for the deconstruction of manhood in America, specifically as it pertains to marginalized males.

Manhood in America. In his novel *I Am A Man!: Race, Manhood, and the Civil Rights*, Estes (2005) explains how manhood in America has centered around the notion of independence, a privilege typically afforded to white males in a white supremacist country. This privilege is due to the dominant ideology around manhood dictated by heteronormative, white, middle class, native-born males (Kimmel, 2012). America’s hegemonic masculinity ideology has promoted

the behaviors, performance, and actions that reflect patriarchy, resulting in the maintenance of a hegemonic manhood (Dancy, 2012).

Despite America's diverse population, there is a dominant ideology that shapes both the perception of what it means to be a man as well as the gendered socialization of males with the intent of increasing the likelihood that they will adhere to the ascribed standards. The dominant masculinity ideology, "informs, encourages, and constrains boys and men to conform to the prevailing male role norms by adopting socially sanctioned masculine behaviors and avoiding certain forbidden behaviors" (Levant & Richmond, 2016, p. 25).

Guided by Brannon's Blueprint for Manhood, psychologists Richard Brannon and Samuel Juni (1984) developed the Brannon masculinity scale in which they identified four categories that encompass the norms associated with America's hegemonic masculinity: (a) No Sissy Stuff; (b) The Big Wheel; (c) The Sturdy Oak; and (d) Give 'Em Hell. "No Sissy Stuff" alludes to the expectation that males must avoid anything deemed feminine. "The Big Wheel" requires that men be successful in all endeavors. "The Sturdy Oak" is used to describe the strong, silent type – those that refuse to show weakness, do not allow themselves to be vulnerable, and remain calm, internalizing thoughts and feelings, when face when hectic and potentially frightening situations. Finally, "Give 'Em Hell" describes the innate love for adventure, danger, and violence that all men have. Together, the four categories compose what is known as Brannon's Blueprint for Manhood. Adherence to this blueprint increases the likelihood that males will experience a GRC and develop one or more of the types of GRS.

What's more is that a qualitative study of 400 college aged men, enrolled in two liberal arts colleges in the New England area, found that those whose behaviors resembled Brannon's Blueprint were also likely to be classified as having Type-A personalities (Thompson Jr.

Grisanti, & Pleck, 1985). In addition, America's "Blueprint" has various negative consequences, both social and personal, such as anti-femininity, homophobia, emotional restrictiveness, competitiveness, toughness, and aggressiveness (Wade & Rochlen, 2013). All of which heavily influence not only the lens in which manhood is viewed, but also the quests that males embark upon to achieve manhood status.

Quest for manhood. Despite the multiple masculinity throughout the world, the quest for manhood is a universal pursuit. Sociologist Michael Kimmel (2012) describes the "Quest for Manhood" as "the effort to achieve, to demonstrate, to prove our masculinity" (p.3). This quest is traversed through social interactions with agents of socialization (e.g. parents, peers, teachers, etc.) in America's social institutions (Family, Education, Media, etc.), guided by America's hegemonic manhood and its correlating masculinity ideology (Pleck et al., 2004).

Eventually, each male will be forced to choose as to whether they will adopt America's notion of manhood and its correlating norms. For those that reject it, in a patriarchal society, they will be subjected to a marginalized status equivalent to women and children. On the other hand, those that embrace it will be afforded the opportunity to achieve manhood and the privileges that come with it. Keep in mind that the privileges associated with manhood are driven by the fear of being dominated in contrary to the desire for domination (Kimmel, 2012). Historically, America has placed people into one of two positions: (1) Oppressor and (2) Oppressed, which means that the acquisition of manhood decreases the likelihood that a male will embody the oppressed. However, the quest for manhood is one of the most formative and persistent experiences in the lives of males as the quest is never truly fulfilled – leaving all men betrayed (Faludi, 2000; Kimmel, 2012).

Although it appears as though some males that will never be marginalized – straight, white, middle - class, native born - the truth is that every male at some point in their lives, some for longer periods of time than others, will fail to meet the rigid standards along their quest for manhood (Kimmel, 2012). The lack of fulfillment, coupled with the potential development of Gender Role Conflict and/or Gender Role Strain, provides adequate justification for intentional efforts to deconstruct manhood in America.

Deconstruction. Due to the dominant ideology guiding the quest for manhood in America, it has become a common practice to reference males as a homogenous group. The inability to recognize the different statuses afforded to males, along with the varying ideologies and masculinities, perpetuates the belief that all males are embarking upon the same quest to achieve the same manhood. If that were the case, then the effect that it has on males, their families, their community, and society would be the same across all social groups. Furthermore, the acquisition of manhood would then put all males that achieve it on an equal playing field – completely negating other social identities such as race, sexuality, etc.

In his book, *Men's Gender Role Conflict: Psychological Costs, Consequences, and an Agenda for Change*, O'Neil (2015) urges scholars and practitioners to aid in the deconstruction of gender, gender roles, and gender norms to diminish the likelihood that men will develop a Gender Role Conflict. O'Neil (2015) explains that deconstruction will empower men to liberate themselves from restrictive notions of manhood and rigid masculinity norms, if it entails:

Telling the truth about sexist assumptions and stereotypes that distort what it means to be fully human, confronting the lies about rewards of highly sex-typed attitudes and behaviors, and identifying and correcting the myths that men and women are more different than alike. (p. 13)

In addition, O'Neil (2015) pointed out one of the primary gaps in the literature on GRC by shedding light on that fact that most of the scholarship in the field of men's studies has theorized manhood and masculinity through the lens of America's dominant group - straight, white, middle class, native-born males (Katz, 1999; Katz, 2013; Newsom, 2016). Documentaries such as *Tough Guise: Violence, Media & The Crisis in Masculinity* (Katz, 1999), *Tough Guise 2: Violence, Manhood, & American Culture* (Katz, 2013), and *The Mask You Live In* (Newsom, 2015) were created with the intent of starting the deconstruction process. However, they have only scratched the surface due to their inability to extend the conversation beyond a heteronormative, white, middle class, American lens. Furthermore, the documentaries continue the historical promotion of scholarship on the performance of gender in which white males are the primary focus; which results in the continuation of theories on manhood and masculinity that position white male behavior and attitudes as 'normal' with that of non-whites as either oppositional or pathological in nature" (Chandler, 2013, p. 55).

Intersecting identities, such as age among others, must also be taken into consideration in the deconstruction of manhood. The social construction of manhood renders it malleable over time in relation to the evolution of society. Not only has ideologies around manhood evolved, but also the quest to achieve manhood due to "a constantly changing collection of meanings (on manhood) that we construct through our relationships with ourselves, each other, and our world" (Kimmel, 2012, p. 4). Thus, not only are there different figured manhoods between social groups, but there are also various figured manhoods within social groups due to stages of life. An example of such is a family composed of three generations of males (son, father, grandfather) that have varying views as to the role of men (masculinity ideologies) and the gender practices (masculinities) necessary to achieve manhood status in America. Such a realization justifies the

need to deconstruct manhood in America in order to identify all the social determinants (race, class, sexuality, age, etc.) that contribute to its social construction.

Deconstructing America's black Man

To be black and male in America renders an entire population nearly invisible when it comes to the discourse surrounding black males, black masculinity, and black manhood (Ellison, 1952). The lack of the black male voices in the construction of black male identities furthers the maintenance of the historical representation of the black male as a threat to society. Over time, the relentless onslaught of the black male image, in conjunction with America's hegemonic manhood and masculinity, has served to bind Black males into rigid, frivolous, unfulfillable gender roles. These racialized gender roles increase the likelihood that black males will be imprisoned in their minds through the adoption of maladaptive norms used to legitimize their unjust treatment throughout the country (Ford, 2011; Payne, 2016). As a result, the cultural adaptations developed by black males in response to the systemic, economic, and social pressures imposed upon them have contributed to the discourse around black males being considered an "endangered species" among other things (Gibbs, 1988; Hunter & Davis, 1994).

Regardless, a deconstruction of black manhood requires an in-depth analysis of the current literature on black masculinity and black manhood. The deconstruction would provide insight as to the work that has already been done as well as oversight for future studies necessary to aid in a holistic understanding of the phenomenon that is black manhood. Each subsequent section on black masculinity and black manhood, will be divided into two sub-sections: (a) theory and (b) empirical evidence to showcase what has been theorized in relation to what has been proven, or disproved, through empirical studies. Within the literature, the terms African American (American-born individuals with African ancestry) and black (individuals or groups in

the African diaspora more broadly, inclusive of African Americans) are used interchangeably to reference black males. Moving forward, I will use the term black to focus on all males in America that are a member of the African diaspora – descendants of Africa – as a means to give the literature synergy seeing that they are referring to the same population.

black masculinity. Connell (2005) reminds us that there are multiple masculinities present in any given society, each associated with different position of power. For black males, their second-class status – due to the intersection of their race - results in the performance of a marginalized masculinity rooted in America’s hegemonic masculinity ideology (Hunter & Davis, 1992). Although black men are more than capable of performing the roles and norms associated with America’s dominant ideology, they are still denied the privileges afforded to their gender by racist institutions and economic deprivation (Hunter & Davis, 1992; Staples, 1978). Thus, the rigid masculinity norms associated with manhood are problematic and maladaptive due to their inability to provide the tools necessary for marginalized men (e.g. black men) to overcome obstacles encountered during their lives (Hunter & Davis, 1994; Robert-Douglass & Curtis-Boles, 2013). This reality led to sociologist Robert Staples (1975) questioning the length of time that would be required for black masculinity to diverge from the white masculinity model. Ultimately, Staples concluded that the dominant masculinity will continue to be endorsed within the black community until opportunities to fulfill other forms of masculinity present themselves. The question is whether alternative black masculinities exist. Where some scholars have chosen to theorize about this question, others engaged in research to examine the phenomenon in hopes of making an informed response.

Theories. To date, there are limited theories on the phenomenon that is black masculinity. The most popular theory on black masculinity, cool pose, was posited by sociologists Majors and

Billson (1992). A little over a quarter century later, three additional theories on black masculinity have emerged: (a) progressive black masculinity posed by law professor Athena Mutua (2006); (b) the brother code introduced by education sociologist Elon Dancy (2012); and (c) the street identified black masculinity presented by social psychologist scholar Yasser Arafat Payne (2016). The latter two were grounded in empirical evidence whereas the former two were completely theoretical.

Cool pose. Cool pose is “a ritualized form of masculinity that entails behaviors, scripts, physical posturing, impression management, and carefully crafted performances that deliver a single, critical messages of pride, strength, and control in response to the daily struggles that black people experience in America (Majors & Billson, 1992). In their book, *Cool pose: The dilemmas of Black men in America*, Majors and Billson (1992) posed the theory in an attempt to explain why black males, in comparison members of other social groups, are more likely to: (a) die earlier and faster from suicide, homicide, accidents, and stress-related illnesses; (b) be deeply involved in criminal and delinquent activities; (c) be suspended from and drop out of school; and (d) have more volatile relationships with women.

According to Majors and Billson, “Cool Pose” is a marginalized masculinity ideology developed to empower black men, rendering them visible within a society that refuses to acknowledge them. In order to be seen, it was instilled in black males that they must suppress their feelings, portraying a calm demeanor and false sense of control despite the social chaos, discrimination and trauma imposed upon them. The act of being cool became synonymous with three restrictive roles deemed acceptable for black men: (a) pimps; (b) athletes; (c) rappers.

Progressive black masculinity. Mutua (2006) acknowledged that masculinity within America is “understood and practiced as a system of domination within the family, culture,

economy, and political/legal structures of the United States” (p. xi). In addition, Mutua pointed out that adherence to the hegemonic masculinity, or any alternative forms grounded in it, leads to black men hurting themselves, black women, and the black community. Hence, the need for the development of a progressive black masculinity, grounded in progressive blackness and black feminist thought (Collins, 2000), human freedom for all by being “pro-black and anti-racist as well as pro-feminist and anti-sexist” (Mutua, 2006, p.7). Mutua (2006) described ‘progressive black masculinity’ as:

The unique and innovative performances of the masculine self that on the one hand personally eschew and ethically and actively stand against social structures of domination; and on the other hand, they value, validate and empower Black humanity, in all its variety, as part of the diverse and multicultural humanity of others in the global family (p. 4).

Ultimately, Mutua advocated for the need to develop an alternative black masculinity, a progressive ideology guided by black feminist thought, due to the lack of one within the African diaspora.

The brother code. Education sociologist Dancy (2012) interviewed 24 black males, enrolled in 12 universities, to explore how manhood mattered in their collegiate and social lives. An analysis of his findings resulted in the development of the ‘The Brother Code’ which is defined as “the rules that govern manhood for African American males” (Dancy, 2012, p. 2). The norms associated with this code describe the ways that black males must “walk, talk, dress, think, and carry themselves”. Those who are unable to meet these norms are “found in contempt of social laws and thus face glaring suspicion and condemnation.” (p. 2)

In his book, *The brother code: Manhood and masculinity among African American males in college*, Dancy (2012) describes 'The Brother Code' as hegemonic, not to be confused with America's dominant manhood or masculinity ideologies, in that it polices the thoughts and actions of black males based on who they are supposed to be. As a result, black males are taught to adhere to the code through the performance of their masculinity, which should reflect the appropriate ideals around black manhood. The biggest takeaway is the underlying notion that mothers teach manhood whereas fathers teach masculinity.

Street-identified black masculinity. Sociologist and African American scholar Payne (2016) saw a need for a radical redefining of black masculinity by incorporating the street-identified black male identity framework. According to Payne, "street life" is an ideology of personal, social, and economic survival found among those that self-identify as "street". Payne defined street identity as, "an inherently dynamic, adaptive, and physically mobile or active sociocultural identity, typically organized through bonding, involving other legal and illegal activities" (p. 190). In his framework, Payne described the "streets" as sites of resilience for low-income Black males.

Payne developed the "street-identified black masculinity" framework following his analysis of two focus groups from his study exploring the construction of masculinities in the face of inhumane socioeconomic conditions. The focus groups, two in total, were composed of seven participants, ranging in age from 16 to 44, from a low-income urban community in northern New Jersey. Payne determined that there are six developmental task domains of the 'street-identified black masculinity' framework: (1) developing a community-based identity; (2) demonstrating loyalty; (3) acquiring respect; (4) bypassing adolescence; (5) being a provider;

and (6) being a protector. Each domain is developed in response to the structural violence and limited opportunities that foster a “street masculinity” as a form of resilience (Payne, 2016).

Empirical evidence. The empirical evidence on black masculinity, specifically the masculinity ideologies of black males, is limited. Despite social psychologist Phillip Bowman’s (1987) charge for future scholarship to explore black masculinity throughout the entire black male lifespan, majority of the research has remained limited in its focus. As a result, black males’ have continued to be treated as a homogenous group pursuing a marginalized form of the dominant ideology.

To date, the voices of adolescent black males have been ignored. Prior studies have either claimed to focus on adolescent black males (Harper, 2004), or asked men to reflect on their adolescence (Roberts-Douglass & Curtiss-Boles, 2010). Adolescence is the period in life when puberty begins until adult status is approached – typically between 13 and 18 years of age (Arnett, 2013). Fortunately, gender and sexuality scholar Tony Laing (2016) explored how black males experience and understand masculinity during adolescence by interviewing and observing eight adolescent black males in their all-male high school. He found that the eight participants’ responses during the individual interviews and focus group, in conjunction with their observed behaviors during field observations, aligned with Dancy’s (2012) “brother code”. As a result, the students interacted with the black men, including the researcher despite being an openly gay male, in ways that differed from their interactions with black women – which may have been due to the culture of the school that perpetuates the idea that every man of color in the building was a role model to be emulated.

While adolescence has been overlooked, emerging adulthood has been the primary stage that scholars have explored to gain an understanding of black masculinity. Emerging adulthood,

ages 18 to 25, is the stage when people become more independent from parent/guardians and explore life prior to making serious commitments (Arnett, 2013). Despite his claims to be examining adolescent African American males, Harper (2004) examined masculinity among 32 high achieving black undergraduate males' enrolled in six different predominately white institutions in the Midwest. Harper found a shared belief that their actions – academic honors and leadership positions on campus – were not considered masculine among their African American peers due to limited views on masculinity centered around: (a) dating and pursuing romantic relationships; (b) athletic competition (including video games); (c) accumulation of material possessions; and (d) fraternity membership. Ford's (2011) exploration of the social construction of black masculinity for 29 black undergraduate men enrolled in a large research institution affirmed Harper's (2004) findings, highlighting that black masculinity is affirmed or denied through raced, gendered, classed, and sexualized discourses in black public social spaces. On the other hand, Harris III, Palmer, and Struve (2011) found that the 22 black undergraduate men enrolled in a private research university performed their masculinity through the pursuit of leadership opportunities and academic success - unlike Harper's participants - along with homophobia, anti-femininity, and sexual relationships with women. Mincey, Alfonso, Hackney, and Luque (2014) extended the literature via their study of 46 black undergraduates enrolled at both predominately white institutions and historically black colleges and universities in which they determined that black masculinity is composed of three parts: (1) what it means to be a man; (2) what it means to be a black man; and (3) masculinity development.

Additional studies on black masculinity (Bowleg, Teti, Massie, Patel, Malebranche, & Tschann, 2011; Chandler, 2013; Rogers, Sperry, & Levant, 2015) focused on black men, ranging in age from 18 to 67. Both Chandler (2013) and Rogers et al. (2015) examined black males', age

18 to 67, conceptualization and performance of masculinity. The former shed light as to how the performance of black masculinity was the by-product of the tension between the black male pathology and the ‘Organic Self’; whereas, the latter found that black men combine American hegemonic norms (e.g. leadership, heterosexuality, toughness, restrictive emotionality, etc.) with African values (e.g. religion/spirituality, education, and historical knowledge) to describe masculinity while at the same time acknowledging that systemic oppression hinders their ability to achieve manhood. In addition, Rogers et al. (2015) confirmed the findings of Harris, Torres, and Allender (1994) in that they posited that black males were more likely to diverge from American hegemonic views as they got older.

When it comes the socialization of black masculinity, the findings of psychologists Roberts-Douglass and Curtis-Boles (2010) were significant due to their ability to provide evidence of additional institutions (media, sports, and family) as well as agents of socialization (peers, fathers, and male role models) that contributed to the formation of black males’ masculinity ideologies. Prior to their study, the only empirical evidence available was on the institution of education due to studies conducted by Ferguson (2000) and McCready (2010). Both studies provided great insight into the institution of education, specifically K-12, and the ways in which it not only shapes the masculinity ideologies of black males, but also hindered black boys and adolescent black males from exploring and performing alternative masculinities.

Conclusion. Symbolic interactionist Goffman (1956) reminds us that social actors structure their behaviors in response to the ways in which they are seen and treated during social interactions. As this pertains to black males, they are expected to adhere to the cultural expectations of their community while conforming to a hegemonic masculinity constructed to maintain white, middle class, heterosexual men’s power and privilege (Ford, 2011; Hunter &

Davis, 1992; Mutua, 2006). The disconnect between social expectations and cultural expectations, in conjunction with the societal barriers impeding their ability to fulfill their prescribed gender roles, increase the likelihood that black men will experience unsuccessful efforts to fulfill maladaptive notions of black masculinity. Jackson and Dangerfield (2004) identify five factors (struggle, community, achievement, independence, and recognition) that contribute to the selection and enactment of maladaptive masculinity ideologies by black males.

Nearly half a century has passed since Staples (1975) concluded that hegemonic masculinity will continue to devastate the Black community until alternative masculinity ideologies, that reject the hegemonic roles and norms, present themselves. A review of the literature on black masculinity has shown that: (a) such an alternative either does not exist; or (b) it has yet to be identified. Instead, there are theories on black masculinity that lack the empirical evidence to support its claims; one of them, “Cool Pose” has been widely used to perpetuate the black male master narrative as a means to justify the oppression of the black male body. It is imperative that future scholarship address the numerous gaps in the literature on black masculinity to combat the damage done by Majors and Billson. Like most studies on black men, “Cool Pose” provides a deficit portrayal of black masculinity, ignoring the impact that racism and discrimination has on black’s males formation and performance of their masculinity ideologies. Majors and Billson presented “Cool Pose” as a performance consciously embraced by black men, ignoring the structural barriers intentionally put in place to impede upon black men’s ability to fulfill gender role norms according to the hegemonic masculinity ideology in America. Furthermore, they absolved the structure of America, built upon imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy ideals (hooks, 2004) of any responsibility in interfering with the identification or development of alternative masculinities for black males.

As it pertains to Mutua's progressive black masculinity (PBM), Lasala and Frierson (2012) would argue that the structure of America has played a significant role in the development, or lack of such an alternative since:

Black men have adopted the distorted and stereotypical forms of masculinity - emphasizing toughness, control, poise, emotional stoicism, pride, and hyper-heterosexuality - to cope with the overtly oppressive society. This particular form of masculinity has simultaneously posited patriarchal, sexist, misogynistic, homophobic, and heterosexist systems of power within Black communities and has alienated Black men who find themselves outside of this stereotypical masculinity. (p. 432)

The lack of an alternative, such as PBM, increases the likelihood that black males will adhere to a black masculinity similar to America's dominant masculinity, resulting in black men aiding in the systematic destruction of themselves, the black family, and the black community. Until progressive black masculinities are located or created, black males will continue to lack the consciousness necessary to combat the messages and images of the black man mass produced throughout America's social institutions.

Rather than posing another theory about what black masculinity is or should be, both Dancy (2012) and Payne (2006) sought to develop a framework grounded in empirical evidence. Together, each theory provided evidence that black masculinity is hegemonic in nature and that it has been cultivated by sociocultural factors that influence the lives of black males – resulting in the development of a marginalized masculinity. However, like the others, neither has been validated as a generalizable theory on black masculinity.

Unfortunately, the current literature on black masculinity has not addressed Bowman's (1987) call for research to examine all stages of black males' lives. Instead, scholars have

focused the majority of their studies on emerging adults enrolled in higher education as if they are representative of all black males. Just like males are not a homogenous group, black males are diverse. Therefore, it is imperative that scholars explore black masculinity during childhood, adolescence, emerging adulthood, middle adulthood, and late adulthood. Ford (2011) adds that the expansion of the definition of black masculinity should be:

more dynamic and inclusive of a range of identities, while also decoupling certain stereotypical gendered attributes from each other, would reduce bodily alienation and allow black men to be their whole, multilayered selves in public and private, black and nonblack social spaces. (p. 60)

Doing so would not only aid in the deconstruction of black manhood, but also contribute to the deconstruction of black as a racial identity used to homogenize Americans of African descent.

In addition to the lack of diverse voices contributing to the literature on black masculinity, the phenomenon continues to be theorized and explored through the dominant lens in America. Mincey, Alfonso, Hackney, and Luque (2014) point out that, “research on masculinity and black men has mainly focused on defining manhood, in general, not defining manhood as it relates specifically to being a black man” (p. 395). The development of an adequate theory of black masculinity requires scholars and practitioners to work together to gain a holistic understanding of black masculinity. In doing so, findings can be used to position black males to deconstruct their notion of what it means to be a black man in America. Along the journey of deconstruction, black males will be equipped with a critical consciousness that will empower them to reconstruct their figured manhoods. Dumas and Nelson (2016) describe such an intervention as one that, “neither prescribes or romanticizes a fixed notion of black male identity but privileges how black boys (and men) imagine and express their own sense of self”

(p. 38). Until such an effort is made, we will continue to see the negative trends associated with black male – e.g. their physical and emotional health among other things – as they continue to search for liberating black masculinities (Hammond, 2012; Ross, 1998).

black manhood. From birth, black males are expected to adhere to America's dominant manhood and its correlating norms. However, these norms do not provide them with the tools necessary to overcome the obstacles that come with being both black and male in a country that has historically impeded upon their quest for manhood (Hunter & Davis, 1994; Robert-Douglass & Curtis-Boles, 2013). America is structured to weaken the confidence and motivation of black males via systemic oppression to increase the likelihood that they will rely on the same forces that oppress them to try to lift themselves up – rendering a subconscious collaboration with their oppressor (Hare & Hare, 1985). This is not to say that black males are the only ones that experience systemic oppression. Oliver (1989) points out that although all black people are victims of systemic attack, it is the black male that is the primary target due to him being perceived as the greatest threat to the continued political and economic subjugation of black people. To rephrase, America's hegemonic manhood and its correlating masculinity norms put black males in a constant state of flux due to the socio-cultural barriers that hinder their ability to fulfill the expectations placed on their black male bodies. This is intentional due to black males being identified as the primary threat to America's patriarchal hierarchy – ruled by straight, white, middle class males (Hare & Hare, 1985).

Gilmore (1990) reminds us that culture plays a significant role in the social construction of manhood. Thus, the figured manhoods of all males, let alone black males, are nurtured. African American studies scholar Ikard (2007) identifies black patriarchy as one of the underlying ideologies that nurtures black males' figured manhoods. Ikard differentiates black

patriarchy from patriarchy in that the marginalized status of black males – due to their race - impedes their ability to see themselves as an oppressor in the black community. As a result, black males are afforded the same privilege as white males in society as a whole, but only in the black community.

Chandler (2013) calls this marginalized form of privilege ‘black male privilege’, explaining the ramifications of such a privilege in the black community as follows:

When one connects the ‘oppressed black male’ trope to beliefs about the supremacy of black male headship within the family, the result is the oppression of black females due to their complicity in their own oppression based on an enculturated belief system. This perspective creates a perpetually subordinate position for black females while simultaneously guaranteeing a dominant position for black males. (p. 82)

Unfortunately, straight black males are likely to use their privilege in ways similar as their white counterparts, furthering sexism and homophobia in the black community. Rather than using their privilege to promote unity in the black community, many black males utilize it as a tool to maintain power over women, children, and males deemed subordinate. The use of black male privilege in such a way is due to the fear of losing the gendered privilege that has been denied black male bodies because of their intersecting race. As a result, some black males deem black females, not white males, the biggest threat to them achieving manhood.

Adherence to America’s dominant ideology on manhood increases the likelihood that the minds of black males will be detained by the interlocking chains of patriarchy and racism (hooks, 2004). Said differently, the dominant ideology as to what it means to be a man coupled with the structural barriers that impede black males’ ability to fulfill the norms associated with manhood is likely to hinder black males – and other marginalized males - development of liberating

figured manhoods. This is not to suggest that alternative manhood ideologies do not exist among black males, but that the current literature has yet to identify them – if they already exist.

Jackson and Dangerfield (2004) attribute the difficulty in developing a benchmark for black manhood to the constant change within the black community coupled with the diversity of the black community. Thus, at the core of the inability to define black manhood is the lack of clarity as to who is black, in terms of race, and what is black as far as ethnicity. Yet, Jackson and Dangerfield (2004) attempt to define black manhood as both an assignment to and agreement with the social, political, and cultural behaviors ascribed to black males – rendering the value of black manhood to be determined by the communities in which black males reside. Black male feminist Michael Awkward (2000) adds:

If embracing normative masculinity requires an escape from the protection and life-sustaining aspects symbolized by the maternal umbilical cords and apron strings and an achievement of an economic situation wherein the male provides domestic space and material sustenance for his dependents, black manhood generally is in desperate trouble. (p. 103)

Chandler (2013) points out that “the concepts of blackness and manhood take on a very different tenor when society characterizes an individual not only as black, not only as man, but as a black man” (p. 84). As a result, scholars have not only struggled to define black manhood, but also develop a universal criterion for black manhood. What is universal is the likelihood that black males will operate in a state of double consciousness as they develop and enact their figured manhoods. In his book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois (2005) describes double consciousness as a state in which individuals feel as though their identity is divided into several parts, hindering their ability to discover and enact their true self. Dancy

(2012) uses double consciousness to explain the burden that black males experience as the spaces that they inhabit influence the performance of their manhood. The norms ascribed to the black male body result in plagued pathways to manhood cultivated by America's narrow discourse as to who black males are, what black males are capable of, and how black males should be viewed and treated in America (Dancy, 2012).

Discourses associated with black manhood. According to sociolinguist James Paul Gee (2014), Discourse – not to be confused with discourse (any instance of language in use, written or spoken) – combines language, actions, and ways of thinking with the usage of various symbols to enact a socially recognizable identity. For this study, the socially recognizable identity is black man. Black man as an identity, like all identities, are formed by interactions in institutions and organizations where the institutional policies and practices provide the context for meaning and action to assigned to social identities, social positions, and social relationships (Holland et al., 1998). Keep in mind that individuals and their figured worlds constantly work together to shape the activities, discourses, and performance of identities.

Since stepping foot on American soil, the discourse associated with black males has been used to render his humanity invisible (Ellison, 1952). Black males have constantly been depicted as demonized, violent, oversexed brutes or satirized as illiterate, imbeciles incapable of achieving that of their white, male peers (Mitchell, 1999). Hunter and Davis (1994) point out as to how “the discourse around black men focuses on stripping away their manhood...casting black men as victims and ignores their capacity to define themselves under circumstances” (p. 21). The dominant discourse around black men not only hinders their holistic development but it also obstructs the childhood and adolescent stages for black boys. Dumas and Nelson (2016) emphasize that the racial and gendered construction of black manhood anticipates and instills

crisis in the lives of black boys, scrutinizing their desires and creativity while styming their achievement and social mobility. This is likely to result in black boys being forced to skip adolescence and transition sooner than their male peers into adulthood despite not being adequately prepared to meet the expectations of manhood imposed upon their black male bodies (Payne, 2016).

History of black manhood. Historically, black males' attempt to achieve manhood in America has nearly been futile as they have been placed in the 'double bind' of proving their manhood while being denied the legitimate tools to do so (Black, 1997). Thus, Pan-African studies scholar Bush(1999) is adamant that:

the status and meaning of black manhood in the united states is a subject matter that should constantly be revisited, examined, and defined because it is out of this framework that black males construct their behaviors and relationships with their wives, children, communities, and one another” (p. 49)

African American studies scholar Black (1997) would add a sense of urgency, arguing that the abuse and marginalization that black males endure during their quest for manhood, within a system that denies them the status, fosters a psychological instability (Gender Role Conflict and Gender Role Strain) that is likely to result in death or incarceration due to the anger and frustration that accompanies the perceived inability to achieve manhood.

In order to deconstruct black manhood, an adequate understanding of the history of the phenomenon serves as its foundation to build upon it is essential. Psychologist Ratele (1998) reminds us that black manhood is a social construct that did not exist prior to white colonialists conquering African men and redefining them; therefore, one has to question whether black manhood even exists outside of whiteness. Some scholars would argue that it has yet to exist

outside of whiteness seeing that black manhood has always and continues to be formed through a white lens, resulting in black males without a manhood to call their own (Black, 1997; Ratele, 1998; Walcott, 2009).

Women & Gender studies scholar Walcott (2009) goes further by explaining how whiteness continues to be the base of the mask(ulinity) that black males' wear, highlighting the impact that the history of black males has on their conscious and subconscious Discourse. The following is a brief historical analysis of the evolution of black manhood in response to the experiences of black males during: (a) slavery; (b) post-slavery through the Civil Rights era; and (c) post-Civil Rights.

The construction of black manhood began with the enslavement of African males. Slavery was a systemic attack on the manhood of African males, structured to destroy any sense of power or pride that the African male possessed (Black, 1997). During slavery, black males realized that manhood in America was not afforded to every male, instead it was a luxury primarily enjoyed by white men (Black, 1997). Eventually, black males envied their white male counterparts, longing for the power and privilege afforded them by patriarchy – resulting in black males embracing American manhood and its masculinity norms (Black, 1997; hooks, 2003).

Eventually, black males figured manhoods evolved to encompass confrontations with whites as a rite of passage during the antebellum period (Estes, 2005). During the reconstruction of America, America's gender norms reshaped black males' figured manhoods as they informed how blacks organized households, established institutions, and negotiated the labor force (Mitchell, 1999). Both eras guided black males into the Civil Rights era and the adherence to the

illusion that manhood as an economic, social, and political status could now be achieved by all males (Estes, 2005). This general notion of manhood was forged during the antebellum period as males accepted that manhood was achieved primarily through force (Wendt, 2007). This notion of force played a significant role during the Civil Rights era as many men: (a) struggled to embrace a non-violent approach; and (b) legitimized the subordination of women and males that enacted alternative masculinities (Wendt, 2007).

In his book *Black Masculinity: The Black Male's Role in American Society* sociologist Staples (1981) made it clear that black men desperately needed an alternative to America's hegemonic manhood and its correlating masculinity norms – a need that remains unfulfilled almost half a century later. According to Staples, black males have always and will continue to be denied manhood status despite their performance of the appropriate norms associated with the dominant masculinity in America. Thus, the Civil Rights era did nothing to aid in freeing black males of their imprisonment due to the intersection of their race and gender. Rather than addressing the ways in which institutional racism shapes black males' expression of black masculinity, “institutional racism and capitalism (was allowed to) provided the framework in which black males' attitudes and behaviors are operationalized...the forces that militate against them were set in motion by larger social institutions” (Staples, 1981p. 9). An example of such forces is “Gangsta Rap” set in motion within the institution of media (Pinn, 1996). Furthermore, Staples (1981) goes on to shed light as to how Gilmore's (1990) provider role adversely affects black males as they continue to be the most unemployed social group in a society where work and money is the measure of the man. Staples (1981) then uses this point to make the claim that joblessness can destroy the male's quality of life as well as his motivation to live - resulting in suicide, homicide, psychological breakdowns and family violence. Its not a coincidence that

black males rank among the highest in statistics on suicide, homicide, and family violence among other things.

Theories in relation to black manhood. In his book *The Man Not: Race, Class, Genre, and the Dilemmas of Black Manhood*, philosopher Tommy Curry (2017) makes the argument that the historical marginalized state of black males is intentional due to their imminent threat to the maintenance of the Imperialist white Supremacist Capitalist Patriarchy. Curry goes on to critique scholars for constantly approaching the phenomenon of black manhood from a deficit perspective where the discourse around black males paints the picture as though they are driven by the pursuit of white manhood and white masculinity while completely ignoring the history of black males and their current state.

This discourse not only perpetuates the master narrative of the black male as hyper-violent and hyper-sexual, but it also, “focuses on stripping them away of manhood. It is a perspective that casts black men as victims and ignores their capacity to define themselves under difficult circumstances” (Curry, 2017, p.3). In doing so, black males are rendered vulnerable as they are able to be killed or dehumanized at any moment, given the inclination of those who encounter them. Curry goes on to explain that providing black males’ the space to share their “black male vulnerability” is an attempt to capture black males’ susceptibility to be rendered helpless in response to others imposing their fears and anxieties upon him. Thus, black males are constantly vulnerable in society that negates their humanity and personhood. Curry concludes his book by calling for new theories pertaining to black males, black manhood and black masculinity. He goes on to say that, “his (black males) existence is thought of be fully accounted for within our preexisting theories, despite the incompatibilities these theories have with his actual life and his specific embodying of black manhood” (Curry, 2017, p. 37).

African American studies scholar Neal (2005) attempted to provide a new theory for black manhood in his book *New Black Man*. Neal called for the development of a New Black Man to “shepherd a generation of under-achieving, under-prepared, under-appreciative black male youth into a twenty-first century black manhood” (p. 3). Rather than blaming the hip-hop generation for the current ills associated with black manhood and black masculinity, like Pinn (1996), Neal points out that “successful black men” have also played a significant role in the maintenance of maladaptive notions of black manhood and black masculinity due to their continued investment in forms of patriarchy, sexism, and misogyny as a means to maintain their black male privilege. Thus, Neal poses New Black Man as a phenomenon still under construction, challenging black males to embrace the blurry edges of black masculinity. Furthermore, Neal goes on to explain that New Black Man is less about the development of a “more positive” black masculinity, and more about the recognition that there are many complex aspects integral in the construction of progressive black masculinities.

Empirical studies of black manhood. Although Neal (2005) was ahead of the charge proposed by Curry (2017), the development of new theories on black manhood and black masculinity requires an empirical approach to the deconstruction of black males’ figured manhoods. In doing so, scholars position the field to reject current theories guided by etic perspectives on black manhood. In addition, grounding theories in the emic perspectives of black males increase their legitimacy in being applicable to black males.

The following is an overview of the research on black manhood. Hunter and Davis (1992, 1994) were the first scholars to explore black males’ meanings of manhood. They engaged 32 black men, from New York, age 25 and older in semi-structured interviews geared to explore their figured manhoods. A concept map revealed that the participants defined manhood

in terms of: (a) self-expectations; (b) relationship and responsibility to the family; and (c) a worldview or existential philosophy, within four major domains: (1) self-determinism and accountability; (2) family; (3) pride; and (4) spirituality/humanism.

Hammond and Mattis (2005) sought to expand upon Hunter and Davis (1992, 1994) by developing categories for manhood according to black males. To do so, Hammond and Mattis examined the written definitions of 152 black males, ranging in age from 17 to 79 years old, that resided in 5 metropolitan areas throughout the country. Their findings revealed 15 categories for manhood, each constructed in response to the males' relationships with self and others (e.g. peers, family, community, etc.).

Chaney's (2004) examination of the opinions of 24 black men, ages 18 – 51, revealed similar findings to that of the aforementioned studies. Her analysis of the participants' written responses to: (1) what is manhood; and (2) how is manhood demonstrated, revealed four themes: (a) maturity and responsibility for self; (b) responsibility for family; (c) the provider role; and (d) self-awareness. This led Chaney to assert that black men's perceptions of manhood are intrinsically linked to their education, economic status, and independence from black women.

In contrary to exploring definitions of manhood for a wide range of black males, Griffith and Cornish (2018) narrowed their study down to focus on black males classified as middle-age and older. They interviewed 64 urban African-American men age 35 – 76 that resided in Nashville, TN. Their analysis led them to conclude that middle-age and older black males reflect on manhood at a deeper level, in which they focused more on highlighting the characteristics and traits of a man.

Conclusion. The aforementioned literature on black males' figured manhoods – beliefs, values, and attitudes in relation to manhood – is evidence that the call by social psychologist

Phillip Bowman has yet to be answered. Over thirty years ago, Bowman (1986) called for future scholarship on black manhood and black masculinity to explore the phenomenon throughout the various stages of black males' lives. Griffith and Cornish (2018) are the only scholars to attempt to do so as they focused their efforts on middle-aged black males. Whereas the others approached black males as one homogenous group classified as men according to the law – age 18 and older. If future scholarship continues to ignore Bowman's request, the knowledge pertaining to black manhood and black masculinity will remain stagnant due to studies that don't contribute to the deconstruction black males' figured manhoods and the masculine norms associated with them.

Deconstructing black Manhood

Mincey, Alfonso, Hackney, and Luque (2014) point out that, “research on masculinity and black men has mainly focused on defining manhood, in general, not defining manhood as it relates specifically to being a Black man” (p. 395). As a result, black manhood and black masculinity have always been theorized and explored through America's hegemonic lens. This aids in legitimizing America's hegemonic manhood and masculinity norms, which have been used to convince black males that physical prowess should be emphasized to the neglect of other talents. While physical prowess is used as a tool to measure a man, it has also played an integral role in the perpetuation of stereotypes imposed upon black males (e.g. brute, savage, thug, etc.) – resulting in black males being both revered and reviled (Cose, 2002; Watts & Jagers, 1998). Furthermore, myopic views of black manhood have narrowed the aspirations of black males as they are forced to constantly prove their humanity to themselves and others while trying to fulfill the expected social norms ascribed to men (Jagers & Watts, 1998).

The deconstruction of black manhood positions scholars and practitioners to expand the phenomenon beyond its historical context and current performance. In addition, it offers new lenses through which black males can form and enact their manhood (Walcott, 2009). The identification of current alternatives or the construction of new black manhoods requires scholars and practitioners to work together to gain a holistic understanding of black males' figured manhoods. Theories on black manhood, rooted in the figured manhoods of black males, positions practitioners to develop initiatives that will equip black males with the critical consciousness (Friere, 1968) necessary to construct liberating figured manhoods. Dumas and Nelson (2016) explain that the ultimate goal of the deconstruction of black manhood is to "neither prescribe or romanticize a fixed notion of black male identity but privilege how black boys (and men) imagine and express their own sense of self" (p. 38).

Paulo Friere (1968) would argue that social change starts with the people, a process that begins explicitly in the development of their critical consciousness (Friere, 1968). According to symbolic interactionists, a change in the meaning of self will result in a change in behavior, thus forcing a change in society. Rather than trying to change the Imperialist white Supremacist Capitalistic Patriarchal society (hooks, 2004) through the development of policies, change can be evoked through empowering people to redefine themselves resulting in a change in their social behavior and eventually the social structure of our society. Thus, the deconstruction of black manhood requires analysis at all levels of society: (1) societal; (2) institutional; (3) interpersonal; and (4) intrapsychic (Persell, 1979). In other words, black manhood must be deconstructed at each level to truly understand the phenomenon and decrease the likelihood that the current phenomenon will be reconstructed rather than renamed.

Structural symbolic interactionism. According to symbolic interactionist, we are the center of our worlds in that our sense of self will be influenced by the way in which we interact with our social worlds (Blumer, 1969; Cooley, 1909; McCall, 2006; Myers, 2010). The bi-lateral relationship between our self and our social world(s) regulate our thoughts, feelings, and actions as they pertain to both ourselves and others. Thus, our social surroundings affect our: (a) self-awareness; (b) self-interests; and (c) self-concern, as our social behaviors will be defined by social relationships (Myers, 2010). All of which contribute to our self-concept, which can be understood as our answer(s) to one question, “Who am I?” – or in this case, “Who am I supposed to be as a black man?”

Symbolic interactionists argue that the social behaviors of an individual or group are dictated by their interpretation of the meanings assigned to them (as individuals or their social group) by society. Regardless as to how black males self-identify, society will view him through his primary intersecting identities - race and gender - and treat him according to the dominant discourse around his black male body. The marginalized status ascribed to black males not only affects how they are viewed by others, but also the manner in which they view themselves. Furthermore, the intersection of black males’ race with their gender has hindered their ability to see themselves outside of the master narrative(s) prescribed to their black male bodies – e.g. brute, savage, sambo, thug, etc.

Symbolic interactionists agree that the answer to questions of identity are developed by society. However, here are two perspectives as to how such questions are answered – traditional and structural. Structural symbolic interactionists recognize the influence that power, politics, and society have on the reciprocal nature of society and social interactions with self being the bridge between both. In other words, structural interactionists operate under the premise that

“society impacts self, which in turn impacts social behavior” (Serpe & Stryker, 2011, p. 233). Furthermore, Serpe and Stryker (2011) remind us that, “...the structural interactionist frame nevertheless gives causal priority to society on the grounds that all historical persons are enmeshed in a society at birth and cannot survive outside of pre-existing organized social relations” (p. 232). Thus, I am arguing that the deconstruction of black manhood requires a structural symbolic interactionists approach. Adopting such an approach to scholarship, both theoretical and empirical, shifts the current deficit focus of scholarship on black males to take into consideration society as a whole and its social institutions - shedding light as to how they socialize the identities and behaviors of black males. As it pertains to black males’ figured manhoods and masculinity ideologies, it changes the discourse from one of nature v. nurture to collaboration of both, evidenced by Jagers and Watts (1998) attempt to alter the way that we approach the phenomenon:

it has been customary for observers to offer either a system-blame or a person-blame explanation for the plight of black males...we find it useful to conceive of the ‘arrested development’ of African-Americans being rooted in and perpetuated by a complex constellation of internal and external psychological and structural barriers...although it is clear that cultural racism continue to shape the opportunity structure for African-Americans, it is also apparent that some of their own thoughts and behaviors hamper movement toward well-being and liberation. (p. 147)

Gaps in the literature. A structural interactionist approach identifies critical gaps in the literature necessary for an adequate deconstruction of black manhood. To date, the current literature is limited in the number of contributions by black males as well as a diverse array of black male voices representing the different seasons of black males’ lives. In addition, there is a

limited understanding of the institutionalization – the process of establishing a norm in the culture of an organization, institution, or society - of black manhood. Addressing these gaps positions the field (scholars and practitioners) to eliminate the pitfalls associated with black males' quest for manhood status in America.

Missing voices. According to psychologist Levinson (1986), there are six seasons of a man's life: (1) pre-adulthood (0 - 22); (2) early adulthood (17 – 45); (3) middle adulthood (45 – 60); (4) late adulthood (60 – 80); and (5) late-late adulthood (80 – beyond). Thus, any attempt to answer Bowman's call requires that scholars identify the gaps in the literature as it pertains to the different seasons of black males' lives. Currently, the review of the literature highlights how the majority of the empirical evidence, though limited in the quantity of black male voices, focuses on black males in the early adulthood season of their lives.

When it comes to the deconstruction of black manhood, this issue is that the lack of perspectives from black males in other seasons of their lives hinders an adequate understanding of the phenomenon – completely ignoring how black manhood evolves over the course of the lives of black males. In addition, the limited input provided by one group of black males has been used to generalize black males, treating them as a homogenous group. The inability to examine black manhood throughout each season of black males' lives hinders practitioners' ability to develop initiatives that will better position black males to develop holistically – free from the strain that results from the intertwining of racism and patriarchy.

In addition to age, Cazenave (1981) points out that research is needed to uncover the impact that class has on black males figured manhoods. Cazenave (1981) supports the assertion by providing insight as to how the provider role has class implications:

The provider role may not be a salient role identity for fathers of low socioeconomic status because they cannot develop a realistic expectation of providing for their family. It also may not be a major identity for those men of high socioeconomic status because economic provision is not a problem. (p. 183)

Ford (2011) expands Cazenave's argument by including the intersection of all social identities: expanding definitions of Black masculinity to be more dynamic and inclusive of a range of identities, while also decoupling certain stereotypical gendered attributes from each other would reduce bodily alienation and allow Black men to be their whole, multi-layered selves in public and private, Black and non-Black social spaces" (p.60)

Regardless as to what social identity scholars choose to focus on, there is a significant gap in the literature on the impact that multiple social identities have on black manhood. Thus, the reconstruction of more progressive black manhoods and masculinities requires the field to explore how social identities intersect and inform one another during the construction of figured manhoods.

Adolescent black males. One of the main voices missing in the literature on black manhood is adolescent black males (age 13 – 18); a population that would be classified in the pre-adulthood season of men's lives (Levinson, 1986). Although there have been instances in which black males have spoken on their adolescence, the literature is in dire need of adolescent black males contributing to the deconstruction of black manhood. Dumas and Nelson (2016) insist that scholars add black boys and adolescent black males to the conversation rather than using recollections of black men to determine how to address the current struggles that younger black males are experiencing. Doing so positions the field to expand the narrow lens through

which we understand how black males negotiate their performance of their gender in conjunction with their views of America's hegemonic manhood (Chandler, 2013).

According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's report *Investing in Boys and Young Men of Color: The Promise and Opportunity* (2013), adolescence is a critical stage in the lives of all males - especially males of color. The social barriers that they will encounter during their teenage years play a significant role in the challenges that they will experience as young men of color and beyond. Thus, in order to better inform ourselves of the systemic barriers that shape their figured manhoods and guide their pursuit of manhood status, future scholarship on black males must bring the voices of this population into the conversation. If we continue to ignore the voices of adolescent black males, then we contribute to the current conversations about black males, black manhood, and black masculinity that oppress the population due to the a holistic view of Black males' figured manhoods!

Institutionalization. Ford (2011) reminds us that despite the gaps in the literature as to how black males define black manhood, there is evidence that black men are:

Set up to fail by a structure that institutionalizes racism and class-based inequities, perpetuates cultural stereotypes of black masculinity, and reinforces hegemonic masculinity power and privilege resulting in black men often struggling to negotiate the bodily process involved in doing fake masculinity or being real men. (p. 58)

Despite evidence of the impact that institutional racism has on the black community, we have yet to identify both the institutions and organizations, as well as the practices within those institutions, that mold black males' figured manhoods. Majority of the literature focuses on the institution of education while briefly touching on the associations of the institution of media (e.g. music, television, and film). However, there is a need to identify every institution, as well

examine the institutional policies and practices, that contribute to the construction of black males' figured manhoods. For example, slavery may no longer be a viable institution since it was eradicated but it is likely that its replacement – the prison industrial complex – has a significant impact on the figured manhoods of all males.

Historically, successful enactment of the traditional male role has been dependent upon access to educational and employment opportunities. Due to their membership in a racial group that has been systematically denied equal access to political and economic power – coupled with educational and employment opportunities - a substantial number of black males lack the skills and resources that are necessary to successfully enact the traditional male role (Oliver, 1989; Staples, 1982). Therefore, future studies must examine the institutions that contribute to the marginalization of black males specifically rather than black people as a whole. Studies that take on this challenge will equip policy makers and practitioners with the insight necessary to recognize that the problem with black males is not psychological and attitudinal, but structural and institutional (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). Thus, change requires a structural symbolic interactionist approach seeing that, “a systemic approach requires a systemic intervention” (Watts & Jagers, 1998, p. 154).

Justification for the Study

It is my premise that the enactment of black males' figured manhoods in response to the systemic oppression imposed upon black males, contributes to the social trends associated with black males in America (e.g. education, incarceration, unemployment, marriage, etc.). As a result, black males are rendered both “victims and participants in their own destruction due to their response to broader sociological and economic forces that undermine their ability to develop an appropriate expression of manhood” (Hunter & Davis, 1992, p. 468). In addition,

these forces hinder their ability to see themselves outside of the discourse around black males depicting them as “hyper-masculine, hyper-sexual, emotionally unexpressive, and violent criminals, thugs, athletes, or entertainers” (Ford, 2011).

The deconstruction of black manhood requires intentional efforts to expand both the theoretical and empirical research on the phenomenon. Currently, the literature on black manhood is scarce - as is the literature on black masculinity – in the number of black males’ voices as well as the diverse perspectives of black males in different seasons of their life. Payne’s (2016) *Street Identified Black Masculinity* is the only theory, in either black manhood or black masculinity, that brings into conversation the social context in which black males are forming their figured manhoods. Thus, it is essential that future scholarship identify the social institutions that guide the construction of figured manhoods.

In addition, overlooking the formative years prevents the development of effective interventions to aid in decreasing the likelihood that Black male youth will adhere to the hegemonic manhood and the masculine norms associated with it. Moving forward, theoretical frameworks must be grounded in empirical studies to position practitioners and policy makers to foster change geared to empower black male youth to resist the master narrative as to what a black man is and the opportunities available to him. My experience as youth development professional working with youth for almost ten years has led me to assert that black males are experiencing gender role strains well before reaching manhood status – possible as early as childhood. However, there is no empirical evidence to support my claim due to the narrow frameworks and limited research on black manhood and the impact that it has on the black males’ identity development.

The purpose of this study was to address the current gaps in the literature by: (a) exploring adolescent black males' figured manhoods; (2) identifying the agents of socialization, along with the social institutions, that constructed their figured manhoods; and (3) examine the influence that their figured manhoods had on their quests for manhood status.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore the figured manhoods of a group of adolescent black males, enrolled in an alternative education program and the impact it has on their quests for manhood status. For this study, figured manhoods is defined as the socially constructed realms as to: (a) what a man is; (b) how men are recognized; and (c) which actions and outcomes are significant in differentiating men from boys and women. The study is guided by the following research question:

1. How did twelve adolescent black males enrolled in an alternative education program form their figured manhoods?
 - a. What are their figured manhoods?
 - b. What agents of socialization molded their figured manhoods?
 - c. What social institutions shaped their figured manhoods?
2. In what ways did their figured manhoods guide their quest for manhood?

This chapter provides an explanation of the methodological decisions that were made to accomplish the aforementioned goal. I will walk you through every decision that factored into the design of qualitative naturalistic inquiry utilizing a case study. Although the group of participants will be treated as the case being studied, I take the time to introduce you to each individual whose voice will contribute to the findings of study. I then expound as to how the data was collected, analyzed, and verified in order to develop findings that: (a) explored their figured manhoods; (b) explained how their figured manhoods were formed; and (c) described how their figured manhoods have influenced their pursuits of manhood.

Qualitative Method

The current limitations of the field as it pertains to black manhood calls for qualitative approaches to explore the phenomenon and its impact on the state of black males. Creswell and Poth (2018) point out that:

We conduct qualitative research because a problem or issue needs to be explored. This exploration is needed because of a need to study a group or population, identify variables that cannot be easily measured, or hear silenced voices...also because we need a complex, detailed understanding of the issue that can only be established by talking directly with people, going to their homes or places work, and allowing them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature. We conduct qualitative research when we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exists between a researcher and the participants in a study. (p. 45)

Any attempt to answer Bowman's (1989) call for researches to explore black males figured manhoods throughout the course of their lives requires a qualitative approach due to the need to: (a) explore the entire population during different stages of their lives; (b) identify variables that cannot be easily measured, as it pertains to black manhood; and (c) hear the voices of those that have been silences in relation to black manhood - black males.

According to Patton (2002), qualitative methods permit researchers to delve into social issues at great depths due to data collection not being constrained by pre-determined analytical categories coupled with the researchers' attention to detail, context, and nuance. Typically, qualitative research will begin with assumptions, informed by theoretical frameworks, that aid in the development of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups attribute to

a social or human problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Studies employing a qualitative approach require: (a) the utilization of a qualitative inquiry (narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study); (b) collecting data in a natural setting sensitive to the needs of the people and places under study; and (c) establishing patterns or themes via both inductive and deductive analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The aforementioned research questions required a research design guided by a qualitative methods approach. I developed a qualitative case study exploring the figured manhoods of twelve adolescent black males, enrolled in an alternative education program. Case study utilizes a naturalistic inquiry due to its ability to minimize the potential for me, the researcher, to manipulate the setting in which the study will take place as well as reduce the possible constraints that I can impose on the study (Patton, 2002). Researchers utilizing a naturalistic inquiry do not seek to try to control, limit or direct change; instead, this approach requires researchers to expect change, adjust accordingly to the unexpected, and go with the flow from beginning to the conclusion of the study. Furthermore, this approach positions me to depict the figured worlds of the participants according to them, rather than as I interpreted it (Patton, 2010).

Case Study

I chose to explore the figured manhoods of adolescent black males utilizing a case study approach to qualitative inquiry. Yin (2018) defines case study as “a social science research method, generally used to investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth and in its real-world context” (P. 286). Furthermore, I conducted a descriptive case study - “a case study whose purpose is to describe the phenomenon (the case) in its real-world context” (Yin, 2018, p. 286) – to describe the formation of adolescent black males’ figured manhoods (the phenomenon being explored) and its influence on their pursuits of manhood. Yin (2018) points out that the need for

case studies is based on the desire to understand complex social phenomena such as figured manhoods. The potential to understand a complex phenomenon is not solely dependent upon ethnography or participant observations, instead a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods can be used to catch the complexity of a single, or multiple, case (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2018). Ultimately, a credible qualitative case study is information rich and positions the researcher(s) to describe the case in depth and with details that allow others to learn a great deal about the issue(s) being studied. (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2018).

Defining the case. According to Patton (2002), “Qualitative designs are naturalistic to the extent that the research takes place in real-world settings and the researcher(s) do not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest” (Patton, 2002, p. 39). As a result, I chose to conduct the study at a site that would limit my ability to manipulate it due to the rigid structure of the program. The case study was conducted at an alternative education program for “at-risk” youth in a state in the Midwest. This site is one of the 40 programs facilitated by the National Guard throughout the country – in 28 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. The National Guard describes the program as a “voluntary 17-month dropout recovery program that helps at-risk youths earn their high school diploma or GED...through a very disciplined and structured program that uses the military model.” Since its inception in 1993, the program claims to have intervened in the lives of over 145,000 (number of graduates to date) troubled adolescents throughout the country, changing the path for their lives.

The program consists of two phases (residential and post-residential) implemented over the course of 17 months. The study was conducted during the residential phase – January 2014 through June 2014 – in which they stayed on site for six months prior to entering the post-residential phase. During this phase, cadets completed two hundred hours of classroom

instruction and other activities in pursuit of the program's objectives: (1) Academic Excellence; (2) Job Skills; (3) Physical Fitness; (4) Leadership/Followership; (5) Health, Sex Education, and Nutrition; (6) Life Coping Skills; (7) Responsible Citizenship; and (8) Community Service.

Upon completion of the program, the cadets are provided with support and resources needed to enroll in a community college or enlist in the military.

Initial site visit. Due to the rigid structure of the program, I was not granted access to the site until the second month of the residential phase. My gatekeeper expressed that this was normal protocol – visitors were not allowed on site until the second month, although my presence on site was not normal seeing that they had never had someone conduct any type of research at their location – seeing that they wanted to allow cadets to get acclimated to the expectations of the program. Fortunate for me, I was granted access for two reasons: (1) my gatekeeper trust me because I use to do some work for the program prior to enrolling in grad school; and (2) the gatekeeper was also enrolled in a doctoral program, so she was able to comprehend everything that I planned to do.

According to Dyson and Genishi (2005), the first thing that qualitative researchers should do is explore the site in question to make informed decisions about the research design, documents to collect, people to interview, and actions to observe. Patton (2002) reminds us that early entry into the field benefits the researcher because it allows them to negotiate with the gatekeeper(s) about the nature of the fieldwork to be done and actual physical entry into the field positions researchers to begin collecting data. My gatekeeper, the lead guidance counselor, served an integral role in the exploration of my site as she provided me with historical context about the program as well as insight into the sociopolitical environment in which the program was conducted.

My initial visit to the site was very informative as it gave me context for the study as well as an understanding of the potential impact that the structure of the program would have on the study. For example, while waiting in the lobby for my gatekeeper to come get me, I noticed that the program was more geared towards military recruitment than post-secondary education. The lobby was filled with countless pictures of former cadets enrolled in various branches of the military – none of the pictures showcased former cadets graduating from post-secondary institutions at any level (junior college, community college, etc.).

While receiving a tour of the site, I learned that over the course of 20 years, the site had grown to be the largest out of the 40 offered by the National Guard due to their ability to facilitate the program twice a year in concurrent sessions – with the goal of graduating 800 cadets annually. In addition, I learned that the program was facilitated on a former air force base in which they utilized the barracks, cafeteria, laundry facility, school, and gymnasium. Although I would be granted access to all of these spaces, I could not travel freely on site – I had to be escorted by a member of the staff at all times. All of the program staff had military experience except for the guidance counselors – a military background is one of the requirements for employment.

At the time of my initial visit, there were 239 cadets enrolled, 179 (75%) were male – I do not know how many began this session. Male cadets were assigned to one of four teams: (1) the Wolf Pack; (2) the Wrecking Crew; (3) the Spartans; and (4) the Dawg Pound. It was the culture for the cadets to do everything as a team - chow, sleep, school, recreation, community service, and physical fitness as a unit – sometimes competing with the other teams. My gatekeeper informed me that the Dawg Pound was the least acclimated to the program's culture, describing them as “off the chain.” One month into the program, only 31 cadets remained out of

the initial 74 cadets that started the program as member of the Dawg Pound. Although a handful of cadets were relocated to other teams, most of the Dawg Pound either: (a) voluntarily withdrew from the program; (b) were kicked out for sneaking in illegal substances; or (c) kicked out for fighting – majority of the fights were race related as the team divided themselves into three racial groups: (a) black; (b) latino; and (c) white. The Dawg Pound was supervised by a team of white males, all formerly enlisted in the United States military. Outside of their interactions with the lead guidance counselor, who was a black woman, members of the Dawg Pound rarely interacted with people of color – including the director of the program and the front door security guards that were older black males.

After my initial site visit, I chose to utilize a deviant case sampling approach – strategy that involves selecting case(s) that are information rich because they are atypical in some way (Patton, 2002) - to determine the case for this study. Yin defines case as, “the main focus on inquiry in a case study, a concrete entity (e.g. person or group, organization, community, program, process, policy, practice, institution, or event)” (p. 286). For this study, the case is the thirteen adolescent black males housed in the Dawg Pound. This decision was made in response to the culture of the Dawg Pound – specifically the likelihood that the cadets were less likely to have their figured manhoods altered by the program – coupled with the low number of adolescent black males.

Ultimately, the low number of adolescent black males in the Dawg Pound aided in the collection of data due to its ability to ensure that all cadets would be able to participate in the study – preventing any cadet from being separated from his in-group within the Dawg Pound. In addition, it allowed me to conduct participant observations of the entire group due to the likelihood that they would be together at all times because of the structure of the program. Also, thirteen cadets

positioned me to conduct the desired goal of two to three focus groups - the ideal number of participants in a focus group is six to eight (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013).

Although all thirteen cadets expressed interest in participating in the study, only twelve were able to do so. One of the cadets forgot to get his consent form signed by his parent/guardian during the only break granted during the residential phase. Two other cadets in the Dawg Pound self-identified as bi-racial (with black being one of their racial identities) but they declined the offer to participate in the study.

Participants

In order to participate in the program, cadets had to meet the following requirements: (1) legal citizen or resident of the state; (2) 16 to 18 years old at the start of the class; (3) be drug free arrival and throughout the program – cadets will be tested during the program; (4) mentally and physically capable to complete the program; (5) no court cases pending; (6) no felony convictions; (7) not awaiting sentencing or on adult parole/probation; and (8) participating voluntarily, not court ordered. It is imperative that I point out that although participation is completely voluntary, some of the cadets were referred to the program by their legal counsel to assist with their pending cases.

Although the aforementioned requirements can be used to give a broad explanation of the case being studied, it is imperative that I take the time to introduce each cadet as an individual – recognizing their humanity as well as who they are and what they brought to the study. Each cadet is a key informant as they use their knowledge and experiences to help me understand their Discourse as it pertains to their figured manhoods. Furthermore, recognizing each member of the group sheds light on the complexities that come with researching manhood among any group with intersecting social identities (race, age, class, sexuality, etc.)

Jet. At eighteen, Jet was one of the oldest cadets to participate in the program. Since he was eighteen, he did not need parental consent to participate in the study, and he never hesitated to remind the other cadets that they were still boys. Jet was the unofficial leader of the group, evident by the ways in which the other cadets responded to his directions and constantly sought his approval. During our time together, Jet constantly took it upon himself to tell the others to “lock it up” – phrase often used by staff to instruct cadets to stop their negative behavior and focus on the task at hand.

His mother, a high school principal, was forced to raise him and his older siblings – an older brother and sister – by herself due to his father dying when he was child. Jet’s siblings were either enrolled in a post-secondary institution or already graduated from one. Despite growing up constantly beating his brother in their competition to be the “gayest” – whoever had the best grades would be classified as the gayest among them - Jet dropped out of high school because he felt as though selling drugs would provide him with a better quality of life in contrast to getting an education. Prior to enrolling in the program, Jet had numerous encounters with law enforcement and the juvenile criminal system for selling drugs. During this time, Jet was shot in the back of the head by an “opp” – slang term for opposition. When sharing this story with me, Jet expressed that he knew that getting shot was inevitable seeing that he and his cousins had a lot of “opps” hating because of the money that they were getting. He explained that getting shot was a part of “the game” – selling drugs- so he wasn’t afraid to die, but he feared spending a significant portion of his life locked up in prison. This fear led him to enroll in the program, seeing that he knew that being 18 years of age meant that he would now be charged as an adult which would bring his fear to fruition.

Kevo. Chosen by his Dawg Pound peers and staff, Kevo was one of four team leaders. This was indexed by the silver ropes draping from his left shoulder – ropes hanging from the shoulder were the only deviations from the cadets’ uniform (black boots, navy blue slacks, light blue button-up shirts and an army fatigue jacket when outside). The only time that cadets were allowed to deviate from their uniform was during rec or physical training in which they were allowed to wear a navy blue sweatshirt and white gym shoes. Kevo took pride in being team leader, embracing the responsibility that came with it. On numerous occasions, Kevo could be seen assisting his team members (e.g. in class he would walk around helping all of his peers, regardless of race).

Prior to enrolling in the program, Kevo lived with his father, mother, and two siblings. Both of his parents attended college but did not graduate. His mother works at a day care and his father does security. Kevo is the only cadet to have a positive relationship, if any relationship at all, with his father. His relationship with his older brother is significantly strained due to a number of physical altercations that have taken place over the years. Kevo dropped out of school because he got tired of fighting the “opps”. After his mother refused to transfer him to another school – he refused to tell her why he wanted to transfer – Kevo stopped going to school and found a job working full time at a day care in his neighborhood. Ultimately, Kevo enrolled in the program to position himself to get his GED so that he could become a “working man” like his father and make his mother proud – she was still disappointed in him for dropping out of school.

Tre. Tre’s father, a known drug dealer in his community, had been in and out of jail for most of his life. As the oldest male in the house, living with his mother and siblings led Tre to drop out of school in order to make money so that he could help his mother, a security guard,

take care of his siblings. Although he started selling drugs in middle school, after awhile Tre decided to completely disengage from school because: (1) he could make more money if he wasn't wasting eight hours a day in school; and (2) going to school increased his chances of getting caught and locked up. Tre expressed that he wasn't afraid of going to jail, but that he was more concerned about being locked up and unable to fulfill his responsibilities as the man of the house – specifically the provider role. At sixteen years old, Tre was about to embark upon a journey that he admittedly wasn't ready for declaring, “how can I teach my son how to be a man, and I don't even know how to be a man myself?” His desire to position himself to provide a better quality of life for his unborn child led him to enroll in the program.

Zay. As the other 18yr old in the study, Zay is the complete opposite of Jet. Despite their similar backgrounds – drugs, gangs, etc. – Zay rarely brags about his past to the other cadets. Instead, he spends most of his time reflecting on his past, planning his future, and trying to maximize his present (enrollment in the program). Most of this takes place at night when he is in deep thought as he stares out of his window at the stars – according to Zay, he doesn't see the stars with such clarity at home. Post-completion of the program, Zay is enrolling in the local community college to position himself to transfer to one of the state's public institutions to pursue a career as a veterinarian. Zay grew up with his mother, a medial assistant, and his little sister. Eventually, his mother kicked him out of her house when she learned that he was a member of a gang. He then went to live with his father who sells drugs to fund his rap career. Zay's decision to drop out of school had less to do with him being disconnected from school, and more to do with him focusing on navigating his community safely.

Kobe. Kobe is the self-proclaimed “hot-head” of the group. My first encounter with Kobe occurred during a transition from the school to the Dawg Pound barracks. Kobe broke

ranks and proceeded to walk at his own pace apart from the group as he brushed his hair. While the staff threatened him with discipline, coupled with his peers trying to get him to get back into formation, Kobe let it be known that he didn't want to and that he wasn't worried about the potential consequences. Next time I saw him, Kobe was dressed in a navy blue jumpsuit – used to signify that the cadet is placed on restrictions

Kobe does not deny that at 16, his temper has constantly gotten him into trouble at home and at school. According to his mother, he gets his temper from his father who is currently incarcerated and has been for most of Kobe's life. Unlike his peers, Kobe didn't join a gang or sell drugs because he felt that he didn't need to since: (a) his mother, a factory worker, provided for all his needs and wants; and (b) he was responsible for his younger siblings while she was at work. Kobe dropped out of school because he felt that it was a waste of time due to the fact that teachers were not engaged in his education coupled with him always being suspended for fighting. According to Kobe, he didn't choose to enroll in the program, he was dropped off by his mother and told that he couldn't return home if he did not complete it.

Skip. Throughout the study, Skip would constantly be observed dancing. At sixteen, Skip had been dancing as an amateur for a number of years in various competitions and showcases throughout his city. While his peers were always talking about sports, Skip would talk about the music and performing arts. He aspired to be the next Chris Brown so that he could take care of his mother, younger sister, and older brother.

Throughout the study, Skip's sexuality was always brought into questioning by his peers. When they caught him dancing, they would make homophobic remarks about him amongst themselves. For the most part, Skip would ignore them but did not hesitate to respond verbally and posture as if he was ready to fight when he had enough. Skip admits that he fought a lot in

school because other males would call him gay, but that he refrains from doing so in the program because he views it as a second chance. There were moments in which Skip disengaged from the group, which had nothing to do with the other cadets messing with him. Skip shared that he was struggling with the reality that he was no longer going to have a child since his girlfriend had a miscarriage during the first month of the program.

AM. Despite being the same age as most of his peers (16), AM is treated as the little brother of the group. He was always observed trying to earn the respect of the other black males. He would tell stories about how he use to try to sell weed but would never make money because he would get beat up and robbed. His peers constantly remind him that he is not built for “The Game” – selling drugs and gang banging – and that he should reconsider school. To try and prove himself, AM would always provoke his peers (other adolescent black males in the group) but rather than engage him physically they would take his money, dessert, and clothes. Yet, in big brother fashion they would protect him from other cadets both within the Dawg Pound and the program.

AM lived with his mother, who is active military, his four siblings and his step-father. In an attempt to follow in his father’s footsteps, AM was kicked out of school for selling drugs. His motivation for enrolling in the program is to be a better role model for his younger siblings, specifically his little brother.

MC. As the only cadet without a sibling, MC grew up in a household where it was just him and his mother. As a registered nurse, his mother was able to provide for him on her own. MC shared that he does not know much about his father. Growing up, MC had been kicked out of numerous schools for various reasons; eventually, he dropped out when he realized how much money he could make for fighting dogs. Consequently, his mother kicked him out of the house

when she learned that he was fighting dogs for money. MC enrolled in the program after hearing about it from a former cadet who previously completed the program.

Additional cadets. Tez, Flo, Chubbs, and Cutty were additional cadets that participated in the study. In comparison to their peers, I spent the least amount of time with them for reasons that I do not know – outside of Tez and Cutty getting kicked out of the program while the study was taken place. Even when they were present for group dialogues, they were extremely reserved throughout the course of the study. For the most part, a lot of their contributions were through body language and physical gestures such as nodding their heads in agreement. According to the data collected, they had a lot in common such as: (a) 16 years of age; (b) their fathers were in out and out jail growing up; and (c) they dropped out of high school because they struggled and didn't feel like anybody cared to help them.

Positionality. Seeing that participant observations were one of the methods used to collect data, I would be classified as one of the participants in this study. At the time of data collection, I was a twenty-eight year old black male enrolled in a doctoral program at a predominately white, research one institution in the Midwest. Prior to grad school, I worked as a youth development professional at the community and state level aiding the development of adolescent youth through community-based programming. I grew up in a major city in the Midwest in both the inner-city and suburbs. The former was a predominately black, low-income neighborhood whereas the latter was a suburb that was also predominately black. Yet, the suburb in which I grew up in had a diverse array of black households with different class backgrounds. Ultimately, my positionality, both personally and professionally, makes me an ideal researcher of this adolescent black males figured manhoods seeing that it: (1) led me to engage in this research; (2) influenced my research design; and (3) enhanced data analysis.

My experiences as a youth development professional led me to pursue this research. While working at the local Boys and Girls Club, I noticed that many of the adolescent black males that I worked with were experiencing a Gender Role Conflict. I recall countless situations in which I was forced to reprimand one or more of them for Discourse that they associated with manhood – e.g. fighting because someone disrespected them. Behind closed doors, they would share with me that they had to fight in order to ensure that they weren't perceived as less than a male (e.g. a bitch or pussy) by both their male and female peers. There were other instances in which some of the adolescent black males refused to be viewed/treated as anything other than a man by their peers and staff due to their belief that they were performing the adequate norms associated with manhood – according to Gilmore's Three P's of Manhood. After being exposed to black feminist thought (Collins, 2000; hooks, 2004), I realized that a lot of the issues that I had as a black man were rooted in my figured manhood. Furthermore, a review of the literature revealed a gap in the literature as adolescent black males, for the most part, were left out of the conversation. I sought fill in this gap seeing that adolescence is a critical stage for the development of figured manhoods due to this population developing their identity – specifically their racial and gender identity - at the same time that they are developing their figured manhoods.

It is my personal belief as a scholar that when it comes to researching people, it is imperative that their voices be included. To date, the voices of black males, of all ages, are limited as most of the literature focuses on black males, classified as emerging adults, enrolled in undergraduate programs. I sought to elevate the voices of adolescent black males by utilizing a qualitative research approach to design a study that would focus on the voices of the participants. However, there were some complications in gaining access to this population due to them being

classified as vulnerable according to the Institutional Review Board. I was fortunate to gain access to this population at the site in which the study was conducted because of my previous working relationship with them. The site was an unexpected asset to the study seeing that the participants would be able to operate as a group for the duration of the study – even when I was not present for data collection – which further made their interactions natural since they were extremely familiar with one another.

Ultimately, my positionality had the potential to enhance my ability to analyze the groups' Discourses due to my emic perspective that comes from both my personal and professional background. My emic understanding of the cadets was essential to both inductive and deductive analysis, evidenced by my first visit to the site to “Case the Joint”. Due to the time of our meeting, I went to the site immediately after work dressed in business professional attire - suit, tie, dress shoes, etc. As my gatekeeper showed me around the site and told me about the program, I overheard multiple cadets referencing me among themselves as a “Narc” or “Dick Boi” – which means that they associated me with law enforcement. After leaving the site, I made a note to be more conscious of my attire seeing that it would strongly influence their levels of engagement with me. Due to data collection taking place in the winter, I always came on site in my normal attire, outside of work, - hoodies, jeans, and the newest Jordans (representative of my identity as a sneakerhead). My shoes were a constant conversation starter as they inquired as to when the shoes came out and my shoe size – as if they were going to take them from me (jokingly). In addition, I informed the staff that I was not there to participate in the chastisement of cadets nor would I report information learned during my interactions with them. I also requested that they allow the group to refer to me as Nino, rather than sir per the culture of the

program, for fear that this may create a barrier between the group and myself, hindering my ability to develop a rapport that allowed them to engage freely with me or in my presence.

Data Collection

The ideal qualitative methods strategy is composed of three parts: (a) qualitative data; (b) a holistic-inductive design of naturalist inquiry; and (c) content or case analysis (Patton, 2002). Qualitative designs procure rich data accumulated via one or more of the qualitative data collection methods: (a) in-depth, open ended interviews; (b) direct observations; and (c) written documents (Patton, 2002). The expected end result are findings depicting: (a) the voices of the participants; (b) the researcher' biases, values, and experiences; (c) a thorough assessment of the problem; and (d) a contribution to the literature, hopefully including a call for change (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

To achieve such a goal, it is highly recommended that qualitative researchers utilize multiple sources of evidence to ensure an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon in its real-world context, validating the findings in a way that could not be achieved via one source (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2018). Doing so increases confidence in others that the study is credible. Therefore, the cadets' discourses were collected in three phases: (1) background questionnaire; (2) participant observations; and (3) focus groups to gain insight into the group's figured manhoods and the influence it had on their pursuits of manhood status.

Discourse. For most, discourse refers to language in use used to create meanings or facilitate interpretations (Gee, 2014). Analysts of discourse, typically sociolinguists, are concerned with the relationship between language and context, studying how discourse – written and/or verbal - is used to shape the interpretations and actions of those being engaged. Sociolinguist James Gee (2014) expands the views on discourse by providing an additional

framing of the term: Discourse with a large D. Discourse - not to be confused with discourse with a small d - combines language, actions, and ways of thinking with the usage of various symbols to enact a socially recognizable identity (Gee, 2014). For this study, that socially recognizable identity is manhood. Thus, data collection focused on the group's Discourses – language, actions, and ways of thinking - in regard to manhood, to describe their figured manhoods along with their pursuit of manhood status in America.

In her book *Gendered Discourses*, Sunderland (2004) states that “identities are progressively and dynamically achieved through the discursive practices that individuals engage in” (p. 18). These discursive practices are socially conditioned via social structures guided by ideals rooted in power and domination. Sunderland reminds us that although discourse structures knowledge and social practice, discourses can only exist if they are socially acceptable and provisionally recognizable, rendering them dependent upon social structures. Furthermore, there is not a finite set of discourses seeing that discourses are more than a concept, rather it is a fluid process rooted in history yet fleeting in nature due to the fact that discourses are unbound, constantly produced and reproduced as multiple discourses are prone to combine to form a new discourse.

As it pertains to gendered discourses, Cameron reminds us that “men and women are members of cultures in which a large amount of discourse about gender is constantly circulating” (as cited in Sunderland, 2004). Thus, women and men are more than capable of producing and reproducing both sexist and feminist discourses. Although discourses are not gender specific, that does not mean that they do not index a particular gender or sexuality (Sunderland, 2004). Sociologist Stuart Hall points out that, “in identity performance (such as Discourse), out-group stereotypes concerning the behavioral patterns of the group associated with the performed

identity are likely to be more important than the actual behaviors or the group's own behavioral norms" (as cited in Sunderland, 2004). Hall provides justification as to why it was imperative that this study go further than describing the groups' Discourses to identify and describe the out-group stereotypes acquired via social interactions with (a) agents of socialization and (b) social institutions.

Background questionnaire. Questionnaires are described by Harris (2014) as the information collection tools of research. One of the strengths of questionnaires is that they allow the researcher to choose the information that they would like to acquire. With this in mind, I chose to create a questionnaire to acquire additional information about each cadet seeing that I was not allowed access to their personal files. Each participant provided me with additional information such as: (a) where they were from; (b) family demographics; and (c) when they lost their virginity. The information collected allowed me to gain insight into the background of each cadet, while positioning me to identify potential commonalities that the group shared (e.g. each member of the group was from one of three metropolitan cities within the state).

Yin (2018) reminds us that, "documentary information is likely to be relevant to every case study topic due to its ability to play a prominent role in any data collection when doing case study research" (p. 113). This is due to their ability to provide specific details that corroborate information acquired from other sources – such as the participant observations focus groups that followed. Patton (2002) adds that documents are valuable not only because of what can be learned, but they also provide additional lines of inquiry to explore through direction observations and interviews. Thus, the information gathered via the background questionnaire was used, in conjunction with the participant observations, to design the semi-structured focus group protocol.

Participant observations. Naturalistic inquiries take place in the field, ideally in settings that are natural to those being observed. Dewalt and Dewalt (2011) define participant observations as, “a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and culture” (p. 1). Patton (2002) declares that direct, personal contact with participants coupled with observations of a setting have several advantages: (1) through direct observations the inquirer is better able to understand and capture the context within which people interact; (2) firsthand experience with a setting and the people in the setting allows an inquirer to be open, discovery oriented, and inductive; (3) the inquirer has the opportunity to see things that may routinely escape awareness among the people in the setting; (4) the chance to learn things that people would be unwilling to talk about in an interview; (5) the opportunity to move beyond the selective perceptions of others; and (6) getting close to people through firsthand experiences permits the inquirer to draw on personal knowledge during the formal interpretation stage of analysis.

Participant observations were conducted over the course of a month, totaling nearly twenty hours, in locations where cadets could engage in free time and be themselves - barracks, cafeteria, common area, and a makeshift weight room dubbed “The Trap”. Originally, I sought to include the classroom in observations but my only visit to their school revealed that the cadets were not able to engage freely among themselves and with me due to most of their time being structured, coupled with the possibility of being placed on restrictions by program staff patrolling the classrooms and hallways - Patton (2002) argues that “the most significant learnings occur during unstructured time” (p. 286). In addition, I attended the women’s month program with the cadets, sitting among them in their section of the gymnasium.

Due to the limitations as to what can be learned from what people say, participant observations positioned me to understand the complexities of the cadets' figured manhoods. By engaging in participant observations, I was able to gather valuable information via informal conversations that occurred naturally (Patton, 2002). Ideally, inserting myself into their figured world positioned me to be able to understand how the cadets think, act, and feel in regard to their pursuits of manhood. The cadets' interactions with each other, staff, and myself were observed and recorded via scratch notes, handwritten in a 5 x 8" notepad. During observations, I focused note taking on the cadets' Discourses enacting their figured manhoods. Following observations, I wrote field notes, expounding upon the scratch notes, to document what I observed as well as my inductive analysis taking place throughout this phase of data collection – all of which were included in my log of the study to be included in the data analysis (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011).

Focus groups. Yin (2018) declares that interviews are the most important source of evidence, when doing case study research, due to their ability to provide insight into the participants' perspectives. A focus group is a carefully planned interview designed to gain multiple perspectives about a topic in a safe environment that allows participants to share freely (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013; Krueger & Casey, 2008). Focus groups are ideal when seeking to collect unbiased data, due to the shift in focus from the researcher to the respondents in order to fulfill its purpose of gathering information from the participants (Lichtman, 2010). The reduction in my influence on the cadets allowed me to capture additional insight that was outside my capacity as a participant observer.

I chose focus groups over individual interviews due to Lichtman (2010) pointing out that focus groups are likely to bring about thoughts that would not have emerged during individual interviews. Creswell and Poth (2018) add that:

Focus groups are advantageous when the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information, when interviewees are similar and cooperative with each other, when time to collect information is limited, and when individuals limited one-on-one may be hesitant to provide information (p. 164)

As a result, I facilitated two 90 min focus groups due to the ideal number of participants in a focus group being six to ten (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013). In rare instances, focus groups can be conducted with twelve participants but smaller groups better foster a space in which every participant can freely contribute to the discussion without being judged by peers and myself (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Krueger & Casey, 2008). The focus groups were semi-structured to allow myself the freedom to explore new insights that may emerge over the course of the 90 mins. Furthermore, the semi-structured protocol positioned me to gain an understanding of the cadets' figured manhoods by allowing them to engage in the dialogue focused on three components of the focus groups: (1) exploring their figured manhoods; (2) examining the socialization of their figured manhoods; and (3) explaining the impact that their figured manhoods had on their pursuit of manhood.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is described by Bogdan and Biklen (2011) as the systematic dissection of data accumulated to enable the researcher to come up with findings that address the guiding research questions. However, there is no definitive point as to when data collection stops and analysis begins when conducting a qualitative study seeing that data analysis is both inductive and repetitive – beginning when one “Cases the Joint” (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lichtman, 2010; Patton, 2002). Despite the grey area that comes with qualitative data analysis, Creswell and Poth

(2018) identified three distinguishable phases to guide qualitative scholars: (1) preparing and organizing the data; (2) reducing the data into themes; and (3) representing the data.

Preparing and organizing the data. The data collected was descriptive in nature, seeing that Discourse focuses on the cadets' words and actions collected during the second and third phases of data collection (participant observations and focus groups). Over the course of the study, I accumulated an abundance of rich data such as a communication log and observation log along with transcripts of the focus groups. All of the data was converted into digital files and stored using a naming system that I developed to assist with data retrieval.

To assist with data analysis, the digital files were uploaded into a data management system (NVivo). NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software designed to assist, researchers working with rich data, in: (a) storing and organizing data; (b) categorizing and analyzing data; and (c) showcasing findings. Although NVivo is one of the top qualitative data analysis software programs, it is not a necessity for qualitative data analysis. Software such as NVivo is only a tool created to help with the management aspects of analysis, the analytical work that is required to analyze qualitative data takes place inside the mind of the researcher – me - regardless as to whether I chose to use the software, (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002).

Reducing the data into themes. Coding is at the core of qualitative data analysis, evidenced by Creswell and Poth's (2018) declaration that, "the process of qualitative analysis involves organizing the data, conducting a preliminary read through of the database, coding and organizing themes, representing the data, and forming an interpretation of them" (p. 181).

Lichtman (2010) provides six steps for researchers to follow when coding: (1) initial coding; (2) revisiting initial coding; (3) developing an initial list of categories or central ideas; (4) modifying

the initial list based on additional rereading; (5) revisiting categories and subcategories; and (6) moving from categories to themes.

The process of coding allows researchers to make sense of Discourse collected through documents, observations, and interviews. Coding was approached using one of case study research's five analytic techniques – Explanation building (Yin, 2018). The goal of explanation building is to analyze case study data in a way that allows the researcher to build an explanation about the case. Furthermore, explanation building is not used to make a conclusion about a case, but to develop ideas for further study. As the data undergoes a continual iterative analysis, explanatory propositions are constantly revised as evidence is reexamined.

I recognize that Discourse/discourse is traditionally analyzed using one of the three techniques: (a) conversation analysis; (b) discourse analysis; and (c) critical discourse analysis. Conversation analysts focus on understanding how social actions and practices are accomplished through talk and interaction; whereas discourse analysts focus on how language is used in certain contexts (Rapley, 2007). Meanwhile, critical discourse analysts go a step further than discourse analysts in that they focus on explaining how language is used to establish and reinforce social practices through ideologies rooted in society's power relations (Fairclough, 2013). Due to the purpose of this study, describing the figured manhoods of 12 adolescent black males enrolled in an alternative education program, none of the aforementioned discourse analysis approaches allow insight into their enacted socially recognizable identity – manhood. As a result, I chose to utilize a thematic analysis guided by a case study strategy in order to build an explanation as to: (1) the groups' figured manhood; (2) the agents of socialization and social institutions that shaped their figured manhood; and (3) the impact that their figured manhood had on their pursuit of manhood status.

Representing the data. Ultimately, the goal of case study research is not to develop statistical generalizations, but to expand theories via analytic generalizations (Yin, 2018). Achieving such a goal requires that the researcher(s) strive to identify potentially generalizable findings that go beyond the specific case being studied. Analytical generalizations should either: (a) corroborate, modify, reject, or advance theoretical concepts; or (b) identify new concepts that arose upon completion of the study (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) reminds us that “the challenge of making analytical generalizations involves understanding that the generalization is not statistical (or numeric) and that you will be making an argumentative claim...remember that you are generalizing from your case study, not from your case(s)” (p. 41). I also used NVivo to showcase the group’s verbal Discourse through Word Clouds and Word Trees to provide visuals to accompany the analytical generalizations.

Verification. When designing the study, I included a few methodological practices to increase the likelihood that the findings from this study can be used to aid in the deconstruction of black manhood as well as the development of programs that position adolescent black males to reconstruct their figured manhoods. First, I incorporated a methodological triangulation – the use of multiple methods to study a single problem or program (Patton, 2002) – to strengthen the findings. In addition, I included an opportunity for the participants to confirm or negate my analysis of their figured manhoods – also known as member checking. An example of such is when the cadets expressed that they did not associate having sex with manhood despite all of them losing their virginity around the same age (13). Not only were cadets able to critique my findings, but they also provided additional insights (such as why the majority of them lost their virginities at age 13). Doing so ensured that the findings were rooted in the voices of the

adolescent black males rather than interpretation of their Discourses displayed throughout the course of the study.

Summary

According to Sociologist John Lofland, there are four people-oriented mandates for a successful qualitative study:

First, the qualitative researcher must get close enough to the people and situation being studied to personally understand in-depth the details of the what goes on. Second, the qualitative researcher must aim at capturing what actually takes place and what people actually say – the perceived facts. Third, qualitative data must include a great deal of pure description of people, activities, interactions, and settings. Fourth, qualitative data must include direct quotations from people, both what they speak and what they write down” (as cited in Patton, 2002, p. 28)

Thus, the researcher is located at the center of qualitative research. Qualitative findings are the product of a methodological process in which researcher(s) gather, organize, and analyze information using their eyes and ears as the lens through which they interpret the data (Lichtman, 2010). Unlike quantitative studies, the skill, competence, and rigor of the researcher determines the credibility of qualitative methods seeing that it is their perspective that serves an integral role in the completion of the study (Patton, 2002).

In practice, qualitative research is fluid in nature, requiring researchers to be flexible and patient as they seek to understand how participants make sense of their worlds. This requires the researcher(s) to be willing to fully engulf themselves in the natural spaces inhabited by the participants, opening oneself to the possibility of alternate ways of thinking, speaking, and living. However, it also necessary that researcher(s) are conscious of their positionality – the

potential for their identities, ideals, and behaviors that may impact their ability to conduct an unbiased study. Ultimately, “the quality of qualitative data depends to a great extent on the methodological skill, sensitivity, and integrity of the researcher” (Patton, 2002, p. 5)

This chapter has presented the methodological decisions I made in order to explore the figured manhoods of a group of adolescent black males, enrolled in an alternative education program and the impact it has on their quests for manhood status. I designed and executed a qualitative naturalistic inquiry utilizing a case study approach to answer the guiding research questions for the study.

To answer the research questions, I conducted participant observations and focus groups to collect the groups’ Discourses enacting their figured manhoods. Their discourses were analyzed using a thematic analysis to develop naturalistic generalizations that: (a) explored their figured manhoods; (b) identified the social institutions and agents of socialization that shaped their figured manhoods; and (c) explained how their figured manhoods have influenced their pursuits of manhood. The findings were shared with the group as a means of member checking to verify the accuracy of my analysis.

The chapter that follows will showcase the group’s figured manhoods emerging from their Discourses used throughout the study. In addition, their Discourses will be used to highlight both the social institutions, along with their agents of socialization, that have shaped the groups’ figured manhoods. Plus, we will gain insight as to how their figured manhoods have impacted their quests for manhood – justifying the need for future studies to aid in the deconstruction of black males’ figured manhoods.

Chapter 4: Findings

In the following chapter, I present the findings of the case study to address the guiding research questions. The cadets' Discourses were explored to describe the formation of their figured manhoods – specifically identifying the agents of socialization and social institutions that molded their figured manhoods as well as how their figured manhoods guided their quests for manhood. Through a thematic analysis of their Discourse (codebook is located in the appendix), the following three themes emerged: (1) the group viewed manhood as something that is achieved by fulfilling the roles of provider and protector; (2) their figured manhoods were socialized through direct interactions with agents of socialization in conjunction with indirect encounters with social institutions; and (3) their quests for manhood were influenced by their figured manhoods.

Achieved Manhood

According to the cadets, manhood is achieved when males perform the adequate norms associated with their sex. This is evidenced by Kevo's statement:

I would say a man is someone who takes care of their responsibilities. They are mature.

He get what he need to get done. Take care of his family. He always put priorities first.

He don't ever put pleasure over business...A man gone do what he got to do.

Kevo's declaration is a prime example of the group using heteronormative norms to showcase their figured manhoods. Consistently, the cadets reiterated the notion that a male's ability to fulfill the roles of provider and protector – in relation to their family as well as themselves - solidified their manhood. For this study, the protector role is fulfilled when one establishes and safeguards boundaries to protect and defend those that they are responsible for; the provider role is fulfilled when one meets the needs and wants of those that they are responsible for.

Provider. The group's figured manhood was grounded in the belief that males must fulfill the role of provider in order to achieve manhood status. This is reflected in the following quote made by Zay:

a man is somebody who knows how to mature himself. He knows right from wrong. He chooses to do right and do what he got to do, get his act together, so he can take care of his family, his future...that's what makes a man a man.

Ultimately, Zay highlighted the group's belief that providing for family – nuclear and extended – along with self is one of the main responsibilities expected of men.

Family. During the focus groups, it became clear that a man's responsibility to his family, specifically as a provider, plays a significant role in determining whether he achieves manhood status. When asked about the appearance of a man, Kevo responded:

You get the title of man by your action, not by how you look. Nobody cares how you look. A man can come in all different shape and sizes, races, color, different countries. It's not about how you look. It's about if you are doing what you gotta do to keeps the lights on! Is he doing what he gotta do to make sure his sons or daughter fed. Is he doing what he got to do to take care of his grandma and his wife, take care of they needs. Do he know his priorities and put them over everything? That what it means to be a man.

In response to Kevo, Tez added that “A man does whatever he has to do to provide for his family.” It became apparent that the family served two roles in relation to manhood: (1) a source of responsibility that awaited them once they achieved manhood status; and (2) motivation to position themselves to meet, and hopefully exceed, the expectations placed upon their gendered bodies.

Self. In addition to providing for their families, the group recognized that a man must also be able to provide for himself. An example of such is when Skip expressed that “I think a man can do everything for himself.” Kevo then expounded upon Skip’s statement by pointing out that, “A man is independent, a man should never depend on nobody. I mean, you might need some help but overall you should be able to cover yourself. You should be able to take care of yourself.” Ultimately, they suggested that dependence on others rendered males less than capable of achieving manhood.

Norms. In addition to clarifying who is under the provision of men, the group shared norms necessary for men to fulfill the Provider role. It is critical that I point out that the group did not express that these norms determine whether an individual can fulfill provider role, instead these norms were used to describe a man that does provide. Some of which were: (a) independent; (b) responsible; and (c) mature to name a few, evidenced by aforementioned quotes. Another norm is resilient, indicated by AM’s description of a man:

I think a man is somebody that when hard times comes, they don't give up. He is always going to figure a way out of every situation, he supposed to always come out on top. And won't feed into the "BS" if he has responsibility, like having a kid or something. He takes care of what he got to take care of.

Zay would add that a man is selfless seeing that “a man makes sacrifices.” In addition, Skip would describe a man as action-oriented due to his belief that “a man is not a real man if he try to push a car with his mouth...he do more talking than he do action when they need more action or they can't go nowhere.” Together, these norms were used to describe a man in relation to his ability to provide for both his family and himself.

Protector. In addition to fulfilling the role of Provider, males must also execute the role of Protector to achieve manhood status. This is reflected in the following quote by Skip:

“It depends if the man has territory. If he want to do something, he gon do something. His body is his territory and if somebody will come to him and try to touch his territory than he have the right to defend himself, that’s a man.”

In addition to a man’s body being his territory, the group expressed that their family is also deemed territory. As a result, it is not only their responsibility to defend their territory but also their right.

Self. A prime example of such right to defend his territory is Kevo. Kevo ultimately chose to drop out of school because he was tired of fighting with the “Ops” (opposition or rivals from another gang or opposing group). He expressed that he valued school, to the point that he asked his mother on numerous occasions to transfer him to another school. When she refused to do so, he stopped going to school and found a full-time job working at a day care in his community. I inquired as to why he couldn’t stay at his school and just walk away from the altercations, in which he responded, “I’m a fight, because it ain’t about me proving a point but I want them to know they ain’t gone bitch me. I ain’t afraid to fight nobody.” His peers chimed in with support, in which I asked if walking away makes one a bitch. Kevo then elaborated:

It doesn’t make you a bitch, but I’m not running from nobody. If I say this is my porch, I’m going to stand on my porch or if this is my yard, I’ll stand on my yard and lean on my gate. Ain’t nobody gon move me, this is my crib and they can’t move me around from my crib.

Kevo’s right to protect his territory not only pertained to his peers, but also to his family. He acknowledged that his mindset has strained his relationship with his brother to the point that they

no longer talk and have not for awhile due to a previous physical altercation between the two – yet, he would not hesitate to protect his brother from others if he deemed him in danger.

Family. Like Kevo, Flo expressed that a man is supposed to protect his family. When asked to recall the first time that they started thinking about what it means to be a man, Flo responded:

I started to think that I should be a man when I held my baby sister for the first time. I was feeling like, yeah okay, when she gets older I'ma have to start beating people up.

Even though we two different genders I still gotta be able to hold my own because she's going to look up to me. Which I am doing right now.

After inquiring as to how many years were between him and his sister, Flo stated that he is seven years older than her.

The group supported Flo's notion that he must protect his sister, at the same time they included girlfriends as additional individuals that they must protect. This was evidenced by Kevo advocating that Mario, from the game *Super Mario Bros*, is a prime example of the extent to which a man must go to protect those that he love:

This kind of funny but like Mario, from Smash Bros, he would go through all these missions just to get one girl...he fighting dragons and turtles with spikes on they shields, all this just to get one princess. So, I'm like damn he must love that girl! You gotta make those sacrifices. You got 24 lives and you gotta be willing to use all them lives, make sacrifices for what you believe in, make sacrifices for what you love. I don't love no girl that much, I ain't fighting no big dragons. You gotta get powers, throwing fire balls just to prove that you love her.

Although it is just a video game, the group's belief that Mario is an adequate representation of the protector role for men – evidenced by the supportive Discourse of his peers – showcases the notion that a man must be willing to sacrifice his life to protect those that he loves.

Norms. In addition to a willingness to sacrifice one's life in order to fulfill the role of protector, the group provided additional norms. Previously mentioned quotes by members of the group revealed that a protector must demand respect, is fearless, and willing to go to great lengths to defend his territory. Throughout the course of the study, each cadet would constantly prove themselves through their performance of their Discourse, communicating to all males – including staff - that they were willing to fight anyone at anytime. AM was constantly forced to prove his willingness to protect himself and his territory because the cadets knew that he was reluctant to do so – evidenced by them taking his cookies during chow and threatening to harm him if he didn't shut up when instructed by his peers to do so (which he complied).

Summary. The groups' Discourse showcased a figured manhood grounded in the notion that manhood is a status that can only be achieved by males. To achieve manhood, males must fulfill both the provider and protector role as they pertain to one's family and self. The successful performance of both roles require specific norms that position males to overcome any barriers that impede upon their ability to provide for and/or protect those that they deem themselves responsible for. In the end, one's inability to achieve manhood is personal, not systemic nor structural, seeing that “a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do to keep the lights on!”

Socialization

Socialization, according to (Kerckhoff, 1989), is the process by which persons acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that make them more or less able members of their

society. For this study, I explored the process by which the group formed their figured manhoods in relation to their function within society. Doing so, it became clear that their figured manhoods have been, and were still being, socialized throughout the course of their lives. However, they were traversing the secondary phase of their socialization – a shift from family to peers as the primary agents of socialization (Giddens et al., 2014) - as their figured manhoods were being renegotiated at this stage in their lives.

When asked what makes a man, Skipped responded that “A man cannot be a man if he didn’t go through anything!” After being asked to elaborate, Skip stated that “it's not by what he goes through, it’s by the way he comes up” – alluding to the socialization of figured manhoods.

In support of his peer, Kevo added:

A man is not defined by what he goes through but it's about how he makes his life after looking back on what he's been through. You change when you go through stuff, I know a lot of people that go through stuff and get depressed and then they don’t wanna do nothing. But I know some people go through stuff and then they will say, I’ma do what this person wanted me to do. I will make myself better. I'ma do this for this person.

AM then took it one step further by pointing out that the present, along with the past, defines a man:

I think a man can be defined by what he going through. Everything a man is, is what he has been through. If a man has been through hard times, he will come out trying to make those hard times better. And if a man, ain't gone through hard times, he will grow up thinking it’s sweet so when he supposed to be doing what he supposed to be doing....he will make things worse for him.

Together, they briefly touched on the group's belief that their figured manhoods were a direct result of their socialization via direct interactions with agents of socialization and indirect encounters with social institutions.

Agents. Agents of socialization are “groups or social contexts within which processes of socialization take place” (Giddens et al., 2014, p. 85). In other words, they are spaces in which people learn the values, norms, and beliefs of their culture through interactions with peers in social institutions. Seeing that the cadets are now in the secondary phase of their socialization, it makes sense that they identified members of their family as the primary influencers of their figured manhoods. In addition to their family, the group identified their peers as individuals who shaped their figured manhoods, evidenced in the following quote by Jet, “Who or what shapes my view of being a man? I would say the people who I’m around, my crowd.”

Family. Moms and dads were the primary agents identified when discussing the socialization of their figured manhoods. In addition, the group named other family members that made contributions during their socialization process to that point in their lives.

Moms. Although the family made a major impact on the group's figured manhood, no one individual was more significant than their moms. For each cadet, their mom was the catalyst for them to change their quests for manhood, illustrated by Zay's comments about his mama:

I seen my mama break down to tears because she knew that I was smoking and gang banging. I think it actually started recently before I came to (omit) when she broke down to tears. She was crying because I wasn't doing nothing with my life, I was not about to graduate. At the rate I was going, I was either going to have to repeat my senior year or not graduate. I knew that if I had to repeat my senior year that I was going to just give up. So, I thought about that. I thought about how my mama usually breaks down about

bills. Now she's breaking down over me and now I'm finally on the right track. She kicked me out of the house and so I was living with my father on his couch, I was traveling down the bad road. So I made the decision to come to (omit) and stop playing, ain't got time for no other BS.

They can also provide in a way that allowed some of the cadets to resist the pressure of their peers coupled with their environments to adhere to harmful ways of proving their manhood (we will explore this further later in this section). When listening to his peers brag about previous experiences as drug dealers and gang bangers in “The Trap” (a makeshift weight room in one of the abandoned bedrooms of the Dawg Pound’s barracks), AM expressed that he was able to resist the temptation to engage in such activities due to his mother’s ability to provide for his needs and wants.

Furthermore, the group praised women for their ability to raise men seeing that most of them, along with their peers back home, were being raised by single mothers. According to Jet:

I think women play a big role for the simple fact that...like a lot of people I know say that, like these guys. A lot of them don't have no type of father figures in his life, no type of male figures. So it's like... when a lot of people that I know grow up and they have become something. It's like...the women that raised them that really pushed them to be that. I'm not really saying a women can really show a man how to be a man but I definitely feel like women can show a man how to be a man for the simple fact that they just been doing it. (Boss). Exactly and it's like, I mean I just feel like a lot of these woman just like I don't know it's like... I don't know... it's like they just they learn how to be men. I guess they learn how to be men. And I just see a lot of women raising a lot

dudes these days. And the dudes coming out just as good as dudes who been raised by men. So, I can't tell the difference to be honest.

Kobe responded by talking about his mom:

Now that I think about it my role model is my OG, my mom. I mean really...my dad locked up and I got a relationship with my dad but he don't be around like my mom do. If it wasn't for my mom, I wouldn't, I don't even think I would be here right now. It's a lot that goes through and the only person that be here for me is my mom. That's the only person that always going to be there for me is my OG. That's how I look at it, so my OG is my role model...cause usually in childhood it usually it be the mom that be taking care of the child and not the dad. So, it basically the mom be the man of the house... like they do everything for you. They put clothes on your back, put food on the table, they do whatever they can do to help you survive.

While the others pondered the statements of their peers, MC expressed his thoughts:

I don't think a woman can raise a man. I think a woman can give you the tools to become a man, you just got to build the house. I think single moms are probably the best example of that. They do. Well I'm the only child so I can't speak for people who have brother and sisters. My mom is doing everything [inaudible] cooking, cleaning [inaudible], everything. So for her to do that, that's basically why I came here. To get out the house, to take stress off her back so I can become a man myself.

While Kevo was the only cadet that supported MC, one cannot ignore that he is an outlier within the group seeing that he is the only cadet that has a positive relationship with his dad.

Dads. As for dads, AM revealed his views as to the role that dads play, “I think our dads supposed to provide an example, so we should know the basics so we could go out and put out what we learned” along with insight as to why moms are the ones meeting these expectations:

My mom did because my dad been gone my whole life (currently serving time in a federal prison for drug trafficking). When I was six she started telling me “don’t do this”, “don’t do that”, like my whole life because she know my dad mistakes. Sometimes she would call to tell me right from wrong. She would tell me “You’re following his footstep when you do wrong.” So I’m like every time I did wrong it was like she says “You turning into your dad.” So she taught me how to...what a man supposed to look like and be like.

Like AM, Flo relied on his mom sharing that, “So I don’t really have a father figure in my life. My mom taught me how to be a man, taught me the man roles.” As a result, Flo aspires to be in a financial position that allows him to take care of his mother so that she could enjoy the remainder of her life.

AM, Flo, and the majority of the cadets shared a common narrative in that not only did they feel as though they needed their dad to teach them how to be a man, but they also lacked an adequate father figure to serve in his place. Meanwhile, unlike his peers, Tez’s disdain for his dad is not rooted in him not being present, but in him viewing his dad negatively due to his inability, potentially unwillingness, to fulfill the provider role:

My dad don’t work for nothing so my mom takes care of everything. He doesn’t really do nothing but sit around and have all the kids clean up. I always told myself that I’m not going to be like that. I’ma work and stuff, not just sit there...I’ma work.

Again, Tez is showcasing the belief that a man must provide for his family and if he is not doing so then he is not one worthy of manhood, let alone admiration. That sentiment alone factors into Kevo conveying his feelings when his daddy was talking about him to his uncle, “I knew I was doing something right when my daddy called me a “working man”. I started smiling because that meant a lot coming from my daddy.” What’s interesting is that even though Kevo idolizes his daddy, he still doesn’t allow the praises of his daddy to surpass his desire to make his mother proud:

I would say they (moms) help build you to make you a better man. Me personally, I’m all about making my mama happy, to please her, cuz I was a screw up. Not a complete screw up but I made her look at me different...so I don’t screw up now that I wanna grow up.

In that statement, Kevo makes it clear that he is still striving to change the way his mother views him seeing that she was disappointed when she learned that he dropped out of school – despite becoming a working man like his father.

Other family members. The type of influence of other family members, both nuclear and extended, was completely gendered. For the most part, male family members adversely shaped their figured manhoods and negatively impacted their quests for manhood. These family members were older and appeared to be taking the necessary steps to achieve manhood. For Tre, he looked up to his cousins in a way that he embraced everything that they introduced him to. Eventually, Tre’s cousins influenced him to drop out of school and sell drugs after they dropped out of college. When asked as to led to his decision, Tre made it appear as though it was both a logical and simple decision, “I saw them sacked up, so I dropped out and got sacked up.” Meanwhile, for Chubbs it was his uncle that served as his role model:

He got his own house, he got his own cars and all that stuff. He got two kids to look down on and all that stuff. He ain't a broke person... he can have whatever he want. He a man of his own. He got his GED and all that stuff. He was in and out of jail half of the time, but he haven't been in jail in two years so that must mean he doing something better. He still out there in the street but at the same time he doing what he gotta do to provide.

Unlike most of the males that Chubbs had been exposed to, his uncle served as an example of someone who eventually figured things out which allowed him to achieve manhood status despite his non-traditional path.

Meanwhile, the women in their families were heralded for their efforts to get members of the group to see the flaws in their figured manhoods and the quests that they embarked upon to attain manhood. For Kobe, he mentioned his grandma while describing their interactions:

I use to have sit down and talk with my grandma. She use to tell me, like you hanging with the wrong crowd and stuff. Hanging with them ain't going to get you nowhere but in jail or dead.

For Tre, it wasn't just his grandma but he also acknowledged the collective efforts of all the women in his family:

Women play a huge part in my life. Not just relationship wise, family wise. It's more females than males in my family so with the males in my family we close knitted like brothers. And the females is like my sisters, well the older ones...My aunties, my grandma, my mom, my sisters, [inaudible] is like the number one at being my back. Cause she know what I'm capable of, it's just that I don't do it. My sister was like the second one that raised me cause my mom, when my mom was working my sister job

would be the man of the house hold. So, my mom raised a woman that could raise man. I don't know how that sound but as, at 13 my sister was like raising me and my brother when my momma was gone so. It's not just my mom, it's the females in my family period. Most of the females in my family are... single mothers or were at one point. But it's a couple men in my family I can look up to... it's a couple that I can't look at... its I look at as you ain't shit, gone head and get away from me. But it's a couple in my family that I just [inaudible] but I'll lock it for them. And woman in my family necessarily not even in my family. It's a couple woman outside of my family that I look up to like a mom or tell me to do the right thing. Females they just got that comfort or that love that they just want to see you do better and succeed. Some females hate you though but some of them that just hate but most females I guess just want to just see you succeed.

Nonetheless, Tre's comment is evidence that it is clear to some of them that they are more than likely to get the right support from the females in their lives – even if they are fortunate to have a male figure present in some capacity.

Peers. During adolescence, peers gain a significant influence on the socialization process. Thus, the cadets' showcased the influence that their peers, both past and current, had on their figured manhoods. Like their family, the influence of their peers was gendered both in terms of interactions and impact.

Males. Only two of cadets had their dads present in their lives, in which only one viewed his father in a positive light, thus the group offset their lack of father-figures by engaging in a co-construction of their figured manhoods with their male peers. AM pointed out that, "It's the people you're around, the people you choose to be around you" highlighting that the people that

one chooses to affiliate with plays an integral role in one's co-construction. In support of AM, Kevo expounded:

I agree with AM, it's all about your environment. If you hang around with a bunch of immature ass kids you're going to be an immature ass kid. You hang around with some wise men, you gone learn from the wise and be very wise, and if you grow up around working men then 9 times out of 10 you will be a working man. It's all about your environment, if you around gang members than you gone be a gang member, that's just how it is. It's all has to do with your environment.

For the cadets, their communities were composed of three types of male peers: (1) Big Guys; (2) Homies; and (3) Ops. The “Big Guys” were the older males in their communities, the men who they looked to for advice along their quests for manhood. The “Homies” were their peers with whom they had legitimate relationships with – whether business or personal. The “Ops”, slang term for opposition, were opposites or rivals from another gang or opposing group. It is essential that we recognize that each group was gendered in that they were spoken of as if women were not a part of either group.

AM and Kevo's statements index a previous conversation with Jet and others in the “The Trap” where he expressed that he has been contemplating as to who his audience was prior to enrolling in the program. During this conversation, Jet explained that he liked knowing that he had people hating on him, especially “older niggaz”, because he was “getting money, fresh as hell, and riding clean” - both Tre and Jet were driving BMWs at 16. AM chimed in that he understood where Tre and Jet were coming from stating that, “Knowing that you got something that other people don't got. It makes you feel better! It's just like, you being you, like, having something that no one can take away from you” but he followed that up with “but, You gotta

break out of the situation that you're in, what makes you a better man is like the choices you make”

Females. On the other hand, the group continued their admiration for females and the positive contributions that they have on their figured manhoods along with their quests for manhood. An example of such is AM’s statement:

women like, they are the main factor in what makes you a man. If you can provide for your girl than that should mean a lot to you. If you out there struggling for your girl, she gone like that and gone show you that you doing good. You might have a kid and do something with your life for your girl. She make you decide if you want to grow up, she gon make you choose if you want to get a job and do what you gotta do.

For Zay, his girlfriend is a clear indicator that he is doing something right:

Girls to me – in my life – is like proof that I’m doing good. If I disappoint my girl then I’m not doing something right, if I make my girl real proud then the more she will love me and the more I know that I’m doing something right. That ties in to the fact that I gotta know that she don’t love me for the money, but that she loves how I express myself, expose myself to her, how I dress, all that. I mean like if she loves you for you, then you know you’re doing something right.

Tre attributed females’ ability to serve as a barometer to them merely wanting what’s best for the males in their lives: “With females... say you have a girlfriend or whatever and your girlfriend don’t want see you doing bad, selling drugs or whatever. All females want to see you do is do better than what you did last time.” In agreement with Tre, Kevo added that, “their (females) support motivates men to grind harder.”

Summary. The group's belief that a man is defined by what he goes through and his ability to overcome obstacles to achieve manhood status is further evidence that one's socialization is essential to the formation of figured manhoods. Furthermore, the group shed light as to the agents that they encountered during their socialization and how those agents impacted them differently. The cadets showcased their gendered interactions with agents, revealing the ways in which males reified the dominant ideals around manhood whereas females challenged them to reject dysfunctional figured manhoods and maladaptive quests for manhood. However, the question that remains is: Where are the agents gaining their perspective as to what it means to be a man and how one achieves manhood status?

Institutions. An answer to such a question would require an analysis of the policies and practices within the social institutions that the cadets indirectly encountered as they formed their figured manhoods. However, these institutions must be identified in order to do so. Hodgson (2006) defines institutions as, "durable systems of established and embedded social rules that structure social interactions" (p. 13). In other words, institutions are part of the social order of society in that they are used to govern the behavior and expectations of individuals and social groups. As expected, most of the major social institutions: (a) education; (b) family; (c) government; and (d) religion emerged during the thematic analysis of the group's Discourse, but they were also accompanied by additional institutions: (f) Community; (g) Mass Media; and (h) Sport.

Community. Although community as an institution is not one of the major five, it was at the center of the institutionalization of their figured manhoods. During their dialogue about their communities, Zay pointed out the effect that one's community has on their identity:

I mean, It's like what they said about growing up in the environment that you are in. You start to think that's who you are, who you will be, for the rest of your life. But you gotta realize that everybody has their own life and you got to deal with it. You gotta know when it's time to stop doing bad things and start doing things different.

As they talked about where they came from, it was clear that their figured manhoods were forged in communities in which: (a) violence; (b) drugs; and (c) incarceration were a part of the culture despite being from three different metropolitan cities within the state.

Violence. Flo's previous comments about protecting his sister is indicative that violence is embedded in the culture of their communities. As a result, many of the cadets developed a mindset like Kobe in which they weren't afraid to fight anyone while others took it one step further and carried a gun at all times for protection. The cadets made it clear that they felt as though it was impossible to avoid the violence of their communities, evidenced by Kevo's statement about where he was from, "it's cause I'm from (omit) and it's the environment that I was raised in. This is my mentality sir, what my environment taught me, so this is just how I'ma act regardless. I can't explain it." Kevo went on to explain that even when he tried to avoid the violence, it was at his own expense:

I wasn't going to school to avoid conflict. I was in the street literally all day and then after school got out, I went home...but I lived on the block with the people that I got into it with so I still had to deal with them.

Eventually, Kevo decided to just drop out since he couldn't convince his mother to transfer him to another school.

Like Kevo, Jet's path was changed by an act of violence. When he was 16, Jet was shot in the head, an incident that spurred him to think about the type of man that he wanted to be:

What made me start thinking about being a man. I was 16 and I got shot in the head. So after I got shot I started thinking okay cool, I can't just be out here. Well I was playing football, so it's like okay so football ain't going to work. So then I had to quickly figure out, who am I and what can I do? What's the next step I'm going to make. What's next basically. Then I thought, what's next was okay when I play football I was always fresh, I was always this, I was always that. So then my thing was what can I do to keep the same status that I got.

What came out of that thought process was Jet deciding commit to the lifestyle that almost led to his death. Unlike his peers, Jet expressed that he is no longer fighting people – not because he is afraid to fight, because nowadays people shoot first – but instead he keeps his gun on him at all times. In addition, Jet didn't enroll in the program because he is trying to change his path but because it was suggested by his attorney that he do so to increase the likelihood that he will beat his pending case – at the time of the study, Jet was looking at anywhere from three to 25 years in prison.

Drugs. In their communities, drugs were easily accessible as each cadet either consumed (smoked weed) or profited (sold weed or crack) from them. Constant exposure to drugs made some of the cadets feel as though it was impossible to resist. An example of such was AM who shared that he felt like he had no choice but to sell drugs seeing that weed was always around him at home. He recalled trying to be like his father, who was currently serving federal time for selling drugs, but always failing because his peers would beat him up and rob him. When he shared his failures, Jet advised him to stop trying to be something that he clearly ain't because “he ain't built for it.”

While some were unsuccessful in their attempts to deal drugs, others, such as Tre, received mentorship to aide in his navigation of the drug game:

I grew up watching dope dealers, some of the big guys...(Me too). As I got older the big guys all got locked up. I use to see them out there, standing on the corner...they use to treat me like I was they son or something. Like I was they little one.

Ultimately, his success contributed to Tre dropping out of school due to his newfound independence due to the money that he was making:

Whooo! Sir I made like 5 in one day and I'm like alright okay. In them school hours, I'm going to make like a 100 a day after I got out of school. So then I was like alright, this how I seen it. Them school hours could be money hours. That could be me out there, the feens be out there early. Money never sleep, sleep is for the rich. That's how I get it. And I'm like, alright half the clucks out here early when I'm going to school so I'll see the clucks while I'm going to school and when I'm out of school. The clucks must be still outside when I'm in school, out of school, all the time. So I can make the money and I'm not making none in school. I can make more than what I did when got out of school. I'm not making no money while I'm in school. I was literally just going to school to go to basketball practices and probably get a little eager to come home with me. And I'll fuck that, dis her to the side, come home from basketball practice, go back to selling drugs. I'm like alright, I'm risking going to jail just to go to school when I can just cut school off. So I'm like alright fuck school. I'm just going to get it my way.

But, Tre expressed that he eventually started to look at the Bug Guys differently when he realized that many of them were doing the same thing despite years in the game:

As I got older, alright, these niggas still, like 38. Nigga you still working this corner, you still hugging the corner, you not no man, you not doing shit, you started when you were like my age. You doing the same things. And the females like, like they said the Meek Mil quote like last year, “you wanna fuck with a dope dealer or keep fucking them broke niggas. I’m like you broke too. Bro you been working this corner since I been... damn near like 9. And you still right here so. I use to be like none of y’all men, cause y’all broke as shit and y’all been working. Y’all need to find a profession, or career. Y’all get locked up, come back to the same corner, where some of your homies done died. Y’all done got locked up, y’all done got shot at and y’all still not being productive with y’all life. Y’all too old to be making the same mistakes.

Tre made it clear that those that he use to look up to are no longer viewed as prototypes for the type of man that he wants to be – hence his decision to enroll in the program and get his GED.

Incarceration. At no point in time did any member of the group express shame for previous actions seeing that they felt as though they were doing what they had to do as men. Each cadet expressed that they knew the potential consequences of their actions, including death, evidence of such can be found in Tre’s statement about his previous actions, “While I was posted, I felt like if I got locked or clapped up (murdered) then I got locked or clapped up.” For many of the cadets, incarceration was common for men in their communities as their family and peers were in and out of jail. Yet, this community norm had a bigger impact on AM due to his father being locked up when he was 7, which prompted him to begin the formation of his figured manhood:

I started thinking about what type of man I wanted to be when my dad got locked up. I was like 7. I didn’t really know what was going on. My mom explained it to me as I got

older. He go locked up, he currently serving two life sentences so he ain't coming home. He got arrested for drug trafficking, illegal firearms, illegal use of firearm and attempted murder. So when she started to explain to me that I can't follow in his footsteps. That's when my mom started raising me, telling me you basically got to do what you got to do. And I think at that point in life, that's when I started to think about that more. You know I started doing the wrong things, so I eventually had to come here

Despite their familiarity of the males in their community being caught up in the justice system, like AM, some of the cadets were able to recognize that they were on a similar path and responded by seeking an alternative way to achieve manhood. Once Tre realized that his mentors were not where he aspired to be, his mindset shifted:

When I seen them I was like, okay I'm still young. I can take, I can take a case or two. I'm going to beat the case or I'll do the time you get less time then what they give you. And I'm like alright I'll take the case for it. But then somebody told me, man you dumb as fuck why would you need something on your record. That's one thing a black man don't need on his record, is a felony, or any type of record.

On the other hand, Kobe expressed that his observation of others showed him what he didn't want:

When I started noticing that my homies, brothers, and them were starting to get locked up and stuff. I couldn't follow in they footsteps cause I didn't want to be in and out of jail, and get a bad background so I can't get a good job.

Regardless, the consistent exposure to the justice system, whether directly or indirectly, not only aids in the formation of their figured manhoods but it also steers their quests to attain manhood.

Education. Despite withdrawing or being expelled, the entire group expressed that at one point in their lives they used to love school. Moreover, they valued getting an education – ergo choosing to enroll in the program to acquire their GED – but many of them were unable to focus in school for a myriad of reasons. Like Zay, Kevo, struggled because he was forced to navigate the OPS in their schools and their communities:

I always knew it was important for me to go to school. It was the people who went to school with me that made it hard. That's why I tried to get out of there and go to another school so I could really do what I told my mama what I said I would. She knew it was something wrong with me, but I didn't want to tell her that I didn't want to go to school because I kept getting into it.

Both ultimately choose to drop out of school as a tactic for survival.

Tre, on the other hand, lacked motivation outside of the maintenance of a 2.0 grade point average to remain eligible for sports so once he got exposed to the drug game it was a logical decision to drop out:

It affected me dropping out. Most of my homies dropped out cause, you feel me, that sack...lose too much money off that. It was like a gold rush, the California Gold Rush, but it was the coke rush. We was out there getting it. I got kicked out of school cuz I fought cuz I had to go into the ops side of the school. I had to go to school with some ops. I'm like alright, fuck school, I was already working back to the summer, when the summer came and my sophomore year started, I didn't complete my sophomore year. So I'm still a freshman. I went to school for one day my sophomore year. After that I'm like alright school, I was going to go back eventually, I was going to go to an alternative school.”

It took Tre to have a baby on the way for him to have his epiphany, recognizing that the drug game wouldn't position him to be the father that he aspired to be for his son, for him to chart a different path and enroll in an alternative school.

Kobe and Flo dropped out because they felt that their teachers were not invested in them. Kobe mentioned that one year, during middle school, he had a different substitute everyday for an entire semester so eventually, "I didn't like school at all. I didn't like my teachers, like the only reason I was going to school was for the honeys and my homies." Like Kobe, Flo decided to drop out because he felt stupid since it took him longer than his peers to comprehend the material - which he blamed on his former teachers. Flo talked about constantly being given passing grades as well as perks (e.g. not having to take mandated exam such as the U.S. Constitution) for being a member of his school's basketball team. As a result, he made the decision to drop out when he was no longer academically eligible to play sports.

Chubbs and MC felt that nobody cared if they stopped going to school so they eventually chose the streets when they figured out ways in which they could make money. MC fought dogs, which further strained his relationship with his parents. Chubbs never shared his means to making money.

Similar to his peers, Jet chose the streets but for different reasons. He actually liked school, in fact he gloated as to how he was able to organize his life in a way that he could succeed in both the classroom and his community. Jet shared a competition between him and his brother in which they would compete every semester to determine who was the gayest among them - the winner would be the one with the best grades. Jet was proud to admit that his grades were always better. Nor did Jet drop out because nobody cared about him going to school, his mother is a principal and she constantly reminds him that she will give him whatever he wants if

he finishes school and goes to college. When it came down to it, Jet walked away from school because he felt that it wouldn't give him the quality of life that he sought – specifically the status that he accrued in his community.

Family. The previous sections have showcased the impact that the institution of family had on the formation of the group's figured manhoods. It is apparent that this institution is the most impactful as it is not only the primary agent of socialization, but during their socialization the agents are shaping the cadet's figured manhoods in relation to their expected roles within the institution of family as males. Time and time again, the cadets referenced their aspirations to provide for their families – specifically their mothers since they have yet to start a family of their own. Flo's formation of his figured manhood was brought upon by watching his mother struggle:

I started thinking that it was time to be a man when I saw my momma struggling to pay bills and my daddy not helping. I always said I don't wanna be like him, I wanna be better than him! When I get older, I wanna be able to pay my momma bills so she won't have to do nothing but just sit around...A man is not a man if he don't take care of his kids, put money before his family, never be in the house, don't pay bills.

While at the same time, he began to solidify his views as to what a man is – declaring that his daddy was not a man since he was not helping his father. Tez had a similar experience as far as watching his mother grind to provide:

I think it was like last summer when I started thinking about being a man, because I always saw my momma working hard to provide for us and the family. She always came home from work at 1 o'clock in the morning and complaining about her feet hurt. So I started thinking bout how I could help her.

In addition, Kevo's comment showcased how man, as the provider for his family, then position other members of the family to fulfill their necessary role:

My daddy shaped my view of what it means to be a man, ever since I was little, my daddy was always working. He would work, work, work and drink on his spare time. When I was little, he would always come home at the same time, everyday. Like he always had this schedule. He never broke his schedule. And now I realize that my daddy was the only one working because my grandma old and she couldn't do stuff herself, like bathe, so my mom would have to help out with stuff like that. Since grandma needed that much attention, my mom could never work. So, my mom would never work, my dad was always working. He was the reason all the bills got paid and we had food on our table. My mama had a link card, but my daddy never used a link card - my daddy didn't even touch it - because always used cash. Anything he buys, he buys cash. I never seen him even have a credit card. He had a messed up van, and he flipped it, I came home and he flipped a 2011 Grand Cherokee. He do what he got to do to take care of the family. I don't know. Take care of the family. I thought he got fired, he didn't get fired. He got a promotion, later on I realized he's doing what he has to do. I now see how I messed up his schedule getting in trouble at school. I remember trying to wake him up for a parent teacher conference. I messed up his sleeping schedule because he needed to sleep since he had work and he didn't get sleep when he had to come to the school...I didn't understand that until I got to high school.

Eventually, Kevo was able to see his function in the family as a kid which motivated him to stop getting in trouble as not to impede upon his daddy doing what he had to do for the family – which was provide.

Government. According to the law, a male becomes a man when he is 18 unless he is treated as such within the justice system. The group would argue that the legal classification of a man means nothing seeing that there are teenagers, such as them, fulfilling the responsibilities of men in their households and communities where there are “men” running from theirs. Zay pointed out the flaw in thinking that age should be taken into consideration when it comes to manhood:

Typically, most people think that, if you...I'ma just throw out the age 15 years old compared to an 18 year old person. They mainly, expect an 15 year old to be more immature than 18 year old, you know. What I mean, I could say yes and no to that. AM chimed in, “you may not be considered a man by law because you not 18 but you are still wise enough to be a man...a young man.” Kevo followed up, in agreement with his peers, stating that, “Your age don't got nothing to do with you being a man. If you ask me, it'll all depends on your environment” in which he alludes to the reality that some people are forced to mature sooner than others pending the circumstances that they are exposed to.

Mass media. Today, the mass media, in its various forms has helped maintain the outdated ideals of manhood in America (Katz, 1999; Katz, 2013). The ideology that a man must do whatever is necessary is to provide, protect, and procreate is constantly reified in the psyche of males via interactions with television, video games, film, and social media to name a few associations of the mass media. The group is no different evidenced by Kevo's previous comment about Mario of the video game *Super Mario Bros.* serving as an example of the extent to which a man must go to protect the woman he loves – including sacrificing his life.

Movies. According to Jet, encounters with the mass media could not prepare males to fulfill their responsibilities as men:

I don't really pay attention to TV and videogames for the simple fact that...(Movies) I mean movies also. I mean a lot...all those things are like for show. They just to show. Unless it's some type of motivational movie, which I don't even watch so I wouldn't even get it in movie. But I just look at it like those guys getting paid to try to show me something that somebody else want to be shown. It's not sincere or nothing, I mean even though. I mean also those guys are millionaires so it's like. I mean those guys are on TV and they getting paid millions to do it so I can't really relate cause my life is real, my life is my life so. I can't really relate, I can't touch those guys or have conversations with them so it's like I just get part of it so I don't get attached at all.

Meanwhile, Jet later contradicted himself when he agreed with Tre's explanation as to how the films: (a) *Paid in Full* and (b) *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*, shaped his mindset around manhood:

Ace Boogie and Mitch the two best friends, as I see Mitch put Ace on. Well Mitch tried to put Ace on, Mitch went to jail and Ace came back. Ace put Mitch back on, Ace went...when Mitch went to jail. And Mitch took care of the family, he made sure his family was straight. He use to come home and go with his family...go with his nephew or whatever. And Ace made sure his baby momma and Mitch sister was good. And his family set off to the...his family was satisfied first and that he made the manly decisions, you feel me. I'm going to stop drug dealing, I'm going to stop selling bricks cause you feel me, it's compromising my life, I might lose my life trying to earn a profit. So as I seen that I'm like alright, okay. He was willing to stop his cash flow to make sure he was good with his family and his son on his was. So I see that like, you feel me, that movie really had something to do with my mindset.

For the group, there are no adequate excuses for a man not taking care of his responsibilities hence he must “do what he gotta do to keep the lights on”.

Television. In addition to the aforementioned examples, the group did reference the character Uncle Phil from the tv show *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*. Not only did AM praise Uncle Phil, but he also referenced a specific episode that resonated with the group:

Uncle Phil had all of the people under his house and he was still grinding...they never showed him not going to work. I remember that one episode when Will Smith was crying because his dad didn't want to have anything to do with him, Uncle Phil just hugged him and was there for him. I never forget that because I never met mine. I kinda remember him coming around a few times when I was younger, remember the way I felt around him but not no conversations or nothing.

The long pause that followed, a random occurrence during my time on site, made it evident that the mentioning of this particular episode triggered something within the group.

Music. Although multiple associations of the mass media were identified, none of them had a bigger impact on the group than the music industry. For some, that impact could be positive if artists provided their listeners with a blueprint like Jay-Z did for Tre:

He done started how I started. Sold crack, he said in the blueprint. He gave us the blueprint. He sold crack so we wouldn't have to. He done came from a drug dealer to almost a billionaire, over time. With him, he got a millionaire mind... a billionaire mind set. His hustle is just so productive. You can't knock this hustle and that's how I want to be looked at in about 10 years from now. He turned nothing to something with just using his mind set, you feel me.

However, MC points out that Jay-Z is rare seeing that most artists have chosen to use their platform to “persuade a lot of people to do the wrong things. (and they die) they live a life that they can’t live.” Kobe provided a first-hand account of such when he shared:

Music fucking my head up sir. I feel like rap...I feel like music mess a lot of people head up. It make people want to do the wrong. Like drill music, Chief Keef, Little Herb, all that type of music like that’s basically like turn up music. Turning up be making people want to fight, drink, do whatever, those type of.... that type of music make people want to do stupid stuff. And how it’s set up. Word for word, how the song is set up and stuff. Like the stuff they say in song about killing people and shooting people and all that. People just look at that like they can take over with that type of stuff. Like they’ll be the best type of person ever just listening to that type of stuff. Like they can just do what that person can do basically.

The group then explained that the worst thing about the current music is that those who aren’t where they are from are consuming it and portraying themselves as something that they are not. Cutty and Tre told a story about an interaction that they had with one of the “Caucasian cadets” in which they tried to convince him that he wasn’t built for their communities so he should be careful not to allow the music to get him “fucked up” since where they come from the music isn’t entertainment, it’s an artistic expression real life in which people die every day.

Religion. Although many of the cadets expressed being exposed to religion by their family, only Zay and Kevo acknowledged the impact that their beliefs had on their figured manhoods. Zay attributes his relationship with God for helping him to transition out of his immature phase as he prepares for life after the program:

I know I'm going to achieve my goal on my own so I don't have to worry about going back to my immaturity. So, my plans of becoming a veterinarian is going to happen, I know for a fact. I'm in my word now, praying and studying so I know the rest of my life is going to be better. I'm getting back close to God, he my second father, so I know the rest of my life gone be decent

Kevo also gives credit to his recommitment to church for his change in mindset and correlating behavior:

While I'm here, I been going to church and even when I leave here, I'ma probably still gonna keep going to church. I grew up in the church, since I was two years old she (his mama) would take me to church...She would take me to church with her every Sunday, every Monday, Thursday, whatever bible studies allows in church. But when I got to a certain age, like 9 to 11, she gave us a choice to either go to church or don't. I stopped going to church around 7th or 8th grade and when I stopped going to church I started getting into trouble. I really noticed that when I started going back to church, I really wasn't doing nothing. Like, I was peaceful and I wasn't turning up like I used to. Since I started going to church, I'm calmer now...I'm cool.

Neither cadet spoke as to exactly what it was that their religion did to position them to be better men, but that they would not be in their present mental state if not for their religious beliefs and practices.

Sport. Both Tre and Flo acknowledged that there ability to play sports was their main motivation for school. Part of this is due to the fact that cadets named famous athletes, along with entertainers, as their role models for manhood. They identified Kevin Durant and James Harden as role models because they got enough money to take care of their family and still buy

all the shoes, clothes, and cars that they want. What's interesting is that they stated that Lebron James would be one of their role models, if his hairline were not receding. In the end, they didn't view the institution of sport as means to engage in leisure activities, but as one of the few opportunities available to them to achieve manhood.

Summary. An analysis of the cadets' Discourse used throughout the study not only showcased their figured manhoods – a man must provide and protect those that he is responsible for – but it also gave insight into their socialization process. The identified agents of socialization (family and peers) depicted the common socialization process that occurs in two phases (primary and secondary) in which members of their family began as the most influential agent, laying the groundwork for their figured manhoods, but that role transitioned to their peers as they entered the adolescent stage. Concurrently, their interactions with the aforementioned agents were dictated by the interlocking social institutions: (a) Community; (b) Education; (c) Family; (d) Government; (e) Mass Media; (f) Religion; and (g) Sport. Together, both their direct interactions with the agents of socialization and their indirect encounters with social institutions increased the likelihood that they would adhere to America's dominant manhood ideology. As a result, they would embark upon the same quests for manhood despite their marginalized status due to impact of race, which they fail to acknowledge.

Quests for Manhood

Kimmel (2012) reminds us that all males traverse through social interactions with agents of socialization in America's social institutions in order to achieve manhood via the performance of their masculinity. The previous sections dissected this process by identifying the agents of socialization, along with the social institutions, that guided the cadets' quests for manhood. It became clear that, like their figured manhoods, their quests for manhood were constantly being

renegotiated in response to their socialization – specifically indirect encounters with social institutions. This evolution can be broken down into three stages, all of which revolve around the program: (1) Past – prior to enrollment in the program; (2) Present – currently enrolled in the program; and (3) future – post-completion of the program.

Past. Each cadet began their quest at different stages of their lives. For some, there quests was evoked by significant changes in their family whereas the quests of others was induced by events that affected them at the individual level. Prior to enrolling in the program, the cadets were trying to position themselves to attain manhood via: (a) fighting; (b) hustling; and (c) working. Even though they embarked upon different quests, all of them ended up in the same program – seeking a second chance and an opportunity to learn from previous mistakes. Regardless as to which path they choose, each cadet has come to the same conclusion that adulthood – according to the law – is around the corner, for some sooner than others, and if they don't change then they may never achieve manhood according to their figured manhoods.

Present. During the participant observations, it was clear that each cadet was in a constant state of reflection. Jet described the program as a crossroad in which each cadet could determine if they were going to choose a different path or return to the one that led them to the program. When he was finally able to pull me to the side for a one on one conversation, Jet asked, “How do I do something different when this is all I know and it will lead me to one of two places, dead or locked up?” I told him that I would respond at the conclusion of the study (in an attempt to not affect my data collection), but unfortunately we were never able to do so since Jet was kicked out of the program after the focus groups were conducted for sneaking in and selling narcotics on site. Ironically, this was the same thing that led him to the program in an attempt to beat a case for drug trafficking. Jet was not the only cadet to kicked out of the program during

the study, Tez and Cutty were also kicked out following the focus groups for reasons that were not disclosed.

While some cadets did not maximize their time in the program, away from their communities, others were intent to graduate the program and leave a different individual. Kobe talked about using his time in the program to address his temper, recognizing that he would punch something or someone as a means of release. Tre, was ashamed that he was the bad apple of his family and he used that as motivation to become a better role model for his younger siblings and cousins. Skip admitted that prior to enrolling in the program, he wasn't doing anything to be proud of and he was going to change that.

Future. The cadets' future quests to achieve manhood could be classified into three paths: (a) enlist in the military; (b) secure a job; and (c) enroll in college. MC planned to enlist in the Navy so that he could get paid to travel the world and shoot guns. Kevo and Flo intended to secure a job in hopes of identifying a career that would allow them to provide for their future families. MC and Kobe aimed to play football at the local university so they were going to enroll at either a junior college or community college. Skip emailed a world-renowned professor at the local university, inquiring as to how he could pursue a career in musical performance and dance. Out of all of the cadets, Zay's plan was the most detailed as he decided to enroll at the best post-secondary institution in the state to pursue a career as a veterinarian. Zay explained that he would think about his plan every night, developing it as he stared at the stars outside his window – he couldn't see them back home.

Summary. The group revealed that an individual's quest for manhood is likely to change as they transition into different stages of their lives. At the current stage in their lives, the cadets were experiencing something similar to the encounter stage of Cross's Nigrescence model

(Cross, 1995) in which they had been forced to come to terms with the effects of their current quests. While not all of the cadets were developing new quests to achieve manhood, they all were engaging in some form of reflection as to how their current quests led them to the program. What was clear is that exposure to new agents and institutions – such as the program’s staff, the local university, faith-based organizations, and community based organizations – spurred a moratorium like stage in which they thought critically about their figured manhoods and their quests to achieve manhood status (Kroger, 2007).

Summary

This chapter reported the findings from a thematic analysis of the groups enacted Discourse in relation to their figured manhoods. Overall, the group viewed manhood as something that males can achieve via the successful fulfillment of the provider and protector roles. This finding varied slightly from Gilmore’s Three P’s of Manhood (1990) in which he declared that manhood, both historically and globally, comes down to males’ ability to: (a) Provide; (b) Protect; and (c) Procreate.

In addition, the cadet’s revealed that their figured manhoods are a by-product of their socialization. During the primary socialization phase, members of their family were the most influential agents of socialization as they formed their figured manhoods – specifically as to what a man is his expected roles within the family. Although the group felt that it was the responsibility of their fathers to teach them how to be a man, most of them learned from their mothers coupled with the support of the other females in their family. Eventually, their peers replaced their families as the most influential agent in the formation of their figured manhoods. Similar to their interactions with members of their family, there were gendered interactions with

their peers. While female peers tried to make positive contributions to their figured manhoods, male peers perpetuated the same maladaptive messages received from the males in their family. Although direct interactions with agents of socialization appear to have the most influence on the formation of their figured manhoods, each interaction occurred through indirect encounters with America's social institutions. The cadets' Discourses highlighted how their figured manhood was shaped by the following institutions: (a) Community; (b) Education; (c) Family; (d) Government; (e) Mass Media; (f) Religion; and (g) Sport.

The direct interactions with the identified agents of socialization in conjunction with the indirect encounters with the named social institutions not only formed their figured manhoods, but it also influenced the quests to achieve manhood that they embarked upon. Despite choosing different quests, each cadet found themselves in the same location – relying on a residential alternative school, facilitated by the United States National Guard, to provide them with a second chance. During their time on site, it was apparent that the cadets were consistently reflecting on their previous quests with the intentions to make the necessary adjustments to better position themselves to achieve manhood. In the end, upon completion of the program each cadet is going to pursue one of three quests to achieve manhood: (a) pursuing a post-secondary education; (b) securing a job; or (c) enlisting in the military.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Tupac's theory T.H.U.G.L.I.F.E. (The Hate U Gave Little Infants Fucks Everybody) was created with the intent of revealing how the social construction of the figured worlds of marginalized populations fucks everybody. Initially, Shakur focused on highlighting the effect of capitalism, however I have chosen to expand his theory to incorporate race and gender by exploring the hate given to adolescent black males in relation to manhood. In doing so, I sought to aid in the deconstruction of black manhood with the intent of eventually positioning black males to liberate themselves of the racist and patriarchal chains imposed upon their bodies.

O'Neil explains that deconstruction will empower men to liberate themselves from restrictive notions of manhood and rigid masculinity norms, if it entails:

Telling the truth about sexist assumptions and stereotypes that distort what it means to be fully human, confronting the lies about rewards of highly sex-typed attitudes and behaviors, and identifying and correcting the myths that men and women are more different than alike. (O'Neil & Renzulli as cited by O'Neil, 2015, p. 13)

However, deconstruction also requires that we recognize that the literature in the field of men's studies has focused on theorizing manhood and masculinity through the lens of America's dominant group - straight, white, middle class, native-born males (Brannon & Juni, 1984; Connell, 2000; Katz, 1999; Katz, 2013; Newsom, 2016).

Although some scholars have attempted to address the negligence of alternative ideologies in the black community, there is still a vast gap in need of being filled – such as the majority of the scholarship focusing on black males enrolled in institutions of higher education. This study was a response to the call by sociologist Phillip Bowman (1989) to explore black males' views of manhood and masculinity at different stages of their lives. In doing so, we then

position black males to deconstruct their notions of manhood and either identify or reconstruct a manhood void of whiteness.

The purpose of this study was to address one of the current gaps in the literature by focusing on adolescent black males – which I classify as age 13 through 18. A case study design was utilized to explore the figured manhoods of 12 adolescent black males’ enrolled in an alternative education program facilitated by the United States National Guard. In conducting the study, I sought to: (1) describe the participants figured manhoods; (2) identify both the agents of socialization and social institutions that constructed their figured manhoods; and (3) examine the influence that their figured manhoods had on their quests for manhood. Ultimately, the goal of the study was to contribute to the deconstruction of black manhood by: (1) inserting the voice of a population, adolescent black males, currently missing in the literature; and (2) identifying the social institutions that mold black males’ figured manhoods.

Key Findings

Historian Steve Estes (2005) reminds us that manhood is an economic, political, and social status that can be achieved by all men. To attain manhood status, males must first undergo a socialization process in which their figured manhoods are forged through social interactions with agents of socialization in addition to encounters with social institutions (Gilmore, 1990). Once they have formed their figured manhoods, each male then embarks upon their quest to attain manhood status (Kimmel, 2012).

A thematic analysis of 12 adolescent black males’ Discourse, indexing the social identity that is man, revealed that the group’s figured manhood depicted manhood as a status achieved through the successful performance of the roles: (a) Provider and (b) Protector. In addition, it was apparent that their figured manhoods were constructed by their direct interactions with

agents of socialization as well as indirect encounters with social institutions. Not only did their socialization process shape their figured manhoods, but it also influenced the quests that they chose to attain manhood.

Cadets' figured manhoods. When it came to manhood, the group felt as though the only thing that mattered was whether or not a male could fulfill the required roles to achieve it. Their Discourse showcased figured manhoods in alignment with America's dominant ideology. Despite minor deviations, it was clear that the cadets adhered to the imperialist, white supremacist, capitalist, (hetero)patriarchy notion of manhood because it was all that they knew (hooks, 2004). However, their inability to recognize the systemic barriers imposed upon them due to intersection of their race and class greatly affected the quests that they chose in order to achieve manhood.

Two not three. The consensus among the group was that a manhood is achieved when a male is able to fulfill the provider and protector roles. Their figured manhoods not only aligned with Payne's (2016) street-identified black masculinity, but they expanded his theory by providing insight as to who they must protect and provide for. The cadets revealed that a man must fulfill both roles for his family and himself.

The current literature supports this finding, evidenced by previous studies stating that black males figured manhoods are formed through the domain of family as they embrace that they are responsible for protecting and providing for their family and themselves (Chaney, 2004; Griffith & Cornish, 2018; Hammond & Mattis, 2005; Hunter & Davis, 1992). What was not clear is whether one (family or self) takes precedence over the other. After reflecting on this, I found myself pondering: (a) Can manhood be achieved if a one is not capable of fulfilling both roles for the family and self?; (b) Are "men" allowed to focus on providing and protecting for

self prior to their family?; (c) Are their levels to manhood – what if one does not have any family to protect and provide for?

Contrary to Gilmore's (1990) Three P's of Manhood (Provide, Protect, and Procreate), the cadets did not associate procreation – or the act of having sex – with manhood. Although all of the cadets were sexually active at the time of the study, with 9 of the 12 losing their virginity during middle school (information gathered via the background questionnaire), they expressed that their motivation for becoming sexually active was so that they would be deemed cool by their peers and male family members. Both Tre and Chubbs lost their virginity in middle school because of older family members: (a) Tre's cousins forced him into a room with a naked high school girl and told him not to be a bitch; whereas (b) Chubb's uncle made him accept head from a prostitute when he was twelve years old.

When allowing the cadets to member check my findings, I asked them if they regretted losing their virginity. Despite acknowledging that their lives had become much more complicated once they started engaging in sexual intercourse, the overwhelming response was an emphatic "Hell Naw!" Rather than associating sex with manhood, the cadets saw sex as the act of "getting the toxins (hormones) out of their bodies" - nothing more, nothing less. Seeing that they felt that they had come too far to even imagine life without sex, they all claimed to utilize preventative measures (to avoid pregnancy and STDs) instead of abstinence.

A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do. Ultimately, the group was adamant that it is the responsibility of the individual to achieve manhood. If one were not able to do so, then they would have no one to blame but themselves. Together, the group's Discourses revealed a figured manhood obtainable to all that possess the adequate norms to achieve the status. For the most part, these norms (selfless, responsible, fearless, action-oriented, to name a few) would be

classified as absolute norms – how men should act simply because they are men – rather than relational norms – how men should act in relation to others – which tends to be the case when males adhere to hegemonic masculinity ideologies (Pleck et al. 1995; Sinn, 1997). Thompson et al. (1985) remind us that those that adhere to hegemonic masculinity ideologies are likely to develop a gender role strain resulting from a gender role conflict. Thus, it makes sense that the cadets were showcasing two types of gender role strains – I will address this later in the chapter.

Throughout the course of the study, the cadets consistently expressed that there is no justifiable reason as to why a male does not fulfill the roles levied upon his gendered body. According to them, failure was not an option as a man must “do what he gotta do” to take care of his responsibilities. If a male is unable to do so then he is denied manhood status, evidenced by Flo’s description of a man, “a man is not a man if he is not taking care of his responsibilities.”

As a result, the group saw nothing wrong with men resorting to “illegal” means to take care of their responsibilities. Kobe didn’t hesitate to express that “there is a right way and a wrong way to do things, and sometimes the wrong way is the only way!” It was evident that the group shared this sentiment seeing that many of them resorted to “crimes” in an attempt to position themselves to achieve manhood. An example of such is MC who chose to fight dogs for money because he knew that it would be hard to get a job seeing that he was no longer enrolled in school. Furthermore, they expressed that they weren’t afraid of being locked up but that they feared being away from their families for extended periods of time in which they couldn’t be there to protect and provide for them.

What I found most interesting is that the group wouldn’t acknowledge that their race and class altered the lens through which they perceived that which they “gotta do” to achieve manhood.

Gender is greater than race and class. I designed the study intentionally to focus on the cadets figured manhoods broadly with the expectations that they would bring race and class into the conversation. Instead, I observed them constantly talk about manhood as if it was this monolithic ideology. When I inquired about the impact of race, it became clear that race had no effect on whether a male achieved manhood. An example of such can be found in Kevo's initial comment:

A man is recognized as a man based on his actions, not on how he looks. A man can be from anywhere and come in all different sizes, shapes, and colors but all that matters is that he is doing what he gotta do to keep the lights on!

Jet elaborated:

a man can be black, blue, big, little, fat, skinny, a man can be anything. A man is just a person who take care of what he needs to take care of... You got Mexican scrubs, you got black scrubs, you got white scrubs, you got Indian scrubs and so much more. (Puerto Ricans) I mean it's just... I just look at it like it's all about you, it's all about what you want to be.

The absence of race consideration in the cadets' figured manhood contradicts the study by Mincey et al. (2014) in which they concluded that black masculinity could be broken down into three areas: (1) what it means to be a man; (2) what it means to be a black man; and (3) masculinity development. Thus, one has to question the impact that age has on black males' figured manhoods. At the same time, we must ponder as to whether the absence of race may not be due to their age, but instead attributing it to culture as it has become difficult to distinguish between black in terms of race and black as an ethnicity (Jackson & Dangerfield, 2004). Ratele

(1998) challenges us to dive deeper and question whether black manhood even exists devoid of whiteness seeing that it is a by-product of Africans being colonized.

When asked about the impact that class has on whether a male achieved manhood, Tre responded:

Class doesn't define nothing. It's some rich guys out there. It's some kids that come from rich families that turn out and be nothing, a bum on a street. And they family have millions. And it's some lower-class civilians that's raising man right now that go on to earn millions and get the amount of that lower class. I would portray myself as a middle-class citizen, you feel me. Upper middle class probably so even though that doesn't define nothing, your class, money doesn't mean anything. It's the person who you are and what you do to get the money and how you going to keep that money. And how you shape up your life with it and...at the end you can't buried with your money. Money don't go with you to the casket or to heaven or hell so. It's the person that you are not what you got.

Unfortunately, I was not able to inquire as to whether they recognized the oppression that they are subjected to as a result of their intersecting race and class identities. However, the aforementioned quotes resemble the current conversations around manhood and masculinity as they tend to present both phenomena as monolithic ideologies – further ignoring the adverse effect that each has on groups deemed “other”.

Socialization of figured manhoods. According to symbolic interactionist, we are the center of our worlds, yet our sense of self will be influenced by the way in which we interact with our social worlds (Blumer, 1969; Cooley, 1909; McCall, 2006; Myers, 2010). The bi-lateral relationship between our self and our social world(s) regulates our thoughts, feelings, and actions

as they pertain to both ourselves and others. Thus, our social surroundings affect our: (a) self-awareness; (b) self-interests; and (c) self-concern, as our social behaviors will be defined by social relationships (Myers, 2010). All of which contribute to our self-concept, which is our individualized answer(s) to one question, “Who am I?”.

In addition, symbolic interactionists argue that the social behaviors of an individual or group are dictated by their interpretation of the meanings assigned to them (as individuals or their social group) by society. The group’s figured manhood was a direct reflection of the meanings assigned to them throughout the course of their socialization, which is no different than any male as culture plays a significant role in the social construction of manhood (Gilmore, 1990).

Roberts-Douglass and Curtis-Boles (2010) research was significant in that it proved that black males’ masculinity ideologies were shaped by agents of socialization and social institutions, which means that if they can shape masculinity ideologies then they also frame figured manhoods. When it comes to the socialization process, the family and peers are known agents of socialization that serve as the primary influence during two subsequent phases of the group’s gendered socialization (Myers, 2010). But, the cadets’ revealed how the impact of each agent group is gendered in that females tend to make more positive contributions whereas the males contributions tend to be maladaptive.

Also, the cadet’s provided insight as to the social institutions that have molded their figured manhoods. Prior to the study, the work of Ferguson (2000) followed by McCready (2010) made the institution of education the primary focus when it came to viewing manhood and masculinity from an institutional level. Roberts-Douglass and Curtis-Boles (2010) added to their work by highlighting impact of the institutions of media, sports, and family. This study

added to theirs by bringing the institutions of community, government, and religion into the conversation – specifically from the perspective of adolescent black males.

Quests for manhood. Kimmel (2012) reminds us that the quest for manhood is universal in that all males throughout the world will embark upon such a quest to achieve manhood within their society. Although the norms and roles associated with manhood can vary based on one's culture, the quests that individuals embark upon is greatly impacted by the structure of society in which they pursue manhood status. Thus, an adequate understanding of the socialization of manhood, not just the practices but also the agents and institutions in which these practices take place, is essential to the deconstruction of manhood and masculinity ideologies prevalent among any group.

As this pertains to black males, Black (1977) reminds us that the construct, black manhood, did not exist prior to the enslavement of Africans therefore any analysis of the phenomenon must take into consideration the effect of whiteness. Despite the cadets' inability to recognize the impact that their intersecting race had on their figured manhoods, it was evident that whiteness - coupled with patriarchy, sexism, and capitalism – was a foundational component of their figured manhoods. Walcott (1999) points out that whiteness continues to be the base of the mask(ulinity) that black males' wear, highlighting the impact that the history of black males has on their conscious and subconscious Discourse in relation to manhood.

Coupled with whiteness, the structure of America weakens the confidence and motivation of black males via systemic oppression to increase the likelihood that they will rely on the same forces that oppress them as they try to lift themselves up – rendering a subconscious collaboration with their oppressor (Hare & Hare, 1985). Thus, it then makes sense that the cadets subconsciously rerouted their quests to return to the same institutions that have

historically failed black males (e.g. education, economy, military etc.) as if their current status was a direct reflection of their inadequacies.

Despite the adjusted quests for manhood, I can't help but wonder as to how many of them were able to remain on their new course post-completion of the program. Throughout the course of the study, the cadets expressed concerns about reverting to old ways due to the number of people that they knew who graduated the program but was unable to continue the transition once they returned home. If the cadets were to relapse, then it would be further proof that manhood and masculinity are toxic because of the ways in which the phenomena are nurtured in America – rather than the nature of males, specifically black males.

Unexpected Findings

As is the case with any study, there were also some unexpected findings that presented themselves. First, it was noticeable that the cadets' lacked role models that they could access directly – many of their role models were observed through various forms of the mass media. Second, the cadets were already experiencing types of gender role strain and developing a gender role conflict at their age. Third, the cadets struggled with accepting that, according to their figured manhood, women are just as capable of achieving manhood status. After allowing the cadets to validate my findings, I briefly considered extending the study to include interviews so that I can delve into each adequately. Unfortunately, the first phase was concluding and we were not allowed to exchange contact information.

No role models to speak of. When asked to identify their role models that serve as an example of what it means to be a man, the cadets identified prominent athletes, criminals, and entertainers with one outlier – Bill Gates. Kevin Durant, James Harden, Jay-Z, 50 Cent, and Chris Brown are all examples of the three roles available to black males: (a) athlete; (b)

entertainer; and (c) criminal, according to Cool Pose (Majors & Billson, 1992). Even Kevo choose Kevin Durant and James Harden, instead of his father who he truly admired, because they “got all the bread...they got a big house, can get all the shoes, and they were able to get out of the area (where they grew up in).” When asked as to why they chose these individuals, the collective response was that each one of them (outside of Bill Gates) was able to overcome their circumstances and accumulate wealth that would enable them to do whatever they want – including taking care of their family, specifically their mamas. Seeing that I know many black males with similar backgrounds to the cadets, including myself, I couldn’t help but wonder as to why there is a disconnect between us and them? However, I can attest that I never even saw or heard of a black male in the positions that my peers and myself are currently in prior to us acquiring post-secondary degrees

Gender role conflict and gender role strain. Black (1997) argues that black males’ quest for manhood, within a system that denies them the status, fosters a psychological instability (Gender Role Conflict and Gender Role Strain) that is likely to result in death or incarceration due to the anger and frustration that accompanies the perceived inability to be men. Such a claim was supported by Jet when he was finally able to pull me to the side after repeated attempts to talk to me alone. During this conversation, Jet puzzled me when he asked:

How do I do different when it is all that I know? I see other people going down a path that I know that I shouldn’t go down but I don’t see an alternative. I want to be a good father, with a good job so that I can take care of my family just like I am supposed to, but I don’t know nobody that has done it?

In the same conversation, Jet revealed that he knew that his current path will lead him to one of two places: (a) dead; or (b) in jail, neither of which he desires to end. Despite his brother

currently being enrolled in college, Jet cannot see an alternative path to the one that he currently travels which is an example of America's hegemonic manhood detaining the minds of black males via the interlocking chains of patriarchy and racism (hooks, 2004).

My conversation with Jet opened my eyes to the possibility that adolescent males can experience both a Gender Role Conflict (GRC) and a Gender Role Strain (GRS) – the current literature is focuses on men according to the law. An additional analysis of their Discourse revealed that they were showcasing components of both GRC and GRS. Over the course of the study their Discourse reflected three of the four patterns of gender role conflict: (a) Success, Power, and Competition; (b) Restricted Emotionality; and (c) Conflicts between Work and Family Relations. In addition, they were clearly experiencing two of the three types of GRS: Dysfunction Strain and Trauma Strain.

(Wo)Men. During each focus group, there was a point in time in which someone referred to their mamas as a man. In both instances, the cadets paused to reflect as to whether it is possible for a female to be a man. The only cadet to respond with a definitive no was Kevo, shutting down the dialogue about the possibility of such in the first group, which could be attributed to the fact that his father is not only in his life, but also living in the same household in which both parents perform traditional gender roles and norms. After taking time to reflect on the possibility of a female being a man, Tre vocalized his thoughts:

A man looks like my mom. My mom is a man to me. Like my mom was my father basically. A man can be any person, you feel me. A man can be a man, a human being as a man. But when a woman take cares of a man's duties, that's when you can portray a female. Alright she done raised males and females and raised man, herself. So, you can't

portray what a man looks like cause a man doesn't have shape or form. It's just a man handling your business and conducting yourself as a man.

Kobe agreed with Tre, mentioning the gendered approaches to parenting in dual parent households:

Usually in childhood it usually it be the mother that be taking care of the child and not the dad. So, it basically the mothers be the man of the house... like they do everything for you. They put clothes on your back, put food on the table, they do whatever they can do to help you survive.

After considering what his peers had to say, Jet provided his thoughts:

Woman teach men how to be men. Nowadays in our generation. (Yeah) For the single fact, my mom was one of them cuz I got a lot of cousins who my mom had to be their dad. My mom had to be just everything, the cousins that don't even know, cousins that don't even live in [omit]. So, it's like to making sure that they good out in the states. And it's just being a man... just like bro nem said. It's like Tre, Kobe, MC, Cutty, and Chubbs say. A man has no shape or form.

The conversation brings into question whether they would still view manhood as a status that only males can attain, if they had adequate time to unpack, or was it that their figured manhoods emulated a position that is legally referred to as the "Head of Household."

Limitations

Overall, the program in which the cadets were studied was a limitation due to its military culture and strict structure. The timeframe in which the study was conducted was reduced to three months, rather than four months, because the administration preferred to have a month with the cadets in order to get them acclimated to program. Reason being is that during this time, the

program tends to lose a lot of cadets for various reasons – evidenced by the number of cadets that remained in the Dawg Pound at the beginning of the study - which impacted the number of cadets that could have participated in this study. During preliminary conversations with my gatekeeper, I planned to conduct the observations in their classroom seeing that it was one of the only time in which cadets were not in the presence of their staff – active or retired members of the Illinois National Guard or reserves. However, this changed after the first observation because their staff would sit outside the classroom as to police the cadets while they were in class.

Although I was able to make modifications for data collection – conducting participant observations in alternative locations – access to the cadets was still hampered by the structure of the program. On more than one occasion, observations were postponed by the program’s administration for a myriad of reasons. In addition, three of the initial twelve cadets – Jet, Cutty, and Tez - were kicked out of the program at different stages of the study. This change resulted in a different vibe when meeting with the cadets to discuss my findings due to the removal of one of the cadets (Jet) who contributed to the conversations the most. After our final meeting in which the group engaged in member checking, I sought to exchange contact information with cadets in order to conduct interviews that would allow me to delve into the unexpected findings, but my request was denied.

Implications

In 1975, the father of black masculinity, Robert Staples, questioned as to how long it would take for black males to diverge from the white masculinity model. Almost half a century later, this study is proof that black males are still adhering to both a hegemonic manhood and masculinity grounded in whiteness and governed by white supremacy. Staples (1975) went on to

state that these hegemonic notions of manhood and masculinity will continue to devastate the Black community until alternative ideologies, that reject the hegemonic roles and norms, are discovered or constructed. Yet, this requires that both researchers and practitioners work together to aid in the deconstruction of the current dominant ideologies along with the identification or construction of alternative ideologies that not only reject the current dominant ideology but also the supremacist notion that there is one way to be a man.

Researchers. Currently, additional work needs to be done to effectively deconstruct black manhood. The following is a list of studies that need to be conducted to address the current gaps in literature to further the deconstruction of black manhood and black masculinity:

- a. Exploration of black manhood throughout each stage of black men's lives
- b. Policy analysis of the each identified institution
- c. Cultural analysis to examine the must undergo both a policy and cultural analysis to examine the policies and practices within them that hinder the development of black figured manhoods
- d. Exploration of Gender Role Conflict and Gender Role Strain among black males
- e. Development of media literacy curriculum to assist with the deconstruction of messages about black manhood received through the mass media
- f. Examination of the alternative education program, at the national level, to reveal the targeting of black and brown youth by the military

This list is only a few of the exhaustive list of studies that need to be conducted to further the work of this study and ultimately deconstruct black manhood.

Practitioners. What was evident from the study is that exposure to new agents in different spaces has the ability to alter not only their figured manhoods, but also their chosen

quest to attain manhood. During the study Kobe praised his peers, Tre and Jet, for opening his eyes to the fact that, “the streets ain’t no joke. The streets ain’t even really nothing to play with and be in. The streets ain’t, pardon my language, streets ain’t shit honestly.” This is proof that not only do adolescent black males need to interact with older black males, but they also could benefit from interactions with their black male peers with different backgrounds.

Unfortunately, my experience as a former youth development professional allows me to understand that expecting practitioners to do the work of developing curriculums, programs, events, etc. is just adding another thing to a plate that is already about to cave. Thus, I am proposing that true progress will not be made until both parties, researchers and practitioners, work together to serve this population. As a scholar practitioner, I recognize that such a collaboration is only possible when both parties approach it with the intent of helping those that they claim to want to serve – putting their personal and professional motives to the side.

Conclusion

Spillers (1987) declared that the black male must learn to embrace the female within to deconstruct the American phenomenon that renders them both oppressed and oppressor. In addition, black males must recognize that black manhood and its correlating masculinity norms are nothing more than a repackaging of the straight, white, middle class, native born brand that continues to govern all males in America despite the diversity of the country (Curry, 2017). If the goal is to identify or create a “New Black Man” then both scholars and practitioners must work together to foster safe spaces that allow black males to take control of the narrative ascribed to their black, male bodies (Neal, 2005). But, we must first engage in research, grounded in the voices and Discourse of black males, to deconstruct black manhood and black

masculinity to increase the likelihood that our efforts don't foster a neo-black manhood in which they only thing new about it is the name.

As a black male embarking upon my journey to redefine what it means to be a black man, I assure you that we can do so if provided the time and space to reject the current phenomenon that keeps us in a constant state of survival and replace it with one that positions us to thrive for the benefit of self, our families, and our community. Until then, the majority of us (black males) will continue to fuck everyone as we operate according to the hate that comes with manhood in America.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CADETS BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Pseudonym	Age	Mom's Education	Mom's Career	Dad's Education	Dad's Career	Siblings	Older Male Sibling (Age)	Became Sexually Active
Kevo	17	Some College	Day Care	Come College	Security	2	Yes (19)	13
Tre	16	Some College	Security Guard	N/A	Drug Dealer	10	Yes (20)	13
MC	17	Some College	Registered Nurse	Some College	N/A	0	No	16
Tez	16	Less Than HS	Waitress	Less Than HS	N/A	5	No	13
Flo	16	Some College	Day Care	N/A	Locked Up	1	No	13
Cutty	16	Some College	White Castle	N/A	N/A	2	No	15
Jet	18	College Graduate	Principal	College Graduate	Deceased	3	Yes (23)	13
AM	16	H.S. Diploma/ GED	N/A	H.S. Diploma/GED	N/A	4	No (6)	15
Skip	16	Some College	Security Guard	College Graduate	N/A	2	Yes (17)	14
Zay	18	Some College	Medical Assistant	N/A	Rapper	1	No	13
Chubbs	16	H.S. Diploma/ GED	N/A	Some College	Taxes	3	No	12
Kobe	16	Some College	Factory Worker	N/A	N/A	3	No	13

APPENDIX B: CODEBOOK

Achieving Manhood		
Thematic Assertion: ACHIEVED		
Categories: ACHIEVED - Protector; ACHIEVED - Provider		
Codes	Code Definition	Examples
ACHIEVED - Protector	Must establish and safeguard boundaries in order to protect and defend	Family and Self
ACHIEVED – Protector - family	Must establish and safeguard boundaries in order to protect and defend family	“I started to think that I should be a man when I held my baby sister for the first time. I was feeling like, yeah okay, when she gets older I’m a have to start beating people up.” Flo
ACHIEVED – Protector - self	Must establish and safeguard boundaries in order to protect and defend self	“It depends if the man has territory. If he want to do something, he gon do something. His body is his territory and if somebody will come to him and try to touch his territory than he have the right to defend himself, that’s a man.” Skip
ACHIEVED – Protector - norms	Norms necessary to fulfill responsibilities as protector	“I just thought about what type of man I want to be for my son. Do I want to be the father to a son that I never knew cause I’m locked up or do I want to be that father... that he comes to when he has a problem or a situation...”Tre
ACHIEVED - Provider	Must meet the needs and wants of those responsible for	Family and Self
ACHIEVED – Provider - family	Must meet the needs and wants of family	“A man provides for his family.” Tez
ACHIEVED – Provider - self	Must meet the needs and wants of self	“ A man is independent, a man should never depend on nobody. I mean, you might need some help but overall you should be able to cover yourself. You should be able to take care of yourself.” Kevo
ACHIEVED – Provider - norms	Norms necessary to fulfill responsibilities as provider	“a man is somebody who knows how to mature himself. He knows right from wrong. He chooses to do right and do what he got to do, get his act together, so he can take care of his family, his future...and that’s what makes a man a man.” Zay

Socialization Process

Thematic Assertion: Socialization

Categories: SOC-Agents; SOC-Environment; SOC-Institutions

Codes	Code Definition	Examples
SOC - Agents	Groups or social contexts within which processes of socialization take place	Family, School, Peer Group, Work
SOC – Agents - family	Consists of both nuclear and extended, with an emphasis placed on mamas and dads	“Who or what shapes my view to be of being a man. I would say your people who I’m around, my crowd. Also in consideration of what my mom and grandmother say. What really family members say and family members show me.” Jet
SOC – Agents - peers	Composed of individuals of similar age and social status	“Who or what shapes my view to be of being a man. I would say the people who I’m around, my crowd.” Jet
SOC - Institutions	part of the social order of society in that they are used to govern the behavior and expectations of individuals and social groups	Community, Economy, Education, Family, Government, Mass Media, Religion, Sport
SOC – Institutions – community	Referencing the communities in which people live and develop	“it’s cause I’m from (omit) and it’s the environment that I was raised in. This is my mentality sir, what my environment taught me, so this is just how I’m act regardless. I can’t explain it.” Kevo
SOC – Institutions - education	Referencing schooling experiences in K - 12	“I saw them sacked up, so I dropped out and got sacked up” Tre
SOC – Institutions - family	Referencing the expected contributions to the nuclear and extended family	“ for the simple fact that being man to be was always someone who took care of family, who did what they had to do for everybody around, not just themselves” Jet
SOC – Institution - government	Referencing the military and legal system	“When I started noticing that my homies, brothers, them when they started getting locked up and stuff. I couldn’t follow in they footsteps cause I didn’t want to be in and out of jail. And got a bad background, can’t get a good job so.” Kobe

SOC – Institutions - media	Referencing the forms of communication – such as books, magazines, radio, television, video games, and film – designed to reach mass audiences	“me personally I do look at magazines just to see another young person coming up. I like to see that they taking they skills to do what they want. I respect the fact that they on they grind, it takes guts to come up. Personally, I love looking at young people doing something with they life and when I look into they background I see they been through all this stuff and I say to myself, this gone be me one day...I just gotta do what I gotta do to make it. I know I gotta do something better with my life.” Skip
SOC – Institutions - religion	Referencing spiritual beliefs and practices	“If it teach you how to better yourself then that’s a man is, bettering yourself and getting out of that immaturity phase, you know where to build your spirits. If you build yourself up spiritually, it actually helps you to be a better man mentally. Then as you build yourself up, it’s your responsibility to build somebody else up.” Zay
SOC – Institutions - sport	Referencing sport as a profession, not as leisure	“my role model is probably Kevin Durant. He came up from being this nobody kid in elementary school to probably the most... he close to being the richest person in the NBA off shoes and clothes and everything else he got.” MC

Quests for Manhood

Thematic Assertion: QUESTS

Categories: QUESTS - Past; QUESTS - Present; QUESTS - Future

Codes	Code Definition	Examples
QUESTS - Future	Future pursuit of manhood...	Aspirations to attain manhood
QUESTS – Future - college	Future pursuit of manhood via college	“my plans of becoming a veterinarian is going to happen, I know for a fact. I’m in my word now, praying and studying so I know the rest of my life is going to be better. I’m getting back close to God, he my second father, so I know the rest of my life gone be decent” Zay
QUESTS – Future - military	Future pursuit of manhood via military	“I’m going to be 17, after 17 I’m going to be 18 and I’m going to be grown as hell. It’s going to be time for me, to pick up big business So I was thinking about like maybe I wanted to go the military or something like that. If I don’t go to the military, then what should I do, what should I do if I can’t go there? I can’t be at home under my people’s wings for the rest of my life or nothing like that. I then I see my little brothers and them too, like my momma ain’t going to be around, I just want to take care of them too at the same time.” Chubbs
QUESTS – Future - work	Future pursuit of manhood via work	Kevo shares that after the program, he is going to move to New York to live with his auntie and find a job
QUESTS - Present	Pursuit of manhood at time of study	Current enrollment in program (at the time of the study)
QUESTS – Present - reflecting	Reflecting on past pursuit of manhood to plan for future pursuit post-completion of the program	Kobe points out that his issue is his anger, that he stays angry because it’s hard to let go of the past when things keep reminding him of it
QUESTS - Past	Pursuit of manhood in the past	Prior actions to attain manhood prior to the program
QUESTS – Past - fighting	Fighting to attain manhood status	Kobe says he never had a gun, nor does he need one because he isn’t afraid to fight anybody
QUESTS – Past - hustling	Hustling to attain manhood status	Tre stated that he would be posted on the corner, but he knows that he can’t do that anymore
QUESTS – Past - working	working to attain manhood status	Kevo picked up a job to embrace being a working man when he dropped out of school