“And the pressure is from cradle to grave”: Exploring Black Manhood

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Doctor of Philosophy

By

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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

"And the pressure is from cradle to grave":Exploring Black Manhood

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Chapter 1: Literature Review

Historically, scholars have relied upon a deficit perspective in studies of African American gender relations and development (see Frazier, 1938; Moynihan, 1965). A deficit approach to Black gender pivoted on the argument that Black men were essentially emasculated by the barbarism of slavery. Early Black family scholars posited that many social illnesses (e.g., crime, unemployment) prevalent in the Black community were the by-product of American chattel slavery and the resulting matriarchal pattern of Black family life established during enslavement (Frazier, 1938). Proponents of a deficit perspective contended that the result of the historical systematic disempowerment of Black men echoes in contemporary Black masculine ideologies in the form of neglected familial and communal responsibilities. Many argued that enslaved Black men served more of a biological function (i.e., stud) as opposed to fulfilling social or economic roles and that these patterns persisted in the form of disproportionate numbers of absent Black fathers and Black female-headed households (Frazier, 1938; Moynihan, 1965).

For example, Blassingame (1979), in a historiography of 19th century American slave communities, noted that systems of enslavement in the early history of America were in fact designed to dismantle remnants of empowered manhood in African men. This was accomplished by stripping the enslaved African male of his rights and responsibilities as husband, father, and leader. Others argued that matrifocal tendencies were the result of contemporary patterns of interacting wherein Black masculine expression is suppressed by dominant and independent Black female personalities and

that slavery cultivated an “unnatural superiority” in Black women over Black men (Bernard, 1966). Since these early attempts to elucidate the essence of manhood for American Black males, others (e.g., Ashcraft & Belgrave, 2005; White & Cones, 1999; McClure, 2006) have contemplated the import of more immediate interpersonal and sociocultural experiences in shaping Black masculine ideals and behaviors. The dynamic and context-specific nature of gender requires that this scholarship be revisited regularly with consideration for diversity in conceptualization and forms of expression (Jackson, 2006). The present study relies on semi-structured interviews and focus groups to explore how 20 Black men conceptualize manhood, who and what they view as influential in shaping their concepts, and how they express their understanding of manhood. Additionally, the significance of context, the salience of agency, and retrospective conceptions of change over time in ideals of manhood are discussed.

Theoretical Sensitizing Concepts: Black Men across Three Paradigms

Although some scholars have attempted to employ an interdisciplinary approach (Ashcraft & Belgrave, 2005), few have succeeded at integrating the various paradigms used to study Black males by considering the development and expression of gender ideals from the perspective of Black men. Kuhn (1970) defined a paradigm as a collection of shared abstractions, values, and practices held by a particular community that shapes its vision of reality and organizes its membership. Using a broader conception of the term, I define paradigms as perspectives from which theorists and researchers govern and guide their scholarship, justify avenues of inquiry, and determine

the relevance of findings. Each of the following paradigms takes a unique approach to the analyses of African American masculinity.

Afrocentric paradigms and African American manhood. Stewart (1992) and others have argued that gender must be examined within the context of race and culture. The Afrocentric paradigm, when applied to issues of gender, draws heavily on African history and values in its conceptualization of African American manhood. Pre-colonial West African concepts of manhood centered on discipline, unity, tenacity, and physical and psychological prowess. According to Stewart, African males acquired knowledge through rites of passage that marked the distinction between boyhood and manhood. Once acquired, manhood was constantly under scrutiny. Men and their manliness were measured throughout their lives by their character and actions. In addition to physical strength, African men, particularly in older age, were expected to master the art of oratory and rhetoric, carrying on the oral tradition of West African people.

Although few in number, studies employing Afrocentric reasoning in the exploration of masculinity have done so under the assumption that contemporaneous expressions of Black American gender reflect enduring African concepts of individual and family expectations. White and Cones (1999) proclaimed that an Afrocentric view of manhood highlights the salience of interpersonal relationships, spirituality, and the reconciliation and co-existence of opposing phenomena, best exemplified when contrasted against Eurocentric masculine ideals that promote self-actualization, polarities, and dichotomies (e.g., male/female, Black/White; Connell, 2002).

For example, Majors and Billson (1992) described *cool pose* - a calm, emotionless persona applied most commonly to young inner-city Black men. ‘Cool pose’ is depicted as an adaptive response to contemporary inequalities, as resembling aspects of mainstream masculinity, and as having roots in certain aspects of pre-colonial African culture (hooks, 2004). Majors and Billson contended that cool pose has its roots in African civilization, expressed through oral culture, art, linguistics, dance, and initiation rituals that encourage self-control, balance, suitable presentation of self, and personal refinement. However, few empirical studies have supported or refuted the prevalence and utility of ‘cool pose’ among African American men (Spraggins, 1999).

Other researchers have noted an amalgamation of Afrocentric and Eurocentric models of masculinity among certain African American men. For example, McClure (2006) interviewed 20 members of a Black fraternity at a large, predominantly White university to determine how members of the organization utilized social connections within the organization in the development of a masculine identity. Invoking W.E.B. DuBois’ premise of “double-consciousness,” McClure sought to explain ways in which African American males reconcile contradictory expectations - them as members of the Black community versus them as members of a White institution. Participants noted that fraternity membership was a forum for them to experience camaraderie, cooperation, and emotional expressiveness with other African American men consistent with the concepts of Afrocentric ethic of caring (Collins, 2000) and communalism (Asante, 1990). Additionally, McClure noted the importance of emotional expressiveness among participants in contradiction to traditional White masculine stoicism and African

American stereotypes of detached and inexpressive 'cool pose' (Majors & Billson, 1992). Participants also reported behaviors and values consistent with many mainstream ideals of manhood such as individualism, competitiveness, and professional and monetary achievement. McClure concluded that this middle-class, educated sample of Black men embodied aspects of both a Euro-American hegemonic model of masculinity and an Afrocentric model of masculine expression. The extent to which contemporary masculine expression is consistent with Afrocentric gender ideals is still unclear, and contexts in which Black men move between Afrocentric models and Eurocentric models of manhood have yet to be fully examined.

Likewise, Oliver (2006) considered African American masculine role socialization with respect to culture, class, and context by investigating the salience of "the streets" - central locations where working and lower class Black men learn the mandates of manhood. Specifically, Oliver highlighted the importance of public and semi-public settings (e.g., street corners, vacant lots, bars, clubs, after-hours joints, convenience stores, drug houses, pool rooms, and parks) as places where street-oriented males with limited access to alternative forms of economic and social betterment develop and practice masculine roles. Oliver notes that the hierarchy of Black masculine roles (i.e., tough guy/gangsta, the player, and the hustler/balla) for working class urban males are adaptive responsive to various social context are not mutually exclusive.

Some gender and African American studies scholars resist over simplifications of Black manhood. For example, Payne (2006) has been critical of contemporary social researchers of inner-city representations of young Black males as primarily hypersexual

and aggressive. Payne (2006) conducted in-depth group interviews in low-income urban communities in which participants relayed stories of their struggles to perform their tasks as men in the face of limited opportunities. For these Black men economic resourcefulness, male bonding, and a sense of communal responsibility were noted as central in the enactment of a concept of manhood. This rendition of manhood encompassed aspects of both "the gangster" - criminal roles that encourage illegal activities as a means of economic survival, and "the gentleman" - a masculine role that embodies respectability, responsibility, and civility. Payne concluded that few aspects of Black masculinity, particularly among inner-city males, have been adequately explored and that over representation of images of promiscuity, sexual irresponsibility, and a propensity for violence exists in the research literature. Additionally, the extent to which social class influences conceptualizations of Black manhood remains yet to be adequately explored.

Further, Afrocentric frameworks distinguish between masculinity and manhood. Akbar (1991) described masculinity as a term applied across developmental stages that illustrates traits, ideals, and expectations associated with the male sex. Manhood, on the other hand, marks the social transition from boyhood into adulthood for males. This distinction insinuates a shift in conceptions and/or enactments of masculinity across the life course. Researchers thus far have done little to uncover turning points in conceptions of Black manhood and the ways in which enactments of masculinity change over time. The present study seeks to explore significant events in the lives of Black men that mark shifts in how they conceive of and enact manhood.

Gender and sex role paradigms and Black masculinity. Role paradigms are based on the notion that individual behavior is governed by prescribed patterns of interacting, assigned roles, and associated expectations (Parsons, 1951). Gender/sex roles have been defined as social prescriptions concerning appropriate behavior, attitudes, and personality traits assigned by biological sex to males and females (Healey, 2003). Interactionists who endorse role paradigms highlight social context in role enactment (Goffman, 1990), recognizing the significance of both those who perform the role and those for whom the role is performed. By suggesting that people perform different versions of "self," interactionists who cohere to role paradigms contend that roles such as manhood or womanhood are acted out and reinforced in various forms and fashions through social relations with others and in varied social situations.

To make sense of the complexities of masculine roles, Connell (1995) argued that there exist multiple patterns of masculinity and femininity differentiated by class, ethnicity, and sexuality. This conception of masculinity, as developed by Connell and expanded by Kimmel (2004), considered the multiplicities and hierarchies that arise in masculine role enactment and hypothesized that masculinity is intimately intertwined with issues of power that are constantly being negotiated between men and across contextual relationships and social structures.

With respect to African American gender concepts, critics of gender/sex role approaches have noted that a stringently polarized view of gender is problematic because African American men and women are known to encompass and express flexible gender roles, particularly within the family domain (Dade & Sloan, 2000; Duneier, 1992; Konrad

& Harris, 2002; Roberts, 1994). For example, Dade and Sloan (2000) asked 145 male and female undergraduates attending a historically Black university to “rate the typical African American man" on characteristics considered typically feminine, masculine, androgynous, or undifferentiated in order to explore the gender ideologies attributed to Black males. They found that these students rated the “typical” Black man as androgynous, followed by feminine, masculine, and undifferentiated (in order of prevalence of responses). This was consistent with a growing body of literature supporting a general (across races) increase in egalitarian gender roles over time (Blee & Tickamyer, 1995; Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004; Brewster & Padavic, 2000; Wilkie, 1993). Other researchers have reported findings indicating a combination of traditional male sex role ideals (e.g., provider, competitive and aggressive) and nontraditional ideals (e.g., spiritualism, emotional sensitivity, humanism, and communalism) held for Black men by Black men (Hunter & Davis, 1992; Wade, 1995).

Haynes (2000) conducted qualitative studies of the relationship between gender roles and moderators such as education, religiosity, and social mobility in an attempt to explain variation in masculinity within the African American community. Both studies found that participants characterized masculinity using traditional concepts such as taking charge, being in control, protecting others, being a father, husband, and co-provider. Additionally, participants also defined masculinity in *neo-patriarchal* terms - a combination of instrumental and expressive (stereotypically feminine) characteristics. Further, Hill (2002) found that the more educated and less religious men were most adamant about articulating support for gender equality, while less educated and religious

fundamentalist men endorsed more traditional views of masculinity. Despite the above-mentioned examples, the relationship between social class, gender role enactment, and conceptions of masculinity among African American men has received minimal attention.

Gender identity paradigms and African American masculinity. According to Erikson (1980), the term identity refers to the continuous manifestation of images of the self, as perceived by the self. The notion of identity was first applied to gender by Stoller (1968), who differentiated awareness of "I am a male," from a belief that "I am manly," (or masculine). The latter is said to emerge as one develops an understanding of expected masculine behaviors and beliefs (Connell, 2002). Similarly, Brekhus (1996) conceived of gender identity as involving a combination of individual behavior, cultural attribution from others, the influences of structural location, and self-definition.

Although related, identities are distinguished from roles in that identities rely on an individual's subjective sense of membership within a particular group, whereas roles are based on culturally prescribed behavioral norms and obligations associated with a given social status. The distinction is often blurred in gender research. For example, Connell's (2000) definition of masculinity incorporates elements of sex role paradigms and identity constructs, in that she assumes a certain set of socially prescribed masculine roles, while recognizing the consequence of a subjective sense of social identity associated with class, sexuality, and race in creating variation in the masculine experience. Connell maintains that gendered behavior is the result of a complex interaction between gender identity (i.e., self-conceptualization as male or female),

gender role (i.e., an enactment of behaviors believed to be associated with being male or female), and the cultural and sociopolitical milieu in which it is experienced.

Greig, Kimmel, and Lang (2000), in bringing to light the importance of context in gender identity, argued for the pluralization of the term masculinity (masculinities), noting that masculine experiences are not singular or universal. Rather, the experiences of men are controlled by simultaneously effective systems of power (e.g., classism, sexism, misogyny, racism). In their analysis of gender identity development, Greig and colleagues underscored this point by pluralizing the term (masculinity into masculinities) in recognition of multiple ways in which masculinity presents itself (even within a singular individual), particularly when power differentials are considered. Greig et al. emphasized the concomitant identities of class, race, and gender (and others) as knit systems of 'being' and social context through which masculinities are experienced.

Symbolic interactionism is another major sociological perspective that places emphasis on interpersonal interaction with respect to identity. Blumer (1969) coined the term "symbolic interactionism" based on the assumption that people act in situations based on the meanings they ascribe to those situations. Meanings are derived from and arise out of social interactions and are negotiated through interpretation of those interactions. Thus, presentations and constructions of identity emerge out of conciliation between social context and meaning making. Similarly, Swann (1987) wrote on the processes of identity negotiation, describing it as a process through which meanings and boundaries of identity are maneuvered within and across various social contexts. Swann argues that people employ strategies such as preferential attention and selective

interpretations to reinforce their self-conceptions. The author argues for an identity framework that underscores the impact of personal characteristics (e.g., goals, agendas, and life histories) and social structure (e.g., norms, roles, and social conventions) on social identities. With respect to Black masculinity, Black males construct their identity framework within one's interpersonal and sociocultural milieu and draw from this framework to create meaning of manhood (Collins, 2000).

Intersectionality framework addresses the relationship between multiple dimensions of social selfhoods such as race, class, sexuality, and other identities (McCall, 2005). An intersectionality framework proposes that concepts of Black gender are complicated by the intersection of multiple identities (Collins, 2006). Rooted in critical-race discourse and Black feminists' theories, intersectionality deemphasizes the need for hierarchical ordering of social identities in terms of importance (Spelman, 1988), in contrast to theories that prioritize race over gender (see Hudson-Weems, 2001). Intersectionality does not simply call for recognition of multiple social locations, but asserts that identities are situated and play roles of variable importance in different settings. That is, the experiences of a Black working-class male may be vastly different from those of an upper-class Black male, based solely on class-determined encounters and perceptions. Further, contextual factors make certain identities more or less conspicuous. In accordance with the intersectionality framework, race becomes central for the only Black male in his male-dominated corporate office, while gender and class differences may be understated. Likewise, sexuality may take center stage for a gay Black man in a room full of heterosexual married Black men. Cole and Zucker (2007)

contend that empirical research on gender should focus on how the intersection of social identities, social roles, and context influence how one defines and enacts gender. Yet, few context-sensitive empirical studies have been conducted on African American male gender identities.

The Current Project

Black men occupy a unique social location on matters of race, gender, and class that presents a complexity and richness to the gender conversation (hooks, 2004). An investigation of Black masculine ideals therefore requires an ontological and methodological approach that reflects these complexities and offers a rich interpretation of the experiences of African American men. To date, few studies exploring Black men's conceptualizations of manhood have undertaken the task of uncovering the processes through which culture, context, social roles, and identities influence definitions and expressions of Black masculinity.

This study serves several purposes. First, it allows Black men to themselves delineate the nature and function of their ideas of manhood. Few studies to date have focused on the perspectives of Black men on the topic of their manhood. Thus, masculinity studies require the re-writing of Black manhood from the perspective of Black men independent of culture-general assumptions of masculinity (e.g., Frazier, 1938), media-perpetuated stereotypes (Bowen & Schmid, 1997), and overwhelming bleak statistics of Black male crisis (e.g., Gibbs, 1988). Second, an investigation into the role of social processes in the development and performance of manhood can inform interventions designed to improve the quality of men's lives by targeting the quality of

their relationships. A consideration for the processes that shape Black manhood offers insight into important social contexts that facilitate the emergence of healthy gender ideologies.

From the perspective of Black men, this study examines how various roles, context, and social identities influence the way Black manhood is defined and enacted and the ways definitions and enactments are perceived to change over time. I employ a grounded theory approach in analyzing conceptions of manhood in a diverse sample of Black men. Black manhood (Akbar, 1991) for the purpose of this study is defined as the gendered expression (e.g., behaviors, beliefs, performances, and values) of adults who self-identify simultaneously as African-/Afro-/Black American and men. The following questions guide this inquiry: What is the process through which Black men develop and enact their conception of manhood? What/who do they think has been influential in shaping their concepts of manhood? How do Black men express their understanding of manhood? In what ways, if at all, does context influence their expression of manhood? How, if at all, do they perceive their masculine expression has changed over time? In their perception, how salient is their sense of 'Blackness' in influencing expressions of manhood? What importance do Black men give to other social identities such as class, religious affiliations, and sexuality in influencing their expressions of manhood?

Chapter 2: Methods

Grounded theory was chosen for its ability to uncover latent processes and generate theory from raw data. This study relies on grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 2009) to explore the processes through which Black men develop and enact their

conception of manhood with respect to other social identities and social roles. Wise (2001) conceptualized manhood specifically as it relates to the experiences and perceptions of African American males and in the context of Black communities by arguing that,

> Arriving at manhood is a process. This process includes ascertaining certain values, morals, and experiences and enacting specific responsibilities. Black manhood also implies understanding this state of being in relation to family, community and the larger society. (p. 6)

An investigation into the processes through which Black men develop and enact their conceptions of manhood is an important step in understanding the relationship between Black males and their environment. This research seeks to add to the meager body of knowledge concerning social processes that shape Black men's notions of manhood.

Grounded theory, as developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), emphasizes the inductive development of theory from a body of data through systematic identifying, naming, categorizing, and describing of a particular phenomenon. Grounded theory provides detailed and systematic procedures for data collection, data analysis, and the development of accurate theory. This approach is most appropriate for the exploration of Black masculinity because of its ability to guide the generation of a theory with consideration for both basic sociocultural processes and psychological understanding of a particular phenomenon. To date, there are few data-driven theories in gender scholarship that focus primarily on the experiences of Black men. Grounded theory, when done properly, should result in the development of propositions that reflect relationships between categories and concepts that emerge directly from participants' notions of manhood.

Initial indicators of Black manhood were collected using semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A). Subsequently, focus groups (see Appendix B) were used to gain a more holistic and in-depth view of how Black men conceptualize manhood. Reflecting the complexity and multi-faceted nature of Black masculinity, this multi-method approach was intended to generate an accurate theory (Foss & Ellefsen, 2002). Combining interviews and focus groups has been noted as useful in exploring the context or circumstances in which events occur and meanings are constructed (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008).

Sampling

Grounded theorists rely primarily on selective and theoretical sampling in choosing participants. Selective sampling is the solicitation of participants, based on a set of basic criteria (i.e., Black male adults), who are able to bring light to the phenomena in question. Theoretical sampling is the subsequent solicitation of participants based on the emerging concepts in an attempt to develop and/or refine the theory. Using selective sampling, participants were initially chosen who self-identified as African American, self-identified as male, and were 18 years or older. Interview participants were then theoretically sampled based on the need to further explore emerging themes and developing categories during data analysis and their ability to expound on these themes and categories.

For example, as initial interviewees (primarily middle-class heterosexual men) discussed definitions and expressions of manhood questions emerged concerning consistencies and/or inconsistencies that might exist across sexual orientation and SES. I

subsequently solicited and interviewed working class, bi-sexual, and homosexual Black men to address these questions. In all, I interviewed 15 participants and invited each to participate in focus groups. Four of the 15 agreed to participate in the first focus group. During the second focus group, 3 men, whom I had not previously interviewed, acted as primary informants while several others volunteered information intermittently during the course of the discussion.

Interviews. Initial recruitment for individual interviews and follow-up focus groups included informational posts on social networking sites and University of Missouri departmental bulletin boards. Also, community organizations in Columbia, St. Louis, and Kansas City Missouri were asked to forward an e-flier or post paper fliers recruiting African American men for participation. Participants were also solicited through friends, colleagues, and acquaintances and through word-of-mouth and snowball sampling.

Focus groups. Two focus groups were conducted. The first focus group was solicited through theoretical sampling from previously interviewed participants in order to expand on and explore specific information about developing concepts and categories derived from the analysis of interview data and also as a form of member checking. In order to increase the credibility and accuracy of the emerging theory, participants were asked to verify summaries of the information gathered during interviews. This group of men consisted of 4 middle-class Black men. One Black male graduate student acted as note taker during this conversation, but did not participate in the discussion.

The second focus group consisted of Black men solicited from a metropolitan barbershop for their potential to expound on the relationships between theoretical categories towards gaining a broader understanding of Black manhood. Specifically, these men were recruited for their potential to tap into the views of urban working-class Black males to compare their experiences against the middle-class participants in the first focus group. Barbershop focus group participants were referred through an acquaintance of the owner of the establishment. Three men acted as primary informants and at least six other customers and barbers entered and exited the barbershop during the course of the discussion. These secondary informants were asked to periodically contribute to the conversation as they wished. One Black female graduate student acted as note taker during this conversation, but did not participate in the discussion.

In total, 20 self-identified African American males agreed to participate in this study. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 62 years old ($M = 34.33$). Socioeconomic status ranged from working-class to upper-middle-class based on a combination of type of work (clerical, managerial, professional, etc.), household income, and educational attainment (Thompson & Hickey, 2005). Five participants reported having only completed high school or equivalent, and 4 reported having some college education. Eleven participants had bachelor degrees, of which 4 had also completed master's degrees, and 1 had completed a doctoral degree. Two participants reported earning less than $16,000 per year, 4 earned $16–30,000, and 7 earned $31–75,000. At the time of their participation, 8 were in their first marriage, 6 reported being single (never married and not currently dating anyone), 2 reported being divorced, 1 was remarried, 1 was

living with his girlfriend, 1 was dating exclusively, and 1 identified himself as polyamorous (mutual consensual non-monogamy). Eighteen of the interviewees reported being heterosexual, 1 reported being bisexual and 1 identified as homosexual (see Table 1 for detailed participants' description).

Procedure

From each of the 20 participants, informed consent was received prior to beginning the interviews and/or focus groups. Written consent was obtained from those interviewed face-to-face (Appendix C) and consent for telephone interviewees was obtained electronically (Appendix D). All 20 participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire prior to their participation. One-on-one interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, took place in a semi-public location (e.g., school library, coffee shop) and were audio taped. Questions centered around five main areas: conceptions of manhood, expressions of manhood, influences on conceptions, influences on expressions, and perceived changes in conceptions and/or expressions. Three of the 15 one-on-one interviews were conducted by telephone due to the distance of the interviewees (e.g., living in another state) or repeated conflicts in scheduling. Of the 15 one-on-one interviews, 12 were interviewed once; 3 were interviewed twice; and 5 were recontacted via email for clarification of responses when follow-up questions were simple (e.g., addressing one or two issues) or when interviewing in-person was not possible (i.e., participants had moved away or had repeated scheduling conflicts). Participants were interviewed and reinterviewed until theoretical saturation occurred—a

conceptual point when no new information was emerging from additional inquiry (Straus & Corbin, 1998).

During the focus groups, a note-taker was present to document salient points while I moderated the 90 and 120-minute discussions. Focus group questions emerged from preliminary themes and categories derived from one-on-one interview data (Appendix D). The first focus group took place in a study room in the campus library and consisted of four men previously interviewed one-on-one. The second focus group took place in a metropolitan Midwest barbershop in which three men acted as primary informants while several other patrons added information periodically. During interviews and focus groups, participants were asked to explore their conceptions of manhood and the processes through which their conceptions developed, have changed over time, and are enacted. Focus groups were audio taped and transcribed.

Focus groups ultimately confirmed the salience of key themes and categories. While the group discussions did not present new information beyond what had been already revealed during interviews, they did allow for a more in-depth exploration of key concepts.

Table 1

Participant Characteristics

Pseudonym	Age	Sexual Orientation	Children (number)	Religious Affiliation	Socioeconomic Status (profession)	Relational Status	Participation Type
Arnes	38	Heterosexual	Yes (2)	Christian Scientists	Working-class (car rental service)	Married	2nd Focus group
Brook	42	Heterosexual	Yes (1)	Evangelical Christian	Working-class (barber)	Married	2nd Focus group
Red	59	Heterosexual	Yes (3)	None	Working-class (mechanic)	Divorced	2nd Focus group
Terrill	33	Heterosexual	Yes (1)	None	Middle-class (data security representative)	Single	2nd Focus group
Al	22	Heterosexual	No	Baptist	Middle-class (undergraduate student)	Dating exclusively	One-on-one interview and 1st Focus group
Harris	38	Heterosexual	Yes (3)	Evangelical Christian	Middle-class (computer technician)	Married	One-on-one interview and 1st Focus group

Nate	33	Bisexual	No	None	Upper-middle class (professor/veterinary pathologists)	Polyamerous	One-on-one interview and 1st Focus group
Paul	26	Homosexual	No	Protestant Christian	Middle-class (nurse/graduate student)	Single	One-on-one interview and 1st Focus group
Ace	31	Heterosexual	Yes (3)	Unspecified	Upper-middle class (athletic director)	Married	One-on-one interview
Amos	37	Heterosexual	Yes (5)	Baptist	Upper-middle class (military)	Cohabitating	One-on-one interview
John	19	Heterosexual	No	None	Working-class (food service)	Single	One-on-one interview
Mason	62	Heterosexual	Yes (2)	Protestant Christian	Upper-middle class (program director/entrepreneur)	Remarried	One-on-one interview
Matt	23	Heterosexual	No	Other ("Jesus")	Middle-class (graduate student)	Single	One-on-one interview
Mitch	38	Heterosexual	Yes (1)	Seventh-day Adventists	Upper-middle class (government contractor)	Married	One-on-one interview
Myron	49	Heterosexual	No	None	Working class (custodian, artist)	Single	One-on-one interview

Phil	41	Heterosexual	Yes (1)	Protestant Christian	Working class (custodian)	Married	One-on-one interview
Ron	33	Heterosexual	Yes (1)	Protestant Christian	Middle-Class (youth development professional)	Married	One-on-one interview
Stan	31	Heterosexual	Yes (1)	Other (“Spiritual”)	Middle-class (computer technician)	Divorced	One-on-one interview
Ted	35	Heterosexual	Yes (2)	Protestant Christian	Middle-Class (graduate student/psychologist)	Married	One-on-one interview
Ty	18	Heterosexual	No	Protestant	Middle-class (undergraduate student)	Single	One-on-one interview

Analysis

The analytical process involved in developing a theory from interview and focus group transcripts and notes included open, axial, and selective coding; memoing; integrative diagramming; and a constant comparison method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). During the analysis, raw data (transcripts and notes) were converted into codes, codes into concepts, concepts into categories, and categories into theory, each a higher order abstraction. Data collection and analysis were conducted simultaneously and that analysis was used to shape strategies for subsequent data collection (e.g., theoretical sampling, interview protocol changes).

Strauss and Corbin (1990) define open coding as the "analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in the data" (p. 101). During open coding, data were coded phrase-by-phrase and included identifying, labeling, categorizing, and describing conceptual categories found in the transcripts. If an item presented as an example of something previously coded, it was given the same category label. If not, a new label (code) was created. This method ensured that categories arose from the data and were not determined a priori by the researcher. Open coding of interview and focus group transcripts produced 344 distinct codes. Reoccurring categories were used as "search terms" to sift through transcripts in determining the frequency and context of specific codes.

Axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) is the process of drawing connections between codes, codes that develop with high frequency of mention and those that

demonstrate a logical consistent connection to other codes. In the present study, axial coding involved identifying contextual influences, intervening conditions, and antecedents and consequences of particular events. For example, being responsible (the phenomenon) is described as occurring in the family and community domains (context), as taught to participants by family, religion, and culture (antecedents), and results in behaviors such as being role models and accepting the outcomes of your actions (consequences). In this stage, codes were also grouped into concepts according to their thematic commonalities.

Toward establishing core categories, I further identified, grouped, and clarified concepts during selective coding using additional interviews and focus groups (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I compared and contrasted the most useful and/or frequent categories against the data itself. I used a type of selective coding developed by Charmaz (2006) called focus coding. This involves a summation and comparison of individual interviews for important and reoccurring thematic domains and categories to bring to light continuities and contradictions across interviewees. During selective coding, core categories emerge and relationships between categories and the contexts in which they exist become evident. For example, the following focus code was created for Amos:

> Amos seems to see manhood as centering on his obligations as a father and role model in his community. For him, being a good father is equivalent to being a good man. He extends his concept of good father beyond just being a provider. Amos also feels strongly about the importance of education and defines it broadly to include getting a trade apprenticeship or going to college. This is something he underscores in his parenting. He also thinks volunteering is an important element of manhood. Amos also sees it as his responsibility as a man to "oversee"

> household tasks. Growing up, he derived many of his ideas about manhood from his father and grandfather and from more distal models, including absent or unavailable fathers in other families, common problems in Black communities, in his opinion. As a result, he feels an obligation to be a role model for children.

Memoing and integrative diagramming (Charmaz, 2006) were employed throughout the data collection and analysis processes in order to document the development of categories, to direct changes in the research questions, and to clarify relationships between categories and concepts. Reflective memoing consisted of a record of my questions, observations, and assessments of the data as they emerged during interactions with participants and during the data coding process. Memoing was a means of documenting the development of more abstract concepts and core categories. Integrative diagramming, as suggested by Strauss (1990), helped to clarify through visual representations emerging theoretical patterns and gave direction for further inquiry.

By comparing emerging concepts with existing concepts, I was able to determine when modifications to the original protocol (e.g., changes in questions, wording, and/or foci) were required and saturation was reached (Glaser & Strauss, 2009). A constant comparison method strengthens the validity of studies by analyzing initial data for categories and themes. With each subsequent participant, new categories were compared with extant categories to determine if they were distinct from or an element of an existing category. Specifically, I collected data from the first case, drew from memos and transcripts in developing initial concepts, and speculated on the connections between them. I interviewed subsequent men and compared conceptual patterns across each participant. Data derived from additional interviews and focus groups were used to refine

concepts. Memos were used to document the process of theory development from interviews, literature, and observations of Black men in my daily life.

Outsider/Insider Perspective and Theoretical Sensitivity

Theoretical sensitivity is a critical component of grounded theory. Theoretical sensitivity refers to the researcher's ability to recognize patterns of behavior in raw data (Glaser, 1992). Sensitivity is developed through the process of constant comparative coding. Sensitivity is also a reflection of the researcher's knowledge of the topic of interest prior to engaging the data. Thus, grounded theorists are to be cognizant of the nature and quality of their prior information, experiences, values, and beliefs as they shape and are shaped by research processes.

As an African American woman, I feel it necessary to address the issue of outsider/insider perspective in the exploration of Black masculinity. My perspective on Black manhood is shaped primarily by interactions with Black males in my family, in my community, and through my exposure to literature (academic and popular) on Black family dynamics. My views on and curiosities about Black manhood are also shaped by the fact that I am a single mother of two Black males, both entering developmental stages where defining and expressing notions of Black manhood are being explored.

A number of scholars have theorized concerning the costs and benefits of outsider and insider membership with respect to cross-cultural and/or cross-gendered research. For example, Miescher (2008) discusses his experiences as a young Swiss gay male historian interested in the daily lives of women in post-colonial West Africa. He addresses a number of methodological and theoretical questions that arise with

consideration for the impact of his various intersecting identities on the research process. He concludes by stating that his position as outsider, "illuminate[s] our ethnographic endeavors by giving us a certain interpretative distance and theoretical insight. Yet at the same time this gendered baggage also obscures, since we will never fully understand our research subject" (p.231). Thus, there are both benefits and disadvantages to being a Black woman studying African American manhood.

First, as a Black woman and scholar of Black Family Studies, I am able to relate to and apprehend the intricacies of African American gender dynamics from a woman's perspective. As argued by Collins (2000) and other Black feminists, Black women have a unique vantage point from which they view and experience issues of gender and race. Collins asserts that Black women "provide a unique angle of vision on self, community, and society" (p. 22) which is derived from our distinctive social, political, and interpersonal localities. From this vantage point and through my own practical knowledge, I was able to embark on this project with sensitivity to the lives of people of African descent reared in the United States that non-Black scholars may lack. In this sense, I can claim the title of "insider," or one who shares a similar cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and national heritage with my participants (Collins, 2001).

There are also ways in which I lack the experientially-based expertise to fully comprehend the perspectives of my participants, particularly with regard to their views and ventures in becoming men. Not only does my location as a woman limit access to certain experiences, but as a middle-class academician I am also viewing the lives of working class and upper class men from a veiled distance. For most of my participants

(primarily middle- and working-class), being a doctoral student and researcher potentially put me at a hierarchical advantage based solely on my association with the local institution of higher learning and perceptions of my level education. Thus, I do not claim to speak for the men in my study, but am speaking with them (hooks, 2004). My intent is to bring forth their perspectives and derive a theory of manhood from their words.

Chapter 3: Results

From the perspective of Black men, this study sought to develop a substantive theory of the ways they conceive of manhood, who and what influences their conceptions, ways they claim to express their understanding of manhood, context in which they feel they modify their expressions, and ways they perceive their masculine expression has changed over time. West and Zimmerman (1987) note that, "gender is not a set of traits, nor a variable, nor a role, but the product of social doings" (p. 128). Participants in the present study attest to the social situatedness of their conceptions and enactment of manhood and the salience of various sources of influence. Specifically, manhood is framed by participants as a socially constructed concept shaped by interactions with other individuals, by elements of culture, and by personal experiences.

First, a clear distinction was made by participants between masculinity and manhood. While the present study initially set out to explore conceptions and enactments of masculinity, participants focused primarily on conceptions of manhood. Consistent with Akbar's (1991) description of manhood as a combination of masculinity and maturation, participants felt it important to underscore that boys can be masculine, but men engage in manhood. In other words, they centered their discussion on elements of

both masculinity and maturation as experienced by Black males. For example, inspired by religious, familial, and cultural examples and counter examples (see figure 1), participants' described an ideal of responsible manhood. This Ideology of Responsibility is as a system of ideals shared by all participants that is based on a duty and an obligation to care for family, community, and self. This was described as central to their definition of manhood. Moderated by various social contexts and a sense of personal agency, expressions of responsible manhood included accepting the consequence of your actions, demonstrating work ethic, being a leader, being a man of your word, and being a role model in your family and community. Participants also noted the importance of being respectful, affectionate, and expressive in the context of interpersonal relationships, especially with women and children.

Interviewees also identified changes in how they have expressed and thought about manhood marked primarily by turning points such as getting married and having children. They also recognized broader (societal level) shifts in sociocultural ideas of manhood and the gradual processes of "just growing up" as important contributors to their changing notions of manhood. Definitions of manhood did not vary across social identities (e.g., socioeconomic class, religious identification, or sexual orientation), but participants, to varying degrees, cited race, sexual orientation, and religion as influential in how they expressed their definition of manhood.

Sources of Influence: Examples and Counterexamples

Participants talked about people and things in their lives that shaped their conceptions and expressions of manhood in terms of individuals and images that they

aspire to be like (examples) and individuals and images that they aspire not to be like (counterexamples). Three influential sources were particularly emphasized: religion, family, and culture.

Religion. All but one participant viewed religion as an important element of their definition and expression of manhood: shaping their moral decisions and guiding their interactions with others. Fourteen participants identified themselves as affiliated with a Christian denomination (e.g., Evangelical, Baptists, and Seventh - day Adventist). All 20 participants spoke of having come from a religious upbringing. Religion was also noted as a particularly strong influence in shaping their conceptions of self. Definitions of manhood were consistent across religious and non-religious participants; even for those who do not currently claim religious affiliations, religious messages and models from their upbringing continued to influence the way they manifested their ideas of manhood. For Mitch, Christianity was central to how he thought about and enacted manhood:

> You have one idea of manhood that I got growing up in the city, you are a player, you are a hustler, the more women you got the better it is. Especially in Detroit, you're a city slicker. That changed when I became a Christian. The morality replaced the pimp aspect. If you are not going to settle down and get married to a woman, you pretty much are not serious about life. Christianity allowed me to become serious about life. It changed my views of things.

Eight participants described religious teachings, scriptures, and/or interactions with clergy as having a positive impact on the way they conceived of and lived out manhood. For example:

> The Bible is a blue print for life itself. I am not saying you have to read it every day or abide strictly by the Bible. It is open to interpretation and you have to figure out what it is

> and what it means for you. You open it, you read it, and you apply those things to your life (Amos).

On the contrary, two participants felt they defined themselves counter to conceptions of manhood taught through religious institutions and teachings. For these men, religion presented ideologies of gender that were inconsistent with their own lived experiences and/or their ideas about gender equality. For example, Paul recalls a particular sermon in which messages about the role of men and women did not align with his upbringing:

> But he [his pastor] mentioned how he felt the household should go. And he related it to the teaching of the Bible…the woman should have her opinion, but her opinion should involve the authority of the man…that's not something I have ever been used to. For me, mom said 'do' and you go do. I guess he's under the impression that you live life under a certain family structure. You have a wife, you have a husband, and you have children. And not every family is like that (Paul).

Likewise, Ted felt that some biblical teachings were inconsistent with his views on gender equity and power in his family:

> One of the things that I don't necessarily appreciate about those teachings of the Bible is that it kind of makes a woman like a second to or less than a man. It is very patriarchal. I see women really as equal partners, as equal to me. I strive to embody that in my relationship with my wife. According to the Bible I am the head of the household as the man, as the husband, as the father. But that doesn't necessarily fit for me because I see myself as co-partner with my wife (Ted).

Family. All of the men interviewed noted family members as important in the formation of their understanding of manhood. Most often mentioned were mothers (6) and fathers (10). Grandmothers, aunts, and female cousins (othermothers; Collins, 1994)

were also salient in shaping their ideas; as well as uncles, stepfathers, and boyfriends of their mothers (otherfathers). As with religion, family members were described as either exemplary of what manhood embodied or as counterexamples of what manhood should embody. Twelve participants described receiving and internalizing lessons on manhood that were explicit and direct, involving candid conversations with family members about what is and is not considered appropriate masculine behavior. Ted's father and grandfather felt it "important to pass along those values to do all the things necessary and be all the things necessary to be a man." On the other hand, eight participants spoke of more implied and less direct messages about manhood from family members:

> It started with my dad. My dad, I saw him as a breadwinner, a strong committed man. Very rarely did he talk to us, but there were those occasions that he would sit down and he would talk, but that was very rare. I think I learned mostly from him through observation and how he carried himself. (Mason)

In addition to relatives, non-related men were also an important influence in the lives of interviewees including teachers, pastors, and older men of the community. These men were mentioned as important influences in the lives of (7) participants and were integral in molding their ideas about manhood:

> I love to talk to older Black men, older men period, about how things were for them growing up and real life situations and get their wisdom. I loved sitting around when I was a kid at the local barbershop and sitting around and talking about life, and I think a lot of how that molded me into who I am (Amos).

Counterexamples came from a spouse or boyfriend of their mothers (2), their fathers (2), and especially absent fathers (6). Participants talked about the influence of

absent fathers in one of two ways. Some talked about the direct impact of not having fathers in their lives as influential in shaping their ideals about manhood, particularly with respect to their sense of responsibility. For example,

> My mother and father got divorced when I was 6, so after that I didn't have a relationship with him, at all. I did not have a lot of males as far as immediate family either. I think for me, not having a male makes me want to be more active in males' lives, in kids lives...I think that as far as me, I felt I'm getting cheated or something is missing. So, not wanting other children to experience that and certainly not my own. (Ron)

Others talk about a general awareness of a lack of paternal figures in their communities, if not in their own upbringing:

> Coming from the neighborhood I came from I think it extremely important for Black men to be in their children's lives. I have seen a lot of fathers that are around but not around. He shows up every now and then. Those are the children who more often than not grow up to not be model citizens. I do realize that it takes someone to be there to mold someone young in order for them to grow up to be positive, to show them the right and wrong way of doing certain things, and explain to them the importance of doing certain things, why it should be done, how it should be done. A lot of times Black kids lack a male role model in their life. (Amos)

Cultural representations. When asked about the significance of being Black in how they defined and performed manhood, 12 participants noted race as important in shaping their notions of who they are and how they presented themselves. Regardless of social class and sexual orientation, all of them felt that being a Black man was more difficult then being a man of another race in the United States. Some of the difficulties noted were a sense that they had to work harder to achieve their educational and

economic goals, that they faced a lack of positive Black male role models to emulate, that they faced racism and inopportunity in the workforce, and that there is added pressure to avoid negative stereotypes. As was the case with family influences, participants drew from both cultural examples and counterexamples in forming their ideals of manhood. The salience of cultural representations most evident in participants' references to Black manhood derived from a combination of positive Black historical figures as examples and negative stereotypes of Black men primarily as counterexamples; although some themselves reinforced and enacted negative stereotypical notions of Black manhood in certain situations.

Historical figures such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Booker T. Washington and, more recently, President Obama were identified as examples from which participants modeled characteristics such as respectability, perseverance, and integrity. Sometimes spoken of in general terms (i.e., the fortitude of enslaved Blacks), references to the strength of character and work ethic of Blacks in history inspired and shaped conceptions of manhood for these men. In discussing his own work ethic, Mitch draws from the experiences of enslaved Africans in the rural south as examples:

> The whole rural life is about work, family, and doing what you got to do. Not just physical attributes, but mental attributes. It builds the character of a man. Booker T. Washington brought that out in his work. A lot of the slaves when they came off the plantation they were adventurers, they were statesmen. But it was, unfortunately, forced labor that made you stay lean. (Mitch)

Nineteen participants highlighted the uniqueness of being Black on their conception of manhood. Many of them felt that as Black men they were required to

present a certain image of manhood in order to eschew certain stereotypes. They also felt that Black men had to work harder to gain respect, success, and acknowledgment in society. They felt that in representing themselves, their families, and other African Americans (especially Black men), they had to uphold high standards of behavior. For example,

> Now, as a Black male you are going to have to be required three times as much in this country. You are going to have to be on top of your game every breathing hour of your life. And it's a tall task and no joke. You are going to have to be on your game 24/7. You have to have the answer, be above the rest when the rest fail, you are going to have to shine, be the beacon. And it's a tall order, but you have no way out. (Mitch)

The importance of race or "Blackness" was described ambivalently with respect to its centrality in how they enacted their manhood. While recognizing that Black men experience manhood in a unique way, most participants also emphasized that being Black was only one element of their identity as men. For example, Al describes his struggle during high school to stand out in a predominantly White environment where Black males were often "lumped together" and stereotyped, "I always kind of wanted to have cross-over appeal. But, I am not just Black guy number six hanging out against the wall. I am me. So, that is why I felt like I needed to go against the grain."

Participants also described straddling between context and agency in the expression of elements of their manhood, elucidating situations in their lives, generally based on the race composition of the environment, when they modified enactments of manhood (e.g., how much and what slang to use). For many participants, it was important to not be "too Black" in predominantly White social situations, nor "too

White" in predominantly Black social situations. At the same time, they nearly unanimously voiced the importance of "just being yourself" regardless of context or situation.

Stereotypes were also influential in shaping participants' enactment of Black manhood, both as examples and as counterexamples. Al described instances when his racial identity was questioned by both Black and White peers because of his upper-middle class economic background. Interestingly, some of the same stereotypes (e.g., aggressiveness and athleticism) participants sought to avoid in predominantly White social context, they felt the need to affirm in predominantly Black social settings. In response, he asserted himself in stereotypical ways in order to prove himself. For example, Al reinforced stereotypes of Black men as violent and athletic in order to affirm his ethnic authenticity when it was questioned during interactions with White and Black peers:

> 'You [Al] don't act Black!' I remember snapping one year in high school and throwing a kid up against a locker because I was just sick of it. He was like 'Al you're not Black! You're the Whitest Black kid I know.' I just like 'what is Black? Is *this* Black enough for you?' When I would try and hang with them [Black kids], they would come at me a little bit more [aggressively]. Say if we were playing basketball and if I blocked someone, they would be quicker to get into my face. (Al)

For Ace, some stereotypical characteristics only applied to certain Black men:

> I think if you look at the hood life, the masculinity is, 'hey I have to be a thug slinging rock here. I got this gun, and I got this car. I got rims. I got tint. I think the masculinity in the hood is like, 'what do I have.' It's not about do I have a house or do I have a yard or anything like that.

Stereotypic counterexamples primarily took the form of negative images of Black men as violent, aloof, irresponsible, and hypersexual. Nine participants mentioned the impact of stereotypes in how they defined and enacted manhood. Participants were acutely aware of prevalent cultural assumptions about Black men. Nate described in detail his interpretation of the expectations of Black manhood in popular culture:

> As a man, I am to do the following: Not be sensitive for that is gay; I certainly should not cry or show my emotions, as that is effeminate; I should be brusque, a braggart, and driven predominately by a love of sex, violence, sports, and beer; sophistication is also effeminate; intellectualism is not masculine; I am to manipulate the women around me to get the things that I want, primarily sex, and keep them fighting amongst each other so much that they don't notice my infidelities; I am to pretend to know everything about everything, anything I don't know much about, I should lie and fake it with bluster and loud comments to drown out anyone who actually knows what they are talking about, primarily by attacking his masculinity at being over intellectual; I am to be violently opposed to anything which draws my masculinity into question; I should be ready at any moment to solve a disagreement with my fists; I shouldn't talk about my feelings or enjoy art; I should be generally unconcerned with birth control, as that is the woman's problem; I should be very interested in things like the quality of my lawn and the exterior appearance of my house and my cars; that I should make a decision and then go with it, sticking to my guns no matter what. These are often at odds with my ideals of manhood. (Nate)

Thus, components of participants' manhood were (sometimes purposely) enacted in direct contrast to negative Black male clichés and were (for some) consciously intended to undermine stereotypes. Participants described a conception of manhood in opposition to the construction of Black masculinity in dominant discourses, against which they built their own ideologies of manhood. They were taught to disassociate their

identities from assumptions of Black men as “uneducated, going to prison, [and] selling drugs” (Ace). These men expressed an awareness of negative images associated with Black males and stated that they actively avoided enacting them,

> I think there is a perception among other races that the Black man has to be in this box...stereotypes. A lot of Black males or a lot of people outside of the Black race don’t expect to see a Black man who has his master’s degree. They don't even expect them to finish high school or college or what not. That perception from other races of Black masculinity… like that [A master’s degree recipient] is not Black masculinity to other races. (Ace)

Nate also articulated problems of prevalent stereotypical images in light of few alternative representations of manhood for Black males by stating, “When you have those images of what manhood is, it only becomes a problem when there is nothing else.” Other participants painted a picture of positive Black manhood against negative images of Black males as hypersexual, irresponsible, violent, flamboyant, athlete, entertainer, and criminal:

> A lot of young people are getting all stereotypical things as far as a man. You know, what they see on TV…an athlete…an entertainer…or something like that. I think the ones that just go to work every day for construction or insurance that they should also be looked up to as far as positive influences. (Ace)

Five heterosexual participants viewed sexual orientation as central to their idea of masculinity. For these men, manhood is intimately tied to their preference for sexual and romantic connections with women. Mitch in particular felt it necessary to delineate the significance of sexuality in how he conceives of manhood, “I am 100% man and I believe manhood is straight and has nothing to do with intimate relationships with another man.

Even the women in my family are looking for men and not men (in name) who sleep with other men." Harris, on the other hand, felt that masculine expression had little to do with sexual orientation. For him, assumptions about masculinity and sexual identity are not fully consonant, "I have known many feminine men, who were by no means gay. Light skinned, wore boots, didn't really play sports, kind of swished when he walked, had a light voice, but had a girlfriend…had a couple of them." Pointing out a conception of manhood that encompasses the synthesis of various aspects of how he sees himself, Paul, who identifies as homosexual, talks about his sexual orientation as, "a minuscule part of who I am. But it has great relevance to the way my life will play out. It is no more important than me being male or Black." Thus, participants have varying views on the import of sexual orientation on conceptions of their and other's masculinity.

Context and Agency

Participants also discussed the saliency of context in the expression and constraint of masculine ideals. Six men discussed points in their lives when they modified their enactment of manhood based on situation. For most, these adjustments were made in response to the racial makeup of the particular group or neighborhood they were in. Specifically, they discussed making changes to how they talked (use of slang) and what they talked about when in the presence of White or Black peers. In certain situations they described adapting their expressions of manhood in an attempt to not seem too 'Black' (e.g., not listening to Hip-Hop music):

> That [how I expressed myself] had to do with the peers I hung with. Even in the White neighborhood you always had to dissociate yourself from the stereotypes. When you get mad, you can't be the angry Black man. If you use

> slang you can't use too much. If you use slang don't let it be the all Black slang. Use some pop slang like 'bro' or 'dude.' So, I was conscious of that. Being in the White neighborhood and not saying the Black slang and them thinking I was alright. (Harris)

Some felt the need to downplay or undercut any perceptions of them as threats by avoiding overt displays of anger. Harris, for example, felt that, "When you get mad, you can't be *the* angry Black man." Particularly when interacting with authority figures, John articulated the need for Black men in particular to curb any demonstrations of upset or anger:

> Well, in certain situations when you are mad you can just say anything you want. And if you are mad at someone you don't know you don't want to get overly mad. I think as Black men you have to be more careful, because let's be real, say you are acting out with a cop; it's not going to be good. You are going to get shot, beat or...it's not going to be good.

In other situations participants felt the need to affirm their "Blackness" when socializing with other Blacks, particularly Black males, as means of defending the legitimacy of their Black and masculine identities. Al, who grew up in an upper-middle-class household, expressed the need to prove himself when interacting with Black males, "I felt a lot of pressure, the majority, from fellow Black guys. When I would try and hang with them, they would come at me a little bit more…they would be quicker to get into my face" (Al). Nate described a similar incident from his youth on the basketball court, an apparently important site of both Black and masculine protestation:

> I felt a lot of pressure from Black friends. I had to 'bring it' more and defend myself because they would step to me. They assumed I was weaker or couldn't play sports, they figure I was weaker or less cause I wasn't [always] with the

> other Black kids. I had to prove myself over and over and over cause it didn't matter [to his peers] if I could hit a ball. (Nate)

At the same time, many participants described the significance of agency in statements like, "just be yourself "(Paul) and "I just do me and don't really worry about what other people think" (Ace). Agency, or the capacity to exercise choices in one's life, entails the ability to act according to one's inclination despite persuasion from outside sources. This self-deterministic framework allowed participants to feel as if they were ultimately the most influential entities in defining and expressing their manhood. Participants recognize the sway of socialization and social situations; yet manage to balance a sense of "just doing me" (Arnes) against the expectations of family and society. Participants' masculine identity is negotiated between the contradictions of contextual influences and agency in creating and manifesting conceptions of manhood. For example,

> I am pretty much the same no matter where I go. But no matter where you go your behavior is going to change according to the environment. As far as how I present myself it doesn't change. I go to church with a lot of White people and in that environment I try to fit into what they are doing, so they don't see me as different. (Phil)

Definition of Manhood: Ideology of Responsibility

All of the men interviewed used the term(s) "responsibility" or "being responsible" in describing their definition of manhood. The Ideology of Responsibility encompassed three elements: 1) being responsible for family, 2) being responsible for your community, and 3) being responsible for yourself. Participants consistently emphasized the relationship between their sense of manhood and acting responsibly

towards members of their family and community. Specifically, this encompassed activities such as cleaning, cooking, and providing financial and emotional support. This sense of responsibility governed not just their interactions with their own biological children, but with other members of their family (e.g., nieces, nephews, aunts), and the broader community (e.g., other fathering). Balanced against this regard for others, was a sense that self-care was also central to being a man. This included being well-groomed, educated, self-reliant, and authentic (being you).

Responsible for family. All of the participants expressed that being responsible for one's family was central to being a man. Amos articulated this by stating, "I personally define manhood as how an adult male takes care of their family and responsibility." Others shared in the sentiment that being responsible for one's immediate family was a primary characteristic of manhood:

> You have to be able to support, not only financially, but also emotionally not just yourself but the people around you. If you are married, your wife and kids...once you take care of that core family that allows you to go out and take care of other things. If you have not taken care of home…you have to take care of where you at before you can give time to others. (Phil)

While caring for family encompassed being a source of support for one's immediate family (i.e., spouse and children), for seven participants the parameters of this responsibility extended beyond immediate family and included extended relatives, particularly for unpartnered men without children:

> I feel like I have to go out and provide even though I don't have family. I do have extended family. So, a lot of things that I do are in regard to my extended family. Whether it's helping my mom out once in awhile or helping out other

> family. And that is not something that is innate, but something that I have been taught to do. (Paul)

For these participants, their sense of responsibility included caring for parents, aunts, sisters, and even close friends. Being responsible consisted of care giving, tangible social support, and providing guidance and advice as illustrated by Amos:

> I define [manhood as]taking care of family, especially when you are talking about young children, expressing how important it is to get an education, expressing how important it is be a productive member of society.

Most of the men interviewed described being responsible for a broad array of family, biological and fictive. Further, eight of the participants noted getting married and having children as a significant turning point in the way they thought about and enacted their manhood. For these Black men becoming spouses and fathers meant taking their "manhood to another level" (Mitch). Many described becoming less self-centered and more other-centered:

> But me being married now I have learned over the years that I have to taper what I want to fit the needs of what everyone else in my family wants. That changed a lot when I got married. Before I got married I didn't have anybody to answer to, any responsibilities. It was just me. I did what I wanted to do when I wanted to do it. When you get married you have to think about other people. (Phil)

While working-class participants did not differ in their assertion of the importance of being responsible, they, however, noted that barriers to fulfilling their responsibilities included time constraints, distance (for their children), and just trying to 'make it' or make a living. For Stan, problems with his child's mother in the form of maternal gate keeping - consciously or unconsciously limiting of the amount of time spent with a child

- was identified as a key barrier. Stan explained the pressure of not being able to fulfill one's obligations as a man, and the things some males resort to in order to compensate:

> I'm going to be blunt with you; it [not being responsible] is unacceptable. So then what happens is he [a man who cannot fulfill his obligation] goes out and does things that probably don't look in the right to everybody else. But for him, he has to do what he has to do. He might be doing some criminal stuff. He might be stealing cars. He may be a laid off old locksmith and maybe not a young guy and having a hard time...so he has this little chop shop. He is doing it to take care of his family. This is the society we live in. So when you are talking about responsibility, manhood has a pride to it. If they [men] can't produce, you can't do anything. You have nothing to offer. It's like your manhood is shot. You can't provide, people are hungry, and they are looking at you. You should be doing something. If you just give up and don't have any other plan, you are just going to get depressed and probably fall into a bottle [of alcohol].

Several of the barbershop interviewees felt that a lack of (Black) community support kept many (Black) men from living up to their responsibilities as men. These men, primarily from working-class backgrounds, felt that a lack of mutual assistance and the prevalence of envy among Black men kept them from progressing as individuals. Brian expressed this lack of communal support in this way, "Black folks don't help other Black folks get ahead. They are too worried that you are going to get something that they won't have access to." Red referred to this as "a crab mentality" - a commonly used metaphor that describes a collective state of mind that negates, undermines, or diminishes the accomplishments of any member beyond the others out of a sense of jealousy or competitiveness. This was in contradiction to those participants who felt "that you don't have to tread on others to live. You can get up in life without stepping on others, and [you

should] pull them up with you" (Phil). From another perspective, Al described the difficulties faced by some financially "successful Black men" in helping family members who still struggle financially,

> …at the same time there is a double front war that successful Black males must face because we are already fighting against the majority of the class (White America), and then you are fighting your fellow brother who feels like you sold out. 'Why aren't you bringing us with you?' Bringing someone with you actually is a very hard thing because I can't instill in you the same values. You know, my dad was very driven and I saw that from an early age.

Responsible for community. Nine of the men interviewed felt that manhood entails a sense of civic responsibility. Being a role model and a positive influence in their communities marked, for these participants, the distinction between men and boys. Brook captured this sentiment in stating that a Black man should "leave something other than a problem in your community." They defined their identities as men in large measure by their contributions to their communities, as illustrated by Paul in the statement, "Let your actions and contributions to community speak for your manhood."

Being a responsible member of one's community meant not just avoiding becoming a problem for its members, but being a model of manhood for younger boys. This expanded sense of responsibility is what I termed 'other-fathering' or taking a father-like role in the lives of non-related children. Participants felt that community involvement, particularly being responsible for the growth and development of children in their communities, was an important aspect of being a man:

> I think I should be a role model and look at the things I do and try to do it knowing that there are children watching me. They see someone and say 'I want to be like him!' I

> want to be the person that children says one day 'I want to be like him' as far as the job that I hold, the way I carry myself, and constantly talking to them about education and staying away from drugs. Children today don't have someone to look up to and I try to be that person. (Amos)

For three of them, being a role model was expected because they were the ones "who made it" (Mitch). Coming from neighborhoods where many did not 'make it' seemed to fuel an appreciation for their own successes and an obligation to their communities based on the support they received growing up and the presumption that they should, in turn, give back,

> You are still responsible as a role model whether you like it or not as a Black male because you are now the one who made it. You are the one who didn't go to prison, you're the one who didn't get on drugs, and alcohol, smoke, and you are going to be put under a microscope. And the pressure is from cradle to grave. (Mitch)

Many also drew clear connections between being responsible, being accountable for their actions, and being cognizant of the impact their behaviors had on others. Stan exemplified this when he stated,

> Manhood would be defined as taking on certain responsibilities, you know, taking ownership…anything you might of done, any of your decisions that might have adversely affected any other being…so taking responsibility for other people. That's my definition of manhood.

Responsible for self. Ten participants characterized manhood as a point in their lives when they could care for themselves. Being responsible for yourself meant being able to meet your own needs (caring for yourself) and taking responsibility for your actions. Caring for yourself took the form of living on your own, making your own

money, and being economically resourceful enough to no longer rely on parental support. For these men, self-care was an essential requisite for becoming a man:

> I see that as an important step towards being a man. [Becoming] A man is a point where you can take care of yourself without having anyone having to take care of you. If you can take care of you and yours without someone else having to take care of you and yours then you can call yourself a man. So many people [say], 'I am a man,' but still live with [their] mama. When are you going to get a place of your own and stand on your own two feet? Until you can be on your two feet you really are no different than a 5-year-old child. Cause if someone else is taking care of you; you really are not a man. (Phil)

In addition to caring for yourself and not relying on the care of others (e.g., mama), manhood was also described as taking responsibility for your choices in life. To be a man meant that a male could "grasp or consider the repercussions of your decisions as they pertain to your life" (Ted).

Expressions of Manhood

When asked in what ways they expressed their manhood and what characteristics embodied the expression of manhood, responses centered around seven themes: accepting the consequences of your actions (9), being expressive and affectionate (8), being a man of your word (7), being a leader (7), having a good work ethic (6), being and presenting yourself as educated (6), being respectful to others (5), and being well-groomed (4).

Accepting consequences of your actions. Nine participants mentioned accepting the consequences of one's actions as an important expression of their manhood. While many readily admitted that some males do not accept the consequences of their actions

(including some of their own biological fathers), all of them felt that ‘real’ men acknowledged that they were responsible for their choices and the consequences of those choices. Accepting consequences included recognition that their actions also influenced the lives of others (e.g., family and community). Phil articulated it this way, “[manhood is expressed by] accepting the consequences of your actions and reactions, and that every action that you put out is going to have a reaction on someone else.”

For many, it also meant possessing the ability and willingness to reflect on past poor decisions/behaviors and adjust future decisions/behaviors accordingly. In other words, “Just, if you make a mistake, admit it, and try to learn from it. Make sure you live a good life and not make bad mistakes. But if you do, make sure you own up to them and never make them again” (Mitch).

Being expressive and affectionate. Next to accepting responsibility for one’s action, (8) participants identified being expressive and/or affectionate as an important exhibition of manhood. This included being able to show emotions despite stereotypes of Black men as hard or aloof, such as those described by Majors and Billson as ‘cool pose.’ Participants described elements of manhood that consisted of traditional Euro-American hegemonic models of masculinity and femininity, reflected in their ideals of manhood characterized by physical prowess, being a provider, and being a decision maker in their families. But they also expressed notions of manhood encompassing non-traditional manifestations of manhood (e.g., being nurturing, acts of care giving, and being affectionate). It was particularly important for many of them to express affection for their children through physical and verbal displays of endearment such as hugging and

saying ‘I love you.’ Amos, a father of two, described his philosophy on Black masculinity and emotional expressiveness in this manner:

> Being a man for me, I have always been one of those that show affection for my children and I tell them 20 times a day that I love them, and I don't think that Black men show that kind of open love. I think that expressing masculinity and caring and loving can come in so many different forms, I think to express masculinity comes easy for me because I am secure in who I am...I tell my kids it is OK to cry and express yourself. So many people say boys shouldn’t cry. But boys have feelings too.

Being a man of your word. Six men spoke of the importance of being a man of your word (6). For them this meant being trustworthy and reliable. For example,

> I strive to be a man of integrity. If you tell someone something they should know that a) its true and b) you are going to do what you say you are going to do cause that is what makes you a man. My dad always said if they stripped everything from you as a man the only thing you have left would be your word and your word would be the thing upon which you build everything else. (Al)

Being a man of your word primarily meant following through with verbal commitments. A man of his word was described as someone who will honor his promises, will do what he says he will do, and believes what he says he believes both in his professional and personal life.

Being a leader/role model. Leadership was described as the ability to influence others and was a key expression of manhood by seven participants. Specifically, they noted the importance of a kind of influence derived not from fear or intimidation, but through a regard for the opinions of others. This type of social influence was achieved through listening to the views of others, making decisions, and working together to

accomplish tasks. Leaders, as conceptualized by participants, are able to articulate and progress their own ideas, values, and visions, while not undermining the ideas, values, and visions of others. Nate talked extensively about a type of subtle, informed leadership as an expression of his manhood:

> I think this quiet power is more commonly something that I see in people who do more listening than judging. Very often in conversations people are not actually listening, but just waiting for their turn to speak. The quiet power comes from feeling as though he has sincerely listened to your point of view and has actually taken the time to weigh alternatives. I find it very masculine to be able to come to a decision based on the available facts.

Using a sports metaphor and underscoring the importance of group effort, Ron, the director of a non-profit agency, describes leadership in this manner, “So, it’s a team and I may be coach, but I still know that to be successful, I’m going to need the players to all work together.” These men felt it important to lead by example, particularly for the sake of young Black males. Being a role model and leader in one’s community was central to their expression of manhood in light of what they observed as a widespread lack of appropriate models for African American children. Red simply states, “[Manhood] is to set an example, to step up to the plate, and be a role model [for] kids in the community.”

Having a good work ethic. Six participants underscored that a man must work hard in order to take care of himself and his family. In addition to hard work, men are expected to set goals, take chances, and be resourceful. Mitch felt that manhood is about, “learning how to work and hustle and always get a job. If I didn’t know [it], I would

learn it; I will get someone to teach me while I do the job. Those things describe manhood for me."

Participants also expressed the importance of having pride in the work they do and how what they produce reflects who they are as men, "I am a local artist so I try to do the best at what I do…that I made something good and share that with others…I think manhood is just trying to be a good individual just where you are in your community" (Myron). Al reiterates this point by drawing connections between the works a man does and how he is judged by others, "I tell younger guys if you do something it says something about you. If you work hard enough they know it's good before they even inspect it. It impacts your reputation."

Being and presenting yourself as educated. An emphasis on education was also a key component of the embodiment of manhood. Six participants noted that they themselves were taught as children to revere and pursue education and they, in turn, saw this as an important aspect of manhood. Being educated was seen as particularly important for Black men, who historically met many barriers to higher education:

> Our parents may not have been able to get a college education, but nowadays a man can't get a good job without a college education. You can get a job, but not a career...I am a testament to this. Black men have to fight harder for education and that knowledge and education is central to manhood. (Ty)

These participants felt that being articulate, confident, being able to problem-solve, and being resourceful were important indicators of having an education. Education for these men did not necessarily entail post-secondary degrees, but included technical or vocational training. The emphasis here is on the attainment of marketable

and practical skills beyond high school and the expression of mannerisms that suggest that one has been properly schooled.

Being respectful to others. Five participants mentioned respectfulness as a component of their expression of manhood. For these men a respect for others, as well as self-respect, meant demonstrating an ethic of regard and reverence. By extending respect, they felt they in turn could expect respect from others. Mason states, “We should respect women at all times and be an upstanding citizen so that other individuals will respect us”.

For three of these men, respect is demonstrated through the use of honorifics (e.g., Sir, Ma'am, Mr., and Mrs.) and behaviors that convey esteem and care for others. Mason continues, “I think as a man, I should be respectful to everybody…the use of language, saying ‘yes sir’ and ‘no sir’, no foul language, and treating people with respect.” Amos also discussed language in showing respect and teaching respect to his children, “[I want my kids] to say ‘yes’ and ‘no’; not ‘yea’ and ‘naw’. I call them by name and don’t allow them to say ‘what!’ That is disrespect and if you use disrespect in the house you will use it out of the house.”

Additionally, all of these men felt it was particularly important to show respect for women and to teach children to be respectful to others, “The way I respect my manhood is being respectful to others, even if I don't know them…treating ladies with respect. Respect is not treating women unequal” (Mitch).

Being well-groomed. For four of the men interviewed, grooming and proper attire were important. An emphasis on how one dressed was described, again, in direct contrast to negative images of young Black males:

> You can't go out of the house with unironed clothes. So, I learned how to wash clothes and how to iron my clothes at an early age. Part of that is making sure that your pants are up on your waist where they are supposed to be. Belt, tucked in shirt, and just looking presentable. (Ace)

For these men, unironed clothes and sagging pants represented a form of self-presentation inconsistent with the messages concerning proper attire they received growing up. Part of coming into manhood for these participants was leaving behind trendy and less formal attire. Al discusses moments as a college freshman where he taught other young Black males some of the basics of his interpretation of proper dress:

> You have young bruthas who come up here and don't know how to tie a tie. It's not their fault, maybe no one ever taught them how to. But I should be like, 'Hey check this out man, let me show you how to do the two knots, I'm going to show you a double-Windsor, a half-Windsor.' I've shown plenty of people how to tie a tie my freshman year. 'Cause they want to be stuntin'. Then they come out with their tie all sloppy. I'm like 'come here man, let's go in the bathroom and fix your tie. You don't want these girls to clown you!'

Although he too understood that judgment based on appearance was likely, 19-year-old John felt that his attire should not be used to judge him:

> But when people see you in baggy clothes, [they say] "Oh he's a thug or will probably be stealing something or don't know how to act or treat people." But that's not necessarily the case. I mean you can dress a certain way and still be respectful to people. It shouldn't matter how you dress.

Chapter 4: Discussion

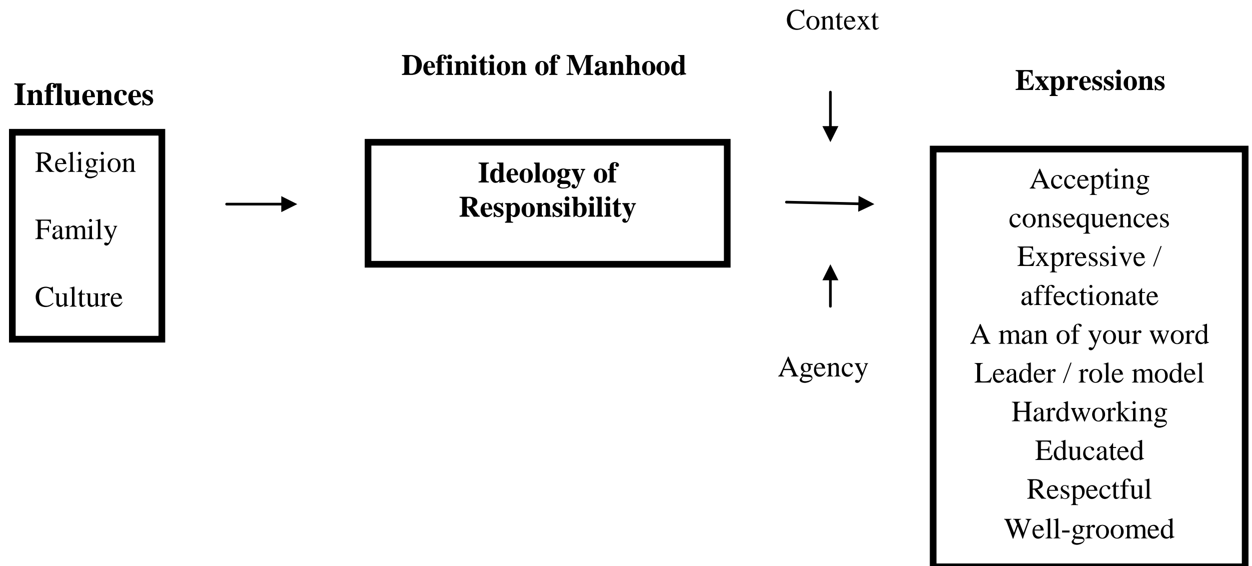
The present study adds to the body of knowledge on Black masculinity by generating a descriptive model of conceptions, influences, and expressions of manhood in a diverse sample of African American men. Far from the deficit models of early Black gender scholarship, participants consistently describe an understanding of manhood that centers on being responsible. Shaped by religion, family, and cultural examples and counterexamples, the Ideology of Responsibility encompasses being responsible for one's family, community, and self. Expressions of responsible manhood entail accepting consequences of your actions, being expressive and affectionate, being a man of your word, being a leader, having a good work ethic, being and presenting yourself as educated, and being respectful to others, especially women. Getting married, having children and growing up are recognized as events in their lives when their ideas and behaviors as men shift. Figure 1 visually represents the theory which includes sources of influences on participants' definitions of manhood, a definition of manhood that centers on an Ideology of Responsibility, expressions of their definition complicated by context and agency, and significant turning points in their lives that mark a move from a more self-centered conception and enactment to a more other-centered conception and enactment.

Influences

Three social institutions are notable sources of influence in the definition and expressions of manhood for Black men. Religion, family, and culture are principle sites in which participants draw, develop and exercise their conceptions of manhood.

Religion. According to Herndon (2003), a strong religious commitment is one of the most ubiquitous cultural and psychological strengths of African-Americans, providing considerable resolve in the face of adversity and stress. In the present study, religion, for most, provides a philosophical foundation and standard of behavior through which participants develop and enact their views of Black manhood. Of all the major racial and ethnic groups, Blacks are the most likely to report a formal religious affiliation, and 70% of American Blacks say that religion is somewhat or very important in their lives (U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, 2008). For these men, religious teachings offer spiritual principles that guide their conception of the roles and responsibilities of men, particularly within their communities and family structures. Early experiences in 'the church' are particularly influential in shaping conceptions of 'proper' masculine Christian behavior. Early instructions on what it means to be a man has a lasting impact on gender ideas and general morality. For some, their Christian faith is the basis and motivation for living as responsible men. For other participants, the religious messages concerning manhood are often contradictory to other strongly held beliefs (e.g., egalitarian gender roles).

Figure 1 Model of Black Manhood



Although, ‘the church’ is viewed as an important site of masculine socialization (e.g., men as providers, protectors, head of household), many participants question its relevance to and treatment of modern Black family problems such as high rates of single-female headed households and male unemployment. The difference between those who rely on religious models as examples of manhood and those that do not seem to depend on whether or not they could reconcile contradictions between their own personal experiences and religious doctrine. Further research is required to better understand differences in the application of religious teaching as it influences definitions and expressions of manhood.

Family: Othermothers and otherfathers. The present study highlights that enduring family ties present opportunities for ongoing gender socialization in African American families. Parents and family members continue to influence how Black men envision and live out their ideas of manhood well into adulthood by offering models and messages of men as hard workers, caregivers, and role models. In addition to immediate family members (e.g., mothers and fathers), extended and fictive kin such as aunts, grandmothers, uncles, cousins, coaches, and pastors are also important instructors in how to think about and ‘do’ manhood. For example, mothering by non-biologically related women is typical in many African American communities of what Collins (1994) calls ‘othermothering,’ and refers to parenting that occurs when Black women assist in caring for children who are not their direct offspring. Participants of the present study speak extensively of the role of othermothers in their early care and in the formation of their ideas surrounding manhood. Consistent with the notion of othermothers, extended family

and/or non-related males also act as agents of gender socialization and sources of guidance and care. Logically, I term these men ‘otherfathers’. Otherfathers can be conceptualized as males who partake in fulfilling the role of father figure in the lives of children, regardless of biological relation. Uncles, pastors, coaches, and maternal spouses act as instructors and templates of manhood and, in turn, men feel an obligation to also act as otherfathers in the lives of the related and unrelated children in their communities. Margaret Mead (1932) termed these men ‘social’ fathers. Billingsley (1968) was among the first Black family scholars to note the primacy of ‘fictive’ fathers in rearing African American children. Generally speaking, father roles, biological or social, have gradually shifted over the last 3 decades from moral sage, to breadwinner, to the contemporary depictions described by participants in the present study of men (particularly fathers) as caregivers, companions, and role models (Lamb, 2010).

Participants talk about manhood in terms of examples and counterexamples - people and images that they aspire to be like (i.e., examples) and people and images that they aspire not to be like (i.e., counterexamples). Thus, conceptions of manhood consist of both elements of what men should be (e.g., caregiver and responsible) and elements of what men should not be (stereotypical images). Sharp and Ispa (2009), in a qualitative study of low-income African American mothers, report that participants often couch their expectations in terms of counterexamples, pointing out certain men and masculine stereotypes that the mothers do not want their boys to emulate. Similarly, the men in my study identify counterexamples that they wish to avoid.

Participants did not want their children or the children in their communities to experience the lack of positive paternal involvement that they themselves experienced. This suggests that manhood is not singularly an individual expression, but the result of cross-generational influences. Being a man means being emotionally, economically, and physically involved in their children's lives, particularly for those seeking to neutralize the impact of negative or absent fathers. This is consistent with the work of Coles (2002) who uncovered in an ethnographic study of single African American fathers a sense of duty and responsibility driven by a desire to undo the influences of absent or "weak" fathers in their upbringing by providing a role model for their own children. A conception of manhood that includes accessibility, responsibility, and engagement as fathers and father figures mirrors 'new' or 'androgynous' fatherhood discourses first discussed by Rotundo (1985) as the cultural expectation of day-to-day involvement of men (fathers) in childcare. The era of 'new fatherhood' marks a shift from paternal figures as providers and distant moral guides, to the more expressive and intimate involvement in child socialization processes. In mainstream (White) society this shift parallels an increasing number of mothers in the work force during the latter half of the 20th century, requiring fathers to take more responsibility as caregivers in family systems (Margolis, 1984). In African American families, where work outside the family home has long constituted a major life domain for mothers, it is no surprise that Black men have an understanding of fatherhood and manhood that embraces and embodies involvement in the daily care of the children in their communities.

Culture: The complexities of stereotypes. Du Boisian (1994) "double consciousness" addresses the power of stereotypes in the actions and thoughts of African Americans. Du bois notes the pressure many Black Americans feel to respond to distorted conceptions of Black life while simultaneously maintaining a sense of authentic self-representation. Participants of the present inquiry all propound positive depictions of manhood in contrast to stereotypical images of Black men. Black males desire to disassociate themselves from unfavorable images of Black men as irresponsible, violent, and aloof (hooks, 2004) and describe a performance of manhood purposely in opposition to typecast characterizations. The concept of "double consciousness" also underscores the influence of both self-awareness and an acute perception of how the 'self' is perceived by others. In the present study, presentations of Black manhood as responsible, affectionate, and other positive qualities are admittedly intended by participants to destabilize racist representations of Black people in general. Across various socioeconomic statuses and sexual orientations, these men acknowledge the impetus of stereotypes in shaping their beliefs and behaviors, and attempt to avoid and undermine associations with negative renditions of Black masculinity. Likewise, in an ethnographic study of Black urban males conducted by Wise, Fine, Shepard, and Foster (1999), Black men discussed their struggles to construct notions of Black masculinity in contrast to negative stereotypic reflections of Black men (particularly inner-city and young Black males) by representing themselves as responsible members of their communities. This suggests that for Black men there is a great deal of pressure to appropriately represent themselves and (Black) communities in a positive light. Many Black men seek to fulfill

the roles that any male of any race does as brothers, uncles, fathers and sons: providers, nurturers, and protectors. Uniquely, Black males are faced with the challenge of undercutting stereotypical depictions that are inconsistent with their own internalized notions of manhood - the result of which is a sense that they must professionally and personally out perform their non-Black counterparts in order to avoid the perpetuation of stereotypes.

At the same time, some participants sought to affirm both their “Blackness” and their “maleness” by reinforcing stereotypes. This further elucidates the complexities of cultural influences as both exemplar and exception. Particularly in situations when the legitimacy of their Black manhood comes under scrutiny, Black men may rely on the same stereotypes they claim to want to avoid. In other words, when accused of not being Black or male ‘enough,’ some select to defend themselves in ways that confirm stereotypes of Black masculinity (through aggression or athleticism). Supporting the notion that identities are created and sustained through interpersonal interactions, these proclamations represent a near constant need to protect identity and status for Black men.

Definitions of Manhood

Emerging from early interactions with significant adults in their lives (e.g., mothers, fathers, aunts, pastors), the men interviewed describe their definition of manhood in relation to a sense of self-sufficiency, their interaction with their families, and their engagement with members of their communities. There is a gradual emergence of qualities (e.g., responsibility, respectfulness, work ethic) that are exercised within the

context of and contingent upon social interactions; central to this definition is an Ideology of Responsibility.

An ideology is a set of ideas that govern a person's goals, expectations, and actions. Although often laden with political connotation, ideology in this regard describes "a system of beliefs common to a particular group" and "the general process [es] of the production of meanings and ideas" (Williams, 1977, p. 55) associated with Black manhood, at the center of which is a sense of personal, familial, and communal responsibility. The ideology of responsibility is expressed in behavioral terms like being trustworthy, having integrity, demonstrating confidence, being a leader/role model, working hard, being respectful, presenting yourself as educated, and being affectionate. Additionally, the emphases placed on expressiveness and affection is in direct contrast to depictions of Black masculine 'cool pose' (Majors & Billson, 1992). However, being responsible for family and community does correspond with the African collectivistic paradigm that underscores the needs of the community as a priority over personal gain (Akbar, 1991). An Afrocentric worldview prioritizes collective well-being over that of the individual. This worldview holds, and the participants of the present study affirm, that individuals are judged to a great degree in terms of the quality of their relationships with others, the extent to which they fulfill their obligations towards others (responsibilities), and the roles they play in bettering the lives of others. The ideology of responsibility expands beyond biological boundaries to include children in their communities and an obligation to act as role models. Thus, the boundaries of responsibility are rather diffused and inclusive (Heimer & Staffen, 1998). Manhood is

depicted as a multidimensional construct defined partially in terms of relationships and responsibilities to others, especially family. Nevertheless, participants describe the balance they must strike between obligations to others and obligations to self. For these Black males, manhood encompasses a balance between caring for one's self and caring for the needs of family.

Turning Points

Turning points are events that shift one's social, psychological, and/or emotional trajectory significantly in a new direction. Shifts in the parameters and enactment of conceptions of manhood mark the reorganization of inner experiences and external behaviors. Participants of the present study describe the influence of changes in family structure on their ideals about masculine roles, images, themes, and characteristics. These ideals and their enactment are contoured by life changes such as getting married and having children. Participants describe changes in their manhood after getting married and/or having children from a more self-centered conception and enactment of masculinity, to a more other-centered conception and enactment. Events such as getting married and having children set into motion enduring changes in levels of commitment, perceptions of personal responsibilities, and the setting and reaching of new, more ambitious goals. Participants describe themselves as being willing and able to consider the needs of others over their own after partnering and/or having children. This narrative validates the argument that culminating life events contribute to shifts in perceptions of self and the expression of those perceptions (see Levinson, 1978). Turning points during

the family life cycle are important milestones and markers of maturation and change in both the ideals and enactment of manhood.

Much has been written on the impact of life transitions on identity concepts, particularly during adolescence and young adulthood. For example, participants affirm Arnett's (2000) construct of emerging adulthood as period of time when young adults begin to perceive themselves as capable of accepting responsibility for themselves, of making independent decisions, and a state of financial autonomy. It is during this period of emerging adulthood that participants describe the formation of deeper intimate relationships that results in enduring role commitments. According to Arnett, and consistent with the findings of the present study, emerging adulthood is also conceptualized as a period during which significant changes may occur in one's worldview occurs. A worldview is a wide collection of beliefs and values that guide an individual's interpretation of life events and is composed of existential postulates and standards of ethical behavior (Naugle, 2005). What is unique to the men interviewed in the present study is the emphases placed on getting married and having children as events that influence and are influenced by a transition from a more self-centered worldview to a more other-centered worldview. In a study of American majority (White) culture from adolescence through midlife, Arnett (2001) found that few participants (13%) identified role transitions such as getting married and parenthood as significant markers of adult status. For the men of the present inquiry, getting married and becoming fathers were accompanied by the expectation that their manhood would encompass more committed social roles. For Black males, the emphases on familial role transitions may be the result

of broader societal limitation placed on access to other markers of adulthood/manhood such as financial autonomy, going off to and graduating from college, and full-time employment.

Limitations and Implications

A number of factors limit the extent that the present study comprehensively speaks to the definitions and expressions of Black manhood. The present study is limited by the small sample of men interviewed and the self-selected nonrandom nature of their inclusion in this study. Thus, it cannot and is not intended to represent the experiences of all Black men in the United States. Additionally, the present study does not claim to report the actual behaviors of Black men. Rather, this study offers insight into self-reported abstractions and expressions of manhood that may represent an idealized version of actual behaviors. Given the desire to avoid reaffirming stereotypical portrayals of Black manhood, it is possible that some of the views expressed by participants reflect a positively skewed depiction of their ideals and expressions of Black masculinity. Lastly, the present study is limited by its lack of longitudinal data. Any argument of continuity and change across time is best supported by actual longitudinal assessments. While participants attempt to retrospectively consider changes in their manhood over time, there exists the possibility that their views may be subject to the influence of social desirability and/or recall biases and inaccuracies.

Nevertheless, the present study offers a great deal of information concerning the way Black men conceive of manhood, expressions of their conceptions, changes in their conceptions and expressions, and the significance of religion, family, and culture in

shaping their manhood. First, this study underscores the need for gender research that considers interpersonal and communal influences in the development and execution of Black masculine ideologies. Given that many Black males struggle to fulfill their familial and communal obligations, future researchers must consider the primacy of family and community in developing notions of manhood as they address such questions as what are the factors that influence a lack of responsible manhood (e.g., paternal abandonment, child neglect).

Likewise, any intervention that does not involve family and community components will likely be insufficient. This research also demonstrates the role of religion in shaping gender ideas for Black men and calls for interventions that validate and engage the spiritual needs of African American men. Additionally, interventions that focus on imparting in Black males a greater sense of responsibility may be more effective if they target barriers to the enactment of already internalized ideologies of responsibility. According to the present study's findings, Black men do not lack a desire to be responsible contributors to their families and communities. Yet, a number of programs (e.g., Responsible Fatherhood Initiatives) focus on changing the beliefs, values, and behaviors of Black men without adequate regard for the systemic macro-level factors that prevent the enactment of their ideals of manhood.

Additionally, a regard for the fluidity of manhood across context and the life course cannot be overstated. Thus, researchers and interventionists would benefit from grounding their understanding of Black manhood in developmental and ecological frameworks that foreground the sociocultural and life/family stage influences in gender

expression and the degree to which ideas and manifestations of manhood remain fixed or shift over time. Finally, further research is required that elucidates the relationship between idealized and actual behaviors of Black men, particularly with regard to the enactment of masculine ideals. Observational studies and longitudinal assessments of components of manhood discussed in the present study could address the question of continuity between ideals of manhood and manhood in action.

Conclusion

Black men occupy a unique place at the intersection of race and gender identity and enactment. This study provides insight into the nature and context of Black manhood. A conception of manhood originates from messages from and models of influential others, and the simultaneous resistance to and reinforcement of stereotypical Black male images. This study brings to light the negotiation between agency and social expectations in the development of gender concepts and the salience of race and culture in how that concept is expressed. What is clear is that Black manhood is composed of uniquely racialized and gendered components derived from experiences both inside and outside of Black communities. Thus, Black manhood is a progressing, interaction-contingent accomplishment. It is fluid and located rather than statically defined (West & Fenstermaker, 1993). Reliant on both examples and counterexamples derived from familial, religious, and cultural sources, Black manhood, as articulated by the participants of this study, is a reflection of conceptions of what it is and what it is not; and the careful negotiation between a sense of collective responsibility and self-determination.

Appendix A
Interview and Focus Group Consent Form

Introduction The University of Missouri supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with the University of Missouri.

Purpose of the study The purpose of this study is to explore the conceptions and expressions of masculinity in a sample of Black males and the factors that influence them.

Procedures You will be asked to participate in a 1-2 hours long interview and, at a later date, a 1-2 long focus group with other Black men. Interviews will be used to clarify how you view masculinity, what you view as influential in shaping your concepts of masculinity, and how you express your understanding of masculinity. Additionally, interviews will ask in what settings and context do you feel restricted from expressing their concepts of masculinity and how, if at all, has you masculine expression changed over time? Lastly, interviews will explore class, religious affiliations, and sexuality as they influence your expressions of masculinity? The focus group will consist of seven to ten men and the questions will be regarding how each of you defines masculinity as Black men. Both the individual and group interviews will be audio taped and transcribed. It is possible that information derived from focus groups and interviews will be used in the development of manuscripts or journal articles regarding this study.

Risks Risks of participation in this study are minimal. The biggest risk is embarrassment regarding some questions that may be asked. In the event that topics arise that are particularly uncomfortable for you, we can take a break from the focus group interview, we can change to a different topic, or you can choose to excuse yourself from the group all together (permanently or temporarily).

Benefits Potential benefits of participation include providing insight into how Black men think about masculinity and the factors that influence their concepts of manhood. In addition, your participation in this project may lead to an expanded knowledge base about Black males that could allow institutes of higher education to enhance educational programming that caters to the needs of this population.

Payment to participants There is no payment to participants. However, participants in the focus group will be provided with a meal during the focus group.

Participant confidentiality Your name will not be associated in any way with the information collected from you or with the research findings from this study. The researcher(s) will use a study number or a pseudonym instead of your name when. The researchers will not share information about you unless required by law or unless you give written permission. All study records will be kept in a locked, secure location and will be destroyed after 3 years. Permission granted on this date to use and disclose the information collected in this study remains in effect indefinitely. By signing this form, you give permission for the use and disclosure of your information for purposes of this study at any time in the future.

Refusal to sign consent and authorization You are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the University of Missouri or to participate in any programs or events of the University of Missouri. However, if you refuse to sign, you cannot participate in this study.

Cancelling this consent and authorization You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose information collected about you, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to: Lynette Nickleberry, 314 Gentry Hall, Columbia, MO, 65211. If you cancel permission to use your information, the researchers will stop collecting additional information about you. However, the research team may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

Questions about participation Questions about procedures should be directed to

Lynette Nickleberry
Principal Investigator
Human Development Family Studies Dept
314 Gentry Hall
University of Missouri
Columbia, MO 65211
573-234-4490
NickleberryL@missouri.edu

Participant certification I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding this study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call (573) 882-9535 or write the Campus Institutional Review Board, University of Missouri, 483 McReynolds, University of Missouri, MO 65211.

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By signing, I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

______________________________ ____________________

Type/Print Participant's Name Date

____

Participant's Signature

Appendix B
Telephone Interview Consent Form

Introduction The University of Missouri supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with the University of Missouri.

Purpose of the study The purpose of this study is to explore the conceptions and expressions of masculinity in a sample of Black males and the factors that influence them.

Procedures You will be asked to participate in a telephone interview. You will be asked to discuss your personal expressions of masculinity and the ways in which family, friends, your social class, religious ideologies, sexual preference, etc., impact your expression of manhood. Your participation is strictly voluntary. You may refuse to participate or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Information collected from this interview may be used in the development of manuscripts or journal articles on the topic of Black manhood.

Risks Risks of participation in this study are minimal. The biggest risk is embarrassment regarding some questions that may be asked.

Benefits Potential benefits of participation include providing insight into how Black men think about masculinity and the factors that influence their concepts of manhood. In addition, your participation in this project may lead to an expanded knowledge base about Black males that could allow institutes of higher education to enhance educational programming that caters to the needs of this population.

Payment to participants There is no payment to participants.

Participant confidentiality Your name will not be associated in any way with the information collected from you or with the research findings from this study. The researcher will use a pseudonym (fake name) instead of your actual name or other identifying information when referring to the responses you provide. The researchers will not share information about you unless required by law or unless you give written permission. All study records will be kept in a locked, secure location and will be destroyed after 3 years. Permission granted on this date to use and disclose the information collected in this study remains in effect indefinitely. By consenting you give permission for the use and disclosure of your information for purposes of this study at any time in the future.

Refusal to sign consent and authorization You are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from your affiliated organization. However, if you refuse to sign, you cannot participate in this study.

Cancelling this consent and authorization You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose information collected about you, in writing, at any time, by sending your

written request to: Lynette Nickleberry, 314 Gentry Hall, Columbia, MO, 65211. If you cancel permission to use your information, the researchers will stop collecting additional information about you. However, the research team may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

Questions about participation

Questions about procedures should be directed to
Lynette Nickleberry
Principal Investigator
Human Development Family Studies Dept
314 Gentry Hall
University of Missouri
Columbia, MO 65211
573-234-4490
ldn26b@mizzou.edu

Participant certification If you have read this Consent and Authorization form and have had the opportunity to ask questions via email or telephone communication please type in the space below ‘I, (your name), have read the informed consent and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time with no negative consequences. My responses confirm my ongoing consent.

Appendix C
Interview Protocol

This is a study about how Black men develop ideas about and express masculinity. I am going to start by asking some questions about how you define masculinity then get a little deeper and explore the things, and people who have influenced that definition. We can take a break at any time or if you choose, you can stop the interview all together. Any questions? Ok, I am going to record our conversation if it is ok with you.

Conceptions of manhood

- Tell me how you define manhood.
- Given your experiences in life so far, what advice would you give to a young Black boy about being a Black man?

Expressions of manhood

- What ways do you express your manhood?
  {Can you give an example of what that might look like? If I were watching you do this, what might I see?}

Influences on conception of manhood

- What would you say has influenced your definition of manhood?
  {How so? Why was that important to you?}
- Who do you think has had an influence on your definition of manhood?
  {How so? Why was that person so influential to you?}

Influences on expressions of manhood

- When and where are you able to make choices about how you express your manhood?
  {How did you feel about that?}
- When do you ever feel held back from expressing manhood the way you would like to?
  {If yes, how so? How did you feel about that?}
- Some research shows that a man's economic background has an impact on their ideas about manhood. For example, bruthas in the hood may hold a particular idea about what it means to be a man, while middle-class educated Black men might have different ideas about manhood. Do you think you economic background or current circumstance influence your definition or enactment of manhood?
  {Can you give me an example?}
- Does/have your religious/spiritual beliefs impact(ed) your expressions of manhood?
  {If yes, how so?}
  {If no, what messages about manhood have you picked up at church or in reading scripture? Has this had an impact on how you express manhood? How so?}
- Do you think that Black men express their masculinity in unique ways when compared to men of other races? Is your sense of 'Blackness' influential in how you express manhood?
  {If yes, how so?}
- Does/has your sexual orientation (gayness/straightness) impact(ed) your expression

of manhood?
{If yes, how so?}

Changes in conceptions of manhood

- Have your ideas about manhood changed over time?
  {If yes, how so?}
  {When did you notice that change? What motivated this change?}

Unguided narrative

- What else would you like to tell me about being a Black man?

Debriefing

These are questions similar to those we will be exploring during the focus group.

- Are you still interested in participating in a conversation with other Black men about these issues? {If not, may I ask why not?}
- Is there anything we discussed today in this one-on-one session that you would rather I not mention during the group conversation?
- Are there questions/issues that come to mind right now that you would be particularly interested in exploring during the focus groups?
- I will need your most current contact information, so can you say your phone number and email address for the recorder.

Appendix D
Focus Group Protocol

Hello and thanks for participating in the Gender Project. I am Lynette Nickleberry, a PhD student in Family Studies at Mizzou and would like to welcome each of you to our online focus group on Black manhood. This study will include an online chat with other Black men and potential follow-up email interviews with the researcher on issues such as

- What is your definition of manhood?
- Who/what has been influential in shaping your idea of manhood?
- What ways do you express manhood?
- In what ways do other identities (i.e. religious, gay, educated, older) impact your expressions of manhood?

Your participation is completely voluntary and you can log out at anytime if you chose to not participate any further. The results from this study will assist in completing my dissertation, possibly contribute to publications, and hopefully help me finally graduate. It will also help other social researchers better understand how Black men think and talk (chat) about manhood. I want to stress that there are no right or wrong answers and that all comments are welcome. Your personal information (i.e., First and Last name) will remain confidential and you will be referred to during this conversation and in any write-up by your login ID.

I am excited to get started, so let's begin by briefly introducing yourselves. Feel free to state your age, occupation, marital status, or any other information you feel comfortable sharing with members of this group

1. All of you mentioned the role of your families in shaping who you are. Let's talk more about the ways your families shaped your ideas about manhood.
2. Many of you briefly mentioned the impact of the media. Can you talk about specific things in the media that have been central in shaping your ideas of manhood? Can you talk about a particular example or counterexample of masculinity in your life?
3. I struggled with finding the right word for what it is I am really researching. We tossed round masculinity, manhood, and the like. Many of you referred to this concept as just who you are, or just 'doing you.' Can you talk a little bit about the term manhood and its limitations? What might be a better word to use other than manhood?
4. Some of you touched on the influence your friends had on your developing ideas of manhood. So tell us more about the influence your peers had on your idea of being a man, either negative or positive. Talk about either role models or counter models and give us examples.
5. A few of you talked about how Black men are viewed in society and that "the Black man has to be in this box." What does this box look like? How is what they present different? How is it the same? Where does this pressure to be a certain way come from?
6. Some of you grew up in single parent families. Some of you had very little contact with your fathers. I am wondering how, if at all, this impacted your idea of manhood?

7. Some of you addressed times in your life when you felt held back from fully expressing your idea of manhood. Can you tell us about when you may have felt held back from expressing manhood the way you would like to? How/what did you feel/think about that?
8. Each of you talked about the role your fathers had in your idea of manhood. Some of you talked about their absence and way you did not want to be as men and as fathers. Still, some of you talked about your fathers as role models particularly as you matured and came to realize what you wanted out of life. Can you tell me more about that?
9. Some of you felt strongly that you had a responsibility to present yourselves in a certain light in contrast to prevalent stereotypes about Black men. Can each of you talk about the importance of stereotypes of Black men on how you choose to represent yourself in public? Where do these stereotypes come from?
10. Some of you are married, others are dating, and some of you are not in a relationship. What role does being/or not being in a relationship play in how you think about yourself as a man? Can you tell me more about the role of your intimate relationships in developing who you are as men? Are relationships an expected part of being a man? Is sex an important part of being a man? In what way?

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