Manhood constructions among engaged African American male collegians: influences, experiences, and contexts

T. Elon Dancy II
Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, tdancy1@lsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations

Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations/2740

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.
MANHOOD CONSTRUCTIONS AMONG ENGAGED AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE COLLEGIANS: INFLUENCES, EXPERIENCES, AND CONTEXTS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Educational Theory, Policy, and Practice

by

T. Elon Dancy II
B.S., University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, 2000
M.H.S.A., University of Arkansas at Little Rock, 2002
December 2007
DEDICATION

To my mother, Gwendolyn,

in your love…

To my grandmother, Charlotte,

in your legacy…

To my mentor, Chris,

in your example…

I continue.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called, according to His purpose.

Romans 8:28

God

God, I thank you immensely for allowing me to reach this point. Your grace, mercy, and power is magnanimous! Clearly, you have ordered my steps during this process. You have blessed me to grow in ways I never knew I could and to experience things I never thought I would. May I never forget, as the gospel song reminds, that “only what I do for You will last”.

My Family

I thank my parents who have been pillars of love, support, and patience. Abraham Lincoln once said, “I remember my mother’s prayers and they have followed me. They have clung to me all my life.” I thank my mother, Gwendolyn Eskridge Dancy, for her persistent prayers, love, and strength. You are my first teacher, my shining example, and my living guardian angel. And when, during the doctoral program’s course, I survived a terrible car accident with my leg shattered into numerous pieces, you bore a year-long task of care that supported me to my very core. Truly, no words capture my gratitude for the myriad times you have gone to God on my behalf to, at times, put my salvation, health, and happiness before your own. To me, you will always be (as you have always been) the most beautiful woman in the world. In my eyes, this accomplishment is as much yours as it is mine. So, in that case, we did it!

I also thank my father, Theodis Dancy, whose namesake I bear. I may never realize the full extent of the ways in which your love, sacrifice, care, attention, and
support has sustained and advantaged me in my life. For all that you have done and will do for me, I am truly grateful and proud to be your son. I also thank my younger brother, Theron, who is not only my sibling, but my first friend. I am grateful to have your support, love, admiration, and assurance that I will be successful in all of my heart’s desires. In the words that you recently wrote to me, “let’s continue to make our parents proud!”

I also thank my relatives, particularly my Eskridge relatives, including a host of aunts, uncles, and cousins who have always been supportive, loving, and encouraging in my life. Yes, the “big paper” is over! I especially thank and recognize my grandmother, Charlotte Allen Eskridge, who is 96 years old and who God has blessed to see this day. You possess knowledge that cannot be captured in any book, and I am blessed that you share it with me whenever we’re together. Making you proud motivates me tremendously. I also thank my Aunt Betty Lawson for her many supportive efforts and sentiments during various points of my doctoral process. Last, I thank my ancestors, many about whom I know, about whom I have read, and others, I may never know. Wherever you are in God’s presence, may you, too, share in this achievement.

**My Dissertation Committee**

I give special thanks to my dissertation co-chairs, Dr. Becky Ropers-Huilman and Dr. Roland W. Mitchell. Thank you, Becky, for your support through offering feedback, thoughts, and comments on my dissertation work. You have challenged my thinking in ways that I believe will make my work, and any work hereafter, stronger. Thank you, Roland, for assuming a co-chair capacity on my committee. I greatly appreciate your work, understanding, and efforts to aid my transition from student to doctor. You are an
inspiration. I also thank my other dissertation committee members: Dr. Thomas Durant, Dr. Leonard Moore, and Dr. Lillian Bridwell-Bowles for their valued time and service in reading my work and offering thoughtful comments. In addition, I thank Dr. Paul Farnsworth for his early service on my dissertation committee.

**My Mentors**

God has blessed me with the most attentive, compassionate, talented, and brilliant mentors a doctoral student ever had. Thank you, Dr. M. Christopher Brown II, for engaging the cumbersome work of mentoring, befriending, role molding, “frientoring”, and academic midwifery. You have invested so much in me, and I stand willing, ready, and able to show you return on that investment. Thank you, Dr. James Earl Davis, for your time, work, and attention as well. My proximity to you and Chris made me the envy of many doctoral students. I do not know what you both saw in me, but I am glad you did. I crossed this threshold to the doctorate atop your shoulders. I am confident that I would not have reached this point in time the way I reached it, if not for your guidance. You have resurrected my thinking in ways I never imagined.

**Others in the Village**

**Others in the Academy.** I am indebted to numerous scholars, teachers, and academics who, during this process, have offered me advice, support, friendship, and reassurance that all my hard work would pay off. They include: Dr. Vernon Polite, Shederick McClendon, Dr. Lemuel Watson, Dr. Darryl Holloman, Dr. Garrett Albert Duncan, Dr. Albert Thigpen, Dr. Anthony Pittman, and Dr. Joe Lott.

**My Friends.** I have a strong group of friends who are all successful in their own right. I thank you all for the supportive role you played in my trajectory to the Ph.D. Of
these, special thanks goes to Jasmine K. Gregory, who is like a sister to me. Other friends include: Rev. Ronnie Miller Yow, Attorney Kimberly Williams, Courtney Strickland (who is also my mentee), Pastor Telvis Rich, Dr. Arthur Fields, Alvin King II, and my SREB cohort (who are thanked explicitly below).

**My Fraternity.** *College days swiftly pass imbued with memories fond…Alpha* Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., how great thou art! Our brotherhood, in my eyes, assumes the most meaningful history and presence in the African American community and the broader society, but of course, I am little biased! May we remain united in our efforts to provide scholarship, service, and love for all mankind. Many members of this fraternity provided invaluable assistance to me at various points of my doctoral progress. I am especially grateful to Dr. Arthur Fields for his selflessness and assistance during my data collection efforts. Dr. Fields, you have no idea what you meant to my data collection and how you eased my navigation of foreign territory. I also give special thanks to Dean Joseph Byrd for his selflessness and assistance to my dissertation efforts as well as his faith in my abilities.

Other fraternity members who enhanced my work or provided support at various points of my doctoral process include: Rev. Ronnie Miller Yow, Darrell Tiller, Charles King, Arthur McDade, Marq Golden, Sascha Chatman, Marco J. Barker, Solomon Graves, Alvin J. Cavalier, Dr. Roderick Smothers, Dr. Zollie Stevenson, Gerard McShephard, Pastor Telvis Rich, Dr. Robert Palmer, John Lee, Hubert Brown (deceased), and of course, Chris, James, Shederick, Vernon, Art, and Joe. It is also not lost in my mind that the doctoral fellowship I first received is named for an inspirational fraternity member whom I am pleased to know, Dr. Huel Perkins. Last, I also recognize
and thank the brotherly sentiments from my many of my line brothers and other members of the Gamma Delta, Pi Lambda, Delta Sigma Lambda and Xi Nu Lambda chapters.

**At LSU.** I am extremely appreciative of the support that I received from those at LSU who I encountered on my academic journey. I am especially indebted to Ms. Melonee Wicker for her kind, mothering, and encouraging spirit to help me reach my goals. I also thank Dr. Eugene Kennedy for his support of me as I transitioned from doctoral student to doctoral candidate. Other thanks goes to Joyce Stevenson, Lois Stewart, Tara Stewart, Jarel Francis, Dora Ann Parrino. I also appreciate the early support I received from Dr. Marietta Del Favero when I was a doctoral student. Last, special thanks goes to Marie Hamilton in the LSU Graduate School for her extraordinary support as I navigated the doctoral process.

**Southern Regional Education Board (SREB).** I was blessed to receive and highly benefitted from tuition and professional development support from SREB. Specifically, I thank Dr. Ansley Abraham, Robbie Ouzts, Melissa Koran, and the sundry other staff at SREB. I thank my SREB cohort who became like sisters to me as we all pursued our Ph.Ds: Dr. Chanika Jones, Dr. Francesca Melleion-Williams, Jennifer Fabre, Kenyetta Smith, and Claire Sam. You five added fullness, light moments, a sense of engagement, and grounding to what is typically regarded as a solitary and nomadic process.

**At UAPB.** I am quite thankful for the education I received at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. I extend special thanks for the myriad opportunities, mentoring, long talks, advice, feedback, and nurturing I have received (and continue to receive) from Dr. Margaret Martin-Hall. Thank you for giving me my first position in higher education.
Additional thanks go to my former colleagues in the UAPB Office of University Relations and Development: Libra Collins-Roulhac, Courtney Strickland, Denise Todd, Shirley Wright, and other staff. I also thank the staff of UAPB Printing Services for their myriad efforts to aid me in my document productions: Laura Hildreth, Brian Williams, Barbara Mazique, Belinda Ingram, and other staff. I also thank Dr. Carolyn Blakely, Chancellor Lawrence A. Davis, Jr., Dr. Mary Benjamin, Shawn Linton, Joyce Vaughan, and Eric Hudson for well-wishes, advice, support, and assistance during this process.

**Others Apropos to the Dissertation.** Thank you, Tamar Stone, for the accurate and polished transcriptions. I could not have completed my data analysis as timely as I did, if not for your hard work, dedication, and sensitivity to my capacities as a full-time doctoral candidate. Last, and with great distinction, I thank the twenty-four African American college men who participated in this study. Your thoughts, reflections, experiences, statements, sensemakings, and worldviews will speak to higher education in ways that will contribute to making the holistic collegiate experience of African American men more equitable and engaging. I will endeavor in my professional and academic realities to attempt to improve your collegiate realities. Clearly, this work would not be possible without your work. And, as expressed by African thought, *I am* because *we are*. To all who have aided my trajectory to the Ph.D., I, again, thank you and pledge to act in similar ways to and for others.

Respectfully, I am

T. Elon Dancy II, Ph.D.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION ........................................................................................................................................ iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ......................................................................................................................... iv

LIST OF FIGURES ...................................................................................................................................... xiv

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................................................. xv

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCING THE STUDY .............................................................................................. 1
  My Struggle to Put Away Childish Things, or Confessions of a “Good Boy” ............................................ 3
    Roots ................................................................................................................................................. 3
    Boyhood Development ......................................................................................................................... 4
    Schooling Experiences .......................................................................................................................... 5
    Collegiate Experiences .......................................................................................................................... 7
  African American Male Collegiate Enrollment, Degree Attainment and Self Perceptions ....................... 9
  African American Students’ Experiences in HWIs and HBCUs ............................................................. 14
  Diverse Experiences of African American Men in HBCUs and HWIs ................................................. 17
    HWIs vs. HBCUs ................................................................................................................................. 17
    GBT African American Men in College ............................................................................................... 24
    Collegiate Fraternities .......................................................................................................................... 26
  Male, Man, Manhood, Masculinity, and the Behavior Code ................................................................... 28
    Male vs. Man ........................................................................................................................................ 28
    Manhood vs. Masculinity ......................................................................................................................... 29
    The Behavior Code ............................................................................................................................... 32
    Conflicting Ideologies: Afrocentric and Eurocentric Paradigms of Manhood ...................................... 34
  Scope of the Study ................................................................................................................................ 37
    Research Void .................................................................................................................................... 38
    Inquiry Approach ................................................................................................................................. 38
    Mapping Engaged Men .......................................................................................................................... 39
  Research Questions .................................................................................................................................. 42
  Dissertation Scheme ............................................................................................................................... 43

CHAPTER II: (RE)READING VOICES FROM THE PAST: A HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN AND MANHOOD ................................................................................................................. 45
  Pre-Transplantation: Men of the African Diaspora .................................................................................. 47
  Post-Transplantation America: Patriarchal Manhood and Masculinity ..................................................... 51
  Resistant Manhood and Masculinity in the Antebellum and Reconstruction Eras ................................... 59
    Military Constructions of African American Manhood ......................................................................... 60
    African American Manhood in the Reconstruction Era ....................................................................... 64
  The Victorian Era: Class and Ritual as Manhood Constructs ....................................................................... 67
  African American Manhood in the Civil Rights Era ................................................................................ 76
    The Black Power Movement .................................................................................................................. 81
    Women’s and Gay-Liberation Movements ............................................................................................. 83
Conclusion ........................................................................................................................ 85

CHAPTER III: THEORY AND RESEARCH............................................................. 89
DuBois’ Theory of Double Consciousness ................................................................. 90
The Cross Model of Nigrecence .............................................................................. 91
Eagly’s Social Role Theory ...................................................................................... 93
Tinto’s Theory of Social and Academic Engagement .............................................. 94
The Study of African American Men and Manhood ............................................... 97
Early Development of African American Masculine Identities ............................. 101
The Development of Masculine Identities in Collegiate Contexts ...................... 112
Diverse Masculine Experiences in College ............................................................ 118
  Homophobia ....................................................................................................... 123
  The Homosocial World of Fraternities .............................................................. 125
  Sexual Diversity in Fraternities ......................................................................... 128
Conclusion .............................................................................................................. 129

CHAPTER IV: METHODOLOGICAL SCHEME AND PRAXIS ......................... 131
Qualitative Methods in Education ........................................................................ 131
Constructivist Grounded Theory .......................................................................... 133
Role of the Researcher .......................................................................................... 136
Sites ......................................................................................................................... 138
  Carnegie Classifications ..................................................................................... 138
The Participants ..................................................................................................... 144
  Sampling Strategy .............................................................................................. 144
  Fraternity Membership ...................................................................................... 145
  Participant Group .............................................................................................. 146
  Sociodemographic Characteristics ................................................................... 147
Data Collection Procedures .................................................................................. 148
  Access ................................................................................................................ 148
  IRB Compliance ................................................................................................. 149
  Interview-Guide Approach .................................................................................. 149
Data Analysis ........................................................................................................ 150
  The Inference Quality ......................................................................................... 154
Scope of the Inquiry ............................................................................................. 156

CHAPTER V: PARTICIPANT INTRODUCTIONS............................................. 157
At Benjamin Harrison University ................................................................. 158
At Mary McCleod Bethune University ............................................................ 160
At James Buchanan University ................................................................ Original 162
At Martin Luther King University ................................................................. 164
At Malcolm X University .................................................................................. 166
At W. E. B. DuBois University ........................................................................ 168
At Zachary Taylor University ........................................................................... 170
At Martin Van Buren University ................................................................. 172
At Thurgood Marshall University ................................................................. 174
At Harriet Tubman University ......................................................................... 175

xi
CHAPTER VI: EMERGING THEMES ................................................................. 183
Manhood Constructions in College: Engaging Interview Intersections ............... 184
Self-Expectations ............................................................................................... 185
“Man-Up”: Being Resilient .................................................................................. 185
“Feeling I Am Grown”: Being Responsible .......................................................... 187
“Just ‘Do You’ and ‘Be Real’”: Being Authentic .................................................... 188
Family Relationships and Responsibilities ............................................................. 190
“It Was a Dream of My Family”: Being a Torchbearer .......................................... 190
Mothering for Manhood, Fathering for Masculinity ................................................ 192
Worldviews and Existential Philosophies ............................................................... 198
“Putting Things in God’s Hand”: Being Spiritual and Religious .............................. 199
“Giving Back”: Thinking in an Afrocentric Sense .................................................... 202
“We Must Never Forget”: Cultural Mistrust and Awareness ................................. 204
Cognitive Dissonance: Double Consciousness in Black and White ......................... 207
“Trying to Be Proper”: Pressures from Whites ....................................................... 210
“Trying to Be Down”: Pressures from African Americans ........................................ 212
“Trying to Be a Part”: Pressures from African American Men ................................ 214
Manhood Constructions by Institutional Type ......................................................... 215
Collegiate Experiences and Manhood: The Institutional Role ................................. 218
“I’m Still Here!”: Institutional Recognition ............................................................. 218
“The President Called Me by My Name” ................................................................. 219
“They Look at Us Like Roughnecks” ...................................................................... 220
“Why Did You Say We Have to Live in the Worst Dorm Again?” ......................... 221
“We Need to See Ourselves” .................................................................................. 223
“Promoting Cultural Understanding” .................................................................... 225
“We Need to Hear Ourselves” ................................................................................ 227
“Knowing the Teacher Behind the Suit”: Constructing Faculty/Student Relationships .................................................................................................................. 230
“From Pals to Peers”: Mentoring and Supporting ................................................... 236
“Opening My Eyes to the World”: Bridging Campus and Community .................... 238
Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 241

CHAPTER VII: WE WEAR THE MASKS: MANHOOD TYPOLOGIES AND VIGNETTES ................................................................................................................. 245
Sexualizer: Sexualizing the Masculine ...................................................................... 246
Vignette 1: The Importance of Being Ernest: “It’s All in the Swagger” ...................... 248
Transgressors: Banishment from African American Manhood .................................. 253
Vignette 2: Outing the Transgressive Self, Breaking Silence .................................... 255
Misogynist: The Paradox of (Woman-Policed) Oppression .................................... 258
Vignette 3: Leonard: Tales of a “Student Leader Pimp” .......................................... 260
Self-Actualizers: Toward an Authentic Masculine Self ............................................ 264
Vignette 4: Sean: “Being Me to My Fullest” ............................................................. 266

xii
LIST OF FIGURES

I. Theoretical model........................................................................................................ 96

II. Institutional matrix.................................................................................................... 142
ABSTRACT

The manhood constructions and collegiate experiences of twenty-four engaged African American men enrolled across twelve, four-year colleges were explored. The purpose of this study was to inform colleges about the ways in which these men construct their manhood. The manifestations of these constructions in African American college men’s behavior, enrollment, and campus engagement were also investigated. The participants, who represented a range of college engagement, were enrolled in colleges that are situated across the nineteen southern and border states of the United States of America. The institutional selection matrix was further disaggregated according to predominant population (HBCU, HWI) and institutional funding type (public, private).

A qualitative research approach was used to forward this study. Specifically, a combination of grounded theory, phenomenological, and case study methodologies examined the nexus between African American manhood and collegiate experiences. The combined research methods were applied to data gleaned from face-to-face interviews that lasted over two hours. Six trustworthiness techniques support the following emergent themes of manhood constructions and collegiate experiences: (1) self expectations (2) relationships and responsibilities to family (3) worldviews and life philosophies (4) double-consciousness (5) institutional recognition (6) constructing faculty/student relationships (7) mentoring and supporting (8) bridging campus and community.

Respondents reported differences in the ways in which they were treated and engaged in historically black and white institutions, also reinforcing various manhood constructs. Emerging divergent perspectives informed a grouping of these men into the following manhood typologies: (1) sexualizer (2) transgressor (3) misogynist and (4) self-actualizer.
The manhood typologies were presented in this dissertation research to further highlight the complexities, underscore the pressures, and draw attention to the ways in which society, and its sundry contexts, further complicates these men’s manhood constructions. Implications are included for the following higher education areas: (1) institutional climate (2) student mentoring (3) faculty development (4) student enrichment (5) contextual cross-pollinations by race and gender. Implications for theory and research are also presented.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCING THE STUDY

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; When I became a man, I put away childish things

The Holy Bible, King James Version, I Corinthians 13:11

Manhood trajectories are differently considered and described in historical and scholarly texts. For example, biological discourse does not give treatment to the manhood process to which I Corinthians alludes. To become a man in the Corinthians assertion is to act and behave in socially expected and prescribed ways. Today, this developmental process is no different. Psychotherapist and author, Sheldon Kopp (1991), declares that people are all born into families and cultures not chosen, given names unselected, instructed in behavior and values not freely chosen, and too often expected to live lives designed by others. In this vein, social directions shape what men say, how men act, what men keep, and what men put away in the process to declare the phrase, “I am a man!”.

African American men, like men of other ethnicities, use the influences of their cultures and communities to inform their voices and behaviors. However, what it means to be an African American man is singularly defined along raced and gendered lines with little margin for different manhood choices and behaviors. African American men who engage culturally unconventional struggles to put away childish things are largely criticized and face glaring suspicion and condemnation in their own communities as well as others. Social contexts judge who is right in his self-definition and find atypical African American men in contempt of social laws.

African American boys and men are enigmatic in educational spaces. African American boys and men are both admired and despised in schooling and collegiate
contexts (Davis, 1994; Davis, 2001; Polite, 2000a, 2000b). The heroics of African American boys and men are often praised in peer and athletic circles across educational institutions (M. C. Brown & Davis, 2000; Davis, 2000; Ferguson, 2000). African American men are perceived as hypersexual and dangerous as well as envied and punished. Recently, the New York Times and other popular media outlets have touted the “Crisis of the Black Male” with near-apocalyptic vigor. As a result, the collegiate experiences of African American men are eclipsed as media pundits scurry to inquire about the experiences of African American men in ghettos or prisons.

The purpose of this study is to inform historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and historically white institutions (HWIs) about the different ways in which engaged African American men construct their manhood and subsequent behaviors.¹ This study is important for informing institutional understanding of African American men’s enrollment, engagement and retention in both collegiate contexts. Specifically, I conducted intensive one-on-one interviews to identify how engaged African American men construct their manhood while in college and to understand the institutional role in shaping these men’s collegiate experiences and manhood. In this chapter, I first position myself in the sociocultural experience of African American manhood. Next, I identify three areas of research that undergird a need for study in this area: (1) the collegiate enrollment, degree attainment, self-perceptions, and retention of African American students, particularly African American men; (2) the experiences of African American students in historically black colleges and/or universities (HBCUs) and historically white institutions.

¹ The term historically white institution is not a misnomer. Rather, it is used intentionally to describe and refer to the legitimate and legal practices of racial segregation in postsecondary institutions prior to the Brown litigation and its precedent cases. Using the term historically white institution is a way to remember the binarism supported by the United States and its colleges.
institutions (HWIs); and (3) African American men’s diverse experiences in HBCUs and HWIs. These three areas are highlighted as they inform this study about the research on African American men in HBCUs and HWIs. In Chapter II, I turn to scholarship relevant to the manhood and masculinity of African American boys and men in K-12 and collegiate contexts. This distinction between reviews of relevant literature is made in effort to further position this study and clarify its contribution (Charmaz, 2006). Pertinent terms to this inquiry are also defined and compared in Chapter I. Additionally, the scope of this study is described in this chapter. Last, research questions are presented at the end of Chapter I to guide the inquiry.

**My Struggle to Put Away Childish Things, or Confessions of a “Good Boy”**

If I didn’t define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people’s fantasies for me and eaten alive  
Audre Lorde

The world described above is the world I know. I engaged my own pathway to manhood amid its cultures, spaces, and rules. This is my story.

**Roots.** The knowledge of my family history is seminal to the process to define myself. Whenever I read the published stories of my family history, I find that my ancestors’ struggles, achievements, adversities, dreams, and nightmares were variable in their lives while love and bonded kinship were staples in how they constructed their identities. Many African American men are not afforded the opportunities to engage such texts. Their family histories either remain buried in folklore or ambiguous auction records that document the sale of African Americans to whites during the days of slavery. In fact, many African American men only trace their genealogies to slavery (if that far) because the United States census did not include African Americans until the reconstruction period (Haley, 1978). The knowledge of family history motivates me to fight against
patriarchal, marginalizing practices in America. However, many African American men will never learn their family histories and will never know, hear, or understand the works, legacies, and deeds of their families.

**Boyhood Development.** I grew up in a household that reflected the strength, the guidance, and leadership of my mother. As a little boy, I once escaped into my house to avoid one of many childhood racist encounters with our white neighbors and their children. My mother stopped me in my tracks and said with conviction, “don’t ever let anyone make you afraid of them. This is your home; a place where you don’t run from anybody”. *Mother wit* is the guiding force in my life albeit I was raised in a household with a mother and father. M. C. Brown and Davis (2000) define *mother wit* as the instructions of the mother to protect and guide the manhood decisions and behaviors of her son. Notwithstanding, my father is also an attentive parental presence in more observed, indirect, and unspoken ways.

My mother cultivated in me a more bourgeoisie masculine behavior displayed by a wardrobe of sweater vests and bowties and a love for reading and arts steeped in Eurocentric tradition. The positions my mother held as teacher and principal lent themselves to her involvement in all aspects of my academic education. I learned early that I was a “good boy” if I performed well academically and made my parents proud. I was instructed and expected to only use physical aggression if physically challenged. Paradoxically, my father left my instructions for manhood to my mother and only pressed for my involvement in activities that would “make me a man” like little-league baseball and other sports.
Schooling Experiences. My educational experiences robbed me of my social extroversion and loquaciousness and replaced them with silence in the racially charged and masculine normative spaces of schooling. I came to know the magnitude of the importance of race and gender in American schools and colleges during the “black male crisis” era in which policy and intervention initiatives emerged nationwide to address the disparate social outcomes of African American men. The southern high school I attended was racialized throughout its academic and social settings. African American and white students preferred separate parking lots for their vehicles and separate seating during assemblies or classroom instruction. In this space, I never possessed the kind of power that African American boys used to gain social attractiveness with girls, strike fear in the hearts of childhood foes and popularize them in peer circles. Unfortunately, an African American boy with my social, cultural, extracurricular and academic profile faced a certain “banishment from black boyhood” in my school (Davis, 2000, p. 61).

The power I needed was imbued with a different social education that teaches African American boys and men to pursue athletic gains and to demonstrate hyperaggressive and/or violent behavior. African American boys who possessed this social education defined the masculine standard for other African American boys in the school. The African American peer circles they ruled were therefore hegemonic as disruptive African American boys decided the masculine rules. In contrast, these aggressive African American boys were perceived as threatening in patriarchal white peer circles. I often wished, like Davis (2000) and Kelly (1995), that I could provoke a sense of threat and fear and be perceived as something other than a good boy so that I would feel genuinely accepted by other African American boys in school (Davis, 2000).
I recall one schooling incident in which I witnessed an African American boy endure malicious ridicule from two white boys. Among many insults, the white boys referred to the African American boy as “Pat” whose androgynous appearance on the television show *Saturday Night Live* kept enquiring voices guessing the character’s gender. I immediately became interested in the reactions of the African American boys who were witnessing the exchange. The African American boys (whether they knew it or not) had been baptized with racial epithets by the same white boys. After hesitation, the African American boys joined in laughter with the white boys to the chagrin of the ridiculed African American boy. I now realize the ontological quandary I was witnessing. Before me was a practical example of how sacred the behavior code is among African American boys and men. The behavior code rules are lifelong and clearly describe acceptable ways that African American boys and men must walk, talk, dress, think, and carry themselves (Davis, 2000). The behavior code is a particular form of hegemonic masculinity and deems an African American boy or man worthy of engagement if his behaviors and value systems assume those that African American boys are “supposed” to have. The African American boys had to decide whether they would stand with the white boys against perceived beta-male behavior or whether they would side with the African American boy against a race that assumes patriarchal superiority over theirs. The white boys’ choice to demean may suggest that masculine behavior is easily scrutinized by peer groups regardless of race. Notwithstanding, the African American boys’ decision to laugh suggests that masculine behavior is more valued than racial solidarity in a community of African American boys if it violates the behavior code.
Collegiate Experiences. Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and historically white institutions (HWIs) are paradigmatically different and therefore inform manhood constructions in different ways (M. C. Brown & Freeman, 2004; Lamont, 1979; Roebuck & Murty, 1993; Willie & McCord, 1972). HBCU ideologies, which are more or less Afrocentric (defined later in this chapter), do not authentically engage all African American masculinities as certain masculinities are normalized and others are left in the periphery. In the historically black college setting, I noticed that many African American men eluded leadership positions and academic work. A preponderance of African American men engaged only in sports while I chose to engage in myriad university-wide committees and organizations. Inevitably, my value system was again scrutinized and I was charged with violating the behavior code as I had been in school. In my mind, negative ramifications included presumptions of weakness or sexual orientation simply because I did not dress in ways prescribed by the hip-hop culture, use slang, or exhibit physical prowess on the athletic courts and fields of college.

Race and gender inequalities in historically white institutions take shape in covert thinking and actions and often blur the line between what is real, what is perception, and what is hallucination. The haughtiness of a laugh, the wink of an eye, the perception of words as less cogent draw feelings of bewilderment, humiliation, and disengagement. Many white students and faculty are inherently unaware of how the interests of students of color become sacrificed by patriarchal power in the classrooms of historically white institutions. I have witnessed white students only applaud the work of students of color and not their fellow white students when neither work appears more impressive or praiseworthy than the other. This discernment suggests that white students think about
the intellectual capacity of students of color in inferior terms and are impressed when that capacity exceeds their expectations.

My eyes were additionally opened in this environment as I added yet another oppressive dimension to my identity—disabled. On a thunderous and lightning-laden August 4, 2005, about two weeks before Hurricane Katrina further called into question the nature of race relations in America, I survived a devastating automobile accident on an interstate in the South. As a result I was faced with two weaknesses—(1) a completely shattered leg and (2) hypertension—the eminent inheritance of African American men in patriarchal spaces. African American men are fundamentally taught to never show weakness, and for the first time, I understood. I find that any superfluous labels (disabled, gay, muslim) further complicate the experiences of African American men in patriarchal contexts. I felt uninvited to receive the accommodations of my disability to which white students feel entitled. As German philosopher, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe writes, “Man is made by his beliefs. As he believes, so he is.” The feelings of exclusion are rooted in my internalization of oppression throughout my lifetime. Recognizing these roots charges me to do the work of weeding.

The central focus of my rehabilitation was to restore my body to the athletic and virile standard it once occupied to offset the sympathetic looks of others who looked on as my mother and father took turns pushing me in a wheelchair or balancing me on crutches. In the aftermath of my recovery, the scars on my body from the shattered glass and stitches are badges of masculinity, a formidable contrast to the smooth skin once present. Something within me cherishes that. I felt as if I had been brought closer to the wish to be something other than a “momma’s boy”. As American novelist Norman
Mailer (1966) asserts in *Cannibals and Christians*, masculinity is not something given but something gained through winning small battles with honor. And I had won—I survived.

I close this section with the words of James Davis (2000), who posits that “what it means to be a black male is so marginalized and suppressed in [educational institutions] and at home, that the manhood of black men is developed with great difficulty” (p. 64). I share my story to position myself in this work by revealing my experiences and biases (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). I also offer these reflections to present the context through which I understand how African American men construct their manhood in raced and gendered spaces in college. Accordingly, this empirical undertaking used raced and gendered lenses to inform HBCUs and HWIs about how they support and impede the manhood development of engaged African American men.

**African American Male Collegiate Enrollment, Degree Attainment, and Self-Perceptions**

The gendered trends discussed in this section describe the educational attainment, enrollment, and persistence of African American men, all of which fall below that of the general college student population and below that of African American women (M. C. Brown & Hurst, 2004). Self-perception trends among African American men are also presented in this section. The ways in which African American men perceive their academic and leadership abilities has steadily increased over the past two decades though African American men’s enrollment and degree persistence has decreased. These trends disturb higher education institutions and challenge researchers to expose the causes and propose recommendations. These trends persist despite race-based admissions,
affirmative action hires for faculty and staff, and scholarships to increase collegiate access.

According to a report issued by the Frederick D. Patterson Institute of the United Negro College Fund, the rates at which African American men complete college are alarming. Enrollment of African American students in historically black colleges/universities (HBCUs) and historically white institutions (HWIs) increased but was disproportionately gendered in the years following Brown v. Board of Education (1954). In 1955, African American men comprised 55% of African American undergraduate enrollment while African American women comprised 45% (M. C. Brown & Hurst, 2004). Between 1976 and 2000, the percentage of African American men began to decline sharply. Today, African American men account for only 37% of African American undergraduate participation in higher education while African American women account for 63% (M. C. Brown & Hurst, 2004).

Evidence also suggests that different factors affect the decisions of African American men to pursue higher education post-high school in comparison to African American women. In 1976, 35% of African American high school graduates who enrolled in college were African American men compared to 32% of African American women (M. C. Brown & Hurst, 2004). However, the college enrollment among African American men who were high school graduates continued to decrease. By 2000, African American men who had graduated high school were enrolling in colleges at the same rate as they were in 1976 while African American women who had graduated high school were enrolling in college at an increased rate of 11% (M. C. Brown & Hurst, 2004). And while the number of African American men awarded the bachelor’s degree has increased
by 52% from 1977 to 2000, the number of African American women awarded the bachelor’s degree has increased by 112% in the same period (M. C. Brown & Hurst, 2004).

Another recent report also observes that African American men are not persisting to and through the latter stages of the postsecondary pipeline (S. R. Harper, 2006). S. R. Harper (2006) reports that between 1977 and 2003, the most significant gains in African American men’s degree attainment occurred at the associate’s degree, not the bachelor’s level. Analysis in this report also reveals that white men earned at least ten times more postsecondary degrees than did African American men in 2003. These raced and gendered trends of collegiate enrollment, persistence, and degree attainment may point to an innate or cultural struggle in the African American male psyche that draws this group’s disparate outcomes. However, recent work reports self-concept trends among African American men, and thus, adds understanding to how African American men innately consider their aptitude, achievement, and education (W. R. Allen, Griffin, Jayakumar, Kimura-Walsh, & Wolf, 2007).

African American men’s self-ratings of their abilities have increased over the past 30 years. In a study of self-perception trends among African American men who were college freshmen, African American men reported high educational aspirations as well as high self-confidence in their academic abilities and leadership skills during the high school-to-college transition (W. R. Allen, Griffin, Jayakumar, Kimura-Walsh, & Wolf, 2007). Specifically, W. R. Allen and colleagues found that African American men who were college freshmen were likely to rate themselves in the top 10% of all students their age regarding: academic ability, math ability, writing ability, drive to achieve, and
leadership ability. Three significant self-rating trends (academic ability, leadership ability, and intellectual self-confidence) are identified over a thirty-year period for African American male college freshmen. In 1971, 34.5% of college-enrolled African American men believed they ranked in the top 10% of college students regarding academic ability. This percentage rate had increased to 64.2% in 2004. In 1971, 43.5% of college-enrolled African American men believed they ranked in the top 10% of college-enrolled students regarding leadership ability. In 2004, 68.5% of African American men believed they ranked in the top 10% of college-enrolled students regarding leadership ability. In 1971, 44.2% of college-enrolled African American men believed they ranked in the top 10% of college students regarding their confidence in their intellect. By 2004, 75.5% of college-enrolled African American men believed they ranked in the top 10% of college students regarding confidence in their intellectual abilities (W. R. Allen et al., 2007).

Evidence also supports the assertion that African American men who choose to attend HWIs express slightly greater confidence in their academic abilities than their counterparts entering HBCUs (W. R. Allen, Griffin, Jayakumar, Kimura-Walsh, & Wolf, 2007). W. R. Allen and colleagues report that, in 2004, 66.4% of HWI-enrolled, African American male freshmen rated themselves above average regarding academic ability in comparison to 60.5% of HBCU-enrolled, African American male freshmen. Over the past three decades, African American men enrolled in HWIs also rated themselves more highly than African American enrolled in HBCUs regarding leadership ability and intellectual self-confidence (W. R. Allen et al, 2007). At the turn of the century, however, virtually no differences existed in the ways in which African American men
perceived their abilities. In 2004, 68.9% of African American men who chose HBCUs and 68.2% of African American men who chose HWIs rated themselves in the top 10% regarding their leadership ability (W. R. Allen et. al, 2007). Seventy-eight percent of African American men attending HBCUs rated themselves in the top 10% of their peers regarding intellectual self-confidence. In comparison, 73.9% of African American men enrolled in HWIs rated themselves similarly. This study also found African American women to feel less confident about their academic abilities than men albeit African American women’s academic performance was superior. In 2004, African American men rated themselves more highly than African American women in terms of their academic ability (64% vs. 61%), leadership ability (69% vs. 65%), and intellectual self-confidence (76% vs. 65%) (W. R. Allen et. al, 2007).

In short, W. R. Allen and colleagues (2007) report that many African American men who come to college perceive their self-confidence and aspirations highly. Notwithstanding, African American men are disadvantaged in the collegiate pipeline in ways that impact persistence, retention, and degree attainment disparately. For decades, African American men who attended HWIs ranked their self-perceptions more highly than their counterparts enrolled in HBCUs. However, the retention rates among African American men enrolled in HWIs lag behind those rates among African American men enrolled in HBCUs (Davis, 1994; Kimbrough & Harper, 2006).

Institutional context aside, African American men’s retention rates are dismal across institutions of higher education. Mortenson (2001) reports that, in 2000, the college retention rate for African American men was 33.8 percent. In other words, 66.2% of African American men disenrolled before completing the requirements for the
bachelor’s degree. In fact, the rate at which African American men continued college is reported as the lowest among all raced and gendered groups (Mortenson, 2001). The findings of the previous studies, when paired with the inconsistent trends discussed earlier in this section, beg additional and diverse research on the ways in which collegiate contexts advantage and disadvantage American American men.

**African American Students’ Experiences in HWIs and HBCUs**

The research literature is replete with findings that clearly highlight African American students as marginalized in historically white contexts and satisfied in historically black contexts (M. C. Brown & Freeman, 2004; Lamont, 1979; Roebuck & Murty, 1993; Willie & McCord, 1972). Yet, African American undergraduate enrollment is increasing at a greater rate in HWIs than HBCUs (W. R. Allen, Epps, & Haniff, 1991; Davis, 1994). Because both HWIs and HBCUs are important in the education of African American students, literature on both contexts is considered in this section.

After *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and the turbulent Civil Rights Movement, scholars increasingly studied African American students on historically white college campuses (Astin, 1977; 1982; Cope & Hannah, 1975; Fleming, 1984; Nettles, 1985; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Scholars from psychological, anthropological, and educational disciplines investigated why African Americans at all levels of education have difficulty learning, adjusting, and staying in historically white institutions post-*Brown* (Fleming, 1984; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Irvine, 1991; Willie & McCord, 1972). Several researchers provided data concerning the extent to which African American and minority students have been successful in negotiating the college pipeline (Astin, 1990, 1993; Nettles, 1991; Tinto, 1994). Findings suggest that African American educational
attainment in college largely relies on feelings of support and congruence with institutional norms.

More recently, many researchers have compared HBCUs to HWIs to identify differences between contexts regarding the academic and social attainment and cognitive development of African American students (W. R. Allen et al., 1991; Berger & Milem, 2000; Bohr, Pascarella, Nora, & Terenzini, 1995; Cheatham, Slaney, & Coleman, 1990; Fleming, 1984; Nettles, 1987; Watson & Kuh, 1996). The overarching finding of most of these studies, with the exception of the Cheatham et. al study, indicates that HBCUs are more successful at facilitating positive educational and social outcomes of African American students than are HWIs.

Research also investigates early retention strategies at HWIs that focus on the disparate academic performance of African American in comparison to white students (W. R. Allen, 1988; Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; Donovan, 1984; Loo & Rolison, 1986; Nettles, Thoeny, & Gosman, 1986; Smedley, Myers, & Harrell, 1993). Additionally, a number of studies suggest that the ability to cope, the influence of sociocultural factors, and perceptions of white peers and faculty differentially affect African American and white college students (W. R. Allen et al., 1991; Nettles, 1991; Nettles et al., 1986; Smedley et al., 1993; Thotis, 1982). Research supports assertions that African American students who do not engage within supportive communities at HWIs often experience feelings of discomfort, social isolation, and stress (Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996; Fleming, 1984; B. J. Gossett, Cuyjet, & Cockriel, 1998; Lang & Ford, 1992; Ponterotto, 1990; Sailes, 1993).
Sociocultural, contextual, and student development literature reports that embracing and considering the culture of students is essential to their retention at HWIs (DeSousa & Kuh, 1996; Mallinckrodt & Sedlacek, 1987; Nettles et al., 1986; Tracey & Sedlacek, 1985). Faculty who display sensitivity to the cultures of African Americans are also important. In fact, close relationships with faculty are associated with better grades, higher levels of retention, and feelings of satisfaction with the university (W. R. Allen, 1988; Kuh, Douglas, Lund, & Ramin-Gyumek, 1994; Nettles & Johnson, 1987; Nettles et al., 1986; Sedlacek, 1987).

Research further indicates that HBCUs remain particularly effective at promoting African American postsecondary attainment (M. C. Brown & Freeman, 2004). Specifically, while HBCUs only enroll 16% of African American undergraduate students nationwide, they produce 28.5% of the baccalaureate degrees awarded to African American students (M. C. Brown & Hurst, 2004). Lamont (1979) posits that for many African-American students, the HBCU is “culturally more congenial” than the historically white university (p. 32). Roebuck and Murty (1993) further suggest that “there is also a general level of satisfaction and camaraderie among [African American] students at black schools that is not found among [African American] students on white campuses” (p. 15). In sum, the research in this section overwhelmingly finds that African American students engage a more difficult trajectory to degree attainment in HWIs. African American students perceive HBCUs as more supportive and are therefore more likely to report satisfaction with collegiate experiences and persist to degree attainment.
Diverse Experiences of African American Men in HBCUs and HWIs

Research on African American men in college is largely interpreted within the breadth of research presented earlier. This section presents studies and syntheses that compare the experiences of African American men in HBCUs and HWIs. Additionally, the experiences of gay, bisexual, transgender (GBT) men in college and men who are involved in fraternities are described as they inform the broader and more inclusive discourse on collegiate manhood and college experiences.

HWIs vs HBCUs. In the three decades since the enactment of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, historically white universities have not been particularly successful in recruiting and retaining African American men (M. C. Brown, 1999b). Instead, the data on the educational attainment of African American men in HWIs remains disappointing at best and disturbing at worst despite growing enrollments. African American men report victimization by faculty, staff, and students, notwithstanding available institutional support services (Cuyjet, 1997a; Dancy & Brown, 2007; Davis, 1994). Research suggests that African American men in college are labeled as threatening, unfriendly, and less intelligent than any other distinguishable segment in American society (Cuyjet, 1997a; Hopkins, 1997). Consequently, African American men must negotiate a historically white campus at which some participants perceive them as hostile, intellectually inferior, fatherless, and determine their value based on athletic skill (Dancy, 2005; Dancy & Brown, 2007).

The collegiate involvement of African American men is also studied in historically white contexts. A recent study asserts that involvement in campus activities ameliorates the collegiate experiences of African American men enrolled in HWIs. C.
Brown (2006) used qualitative methods to identify the out-of-class activities that positively impact African American men at a historically white research university. African American men at this college identified engagement in student organizations, mentoring, and supportive relationships with each other as important for enhancing collegiate experiences.

Other work suggests that interpersonal relationships with same-sex peers reinforces in African American men a sense of self-identity, and positive perceptions of the collegiate experience (S. R. Harper, 2003). Despite these findings, few African American men are involved in out-of-class activities at HWIs (Sutton & Terrell, 1997). S. R. Harper and Wolley (2002) contend that African American men are underrepresented in student organizations and leadership at HWIs because their same-sex peer groups largely avoid them. In addition, they argue that student organization recruiting efforts are weak or nonexistent. S. R. Harper and colleague (2002) also write that African American men are more interested in traditionally hypermasculine activities such as sports and weightlifting; student organizations, therefore, have difficulty engaging their unique interests in HWIs.

In contrast, the complacency of African American men in HBCUs has recently been labeled a concern in the literature. For example, S. R. Harper, Carini, Bridges, and Hayek (2004) found in their study that African American men in HBCUs devote less time to academic preparation. S. R. Harper et. al (2004) also found that African American men interact less frequently with HBCU faculty than do African American women. Despite these trends, Davis (1999) reports that African American men who graduate from HBCUs successfully persist to graduate education, maintain healthy loving relationships,
and receive similar employment opportunities and wages to students from different populations who attend different institutions.

Other work foregrounds the experiences of African American men in HWIs and HBCUs as well. In *Helping African American Men Succeed in College*, Cuyjet (1997b) describes campus and service programs that address engagement, retention and educational attainment issues for African American men in both collegiate contexts. This text also highlights practices that serve to enhance the in-class and out-of-class experiences for African American men. However, no qualitative data buttressed this work by providing the lived experiences of African American men in college. More recently, *African American Men in College* (Cuyjet, 2006) advances the discourse on the engagement, retention and educational attainment of African American men. The overarching finding of Cuyjet’s (2006) work is that institutional environment matters to African American men who are largely diverse in family backgrounds, pre-college experiences, sexual identities and religious affiliations. Clearly, institutional environment (i.e. academic and social climates, adjustment) matters to the enrollment, persistence, engagement, and graduation of all student populations. However, Cuyjet (2006) notes that the academic and social climates for African American men on campus requires differently framed interventions. Such interventions include: (1) the creation of classroom communities in which students learn from each other (2) the presence of African American male role models to change African American men’s perceptions about the college experience, and (3) tying students’ families to the college experience through programs that facilitate family visitations to the campus.
In a recent synthesis, Bonner and Bailey (2006) offer suggestions to positively impact the experiences of African American men across collegiate environments. The authors suggest that university staff across collegiate types can enhance the academic experience and counteract negative impact of peer influence. They additionally assert that university staff can employ tactics that negate the perceptions of educated African American men in college as “unmanly” or “acting white”. The authors also write that families may work to negate these perceptions by providing emotional support. Bonner and Bailey recommend that colleges consider how institutional values may be congruent to the values of African American men and use that knowledge to begin to reverse the collegiate perceptions of African American men enrolled in the institution. Campus student centers or spaces designed as safe-havens and/or that focus on student adjustment and engagement also comprise effective interventions. These types of interventions provide resources and opportunities critical to retention, completion, and civic success of African American men (Dancy & Brown, 2007).

Davis (1994) conducted research on African American men attending historically black and white institutions that lend support to the recommendations of Bonner and Bailey (2006). His study investigates the relationship between student background, college-level factors, and academic performance in college. Further, Davis examines perceived social support and its contribution to college student achievement. Results indicated significant differences for African American men enrolled in historically white versus those enrolled in historically black schools. For example, African American men enrolled in black colleges reported a greater sense of racial solidarity than those in white institutions. African American men enrolled in black colleges were more integrated into
the academic life of the campus, received better grades, and perceived their colleges as more supportive. Conversely, the survey data in the Davis (1994) study shows that African American men at historically black colleges are more successful in their pursuit of educational attainment and perceive their colleges as more institutionally supportive than African American historically white colleges and universities. Similar results are echoed across the research on African American men at HBCUs (Fleming, 1984; Gurin & Epps, 1975).

Other work comparing African American students in different collegiate environments gives specific treatment to African American men. In 1984, psychologist Jacqueline Fleming completed a cross-sectional study that compared freshmen and seniors in fifteen institutions to obtain data about the social and intellectual gains of African American students in historically black and historically white colleges. Fleming (1984) reports differences by race and gender in those collegiate contexts. Specifically, the data confirm that the dominance of men in general and the dominance of white men in particular are mainstays on college campuses. Furthermore, the data suggest that African American students are able to identify which student populations are most supported in the college.

In her study, Fleming (1984) writes that African American men are the “hardest hit” on historically white campuses (p. 141). Her research finds evidence of the eight following conditions to support her overarching hypothesis about African American men. In HWIs:

1. African American men are predisposed to interacting with others in competitive ways which subsequently brings them emotional harm (p. 142).
2. African American men are unable to control feelings of detachment, depression, and low self-image relative to small numbers on campus (p. 142).

3. African American men are excluded inside and outside the classroom which constricts their intellectual gains and outcomes (p. 141).

4. African American men risk truancy and attrition if they socially or academically perform in less successful ways than others (competitive rejection) (p. 143).

5. African American men who feel unfairly treated may participate in in-class and out-of-class activities but only in emotional defense or out of aggression (p. 143).

6. African American men may display different aggressions (i.e. attempt to dominate women) as they internalize engagement problems (p. 143).

In HBCUs:

1. African American men act in very similar ways to white men at historically white colleges by showing less concern for others and constructing formal and informal attachments with faculty (p. 142).

2. African American men strive to remain content and complacent in historically black collegiate environments because they feel a sense of control in an environment perceived as supportive (p. 142-143).

A recent study conducted by Dancy and Brown (2007) aligns with Fleming’s (1984) report. In this study, a sample of eight African American men representing diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and precollege experiences were intensely interviewed to gauge their sensemaking in two different collegiate contexts. Phenomenological methods
were used to analyze the data. The holistic contextual analysis engaged universities are more complex systems. Trustworthiness techniques support the following emergent themes in this study: (1) socially diverse experiences matter (2) participants’ manhood and behavior are influenced differently in different collegiate contexts (3) faculty-to-student interaction matters.

Dancy and Brown (2007) assert that all colleges and universities can learn from the ways in which historically black postsecondary institutions have remained sensitive to techniques that are effective in shaping the thinking and behavioral responses of African American men. The authors recommend that faculty in all institutions must abandon deficit-model, prejudiced, naïve, and/or Eurocentric ideals that serve to disadvantage African American men in the collegiate environment. Additionally, all faculty, staff, and administrators in the higher education community are urged to ground their pedagogies and practices in frameworks sensitive to the unique raced and gendered experiences of African American men. This study also suggests that historically black colleges remain one of the best models for institutions who seek to engage African American men authentically in the academic experience (Dancy & Brown, 2007).

The aforementioned literature suggests that HWIs and HBCUs must improve the campus environments in which African American men experience their college days. African American men report institutional incongruency, lack of support, and perceptions of racism in HWIs. In HBCUs, African American men report contentment and satisfaction but scholars suggest African American men are complacent in these contexts. As such, African American men in HBCUs may feel supported but not challenged. More
recent research shows how the above findings become even more complex for gay, bisexual, and transgender (GBT) men.

**GBT African American Men in College.** Little research is offered on the unique experiences of African American gay, bisexual, and transgender (GBT) men in college. Early research focused on the plight of white gay men and subsequently women (Cass, 1979; Savin-Williams, 1990; Troiden, 1989). More recently, seminal research and commentary has emerged to inform the discourse on gay men in college (Dilley, 2002; Rhoads, 1994). However, African American men’s collegiate voices are scant in both the work of Dilley and Rhoads and neglected in the literature on GBT identity development. Recently, Washington and Wall (2006) reviewed the literature around sexual identity development to offer suggestions for how institutions of higher education can provide support to GBT African American men. Most suggestions include acknowledging and collaborating with gender-sensitive organizations on campus. Additionally, the authors write that merging racial and sexual diversity events are more inclusive ways of engaging GBT African American men.

The efforts of GBT African American men to engage within African American communities is documented in the literature (Boykin, 2005; Constantine-Simms, 2001). Hutchinson (2001) writes that African American men who are GBT feel like “men without a people” (p. 5). He further contends that African American GBT men are under pressure from the African American community to “subvert their manhood and conform to American standards of what it means to be a man as long as antigay attitudes remain firmly rooted in America” (p. 5). According to Hutchinson, a survey conducted in 1995 to measure African American heterosexual men’s and women’s attitudes toward African
American men who are GBT revealed that African Americans, like whites, perceived African American GBT men in hostile ways. African American heterosexual men’s and women’s feelings toward African American GBT men were more hostile than African American GBT women.

Gay, bisexual, transgender (GBT) African American men who enroll in college are likely from homophobic communities (Boykin, 2005; Constantine-Simms, 2001). Hutchinson (2001) adds that antigay feelings are so intense in African American communities that discussions or activities of African American men who are GBT are largely ignored. Hutchinson also writes that African American men who are GBT are rejected by many African Americans and sense that they are only barely tolerated by white GBT men. As a result, African American men repress, hide, and deny their sexuality from family members, friends, and society.

The plight of African American GBT men is documented in the literature albeit conversations about African American GBT men in college are few (Washington & Wall, 2006). The literature suggests that African American GBT men experience difficulty engaging in college because they perceive their presence as despised across many collegiate organizations (Rhoads, 1994; Washington & Wall, 2006). These experiences are largely different from African American heterosexual men and white GBT men (Rhoads, 1994; Washington & Wall, 2006). African American GBT men’s disparate experiences in college engagement are intensified in collegiate all-male spaces. For example, the experiences of GBT African American men in their efforts to join or engage in fraternities are also dissimilar in comparison to their heterosexual counterparts. Kimbrough (2003) writes that the membership of GBT African American men in African
American fraternities is viewed controversially. As such, African American GBT men may be denied membership because they are, or are suspected to be, GBT (Kimbrough, 2003). Additionally, those who “slip through the cracks” may not feel they have an equal voice in fraternity endeavors (Kimbrough, 2003). This lack of connectedness persists in the minds of many African American GBT men despite what it means to be a member of a fraternity—the construction of meaningful relationships, unconditional support, and lifelong service among each other. Notwithstanding, fraternities are widely identified as enhancing the African American male undergraduate experiences given the gains and outcomes discussed in the following section.

**Collegiate Fraternities.** Membership in collegiate fraternities generally facilitates social and academic engagement in college (Guiffrida, 2003; S.R. Harper & Wolley, 2002; Kuh et al., 1994; Pascarella et al., 2006; Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001). Membership in collegiate fraternities is also found to contribute to stronger racial identities (see C. M. Taylor & Howard-Hamilton, 1995). In fraternities, African American men have the opportunity to engage with other African American men and construct meaningful relationships built upon community and campus service. As Kimbrough (2003) describes, African American fraternities work to deconstruct the social, economic, and political issues that challenge African Americans in college and across communities.

African American men who are members of fraternities report an enhanced sense of leadership ability and campus awareness (Kimbrough & Hutcheson, 1998). Kimbrough and Hutcheson (1998) found that black greek-letter organization (BGLO) members were more likely to participate and engage within other campus activities and organizations. In addition, they found that African American students who are members
of BGLOs were more confident in leadership ability than African American students who were not members of BGLOs. Additional work suggests that African American men who are members of fraternities are more likely to be satisfied with their undergraduate experiences (Hayek, Carini, O'Day, & Kuh, 2002).

S. R. Harper and Harris (2006) write that fraternities also assist African American men in attaining practical competencies that serve them well in social and professional contexts. In essence, mentorship and leadership opportunities follow membership in fraternities. S. R. Harper and Harris (2006) describe practical competencies gained through fraternal affiliation as follows: (1) acquiring skills in marketing and sales through coordinating and executive events (2) learning to function in political spaces that require membership consensus (3) recognizing and cultivating talent in others through recruitment and membership intake activities (4) balancing academic and myriad social commitments of the fraternity notwithstanding other aspects of campus life.

S. R. Harper, Byars, and Jelke (2005) describe the differences in fraternity involvement for African American men in HWIs and HBCUs. The authors suggest that African American men are exposed to a myriad of social outlets in the HBCU context that are perceived as supportive to the social, cultural, and academic adjustment process. Conversely, the authors also suggest that fraternities tend to be the primary source of involvement for undergraduate African American men and provide an escape from the racism, tokenism, isolation, and underrepresentation documented in the literature as characteristic of HWI contexts.
Male, Man, Manhood, Masculinity and the Behavior Code

In casual discourse, the terms, “man” and “male” are used interchangeably. Manhood and masculinity are also parallel terms. In this study, however, distinctions are made between man and male as well as between manhood and masculinity. This section discusses and distinguishes between the following important terms in this study: man, male, manhood, masculinity, and the behavior code. This section also discusses the ways in which manhood and masculinity are raced in America and defines the terms patriarchy, Afrocentrism, and hegemony to aid this discussion.

Male vs. Man. Biology defines a male in terms of the “sexed body” (Schoenberg, 1993). However, social constructionist research frames gender as the socially constructed relationships which are produced and reproduced through the actions of individuals (Connell, 1995; Courtenay, 2000; Gerson & Peiss, 1985; Kimmel & Messner, 2007). Kimmel and Messner (2007), who have been teaching courses on the male experience for over twenty years, write

Too often…we treat men as if they had no gender, as if only their public personae were of interest to us as students and scholars, as if their interior experience of gender was of no significance…Men often think of themselves as genderless, as if gender did not matter in the daily experiences of our lives. Certainly, we can see the biological sex of individuals, but we rarely understand the ways in which gender—that complex of social meanings that is attached to biological sex—is enacted in our daily lives (p. 25).

Feminist studies, contributions, and critiques first allowed for the framing of gender in these terms (Kimmel & Messner, 2007). In feminist work, gender is not conceptualized as a fixed quality or trait, but as one socially constructed between men and women. In my study, man is framed as a socially constructed being (Hart, 1996; Hunter & Davis, 1992, 1994; Kimmel & Messner, 2007; Ropers-Huilman, 2003). Men,
therefore, receive instruction about how to be men through social interactions with others.

Being a man is defined differently by men given different social educations. Ropers-Huilman (2003) frames the difference between males and men as follows:

Girls and boys, men and women, are reminded of their proper sex roles through both formal and informal education. Through the interactions in many contexts, gender is constructed. Although we are each born with a biological sex that is more or less determined, the ways in which our sex is expressed through social practices is known as gender…From the beginning, when boys are encouraged to be active and told not to cry, when girls are praised for their appearance and their quiet and polite behavior, when both boys and girls are given gender-specific toys that implicitly teach them what each gender is “supposed” to find pleasurable, gender is formed. However, gender is not formed only during the early years of our lives. Instead, in our interactions throughout our lives, we subtly (and sometimes not so subtly) let others know what we expect from them as gendered beings (p. 2).

Other scholars describe gender similarly. For example, West and Zimmerman (1987) also argue that gender is constructed recurrently through interaction with others. In this study, “men are not born; they are made” (Kimmel and Messner, 2007, p. xxi). Accordingly “man” is constructed, not biologically, but in his social interactions with others.

**Manhood vs. Masculinity.** One’s manhood, like the term man, is differently defined through different social interactions. Therefore, manhood is also differently constructed by different men in response to different sociocultural contexts. Hunter and Davis (1992; 1994) argue that manhood is a multidimensional construct that defines being a man in terms of self-expectations, relationships and responsibilities to family, and a worldview or existential philosophy. My study takes a similar stance that manhood is multidimensional and constructed differently by men given different social experiences and interactions.

It was the intent of this study to discover the self-expectations, relationships, responsibilities, worldviews, and other dimensions that African American men enrolled
in different four-year colleges use to construct their manhood. As such, this study evoked from participants meaningful statements from which multidimensional constructs of manhood emerged. The aforementioned conceptual framework in the Hunter and Davis (1992) study served as a point of departure. Charmaz (2006) defines points of departure in grounded theory research as the general concepts a researcher brings to a study that inform the character and pursuit of certain questions. Charmaz argues that points of departure aid the researcher to form interview questions, to look at data, to listen to interviewees, and to think analytically about data. The manhood concept that Hunter and Davis (1992) provide is a point of departure for this work. Subsequently, a definition of manhood was developed in this study through my interpretation of data throughout the analysis (Charmaz, 2006).

Manhood is different from masculinity. This study conceptualizes masculinity as the socially constructed behaviors, demonstrations or performances of men (Alexander, 2006; Butler, 1990b; Kimmel, 2002). Conversely, manhood is defined as what it means to be a man (Hunter & Davis, 1992, 1994). In this frame, men then use their masculinity across societies and cultures to honor, identify, respect, disguise, and/or to make others aware of the different definitions of manhood they construct (Alexander, 2006; Kimmel, 2002). One does not behave, demonstrate, or perform their manhood (i.e. self-expectations, relationships, responsibilities, and existential philosophies) given the meanings constructed in the Hunter and Davis (1992; 1994) studies (i.e. How does one perform a self-expectation or a philosophy?). One constructs these meanings for self and then performs in ways that honor, identify, respect, disguise, and/or make others aware of the meanings they construct.
The framing of masculinity as performance is evident in the literature (Alexander, 2006; Butler, 1990a, 1990b, 1995; Courtenay, 2000; Kimmel, 2002). Butler (1999b) defines performance as the presentation of the body itself in its stylized repetition of acts that are socially validated and discursively established. Butler argues that the body is a vessel for which there is “materialization of possibilities” (1990b, p. 272). In other words, masculinity as performance aids men as they seek to fulfill goals and desires in social contexts (Alexander, 2006). In *Performing Black Masculinity*, Alexander builds on Butler’s definition in his conceptualization of African American men’s masculinities. Alexander describes the ways in which African American men perform their masculinities in congruence (or not) across social contexts. Alexander argues:

The black male body is [controversial]. It is a site of public and private contestation...The diversity that exists within the character of the African American man is not acknowledged, hence he is relegated to a stereotypically pathologized position, in which any variation of performance might be constructed as inauthentic or not being real, passing for something that he is not. (p. 74)

In some cases, African American men receive cultural pressure from African Americans to “act as a man” in ways deemed culturally authentic to African Americans. To behave in ways stereotypically accepted in white communities (i.e. articulate, polite) subject African American men to scrutiny, suspicion, and rejection in African American communities.

In this study, masculinity and femininity are also briefly noted in relation to each other. Masculinity and femininity are the socially constructed behaviors, demonstrations, or performances stereotypically associated with being a woman or a man (Alexander, 2006; Kimmel, 2002). Masculinity and femininity are not separate personality traits germane to either men or women. Rather, perceptions of men and women as masculine or...
feminine reflect cultural stereotypes as opposed to psychological realities (Bem, 1987; Constantinople, 1973). Therefore, this study assumes the stance that individuals can be both masculine and feminine.

As the synthesis of literature in this section suggests, manhood and masculinity are similar in that both are socially constructed. However, manhood and masculinity are different. Men perform masculinity to honor, identify, respect, disguise, and/or to make others aware of the different definitions of manhood they construct. These are the stances of manhood and masculinity that this study assumes. The following discussion defines the behavior code as cultural border for African American men.

**The Behavior Code.** What is behavior? Behavior refers to the actions and reactions of an object or organism. Behavior can be overt or covert, voluntary or involuntary, conscious or unconscious (Skinner, 1965). What is a code? A code is a set of rules or principles or laws, or an organized system of signs. Codes are the rules and conventions about how signs (i.e. words, images, concepts) are combined and relate to each other (Martin, 1958). Both individuals and cultures have sought to operationalize codes in their work. Author Dan Brown, for example, in his widely read fiction, *The Da Vinci Code* (2003), uses the term code to refer to the hidden messages, or signs, in Italian Renaissance painter, Leonardo Da Vinci’s work that reveal secrets about the Holy Grail and the death of a museum curator. Also, as discussed in the following chapter, slave codes were constructed by whites in America as the repressive body of laws which covered every aspect of the life of enslaved people of the African diaspora (J. H. Franklin & Moss, 1994). Manhood, particularly African American manhood, also carries a distinct code.
The socially constructed ideals of African American manhood require masculine behaviors that are reflections of those ideals (behavior code). Rhoads (1994) characterizes the behavior code concept as “cultural borders” and writes that cultural borders divide people and separate “us” from “them”. He adds that these same borders enable others to connect or identify with others in similar positions. hooks (2004a) further characterizes how the behavior code exists in early African American men’s experiences. She writes, “an [African American] boy who likes to read is perceived as suspect, as on the road to being a sissy….As long as [African American] people buy into the notion of patriarchal manhood, which says that real men are all body and no mind, [African American] boys who are cerebral, who want to read, and who love books will risk being ridiculed as not manly” (p. 40). Griffin (2001) writes:

Black men swallowed whole the phony and perverse John Wayne definition of manhood, that real men talked and acted tough, shed no tears, and never showed their emotions. When men broke the prescribed male code of conduct and showed their feelings, they were harangued as weaklings and their manhood was questioned (p. 3).

The behavior code, like other terms pertinent to this study, is socially constructed and provides cultural borders in which both the manhood and masculinity of men are scrutinized. However, cultures may accept or condemn the masculinity of African American men more easily given that masculinity can be observed. For example, in the section that presented my story, the African American boy was ridiculed for behaving in ways that violated the behavior codes that African Americans and whites construct. However, less was distinguishable about the ridiculed boy’s self-expectations, existential philosophies, or sense of responsibility to others. Therefore, cultures may or may not ascertain the meanings men make of themselves as men so the manhood of African
American men may not be so easily examined. The behavior code was analyzed in this study as a cultural border in which men act congruently or incongruently.

The distinctions made above, however, are racially bifurcated. Men’s manhood, and subsequently masculinities, are differently considered and constructed given the race with which they identify (P. B. Harper, 1996; Hunter & Davis, 1992; Kimmel & Messner, 2007; Wallace, 2002). The research points to clear cultural distinctions about manhood that are made along racial lines. In America, African American men are often at the center of a cultural debate (i.e. acting white) about which way of being a man is the correct one (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Majors & Billson, 1992). The section that follows considers how manhood is constructed differently across these racial lines and may, therefore, represent an internal conflict in the masculine consciousness of African American men.

**Conflicting Ideologies: Afrocentric and Eurocentric Paradigms of Manhood.**

In America, many African American men “see” their race and negotiate it as a central element of manhood in ways that white men, for example, do not. African American men’s race marginalizes them and puts them in a sociological place where they lack privilege. To exist in America, African American men are increasingly encouraged by urban community and culture-focused programs to construct manhood in ways deemed more Afrocentric. Scholars and researchers have pushed toward this end in their scholarship and commentary (Asante, 1995; Dei, 1994; El-Amin, 1993; Jackson & Sears, 1992). Afrocentricity is a term popularized by Molefi Asante in the late 1970s, gaining widespread attention, usage, and recognition during the 1980s and 1990s. Afrocentricity places the African culture, expressions, teachings, stories and ways of knowing at the
center of thinking and doing.² Afrocentricity is posited to empower African American males in America as they are historically and presently disempowered (Akbar, 1991).

A critique, however, of Afrocentricity is that it does not empower all African American males through its tenets. For example, Afrocentric paradigms do not acknowledge the historical presence or existence of sexually diverse men in the African culture. Griffin (2001) writes that Afrocentric thinkers have claimed that homosexuality is a perverse sexual practice, unknown to Africans until it was imposed on them by Europeans. Research indicates, however, instead that sexual diversity existed in Africa, and all communities and cultures, prior to European colonialism (Evans-Pritchard, 1971; C. A. Johnson, 2001; Junod, 1962; Murray, 1996; Murray & Roscoe, 1998).

In contrast, Kimmel and Messner (2007) offer a discussion about the ways in which men’s manhood differs Eurocentrically. According to the authors, white men do not “see” their race as a critical component of manhood because they are blinded by their privilege. They assert,

There is a sociological explanation for this blind spot in [whites] thinking: the mechanisms that afford us privilege are very often invisible to us. What makes us marginal (unempowered, oppressed) are the mechanisms that we understand, because those are the ones that are most painful in daily life. Thus, white people rarely think of themselves as “raced” people, and rarely think of race as a central element in their experience. But people of color are marginalized by race, and so the centrality of race both is painfully obvious and needs study urgently (p.xvi).

Not only is the Eurocentric paradigm of manhood privileged, it is also historically racist in assumptions that African American men are inferior beings. This notion conflicts with Afrocentric constructions of African American manhood. Harris

---

² **Afrocentricity.** Some authors believe that the prefix “Afri-” is more appropriate than “Afro-” in describing African-centered concepts because the former prefix is a more precise reference to Africa. This author prefers the widely used prefix “Afro-” in recognition of the original term posited by Molefi Asante.
(1995) writes that Afrocentric values historically emphasize collectivism over individualism, spirituality over materialism, and oneness with nature. However, the dominant definition of white manhood in America was historically shaped by individual white men’s mastery over plantations, farms, and households with numerous dependents (Estes, 2005). In this frame, whites defined men of the African diaspora and their descendants as less than men for hundreds of years. Instead, they were chattel or property (DuBois, 1903/2005). This systemic oppression created a form of racial patriarchy in America. Patriarchy is defined as the political-social system in which men inherently dominate, are superior to everything and everyone deemed weak especially women, and endowed with the right to dominate the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence (hooks, 2004a). In this conceptual frame, African American men in America are dominated by white men, but also subordinators of African American women and other African American men deemed weak.

In America, the patriarchal system is socially reproduced (hooks, 2004a; Kimmel & Messner, 2007). Over time, whites overtly and/or covertly subject African Americans to positions of inferiority to maintain power, or, hegemony. Hegemony refers to how ruling groups normalize patriarchal ideologies and marginalize others’ ideologies to maintain power and dominance (Gramsci, 1971). Cultural perspectives then become skewed to favor the dominant group. As a result of hegemony, patriarchy is empowered and diverse others excluded. Accordingly, hegemonic manhood ideals align with and maintain the tenets of patriarchy while hegemonic masculinity refers to the behaviors, performances, and actions that reflect the ideals of patriarchy—domination of men and
subordination of women (Connell, 1995; Summers, 2004). Hegemonic masculinity, for example, may reflect the following types of thinking: (1) homophobia, or in other words, the fear or hatred of GBT men, (2) devaluing femininity, (3) increasing masculine bravado, and (4) claiming masculine space within spaces deemed feminine or feminized (Anderson, 2007). In sum, Eurocentric thinking about manhood is patriarchal and sustained by hegemony to ensure that white men assume and maintain positions of privilege and power to the disadvantage of culturally diverse others.

Research posits that whites in present-day America, particularly white men, continue to maintain their dominance in ways that oppress African American men (Stokes, 2001). In response, Akbar (1991) argues that African American men need to adopt an Afrocentric existence in America. According to Akbar (1991), African American men who embrace and convey an Afrocentric way of thinking about their manhood have “declared war” on the patriarchal system in America (p. 27). He adds, “the [white American] man has defined his masculinity predicated on the lack of manliness of the African male. So he is a man only because the African is not a man. If the African becomes a man, by his own definition, [the white American man] automatically loses his manhood” (Akbar, 1991).

**Scope of the Study**

In this section, I describe the scope of my study, highlighting the void in higher education research to which I contribute. Then, I describe my research approach and the scope of participant selection. Finally, I turn to the importance of this research for its contribution to understanding the enrollment, engagement and, subsequently, the institutional retention of African American male undergraduates.
**Research Void.** Extant literature is largely absent research that investigates the nexus between race and gender for African American men in college. Research is both scant and outdated that examines the construction of manhood in college. The voices of African American men to inform such inquiries are also missing. In addition, institutions are uninformed about the manhood construction of African American men and how these identities inform their decisions to engage or disassociate themselves in collegiate contexts. How colleges treat African American men with diverse manhood constructions may influence African American men’s choices to either obtain undergraduate degrees or discontinue collegiate education and increase the likelihood of social, political, and economic hardship.

Manhood literature is absent the perspectives of African American men in college, and the discourse on African American men in college is absent research on manhood construction. A paucity of literature addresses the manhood construction processes of African American men in college across different collegiate contexts. These empirical worlds require juxtaposition given research that argues that how African American men construct their manhood may serve as a cultural mechanism for adaptation and survival, particularly in white-dominated spaces (Hunter & Davis, 1992).

**Inquiry Approach.** I constructed this project to investigate the nexus between the manhood and collegiate experiences for African American men. I weaved together the diverse stories of African American men in historically black and historically white institutions using narratives generated in intensive face-to-face interviews. To guide my sensemaking and analysis of the data, I used a combination of grounded theory, phenomenological, and case-study approaches (Charmaz, 2006). More specifically, tenets
of grounded theory and phenomenological methods were used to rigorously code and categorize the lived experiences of African American men as constructed in their interviews. Following the categorical analysis, case study methods connected participant narratives across contexts. The experiences of twenty-four (24) engaged, traditional college-aged, African American men enrolled in six historically black and six historically white colleges across the nineteen southern and border states of the United States informed the analysis.

**Mapping Engaged Men.** This study recognizes that research on the manhood construction of African American men in different collegiate contexts is virtually nonexistent. As such, the goal of this study was to feasibly gather the theoretically richest data possible while simultaneously attempting to provide themes that may be transferable to other settings. Charmaz (2006) defines rich data as “detailed, focused, and full” (p. 14). She adds that “researchers generate strong grounded theories with rich data” (p. 14). Charmaz also writes that researchers who gather rich data possess the most “solid material for building a significant analysis” (p. 14). She additionally argues that researchers should gather focused data to construct a platform from which to speak. Similarly, Glaser and Strauss (1967) argue that researchers should select participants toward theory construction, not population representation, to increase analytic power.

The scope of participation in this study was disciplined with engaged African American men. Engaged students are those who participate in educationally purposeful activities that reflect “good institutional practice” and that typically rest upon seven principles: (1) student-faculty contact, (2) cooperation among students, (3) active learning (4) prompt feedback, (5) time on task, (6) high expectations, and respect for diverse
talents and ways of learning (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). To engage in activities that reflect the seven principles include using an institution’s human resources, curricular and extracurricular programs or organizations, and other opportunities for learning and development (i.e. internships, community service, study abroad) (Kuh, 2003). Those institutions that more fully engage students in the variety of activities that contribute to valued outcomes in college (i.e. learning, personal development, responsible citizenship, critical thinking) are considered of high-quality, and engaged students enrolled in the institution typically report higher achievement, feelings of satisfaction, and increased senses of persistence in relation to students who are not engaged (Kuh, 2003).

In an effort to gain access to students at diverse institutions, the twenty-four engaged participants shared membership in a historically black greek-letter fraternity. What this fraternity membership implies for African American men is central to meaningful data collection: (1) commonality of social dispositions (2) commonality of social capital and (3) similar grade point averages.3 These commonalities among African American men in collegiate fraternities are highlighted by many scholars and writers (T. L. Brown, Parks, & Phillips, 2005; Graham, 1999; Guiffrida, 2003; S. R. Harper & Harris, 2006; S.R. Harper & Wolley, 2002; Kimbrough, 2003; Kimbrough & Hutcheson, 1998; Sutton & Terrell, 1997). In separate research studies, DeSousa and Kuh (1996), Pascarella, Edison, Whitt, Nora, Hagedorn, and Terenzini (1996), Kimbrough and Hutcheson (1998), and Kuh, Douglas, Lund, and Ramin-Gyumek (1994) used African American men in greek-letter fraternities to inform broader recommendations about the undergraduate experiences of African American men in college.

3 Social capital refers to the advantage created by a person’s location or membership in a structure of relationships. Social capital explains how some people gain success in particular contexts given social networks or connections (Bourdieu, 1977).
Though African American men may share membership in a fraternity, they have different fraternal experiences as well as different institutional experiences. In other words, the fraternal and institutional experiences of an African American man in a fraternity at a small HBCU are not the same as the experiences of an African American man in the same fraternity at a large HBCU, small HWI, or large HWI (S. R. Harper & Harris, 2006; Kimbrough, 2003; Kimbrough & Hutcheson, 1998). Yet, African American men in fraternities share like attractions to particular types of greek-letter organizations (Kimbrough, 2003; Ross, 2001). Given an empirical frame influenced by grounded theory, the intent of this study was to construct a foundation upon which subsequent study will investigate the construction of manhood for other African American men in college. The study acknowledges that the experiences and dispositions of engaged African American men in one fraternity may be dissimilar to other African American men who are not members of this fraternity, are in other organizations, or are inactive on campus.

African American men in fraternities tend to be more or less engaged in other activities on campus that represent good institutional practice. Many scholars have written about the engagement of students as educationally helpful and as supportive to the overall collegiate experience (Astin, 1993; Braxton, 2000; Cabrera et al., 1999; Fleming, 1984; Guiffrida, 2003; S.R. Harper & Wolley, 2002; Kuh et al., 1994; Kuh, Schuh, & Whitt, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Members of fraternities may be involved in academic honors groups, religious groups, political organizations, or student government associations. All serve similar purposes in facilitating cultural connections and engagement in the university. Noted among these are out-of-class connections with
faculty, exposure to experiences that enhance civic awareness, and connections to other students from like cultures and with like experiences.

The fraternity selected to map engaged men as the participants for this study was used for three unique reasons: (1) the fraternity’s influence on other BGLOs, (2) the fraternity’s recognition in popular and academic media as a “school for the better making of men” (3) the fraternity’s recent strategic plans and symposia to address issues of African American manhood. Diverse fraternity participants in this study provided multiple narratives of manhood construction as well as a window into broader sociocultural discourses of how African American communities institutionalize manhood expectations through their organization of college men.

 Collegiate members of the selected fraternity comprise approximately 10% of total African American men enrolled in four-year colleges when the fraternity’s undergraduate membership is compared to the total number of African American men enrolled in four-year colleges. In this study, the African American men in this organization tended to construct their manhood commensurate with the ideals of the organization. Within this fraternity lies an informed understanding that the study participants used to make sense of themselves as men in collegiate contexts. The rich data of this study yields a foundation upon which subsequent research may be conducted on African American manhood in college.

Research Questions

The research questions that guide this inquiry are:

1. How do engaged African American men construct their manhood while in college?
2. How do these constructions compare based on enrollment in an HBCU and HWI?

3. How do these students perceive the institutional role in shaping their collegiate experiences and manhood constructions?

**Dissertation Scheme**

Chapter I began with my story to position myself in this work. Then, the extant literature on African American students and men in college was presented. The research on diverse African American men was highlighted within the larger discourse on African American students in higher education. Chapter I also defined the following terms: man, male, manhood, masculinity, and the behavior code. Further discussion also considered the ways in which manhood constructions in America are racialized. Subsequently, the scope of this study was described. The closing sections of Chapter I identified research questions that frame this study.

Chapter II situates a history of African American men, manhood, and masculinity in this work to understand the evolution of these over time. Chapter III is a review of the literature that considers masculine experiences of African American boys and men, specifically within K-12 and collegiate pipelines. Chapter IV is a discussion of the methodological scheme and praxis of this study that was designed to elicit the voices of African American men in college. In Chapter V, I introduce each study participant, focusing on the earliest way in which the power of race and gender became relevant in their lives. In Chapter VI, I identify and discuss emerging themes from the research. Next, I identify the manhood typologies that emerged from the data in Chapter VII. Vignettes that illustrate manhood typologies emergent in this research are also presented.
Last, I offer implications for theory, research, and higher education practice in Chapter VIII.
CHAPTER II

(RE)READING VOICES FROM THE PAST: A HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN AND MANHOOD

Are we men!! I ask you…are we MEN? Did our creator make us to be slaves to dust and ashes like ourselves? Are they not dying worms as well as we?...How we could be so submissive to a gang of men, whom we cannot tell whether they are as good as ourselves or not, I never conceive…America is more our country than it is the whites—we have enriched it with our blood and tears. The greatest riches in all America have arisen from our blood and tears: And they will drive us from our property and homes, which we have earned with our blood.

David Walker, Walker’s Appeal in Four Articles, Together with a Preamble to the Colored Citizens of the World, But in Particular and Very Expressly to those of the United States of America (1829)

The history of African American men in America is important for understanding these unique manhood constructions and how these evolved over time. In a broad sense, the following questions are important to this chapter: (1) In what ways has the changing sociopolitical landscape in America impacted the manhood constructions of African American men over time? (2) How may the historical constructions of African American men inform institutions about their educational choices? More specifically, I craft this chapter with the following questions as guide: (1) What were African American men’s senses of responsibilities to self and others? (2) What were their existential philosophies and worldviews? (3) How did they define themselves? (4) What were the behavioral representations of the manhood ideals they constructed for themselves?

In a chronological sense, this chapter describes constructions of manhood for African American men throughout six turbulent periods in American history: pre-transplantation Africa, post-transplantation America, the Antebellum and Reconstruction
Eras, the Victorian Era, and the Civil Rights Era. First, I describe experiences of men of
the African diaspora during the era of transplantation. Specifically, I discuss their
masculine experiences before and after their transplantation from Africa to America.
After transplantation, I turn to scholarship that defines patriarchy and considers its impact
in America on the collective consciousness of enslaved men. More specifically, the
synthesis considers how the institution of slavery interrupted and reshaped African and
African American men’s manhood constructions. Accordingly, patriarchy is identified as
interruptive in the manhood constructions of enslaved men through the following
strategies: slave codes, caste systems, and African American men’s image distortion.

Second, I discuss the resistant masculine behaviors of African American men in
the Antebellum and Reconstruction Eras. Specifically, I consider how efforts to attain
freedom through military service in the Civil War and plantation revolts reconstructed
many African American men’s manhood in the Antebellum Era. Third, I discuss how
African American men’s manhood evolved in the Reconstruction Era after African
American men freed themselves. Fourth, I describe the Victorian Era as a period in which
class became a major construct in how African American men defined themselves as
men. Fifth, I look to scholarship that considers the nexus between the Civil Rights Era
and African American manhood. Accordingly, African American manhood is positioned
in relation to the Black Power, Gay-Liberation, and Women’s Movements in this section.
This distinction between eras is made in effort to demonstrate the different ways in which
the evolving American context influenced African American men’s constructions of self
over time.
Pre-Transplantation: Men of the African Diaspora

In *From Slavery to Freedom*, J. H. Franklin and Moss (1994) describe African men’s ways of being and doing. The authors write that class was largely interconnected with how men of the African diaspora defined themselves as men. J. H. Franklin and Moss (1994) observe that class socially stratified men in the African culture. For example, “good men” were those who could prove an ancestry of free men and were, therefore, entitled to positions of respect and recognition as members of nobility (J. H. Franklin & Moss, 1994, p. 18). Working class men in Africa were those who could not prove a noble ancestry and subsequently were not entitled to a socially revered position. African men were either dignified or degraded apropos to the work they engaged to create a life for themselves and their families (J. H. Franklin & Moss, 1994). African men who worked the soil were considered the most noble. Following in order were cattle raising, hunting, fishing, construction, navigation, commerce, gold mining, and the processing of commodities (i.e. soap, oil, and beer) (J. H. Franklin & Moss, 1994). However, J. H. Franklin and Moss (1994) write that lower status African men could still achieve power and wealth which substituted for nobility of origin.

African men largely felt responsible to their families, communities, and culture. In the African culture, the presence and power of community was (and still is) sacred (J. H. Franklin and Moss, 1994). In fact, political leadership in Africa was exercised by families. J. H. Franklin and Moss (1994) write that families combined to form village states throughout most of Africa. Accordingly, village states were comprised of large, influential families who formed small kingdoms. In this government, African men were selected by designated families to serve as kings of their localities. This form of
government led to many village states. As such, many African localities were led by kings. J. H. Franklin and Moss (1994) write that kings of larger empires and kingdoms in Africa were careful not to intrude the sovereign rule of other African kings in similarly sized empires or smaller ones. In Africa, this sense of constraint respected the communal bond among kings, families, village states, but more deliberately, African men. Within these social constructs, the African family most comprehensively displayed the ideals embedded in the African community and culture.

J. H. Franklin and Moss (1994) write that the African family was the basis of social organization as well as economic and political life in early Africa. African families comprised large clans, or groups of families that claimed relation to one ancestor (J. H. Franklin & Moss, 1994). African women did not legally belong to their husbands but to their families (J. H. Franklin & Moss, 1994). J. H. Franklin and Moss (1994) observe, however, that husbands were free to have multiple wives. They write, “the chief of the family would defray the expenses involved in the first marriage of a male member of the family, but if the husband wanted to take a second wife, he would have to meet all the expenses himself. (p. 17)”. J. H. Franklin and Moss add that polygamy was valued, particularly by African American men, in these communities. Many African men’s constructions of polygamist families suggest that African men perceived themselves dominant to women. However, there is some evidence to suggest that women exercised autonomy in families and rights to property (Hine & Jenkins, 2001). Still, positions of authority were largely reserved for and controlled by African men (Hine & Jenkins, 2001). These, however, were not the only ways in which African American manhood and families were constructed.
Literature disproportionately offers descriptions of manhood and masculinity of African men that are neglectful of sexually diverse men, and therefore, different manhood constructions in the African diaspora. Other scholars discuss men of the African diaspora who constructed their families, and ultimately manhood and masculinity, differently (Evans-Pritchard, 1971; C. A. Johnson, 2001; Junod, 1962; Murray, 1996; Murray & Roscoe, 1998). Among many ethnic groups, male sexual diversity did not hinder sexually diverse men’s participation and culturally perceived importance in African society (C. A. Johnson, 2001). Evans-Pritchard (1971) writes that many young African men in the Zande engaged in very intimate relationships with boys and married them. Evans-Pritchard also describes the diverse masculine behavior of men when he writes that “the boy fetched water for his husband, collected firewood and kindled his fire, bore his shield when traveling and also a small bang containing wava leaves (Evans-Pritchard, 1971, p.1970)”. Johnson (2001) writes that a similar pattern of marriages among African men was found among the Berber culture of Siwi where “men and boys entered into alliances…with family approval and these alliances had many of the traits of formal marriages” (p. 136). Johnson (2001) adds that many African communities were fundamentally bisexual. He writes, “Among both the Zande and Siwi, boy-wives were eventually married to women, their former husbands paying the bride price. The new husbands subsequently took boy-wives of their own (p. 136)”.

African society in Congo kingdom which gives context to how Europeans sought to change African behavior once they decided it was reprehensible. The French priest, Jean Baptiste Labat objected to the feminine behavior of the shaman (governing priest) of the Giagues people of the Congo kingdom. The shaman, Ganga-Ya-Chibanda, often dressed in women’s clothing and was often addressed as “grandmother” (Murray & Roscoe, 1998, p. 10). Labat’s disgust for Ganga-Ya-Chibanda is an example of the early European condemnation of the diverse social constructions of African men.

Across diverse African cultures, sex was also used as a tactic to foster trust among African men in warrior circles. Gevisser (1999) writes that in the Zulu culture, for example, Zulu king Shaka encouraged his warriors to engage in sexual behavior with each other to “create intimacy and loyalty” among them (p. 961). Murray and Roscoe suggest that Europeans became obsessed with the “moral discourse” of African peoples whom they viewed as primitive, “fundamentally transgressive” and ignorant to the distinctions of gender (p.10). In general, Europeans were sex-negative and anti-sexual diversity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which fueled European efforts to “save the souls” of African American men deemed biblically transgressive (Griffin, 2001). However, Europeans not only used the Bible to condemn diverse acts of Africans as immoral but also justify their enslavement in the Western world (Griffin, 2001).

Diverse sexual identities of African men evince diverse manhood constructions for African American men. Across many cultures, many African men held different values and beliefs about love, sexuality and relationships. A major difference between many sexually diverse and many heterosexual African men’s constructions is the way in which these men intimately and sexually interacted with each other and women. Many
heterosexual African men pursued sexual and intimate relationships with African women while many sexually diverse African men opted for senses of deeper intimacy and understanding between men.

As the authors of *Boy-Wives* point out, the social constructions of sexuality in Africa differed from those they encountered after their enslavement in America. In America, same-sex relations were (and still are) conflated with masculinity (and femininity), mental health, and morality (Murray & Roscoe, 1998). In many countries of Africa, however, the social code around sexuality required that African men, express same-sex desires, but not allow these desires to overshadow or prevent procreation which would compromise cultural strength (Murray & Roscoe, 1998).

Before enslavement, African men constructed manhood in ways socially informed by African communities. Across all African ways of life, the commitment to immediate family was as strong as commitment to extended family and community. The visibility and acceptance of ways of life for sexually diverse men in many African countries shows various manhood constructions that existed in Africa. These constructions of manhood were interrupted when African men and their communities were enslaved and forced to reshape new constructions of self in America.

**Post-Transplantation America: Patriarchal Manhood and Masculinity**

hooks (2004a) offers a fulsome discussion of the patriarchy constructed by white men in *The Will To Change: Men, Masculinity and Love*. hooks (2004a) defines patriarchy as a political-social system in which men inherently dominate, are superior to everything and everyone deemed weak especially women, and endowed with the right to dominate the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of
psychological terrorism and violence. In her words, the patriarchal system is “imperialist white-supremacist capitalist” in scope and continues to shape and inform African American men’s manhood and masculinity (hooks, 2004a, p. 18). Across sociopolitical contexts, white men were (and still are) free to display patriarchal masculinity, or in other words, behave in ways that honor a “natural” position of dominating gendered and cultural others. In this frame, hooks (2004b) argues that patriarchy was (and still is) the deliberate and systemic process to inculcate such traits as weakness, docility, and ignorance in men of the African diaspora to place them into inferior positions. After transplantation, men of the African diaspora were forced to develop new meanings of manhood and new masculine behaviors consistent with what their oppressors desired.

The ways in which whites treated the enslaved of the African diaspora represented a different form of patriarchy in America than existed in Africa (Hine & Jenkins, 2001). In early America, enslaved men experienced harsh and inequitable treatment. Perhaps the greatest atrocity is that men of the African diaspora did not own themselves. The institution of slavery denied enslaved men the natural right to construct their own manhood and masculinities. The efforts of enslaved men to behave in ways that honored independent constructions of manhood often conflicted with the intentions of whites who systemically placed enslaved men in chattel positions and defined them as things or privately owned commodities (Marable, 2001). To refashion the manhood of the enslaved, white enslavers denied certain characteristics (i.e. authority, familial responsibility, and property ownership) to African and African American men (Mercer, 1994). The ways in which these characteristics were denied were wholly sadistic.
Slave codes, for example, were used during slavery, not only to deny
aforementioned characteristics, but also to emasculate and dehumanize the enslaved
define slave codes as the repressive body of laws which covered every aspect of the life
of the enslaved. More specifically, J. H. Franklin and Moss argue that slave codes were a
more legitimate way of redefining the enslaved as property. Laws protected the
ownership of the enslaved inasmuch as they were property, and laws protected whites
against any dangers that might arise from the presence of large numbers of enslaved men.
Enslaved men and women had no standing in the courts: they could not be a party to a
law suit; they could not offer testimony, except against another enslaved or free man of
the African diaspora (J. H. Franklin & Moss, 1994). The enslaved could make no
contracts or own property though, in some states, the enslaved were permitted certain
types of personal property. The enslaved could not strike a white person in self-defense;
but the killing of enslaved women and men, however malicious the act, was rarely
regarded as murder (J. H. Franklin & Moss, 1994). The rape of an enslaved woman was
regarded as a crime only because it involved trespassing. Also, many of the enslaved
were not permitted to leave plantations without the written permission of their masters (J.
H. Franklin & Moss, 1994). Those enslaved who behaved or acted in any way
incongruent to slave code policies were considered affronting to white men’s manhood
and were severely punished (Akbar, 1991). Whipping, branding, imprisonment, and
hanging were commonly used penalties to ensure adherence to slave codes as well as to
condition enslaved men and women to perceive themselves as psychologically,
intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally inferior (J. H. Franklin and Moss, 1994). In
many cases, whites cut off the body parts of the enslaved as punishment (J. H. Franklin and Moss, 1994).

The creation of caste systems is another example of the patriarchal relationships between whites and enslaved of the African diaspora. Whites re-socialized enslaved men and women by dividing them into two general groups when they arrived on Southern plantations—laborers and house slaves. The laborers worked in the fields harvesting rice or tobacco, cutting sugarcane, picking cotton, or building roads and structures. Additionally, enslaved men who were laborers bore the tasks of smelting iron, digging wells, or laying bricks. Many enslaved men built the very plantations and buildings around which they worked (Graham, 1999). Conversely, enslaved men in the master’s house usually served as butlers and were perceived within the enslaved community as favored in their master’s household (Graham, 1999). The terms “house niggers” and “field niggers” emerged in this caste system as labels. The enslaved in the house gained better treatment and had access to better work conditions, better clothing, minimal education and intimacy with the master’s family (Graham, 1999). Whites and “house niggers” came to consider “field niggers” (who were often dark-skinned and worked outside the home) to be less civilized and intellectually inferior (Graham, 1999). These early caste systems worked to create resentment between and among men of the enslaved community (hooks, 2004b). White slave owners advanced a greater rift in the enslaved community by placing lighter-skinned servants in the house. Lighter-skinned servants were primarily the children of white slave owners and enslaved women who engaged in (often nonconsensual) sexual relations.
The skin-color caste system was an advancing force behind new sexual politics between whites and the enslaved of the African diaspora. One way white men exercised their patriarchal masculinity was through sexual brutality. Enslaved women were used by white men for sexual gratification and to demonstrate their power (Marable, 2001). In fact, Marable (2001) writes that the vaginas of enslaved women of the African diaspora were considered the property of white men. “Like his cotton fields, the fruit of its issue belonged to him alone” (Marable, 2001, p. 123). Across American plantations, enslaved wives, daughters, and betrothed women were sexually ravaged, causing them and the enslaved men who loved them, emotional distress (J. H. Franklin & Moss, 1994; Marable, 2001). Scholars argue that many men of the African diaspora were psychologically affected as a result of these often-violent and aberrant relationships (DuBois, 1903/2005; Graham, 1999; Marable, 2001). DuBois (1903) in his text, *The Souls of Black Folk* poignantly argues:

Nor was the Negro man’s burden all poverty and ignorance. The red stain of bastardy, which two centuries of systematic legal defilement of Negro women had stamped upon his race, meant, not only the loss of ancient African chastity, but also the hereditary weight of a mass of corruption from white adulterers, threatening almost the obliteration of the [African American] home (p. 19).

DuBois’ (1903/2005) work asserts that the sexual degradation of enslaved women denigrated many enslaved men in immense psychological and emotional proportions and threatened to destroy African American families. DuBois also suggests that a key problem in the construction of African American manhood is that many African American men perceived an inability to protect African American women from the sexual transgressions and aggressions of white men. However, enslaved women were not the only sexually victimized of the African diaspora.
Wallace (2002) suggests that many white men also sexually victimized enslaved men when he writes that “the sodomitic threat was as real during slavery as the heterosexual rape of women” (p.88). Wallace illustrates an example of this threat in Harriet Jacobs’ (1861) *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. In Jacobs’ biographical account, Luke (a slave) was savagely raped and forced to endure sexual treatment by white men in excess (Wallace, 2002). The master is described as performing degrading acts of masturbation and sodomy on Luke. Wallace chillingly recalls in the text, “in the end, the young master takes to his bed a mere degraded wreck of manhood” (p. 89).

Wallace’s work describes the sexual decadence exercised by many white men that greatly imposed on the masculine identities of men of the African diaspora. Other work supports the existence of sexual degradation of African diaspora men by white men as well (Montejo, 1968). Additional scholarship asserts that many sexually humiliating acts performed by white men on African American men are masked in the writings of Frederick Douglass and others (Clifton, 2001; Wallace, 2002). Sex, however, was not the only patriarchal tool used to maintain the subordinance of people of the African diaspora.

Whites also sought to psychologically terrorize the enslaved by attempting to change the ways the enslaved saw and thought about themselves. Research identifies two patriarchal images of enslaved men of the African diaspora that emerged during this period—the beast and the Sambo (T. Gossett, 1965; Hoch, 1979; D. M. Jones, 2005; Mercer, 1994; Turner, 1977). The two images bifurcate men of the African diaspora as either violently resistant (beast) or docile (Sambo). In *Race, Sex and Suspicion: The Myth of the Black Male*, Jones (2005) describes how the distinctions of these images reflected the white men’s psyche. The beast represented the savage, or the hyperaggressive and
hypersexualized man of the African diaspora. As Patricia Hill Collins writes, these types of enslaved men were seen as “big, strong, stupid, and naturally violent” (Collins, 2005, p. 56).

Beliefs about African and African American men’s physical stature informed white attitudes and responses. According to Dyson (2001), enslaved men of the African diaspora were believed to have big sexual desires and even bigger sexual organs to realize their lust. Dyson further adds that white men created the myth that enslaved men were obsessed with white women to attempt to relieve the guilt of white men for raping enslaved women. After slavery, white men continued to beat, burn, hang, and often castrate African American men in response to perceived sexual envy and threat (Dyson, 2001). Additionally, Dyson (2001) notes that whites made enslaved men and women aware that whites perceived them as ugly, disgusting, and sordid. To further illustrate this notion, Dyson writes that “black bodies were spoken of in the same breath, as say horses and cows” (p. 312). Also, Thomas Jefferson illustrates Dyson’s argument about the perceived hypersexual nature of enslaved men:

They seem to require less sleep. A slave after hard labour through the day will be induced by the slightest amusements to sit up till midnight or later, though knowing he must be out with the first dawn of the morning…They are more ardent after their female? But love seems with them to be more an eager desire, than a tender delicate mixture of sentiment and sensation. Their griefs are transient…In general, their existence appears to participate more of sensation than reflection…Their love is ardent, but it kindles the senses only, not the imagination (as quoted in Perkins, 2000, p. 15).

Enslaved men were viewed as hyperaggressive as well. Jones (2005) argues that the beast reflects the white enslaver’s psychological fear that he would be murdered by his enslaved community. Jones (2005) describes the masculinity of enslaved African American and revolt leader Nat Turner who is a largely cited example of the enslaved
“beast” (Blassingame, 1972; J. H. Franklin & Moss, 1994; D. M. Jones, 2005). Jones quotes a description offered by Blassingame (1972) to illustrate the beast as masculine behavior.

Nat was the rebel who rivaled the Sambo in the universality and continuity of his literary image. Revengeful, bloodthirsty, cunning, treacherous, and savage, Nat was the incorrigible runaway, the poisoner of white men, the ravager of white women who defied all the rules of plantation society. Subdued and punished only when overcome by superior numbers or firepower, Nat retaliated when attacked by whites, led guerrilla activities or maroons against isolated plantations, killed overseers and planters, or burned plantation buildings when he was abused…Nat’s customary obedience often hid his true feelings, self-concept, unquenchable thirst for freedom, hatred of whites, discontent, and manhood, until he violently demonstrated these traits (p. 19).

In contrast, Jones (2005) writes that the Sambo represented the white enslaver’s desire for power. The Sambo is described in the literature as buffoonish, docile, and loyal (Blassingame, 1972; J. H. Franklin & Moss, 1994; D. M. Jones, 2005). Jones asserts that the Sambo was “always dull, always immature, always a child; he never became a man (p. 27)”. White belief in this bizarre manhood process of enslaved men hence satisfied the subconscious need of slave-owning whites to remain in command. However, enslaved men thought about their manhood and masculinity differently. In this period, “true manhood” was represented by the attainment of freedom. Thus, stupidity and intimidation were largely behaviors enslaved men used to honor (and often disguise) a manhood desire to be free.

Earlier in this chapter, hooks’ (2004a) discussion of patriarchy illustrates the system of subordination to which men and women of the African diaspora were exposed post-transplantation. In post-transplantation America, patriarchy is represented in the inherent nature of white men to dominate the actions of gendered and cultural others who they deem weak in order to maintain sociopolitical power in various ways. In the
following section, I discuss the ways in which African American men’s manhood became imbued with Euro-American patriarchy and maintained in African American homes after African American men freed themselves. Discussion about the patriarchal manhood and masculinity of African American men follows a discussion about African American men’s resistant masculinity in the Antebellum Era.

**Resistant Manhood and Masculinity in the Antebellum and Reconstruction Eras**

Research offers the term *resistant masculinity* to describe rebellious acts African and African American men used to fight for freedom and assert their manhood throughout their lives in America (Estes, 2005; Hine & Jenkins, 2001). Nat Turner, therefore, is innovative within this frame as he fortified a tradition of enslaved men who did not accept patriarchy but used different energies to resist whites. The flame of resistance continued to burn within African American men notwithstanding white efforts to extinguish it. The episodes of raced and gendered conflict between whites and enslaved men imbued the latter culture with resistant masculinity.

Acts of resistant masculinity persisted throughout slavery in the form of revolts. More specifically, enslaved men and women showed signs of dissatisfaction, plotted rebellion against their masters, and committed acts of sabotage, arson, theft, and murder. African American men and women worked in harmony to resist enslavement and maintain inner strength and integrity. Marable (2001) argues that enslaved men and women participated in conscious, voluntary day-to-day protest including the destruction of agricultural implements, burning crops, stealing whites’ personal food and property, and deliberate work delays during fieldwork. And Frederick Douglass describes in his autobiography his own exercise of resistant masculinity that culminated in a two-hour
brawl—“[The fight with the slave overseer] rekindled in my breast the smoldering embers of liberty. It brought up my Baltimore dreams and revived a sense of my own manhood. I was a changed being after that fight. I was nothing before—I was a man now” (as quoted in hooks, 2004 p. 3). Revolts, fights, and other acts of resistance on plantations were not the only contexts for resistant masculinity. Eventually, African American men received the opportunity to exercise resistance through military service.

**Military Constructions of African American Manhood.** Hine and Jenkins (2001) argue that one way enslaved men’s resistant masculinity was realized was through military service. Specifically, the Civil War is identified as an event in which enslaved men clearly exercised resistant masculinity. Earlier wars for American expansion (i.e. Revolutionary War and War of 1812) attracted the involvement of few enslaved men or held little symbolic importance for them because it did not mean liberation for enslaved men (Hine & Jenkins, 2001). This distinction is not made to negate the efforts of enslaved or free men of the African diaspora who fought in these wars. In fact, scholars argue that the Revolutionary War presented one of the first opportunities for enslaved men to understand how military service could serve as a conduit to win freedom (Hine & Jenkins, 2001). Thus, the Revolutionary War became a fight for freedom even though the enslaved men who participated were largely fighting for the independence and economic gains of white Americans. Hine and Jenkins contend that the Revolutionary War reinforced beliefs in free and enslaved African American men that freedom was their fundamental right. Some enslaved men in the South escaped and would often join enemies of America to attain freedom. Southern white men feared and resisted enlisting
and arming enslaved African and African American men. In response, the enslaved often fought for enemies of America or escaped (Hine & Jenkins, 2001).

However, Hine and Jenkins (2001) also note an interesting pattern that fueled enslaved men’s resistant masculinity after the Revolutionary War--the growing racism and practice of exclusion. Hine and Jenkins write that “whenever the country was at peace, and the need for combat soldiers was at a low level, the military excluded black men” (p 40). African and African American men served in all divisions of the army during expansion wars including the Continental Army, the state militias, units made of U.S. allies, and the navy (Hine & Jenkins, 2001). However, African American men were excluded from newly formed military forces after these wars’ ends because whites widely believed that enslaved men would use military participation as a catalyst to attain freedom. The Civil War, however, provided African American men an opportunity to intensely fight, in organized and disorganized ways, against racial and racialized exclusion, not just to fight for white America’s expansion of resources and other ideals that did not include people of the African diaspora. Hine and Jenkins (2005) observe that “the meaning of black manhood in America became inseparable from freedom and equality” during the Civil War (p. 46). Though free African American men also fought in the Civil War, African American soldiers in the Civil War were largely African American men who had been enslaved (Hine & Jenkins, 2001).

Cullen’s (2001) work shows how African American men constructed manhood ideologies around Civil War military service and how these compared to white men. Namely, duty and responsibility were clear dimensions of manhood for both African American and white men. Both also conflated masculinity with fighting but manhood
meanings (i.e. protection of human freedoms, rights, and ways of life) differed as African American men felt a sense of entitlement to these constructions in ways that many whites denied (Cullen, 2001). African American men fought in the Civil War to attain a sense of pride. Accordingly, Cullen (2001) writes that many African American men expressed masculinity in terms of protecting their families. He points to the narrative of Civil War army veteran Thomas Long who wrote,

> Suppose you had kept your freedom witout [sic] enlisting in dis army; your chillen [sic] might have grown up free and been well cultivated as to be equal to any business, but it would always have been flung in dere [sic] faces—‘your fader [sic] never fought for he [sic] own freedom’—and what could dey [sic] answer? Neber [sic] can say that to dis [sic] African race any more (p. 499).

Many African American men were willing to fight because they believed they would not be regarded as men in the eyes of their families and others until they proved their manhood by their willingness to go into battle and fight for their principles (Cullen, 2001).

Military service also provided African American men a stronger civic voice. Many African American men expressed disagreement to serve in military unless they could serve on an equal basis with white men (Cullen, 2001). Despite these disagreements, many African American men who served in the military during the Civil War were affirmed as men by their military experiences. According to Cullen (2001), a former slave exclaimed, “This was the biggest thing that ever happened in my life…I feel like a man with a uniform on and a gun in my hand” (p. 496). Even one white soldier observed, “Put a United States uniform on his back and the chattel is a man…You can see it in his look. Between the toiling slave and the soldier is nothing but a god could lift him over. He feels it, his looks show it (Cullen, 2001, p.496)”. 
Cullen (2001) writes that African American men who “became men” during the Civil War era killed the two racist conceptions of African Americans as children and animals “with one stone” (p. 496). In the years before the war, southern whites had thought about enslaved men and women as children or animals to make the institution of slavery appear “rhetorically defensible” (Cullen, 2001, p. 496). As armed soldiers, Cullen notes, these enslaved men were neither. Cullen’s synthesis surmises that African American men’s resistant masculinity during the war not only redefined how others saw and thought about African American men but also endowed enslaved men with a new power to prevent the abuse of themselves and those they loved.

Cullen (2001) engages an interesting conversation about the way in which the African American military path to manhood was sexualized and patriarchal. He highlights African American minister Henry Turner’s experience as a member of a Civil War regiment in 1866:

I was much amused to see the secesh women watching with the utmost intensity, thousands of our soldiers, in a state of nudity. I suppose they desired to see whether these audacious Yankees were really men, made like other men, or if they were a set of varmints. So they thronged the windows, porticos, and yards, in the finest attire imaginable. Our brave boys would disrobe themselves, hang their garments upon their bayonets and through the water they would come, walk upon the street, and seem to say to the feminine gazers, “Yes though naked, we are your masters.”

Cullen (2001) argues that this passage illustrates the nexus between manhood and sexual power. As basis for his argument, he notes that intercourse (sexual and otherwise) was used to subordinate African American men in the antebellum South. Serving in a military regiment during the Civil War allowed African American men “to taste mastery over their own bodies which they used for their own purposes, a mastery that compelled white southerners to observe it in action” (Cullen, 2001, p.496). This, Cullen believes,
represented African American men’s new ways of thinking about the sexual order which, he describes, is “unmistakably symbolized by bayonets [and] Yankee uniforms” (p. 496). This new sexualized construction of manhood was not the only byproduct of military service.

According to Hine and Jenkins (2001), the Civil War politicized African American men and strengthened their manhood constructions in ways unlikely to result from other forms of bloody combat or other military sanctions. Hine and Jenkins posit that the war was indicative of forthcoming political, social, and economic change to test the conditions of race relations in America. Specifically, the Civil War largely gave African American men an opportunity to show others that African Americans could contribute in different ways to American society (Hine & Jenkins, 2001). The Civil War is a particularly salient event for understanding how African American men constructed their manhood thereafter. As Hine and Jenkins explain (2001), the Civil War marked the African American transition from the struggle for freedom to civil and human rights movements. Similarly, the Civil War reinforced the idea in African American men that resistant masculinity could be used to fight perceived oppression. After African American men won their freedom in the Civil War, they returned to their families and sought to build a life on their own.

**African American Manhood in the Reconstruction Era.** E. Franklin Frazier’s (1939) cornerstone work, *The Negro Family in the United States*, was considered cutting-edge in its exploration of the African American family pre- and post-slavery. After the Civil War, African American men and women wandered “aimlessly about the country” in a “modified plantation system” (p. 209). In other words, southern whites attempted to
“re-enslave” African Americans in new ways to maintain labor needs in the South. In these days, new constructions of manhood emerged for African American men.

After slavery, African American leaders like Alexander Crummell, Frederick Douglass, and W.E.B. DuBois emerged to endorse a different framework for the African American family, specifically, for African American men—the patriarch. However, scholarly work argues that implicit in this framework is the idea that African American men would approach family life in similar ways to white men in their homes (hooks, 2004b). In fact, hooks (2004b) argues that enslaved African American men were socialized during slavery by whites to believe that they should endeavor to become family patriarchs. Family patriarchs were those who were free, provided for, and protected women. hooks refers to those men who exercised this power without force as benevolent patriarchs. hooks insists that this was the model of patriarchy that many African American men sought to emulate after slavery. Frazier supports hooks assertion, writing that many African American men were “exceedingly jealous of their newly acquired authority in family relations and insisted upon a recognition of their superiority over women” (p.127). hooks also observes that a large majority of African American men adopted the dominator model set by white masters. The dominator model refers to the force (sometimes violence) used to dominate African American women in similar ways that white men dominated white women (hooks, 2004b). hooks argues that some newly freed African American men would even “take their wives to barns to beat them as they had seen their masters do” (hooks, 2004b).

hooks (2004b) highlights, however, that many African American men did not engage patriarchal manhood and masculinity. Rather, many African American men
sought refuge among Native Americans whose cultures did not insist on violence and/or subjugation of women and children. hooks observes that, in these cultures, marriages between Native women and African American men “created a context for different ways of being and living that were counter to the example of white Christian family life” (p. 4). Notwithstanding, many African American men who married African American women sought to subordinate women as a very important part of manhood construction.

Frazier (1939) identifies two factors that African American men used to solidify positions as leaders in the home. One factor was the way in which African American men were positioned in African American churches. Frazier writes that the African American church was under the domination of African American men and thus the work of the African American church tended to confirm men’s interest and authority in the family. A second factor involved the acquisition of property and homes. Frazier writes that, even before slavery’s end, African American men became interested in developing superiority in the home. Before slavery, many ambitious African American men felt it was their duty to attempt to purchase their freedom and the freedom of their wives and children (Frazier, 1939). African American men, Frazier posits, used economic arrangements like these to place them in a position of authority. In some cases, women refused to become subject to the authority of their husbands (Frazier, 1939). A manhood trend was established. African American manhood, which was largely resistant during the Antebellum Era, had evolved to mimick white men’s patriarchy after the formerly enslaved were freed.

Resistance was a major construct of African American manhood during the Antebellum era. As the synthesis above points out, resistance was not only observable in the form of bloody revolt. It also included escape, sabotage, destruction of property, theft,
and many other acts. All acts of resistance were mainly efforts to attain freedom and to keep alive the hope that life would be better for those enslaved. The behavioral response that slavery drew from African American men is discussed in this section as resistant masculinity. As African American men increasingly constructed their manhood around freedom, they demonstrated resistant masculine behaviors to honor disagreement with and contestation of slavery and racial exclusion.

**The Victorian Era: Class and Ritual as Manhood Constructs**

We profess to be both men and Masons; and challenge the world to try us, prove us, and disprove us, if they can.

Martin Delany, *The Origins and Objects of Ancient Freemasonry* (as quoted in Wallace, 2005)

The resistant masculinity of African American men during the Victorian Era evolved to include efforts to build America through industry and protect the African American race in the years following the Reconstruction Era. Exercising resistance seemed to have its gains. Politically, African American men had gained the right to vote. However, women were denied this right until the twentieth century. Some African American men, however, had been elected to public office despite white backlash (Collins, 2005). There were not only political gains for African American men, but population gains for America.

The first three decades of the twentieth century witnessed an increased migration of African Americans and African Caribbeans to northern and mid-western urban areas in the United States (Summers, 2004). Between 1870 and 1910, African Caribbeans migrated to America to escape labor shortages, political marginalization, and natural disasters (Summers, 2004). African Caribbean immigrants joined African Americans who
were leaving the South for the North and Midwest to attempt to meet a growing labor demand and escape the cotton industry (Summers, 2004).

In *Manliness and its Discontents: The Black Middle Class and the Transformation of Masculinity, 1900-1930*, Summers (2004) describes the ways in which African American men engaged in their own manhood constructions during the Victorian Era (1900-1930). Summers writes, “hegemonic discourses of manliness clearly shaped how [African American] men thought about themselves as men” during this period (p.14). Summers conceptualizes hegemony in this sense as a lived system of meanings and values (culture) experienced through reciprocal events. In other words, hegemonic experiences were those in which particular groups were dominant and others subordinate with the latter group powerless to alter the power distribution (also see Chapter I). Summers identifies manhood formation within the Prince Hall Freemasons and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) as primarily shaping the discourse on African American manhood during this time period. This section considers the rise of Freemasonry and the UNIA as organizations used by African American men to further shape their manhood constructions in America. Though these two organizations were interrelated, fundamental differences in their conversations surfaced about the manhood and masculinity of African American men.

African American fraternal organizations are largely influenced by Freemasonry. Wallace (2002) traces the origins of the African American masonic movement in the United States back to March 6, 1775. Prince Hall, a free African American artisan and Revolutionary War veteran, entered an encampment at Massachusetts’ Bunker Hill where he and fourteen other free African American men were initiated by an outfit of Irish
Freemasons belonging to a British regiment. Hall and his fellow African American members petitioned for nine years to obtain a charter from the confederate-operated American Grand Lodge with no success. In 1784, Hall obtained a charter for Provisional African Lodge I from the Grand Lodge of England. African Lodges eventually became Grand Lodges and attracted African American men nationwide for over the next thirteen years (Summers, 2004). African American men were attracted to these organizations because they unified men under ideologically bourgeois constructs of manhood (i.e. wealth, social respectability, political power) (Summers, 2004). During the Victorian Era, Prince Hall Freemasonry attracted African American men who sought to redefine themselves as political, economic, and social leaders. Summers (2004) writes that between 1904 and 1955, membership in the order grew from 46,000 to over 300,000, with most gains occurring prior to 1930.

Summers (2004) also argues that African American men’s manhood in the Victorian Era was largely influenced by gender, class, status, age and the intersection of these. Specifically, African American men defined themselves against African American women and boys (Summers, 2004). Among these influences, class emerged as a more significant construct in African American men’s manhood, particularly for Freemasonry members (Summers, 2004). Summers (2004) describes how many African American men became biased, in a collective sense, toward other African American men who had been influenced by fraternalism and middle-class values. Freemasonry increasingly attracted the first emerging middle classes of lawyers, prosperous farmers, and independent tradesmen. Freemasons became ideologically bourgeois and sought to assert their masculine privilege and authority in African American communities in similar ways to
white men in America. This “imaginary claim” to traditional manhood meanings subjected African American women to subordinate roles since Freemasons appointed themselves as protectors of women and children (Summers, 2004, p. 27).

The membership of Freemasons grew in exclusive ways. Summers chronicles that the majority of accepted members into the masonry fell within middle-class economic lines. A masonic handbook obtained by Summers identifies the following membership guidelines, “he [must be] free-born and [not] a bondsman, of good report, hale and sound, so as to be capable of earning a livelihood for himself and family, and to perform the work of a member of the Lodge, and he must have some visible means of gaining an honest livelihood” (Summers, 2004, p. 35). Few men with “questionable reputations” or in menial positions were proposed for admission to the lodge (Summers, 2004, p. 35). Women were excluded from joining the Freemasonry to maintain the masculine character of the organization (Summers, 2004).

The proliferation of Freemasonry membership tied the manhood and masculinity of its members more closely to the African American community. According to Summers (2004), the provision of mutual aid, charity of time and resources, and exertion to develop themselves professionally were characteristic of the organization. Freemasonry represented another opportunity for African American men to become, as discussed above, benevolent patriarchs. Summers uses the term, “community patriarchs” to refer to African American men who saw themselves as providers for the families of sick or deceased brethren or liberators of the indigent in the broader, non-fraternal African American community (Summers, 2004, p. 39). Freemasons, because of their efforts in the community and emphases on class and social mobility, believed that they were the
leaders of economic movements to fortify the African American race (Summers, 2004). The perceptions were clearly patriarchal. African American men, though attentive to African American women entrepreneurs of the period, internalized entrepreneurship and supporting efforts as primarily a masculine identity both individually and organizationally (Summers, 2004). Freemasonry was not the only organization, however, that sought to improve the sociopolitical and economic conditions of African Americans during the Victorian Era.

The Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) also emerged in America during the Victorian Era and was the largest secular organization for people of African descent in the world. The UNIA grew from a small group of Jamaican men and women who shared similar ideologies about self-reliance, anti-European colonialism, and racial purity (Summers, 2004). The international standing of the UNIA distinguished it from Prince Hall Freemasonry which was a national organization. UNIA chapters emerged in Jamaica in 1914 and erratically spread to thirty-eight states in America by the mid-1920s. Members of the UNIA were often referred to as Garveyites to recognize Marcus Garvey who was chief philosopher of the UNIA movement and its president-general. Garveyites believed that entrepreneurship was both a means to manhood development as well as racial advancement. The work done by UNIA chapters and their various auxiliaries resembled self-help organizations. The UNIA pushed for African Americans’ economic empowerment through the creation of restaurants, clothing factories, stores, cooperative markets and financial institutions, and laundries, among other pursuits. Men who held positions in these areas often held leadership and membership positions in the UNIA.
Garvey articulated a largely eclectic ideology of the “self-made” man to guide the UNIA. Like Freemasons, the UNIA first adhered to and then reshaped Eurocentric, middle-class standards of manhood. Unlike Freemasons, the UNIA pushed a more radical, “racially chauvinistic and nationalist agenda” (Summers, 2004, p.69).

Specifically, UNIA officials delivered rousing speeches and wrote scathing editorials in the *Negro World* that often referenced African American manhood as the subject while the work of Freemasons was often subtle and understated. Summers (2004) presents several models of self-made manhood that informed the more radical ideology espoused by Garvey. These models combined to comprise the “producer outlook” of African American manhood which focused on achievement as defined by three important ideals: (1) gaining leadership in industry (2) adopting bourgeois standards of respectability and (3) implementing frontier ideologies posited by Theodore Roosevelt and American imperialists (Summers, 2004, p. 85).

First, Garveyites encouraged members to become captains of industry while Freemasons still held to yeoman and artisan work ethics (Summers, 2004). UNIA members widely held the belief that such trajectories evinced manly endeavor and redefined an African American man as “masterless” (Summers, 2004, p. 85). Garveyites also asserted that the presence of character in African American men complemented an entrepreneurial spirit. Summers writes that character was believed to bring economic wealth and possessions under the self-made man framework. Garvey declares the following about character, “One lives, in an age like this, nearer perfection by being wealthy than by being poor. To the contended [sic] soul, wealth is the stepping stone to perfection, to the miser it is the nearest avenue to hell” (Summers, 2004, p. 85).
Second, Garveyites emphasized the traditionally bourgeois standard of respectability for African American men in periodical literature. Summers (2004) describes respectability as a sociocultural concept in which “upper- and middle-class men and women adopt values and act in ways that distinguish them from the working class” (Summers, 2004, p. 87). Summers also explains the major difference between how Freemasons and Garveyites used respectability in African American manhood construction. Freemasons drew upon white manhood models to determine how they constructed themselves as respectable. Garveyites used white manhood models as well but sought to reshape them in ways deemed more Afrocentric. This notion eventually expanded to consider ways in which Garveyites could bring these ideals to Africa.

Last, the notion of frontier manliness (demonstrated by Native American fighters and homesteaders) represented the aggressive aspect of African American masculinity. Garvey advocated the “cult of strenuosity” developed by Theodore Roosevelt to encourage African American men to strengthen their “physical muscles” as opposed to “spiritual muscles” (Summers, 2004, p.80). Summers writes that this frame served to largely define African American men’s character in the Victorian Era. Garveyite thought also redefined the “frontier” in an Afrocentric framework. In other words, Africa was largely touted as the environment in which African American manhood was best realized and avowed.

At times, the stance of the Garveyites appeared unreasonable, confusing and inconsistent. For example, Summers (2004) writes that Garvey and his fellow ideologues supported the Tuskegee model posited by Booker T. Washington. The Tuskegee model asserted that African Americans could acquire economic gain through learning industrial
trades, building economically self-sufficient communities, and internalizing the bourgeois values of thrift, sobriety, industry, and Eurocentric standards of morality (Summers, 2004). However, Garvey also expressed thoughts congruent to assertions made by W.E.B. DuBois. DuBois believed racial strengthening required the attainment of liberal education and assertion of political challenge to bring civil equality. The DuBois philosophy encouraged the educated African American elite to advance the liberal education agenda and affect change toward this end in poorer African American classes.

The self-made man ideology connected the masculine discourse between Garveyites and Prince Hall Freemasons. This notion was evident in the use of the rituals that both organizations used to create in their members a heightened sense of manhood. Freemasons and Garveyites also used rituals to define their organizations as exclusive. The rituals performed in both organizations served to bound the members together and reshape and further bifurcate African American men. The rituals formed a sense of cohesiveness among African American men who joined them. Specifically, members who continued the artisanal, social, and political work of the organizations were perceived as reflecting an informed sense of self separate from non-members and women.

Freemasons and Garveyites measured their manhood not only against other African American men deemed less manly, but also relative to African American women and children. According to Summers (2004), Freemasons and Garveyite men constructed their manhood against women and children in primarily two ways. First, Prince Hall Freemasons articulated notions of themselves as protectors of the families, communities, and culture of African Americans in their organizational oaths, guidelines, and rituals. These ideals were further expressed in co-functioning with local lodges led by African
American women, the national independent Order of the Eastern Star (a sister organization to Freemasonry), and youth departments established within the organization. Masculinity was therefore further defined among African American men as the characteristics observed in industrial and civic circles which, at the time, African American men dominated. Women in the UNIA held leadership positions in UNIA auxiliaries such as the Black Cross Nurses, and the juvenile regiments of the organization (Summers, 2004).

Second, African American women also participated in African American manhood constructions in more intentional ways as shaped and allowed by the Masonic and Garvey movements. Prince Hall Freemasons and Garveyite men attempted to temper the political and civic work of African American women to complement a patriarchal framework (for Freemasons) and producer/entrepreneurial framework (for Garveyites) (Summers, 2004). Many African American women, however, asserted their presence, rejected their “assignment”, and challenged perceptions as subordinate helpmate in the Freemason and Garveyite efforts toward racial progress.

This section considered the similarities and contradistinctions between Freemasons and Garveyites. Middle-class ideals of domesticity and the public-private organization of gender roles played an important part in the manhood constructions for African American men in both movements (Summers, 2004). During the Victorian Era, African American men in these organizations used class to begin to define themselves as men and to distinguish themselves from other African American men, women, and boys. Garveyites sought to politically and economically rally both African American men and women around an entrepreneurial agenda to affect change in Africa while Freemasons
aspired to unify like-minded, bourgeois men through secrecy to ascend to prominence in America. Both Garveyites and Prince Hall Freemasons shared fundamental ideas about what it meant to be a man in the early twentieth century (Summers, 2004). Members in both organizations subscribed to bourgeois ideals of manhood shaped by production and engagement in the marketplace and also sought to provide and protect African American women and children.

**African American Manhood in the Civil Rights Era**

Economically, the climate of America shifted at the dawn of the Civil Rights Era (Perkins, 2000). Specifically, Perkins identifies the economic sources that contributed to dramatic shifts in African American men’s manhood and masculinity: 1) the impacts of deindustrialization, job losses, and the globalization of the economy on African American working-class and underclass households, and 2) the exponential growth in the number of unmarried mothers since World War II. The number of unmarried mothers tripled between 1940 and 1957. The growth in numbers of unmarried mothers, in turn, led to an increase in welfare dependence for many African American families. As welfare dependency expanded, the age-structure of African American households dramatically changed. In particular, birthrates among older, better-educated, middle-class African Americans declined while birthrates among younger, less-educated, lower socioeconomic African Americans rose and resulted in an increase in the number of births to unmarried African American women (Perkins, 2000). Scholars write that these economic trends were linked to the overt racial segregation in this period (Collins, 2005; Perkins, 2000). However, in this section, gender relations among African American men and between
African American women and African American men are additionally considered as contributors to these trends.

Collins (2005) identifies “the political economy of racism” which, she argues, mandated the separation of African American and whites on many levels of social interaction (Collins, 2005, p.62). In her discussion, she maps how the political, legal, and social system affected African Americans differently relative to the region of America in which they lived. In the South, African Americans endured Jim Crow laws which legally separated African Americans and whites. Jim Crow laws refer to the laws that upheld the “separate but equal” doctrine between African Americans and whites. The “separate but equal” doctrine was the acceptable, legalized separation upheld in a Supreme Court review of the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case (Collins, 2005). In this case, Homer Plessy, an African American man, took a seat in a passenger car designated for whites, was ejected, and sued on the basis of discrimination. Whites achieved separation in the North through covert segregation, customs, and “traditions” (Collins, 2005). African Americans in the North were made to work the worst jobs, confined to the worst neighborhoods, and generally restricted or prevented from movement in white neighborhoods and other areas (Collins, 2005).

In this economic and political climate, African American men’s constructions of self were further informed and changed. Collins (2005) identifies two trends that impacted new negotiations of African American men’s masculine selves: 1) the political disenfranchisement of Jim Crow laws and failure of the general public to assist African Americans who were formerly enslaved and 2) the patriarchal imagery of African American men as hypersexual and naturally violent (Collins, 2005). Across America,
African American men were relegated to the dirtiest and lowest-paying jobs in America, that is, if African American men were hired at all. As a result, African American families were pushed to live in crowded, unhealthy, and unsanitary living conditions. Urban African American neighborhoods came to be known as “ghettos”, or as Collins (2005) terms, “a new form of prison” due to the egregious conditions African Americans were forced to endure (p. 69).

Scholars argue that this urbanization further contributed to many African American men’s feelings of disempowerment but also movements of African American women and GBT African American men (Collins, 2005; hooks, 2004b; Perkins, 2000). Collins (2005) observes that urbanization allowed for a “freeing” of African American women who longed for life outside the imprisoning domestic life they lived in the South. African American women began to challenge patriarchal ideas about their own womanhood constructions. As a result, many African American women chose to be single in urban areas during the Civil Rights Era. At the same time, urbanization “freed” some closeted, gay African American men and some openly gay African American men to comment about diverse constructions of manhood in which same-sex intimacy was a natural part of those constructions and not sinful as African American churches held. The Harlem Renaissance is a noted time and place for the emergence of these constructions and refers to the rebirth of art, literature, and music that largely commented on racial oppression and African American sexualities (Collins, 2005).

Many African American men found it difficult to challenge new constructions of African American womanhood and diverse constructions of African American manhood. According to Collins (2005), African American men either escaped the responsibility for
their families (setting the stage for women-headed households) or formed new constructions of themselves as respectable African American men. However, this was ideologically difficult for African American men as their constructions mimicked the constructions of white men in a racially segregated and oppressive society (Collins, 2005). Researchers suggest that such conflicts, when paired with new constructions of womanhood and manhood, impaired many heterosexual African American men to show love (Collins, 2005; hooks, 2004a). Collins draws on an African American girl’s narrative of her father as an example of this argument:

> For him and many fathers of his generation, the price of navigating the segregated road to success in the 1940s and 50s was defensiveness, a constant, smoldering rage, the loss of the ability to communicate love in any way but through material things…the closing of that opening, the soft spot in the soul. That allows us to give and receive love. I know this had much to do with being black and male, that sense that black men have of always moving through a world that is hostile, of constantly having to prove themselves as non-threatening, intelligent, finally worthy of some small chance, while holding on to some sense of manhood (p. 74).

hooks (2004a) argues that, amid these diverse constructions, African American men decided to refashion a more “cool” manhood, one that would free them from the obligations of marriage and fatherhood. This new “freedom” for many African American men, hooks comments, was envied by white men who wanted to redefine themselves as “cool”. hooks posits that African American men’s new desire to be cool became the antithesis to family life and ultimately resulted in a trend in which African American men turned away from family responsibility in significant numbers. Interested in this trend, white researchers began to formulate scientific ideas that sought to uphold African American inferiority, justify separation, and to argue that African American men were being emasculated by African American women (Collins, 2005; Perkins, 2000).
These theses largely informed the Moynihan Report (Marable, 2001; Perkins, 2000). The report, issued at the heel of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, argued that government must intervene in rebuilding the paternal role in African American families. In hooks’ (2004a) language, the report represented the imperialist white-supremacist capitalist views inherent in America. The report, titled *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, argued that the African American man’s role in the family had been weakened due to poor employment rates among African American men and the escalating prominence of African American women in African American homes. The Moynihan Report posited that government intervention was necessary to place African American men in economic positions that would enable them to become empowered in African American homes. The widespread belief in this report was that strong African American fathers would serve as value-added role models to African American youth. This, in turn, would socialize African American families, and particularly African American men, into American society. This led to a theory which asserted that African American men’s employment would repair the African American family and begin to reverse the sociopolitical and socioeconomic damages of slavery.

This theory reinforced two patriarchal notions: 1) African American men needed to fight in wars on behalf of America (which had denied the interests and freedoms for African American families for years) and 2) African American men’s sexist beliefs were legitimized and their efforts to subjugate African American women were supported (hooks, 2004a). The report is largely identified as sparking gender-conflict between African American men and African American women. Scholars assert that, during this time, many heterosexual African American men began to ferociously attack and critique
white masculinity which “did not fulfill the primal ideal of patriarchal manhood because [white men] relied on technology to assert power rather than brute strength (p.14).” Subsequently, these conflicts were precursors to the Black Power, Gay Liberation, and Women’s Movements. (hooks, 2004a; Marable, 2001; Perkins, 2000).

**The Black Power Movement.** Many African American men used the Black Power movement to attempt to reclaim the manhood they felt they had been denied by the patriarchal, Euro-American system. hooks (2004a) writes that many black power activists “started out as angry disappointed disenfranchised” men who were unable to fulfill the patriarchal promise they had been told was their entitlement for being born men (p.58). She further argues that these African American men turned to unacceptable criminal behavior (i.e. violence) as the appropriate combative measure. The “militant” platforms that members of the Black Power movement used are rooted in the American patriarchal system. In fact, hooks argues that the downfall of the Black Power movement is attributed to the choice of African American men to use resistant methods socially and historically characteristic of the system that enslaved their ancestors and kept them oppressed. hooks adds that the evolved masculine image of African American men who were members of the Black Power movement is “beautiful African American men wearing leather jackets and berets, armed with machine guns, poised and ready to strike” (p.59). She suggests that this image, perpetrated by mass media, first imbued whites with the notion that African American men were able to “do violence” against white men and prove their manhood in their willingness to die (p. 59).

Patterson (1999) further describes how Euro-American violence influenced African American men to assert their manhood in armed ways:
America has always been a violent place. And quite apart from their involvement with slavery, Euro-Americans have always exhibited a perverse fascination with violence. The violence of Euro-American men against other Euro-American men, and against Euro-American women, needs no documentation. The law of the jungle, of an eye for an eye, has played and continues to play, a central role in the culture….Euro-American men exhibit a higher rate of homicide and other forms of violence than men of any other advanced industrial society…America is the only advanced industrial society that practices capital punishment…The experience, and fear, of violence among Euro-Americans is hardly new…The quintessential American myth is that of the cowboy…Central to that myth are the role of violence and the reverence for the gun…Thus violence is not only shunned and dreaded in American culture; it is also embraced and romanticized (as cited in hooks, 2004b).

During the Black Power movement, some African American men intensified their masculine behaviors. Accordingly, many African American men constructed their manhood around contempt for whites. The contempt was so strong, in fact, that some Black Power members of note confessed they attacked members of their own communities to practice attacks against whites. hooks (2004b) considers such gender politics between African American men and women during this era in Soul on Ice by Eldridge Cleaver. Cleaver (1968) writes that he raped African American women to practice raping white women. Cleaver details his experience as one in which he “crossed the tracks and sought out white prey. I did this consciously, deliberately, willfully, methodically…Rape was an insurrectionary act. It delighted [African American] men that I was defying and trampling upon the white man’s laws, upon his system of values” (hooks, 2004b, p. 52). During this period, Cleaver’s text was widely published and disseminated to the chagrin of active African American participants of the women’s and gay-liberation movements. Contrarily, supporters of women’s and gay-liberation movements sought to deconstruct the patriarchy inherent in text like Cleaver’s.
Women’s and Gay-Liberation Movements. Mercer (1994) writes that the origins of the modern gay liberation movement were closely intertwined with the African American liberation movements of the 1960s. Mercer reiterates Audre Lorde’s assertion that the black struggle became the prototype for all new social movements of the time—from women’s to gay liberation, to peace, antiwar, and ecology movements as well. During the 1970s, feminist initiatives radically politicized the issue of sexual representation. Rustin (2001) notes that the women’s movement represented a long struggle of women’s equality evident in such issues as disparate economic incomes between men and women, equality socialization, education, employment, and domestic responsibilities.

Similarly, the gay-liberation movement emerged when gays resisted police harassment in what became termed the “Stonewall” Rebellion in 1969 (C. W. Franklin, 1984). The gay-liberation movement placed issues of gay men’s sexuality on national platform. Both movements prompted further inquiry into the study of men, manhood and masculinity (C. W. Franklin, 1984; Pleck & Pleck, 1980). In addition, a letter from an unexpected source confronted the fear of many African American men to support the gay-liberation and women’s movements.

In 1970, Huey Newton, who co-founded the black nationalist organization, The Black Panther Party in 1966, published a letter to his readers about the Women’s Liberation and Gay Liberation movements. Newton (2001) argues for coalition-building between black nationalists and other oppressed people in society including women and LGBT persons. In his letter, Newton evaluates the sources of homophobia as well as the roots of homosexuality and concludes that “[Black Nationalists] are only in the process of
establishing a revolutionary value system. I don’t remember us ever constituting any value that said that a revolutionary must say offensive things toward homosexuals or that a revolutionary would make sure that women do not speak out about their own particular kind of oppression” (p. 282). At the close of his letter, Newton reflects on his own attitudes and thinking in hopes to encourage others to think about the ways in which heterosexual African American men may position themselves in relation to women and LGBT persons. He expressively writes,

We should be willing to discuss the insecurities that many people have about homosexuality. When I say “insecurities” I mean the fear that there is some kind of threat to our manhood. I can understand this fear. Because of the long conditioning process that builds insecurity in the American male, homosexuality might produce certain hangups in us. I have hangups myself about male homosexuality where on the other hand I have no hangups about female homosexuality and that’s a phenomena in itself. I think it’s probably because that’s a threat to me maybe, and the females are no threat. It’s just another erotic sexual thing (p. 283).

In this reflection and throughout his letter, Newton (2001) suggests that desires of many African American men to silence LGBT persons and women might be rooted in insecurities about their own sexual identities. Newton begins his letter by observing, “sometimes our first instinct is to want to hit a homosexual in the mouth and want a woman to be quiet. We want to hit the homosexual…because we’re afraid we might be homosexual and want to hit the woman or shut her up because we’re afraid she might…take the nuts that we might not have to start with” (p. 281). Newton urges Black Nationalists to regard the oppression of women and LGBT persons as fundamentally similar to their own oppression. To recognize the multiple oppressions of race and sexual identity that are a part of African American homosexuality, Newton suggests, “maybe a homosexual could be most revolutionary” (p. 282).
Conclusion

In this chapter, African American men’s construction of manhood and masculinity were discussed throughout six eras of history: pre-transplantation Africa, post-transplantation America, the Antebellum and Reconstruction Eras, the Victorian Era, and the Civil Rights Era. This synthesis points to major themes in the development of African American manhood throughout history. First, this chapter described ways of life and manhood meanings constructed by men of the African diaspora. African men’s senses of self, senses of responsibility, and understandings were socially informed by African communities, traditions, and philosophies. Specifically, African men largely felt responsible to their communities and culture. In the African culture, the presence and power of community was (and still is) sacred, but so was patriarchy. Clearly, there were strong connections and respect among African men as they served as authorities of localities and subordinated women across African cultures. This chapter also considered diverse constructions of manhood across various countries and tribes of Africa. Across many cultures, many African men held different values and beliefs about love, sexuality and relationships. A major difference between many sexually diverse and many heterosexual African men’s constructions is the way in which these men intimately and sexually interacted with each other and women. Many heterosexual African men pursued sexual and intimate relationships with African women while many sexually diverse African men opted for senses of deeper intimacy and understanding between men.

After people of the African diaspora were enslaved, they endured horrifying treatment which, over centuries, altered African American men’s senses of self in America. Under white rule, many enslaved men were forced to construct new definitions
of manhood in a new system of patriarchy. In this system, African American men used resistant behavior to honor how they thought about themselves as men who should be free. Specifically, this chapter considered how various forms of revolt and military service during the Civil War fulfilled desires to earn freedom specific to African American men. During the centuries that slave systems existed, resistance took various forms that reinforced the desire of freedom.

After the war, many African American men who married African American women revealed how their manhood constructions and subsequent behaviors had been imbued by the Euro-American, patriarchal system. In fact, many African American men interacted with their families in similar ways as white men during the Reconstruction Era. At times, violence, intimidation, and terrorism were tools that many African American men used to oppress their own families. Many African American men used two other patriarchal strategies to solidify positions as leaders in the home: 1) securing leadership positions in African American churches and influencing its work in the community and 2) acquiring property and homes. By the end of this section of the chapter, it becomes clear how similarities existed between the gendered patriarchies of Africa and America as well as how they were uniquely different, redefining the ways in which African American men exercised authority over women.

During the Victorian Era, many African American men were desperate to shed the images forced upon them by whites. Paradoxically, African American men defined themselves according to Eurocentric standards of class and achievement. The pursuit of education, a working craft, and membership in secret societies and fraternities combined to impact many African American men’s manhood constructions. At the same time,
African American men became further interested and engaged in political, civic, educational, and social matters and pursuits. African American men also used rituals to heighten their senses of manhood. The rituals formed a sense of cohesiveness among African American men who joined them. However, the rituals also reinforced the bifurcation of members of secret societies from those who were not members. Secret society members who continued the artisanal, social, and political work of these organizations were perceived in African American communities as more respectable. Many African American men who attained class by Eurocentric standards began to use it in similar ways as whites including the exclusion of poor, uneducated, and socially non-affiliated African Americans. Hence, the once oppressed in slavery for centuries began to oppress those in their own culture.

Last, the nature of oppression shifted with the changing economic and political climates of the Civil Rights Era. As a result, many African American men were forced, either overtly or covertly, to work the most unwanted jobs in America. Two trends, in particular, impacted new constructions of African American men’s masculine selves: 1) the political disenfranchisement of Jim Crow laws and failure of the general public to assist African Americans who were formerly enslaved and 2) the patriarchal imagery of African American men as hypersexual and naturally violent. Urbanization further contributed to many African American men’s feelings of disempowerment when many African American women and sexually diverse African American men sought to empower themselves. Many African American men found it difficult to challenge new constructions of African American womanhood and diverse constructions of African American manhood. Many African American men’s new desire to be “cool” became a
coping mechanism for these perceived pressures. This resulted in a trend in which African American men turned away from family responsibility in significant numbers.

During the Civil Rights Era, many African American men articulated sentiments consistent with the Black Power movement in which militant resistance fulfilled African American men’s intrinsic need to reclaim the manhood they felt they had been denied by the patriarchal Euro-American system. Feelings of contempt were so strong, in fact, that some Black Power members attacked members of their own communities to practice attacks against whites. The chapter ends by presenting a more diverse positioning of manhood during the women’s and gay liberation movements through Huey Newton’s reflections. Newton, who was the leader of the Black Panther Party, urged Black Nationalists to recognize the multiple oppressions within American society and to regard the struggles of women and gays as fundamentally similar to the oppression of African American men.
CHAPTER III
THEORY AND RESEARCH

Men know so little of men.

W. E. B. DuBois (1903)

Since the early theories of the planetary system posited by Ptolemy, theory has been constructed in order to explain, predict and master phenomena (i.e. behavior). In many instances, models of reality are constructed from theory (Hawking, 1996). A theory makes generalizations about observations and consists of an interrelated, coherent set of ideas and models (Hawking, 1996). In educational research texts, theory is defined similarly as an “explanation of a certain set of observed phenomena in terms of a system of constructs and laws that relate these constructs to each other” (Gall, Borg, and Gall, 1996, p. 8). In this chapter, the theoretical frameworks of this study are presented. Three of the theories presented in this chapter explore the interconnections of race and gender with African American men’s constructions of manhood. The fourth theory, Tinto’s theory of social and academic engagement, shapes the analysis of participant narratives in relation to their decisions to engage in college. The following theories that frame this study are: DuBois’ (1903) theory of double consciousness, Cross’ (1991) theory of nigrescence, social role theory, and Tinto’s (1994) theory social and academic engagement. Figure I displays the theoretical frameworks as well as the theoretical questions that undergird the broader research questions in this dissertation.

This chapter also reviews relevant literature on the masculine behavior of African American boys and men in schooling and collegiate contexts. First, the history of the study of men and manhood is discussed to position this study in the manhood literature. Second, I discuss research on the early development of African American masculine
behavior. Third, I review the literature on the development of masculine behavior in college. Then, I offer research that suggests different pathways to manhood for GBT men in college. In this discussion, the nexus between gender stereotypes and homophobia is considered. Also, scholarship is presented that analyzes the collegiate fraternity as a masculine normative space in which GBT men experience incongruence and report disengagement and exclusion.

**DuBois’ Theory of Double Consciousness**

DuBois’ (1903) theory of double consciousness is a useful lens to view and conceptualize the disparate experiences of African American men in America and specifically African American men who are enrolled in the patriarchal spaces of historically white institutions. The theory states that African Americans negotiate two identities—one as an American citizen and the other as oppressed African descendant in America. In this frame, African American men negotiate a different consciousness and circumvent behavior according to others’ perceptions. Acting in a double consciousness is shaped when an individual “looks at one’s self through the eyes of others” (DuBois, 1903/2005). In this frame, a healthy identity is achieved when the African self and American self become one.

Fanon’s work (1967), for example, operationalizes double-consciousness. By the end of the text, Fanon is liberated from seeing himself through patriarchal eyes. For example, he writes “I try to read admiration in the eyes of others…and, if, unluckily, those eyes show me an unpleasant reflection, I find that mirror flawed. Unquestionably that other is a fool…I am the Hero” (as cited in Wallace, 2002, p. 174).
The theory of double consciousness suggests that African American men face a unique struggle to construct their manhood in America. African American men who behave in ways compatible with manhood meanings white American men constructed risk condemnation in the African American culture. African American men who construct their meanings and behavior compatible to the African American culture feel genuine acceptance in these spaces. However, this genuine acceptance in the African American culture often leads to inequitable experiences in white normative spaces (Alexander, 2006; DuBois, 1903/2005). DuBois’ theory, therefore, suggests that African American men are burdened to change or disguise their behavior to suggest that their meanings of manhood are compatible in the cultural space they inhabit at the time. The theory of double consciousness shaped interview questions of this study. I looked for interview statements from the participants that suggested that African American men change their behavior in different cultural spaces to appear, or not appear, to be culturally authentic African American men.

**The Cross Model of Nigrescence**

The Cross Nigrescence Model is widely used in research to describe the steps African Americans engage to internalize their racial identity. Cross’s (1971) original model was challenged when the link between pro-white attitudes and African American self-esteem was tested and found non-existent (Cross, 1991; White & Parham, 1990). Howard-Hamilton (1997) notes that the Cross Model of Nigrescence is a more appropriate framework for understanding African American men in collegiate contexts because its Afrocentric foundation lends insight into the ideologies of African American men. Racial identity is grouped in three clusters in this model: (1) Pre-encounter (2)
Immersion-Emersion identity and (3) Internalization. These clusters are described below—

(1) The Pre-encounter stage is bifurcated into two subcategories: Pre-encounter Assimilation which refers to a low salience for race but a strong salience for American citizenship [i.e. “I prefer to socialize with white Americans” (Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross, & Worrell, 2001)] and Pre-encounter Anti-Black depicts an African American individual who holds very negative views about African Americans (internalized as African American self-hatred).

(2) The Immersion-Emersion stage is also bifurcated into two subcategories: Individuals in the Intense Black Involvement sub-stage place emphasis on the relevance of blackness. This is deemed the first step to an internalized African American identity. Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross, and Worrell (2001) observe that a positive aspect of Intense Black Involvement is the enthusiasm that manifests itself in the investigation and learning of African and African American history. However, Vandiver et al. also note that negative aspects of this sub-stage often appear through the rage, guilt, and anxiety that fuels African American exploration of these histories and commentaries. Individuals in the Intense Black Involvement sub-stage negotiate Anti-White attitudes more cognitively. In Cross’ revision (1991), he notes that physical expression of anti-white attitudes are less likely to emerge, but manifest themselves in thinking [i.e. “I hate white people” (Vandiver et al., 2001)].
(3) The Internalization stages in the Cross (1991) model are comprised of two revised subcategories in the 1971 model that describe internalization of self-acceptance. Internalized African Americans can differ in their acceptance of members from diverse cultural groups (Vandiver et al., 2001). The last stage is engaged when African Americans liberate themselves from the stereotypical and unjustified pro-race and anti-race attitudes they once held. Vandiver et al. note that being comfortable with Blackness frees individuals to concentrate on issues beyond the parameters of a personal sense of Blackness.

The Cross (1991) model has been critiqued for its linear conceptualization of racial internalization (M. C. Brown, 1997; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). Sellers and colleagues (1998) posit a re-conceptualization of the Cross model that broadens and further bifurcates the racial development of African Americans. However, the Sellers model is so multifaceted that the analysis of the interview data in this study would hold less meaning. Therefore, this study looked to the Cross model to inform the data collection instrument and interpretive analysis.

**Eagly’s Social Role Theory**

Eagly’s (1987) social role theory informs my inquiry about the gender performance of African American men. Social role theory asserts that men and women look to the behavior of same-sex others to determine appropriate behavior. Violation of norms may bring social disapproval. This theory has been widely used in the study of business leadership (Eagly & Karau, 1991; Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000; Wood & Eagly, 2002). Subsequent research that applies social role theory focuses on African

Peters and colleagues (2004) used social role theory to investigate 148 students who read a bogus newspaper article that described either a man or woman athlete who successfully completed an athletic event. The type of sport (football, basketball, and cheerleading) was manipulated. The researchers overwhelmingly found that athletes who fulfilled stereotypically masculine athletic roles (i.e. football and basketball) are likely to be perceived as masculine role oriented. Conversely, male athletes who fulfilled stereotypically feminine athletic roles (cheerleading) were perceived as feminine role oriented.

As I listened to study participants and analyzed participant narratives, I looked for the ways in which African American men may (or may not) look to the behavior of other African American men to determine appropriate behavior. The interview protocol was also designed to elicit from study respondents their descriptions of African American men that they deemed the most masculine or manly.

**Tinto’s Theory of Social and Academic Engagement**

The theoretical frame posited by Tinto (1975; 1987; 1994) informs this study about the disconnects that African American men may experience in collegiate contexts that influence collegiate engagement and degree attainment. Tinto writes that students who perceive incongruence between themselves and the institution will experience more difficulty becoming integrated and therefore are less likely to persist. Tinto (1994) proposes that two variables, academic and social integration, are necessary to positively impact collegiate perceptions. The two, though different, are interrelated. Any difficulty
becoming integrated on either level has an adverse effect. Tinto suggests that how students perceive the college experience relates to the degree they engage in the social and academic communities of college. Negative perceptions of the college experience become predictors of attrition within this frame. Tinto (1986) argues that students who discontinue their enrollment in college are reflecting “the interpretation and meaning that individuals attach to their experiences within the institution” (p. 365). Tinto also identifies three transitional phases (informed by work of Van Gennep) in the process of student persistence in college as: (1) separation from communities of the past (2) transition between high school and college and (3) incorporation into collegiate society.

Tinto is most often cited in and associated with student persistence research. The origins of Tinto’s student departure theory begin with his collaboration with Cullen in 1973. The academic and social integration variables from this collaboration form the foundation of the model (Tinto, 1975). Scholars who test the Tinto model confirm strong relationships among attitudes, behaviors and collegiate engagement (Bean, 1983; Braxton, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983). The applicability of the Tinto model to minority students experiences are less clear (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998).

In this study, the interview protocol was designed to elicit perceptions of institutional culture and environments from study participants. In the analysis, I looked for ways in which African American boys’ and men’s raced and gendered experiences in college are congruent or incongruent with institutional norms. The manhood experiences of these students, who are more or less engaged in the institution, lent insight into why they chose to engage and what experiences influenced decisions to disengage in college.
How do African American men in college negotiate a dual consciousness?

- DuBois' Double Consciousness

How do African American men in college define their relationships with other African Americans and people of other racial identities?

- Cross' Nigrescence Theory

How do African American college men's manhood constructions affect college engagement or disengagement?

- Tinto's Theory of Social and Academic Engagement

How do African American men look to others for guidance on how to perform their manhood?

- Eagly's Social Role Theory

Figure I. Theoretical Model
The Study of African American Boys, Men, and Manhood

In this section, I discuss the breadth and depth of African American manhood scholarship that informs the discourse on African American men in college. Consideration is given to the history of manhood studies. Additionally, seminal work is presented that lends insight to how African American men engage manhood processes.

Early work of Joseph Pleck (1981) is largely cited as the beginning of consistent research in the study of men and masculinity. Several works have studied men in their roles as fathers, husbands, and workers (Brod, 1987; Doyle, 1989; C. W. Franklin, 1984; Kimmel & Messner, 2007; Pleck & Pleck, 1980; Stearns, 1979). Other work considers, more broadly, the evolving nature of manhood and masculinity imagery in America and abroad (Kimmel, 1996; Kimmel & Aronson, 2003; Kimmel & Messner, 2007).

Early research on African American men sought to compare the characteristics and experiences of African American men with Eurocentric standards of fatherhood and success and yielded widely challenged results (Moynihan, 1965). This work investigates the household dynamic between husbands and wives. Subsequent studies and syntheses have since investigated the gender roles of African American men as fathers or economic providers (Cazenave, 1979; C. W. Franklin, 1984; J. H. Franklin & Moss, 1994; Hare, 1971; Liebow, 1967; Staples, 1982), or the external attempts to deconstruct African American manhood (Grier & Cobbs, 1968; Hutchinson, 1997; Staples, 1982). During the 1980s, C. W. Franklin posited African American masculinity as “an emphasis on physical strength, an expectation of both submissiveness and strength in women, angry and impulsive behavior, functional (and often violent) relationships in women and strong male bonding” (p. 60-61).
The first wave of African American manhood scholarship emerged in the early 1980s after seminal work on the African American family (C. W. Franklin, 1984, 1986, 1987; Gibbs, 1984; Kunjufu, 1986; Oliver, 1984, 1989a 1989b; Staples, 1982). This scholarship was more than two decades behind sustained feminist scholarship and at least one decade of sustained black feminist scholarship (Wallace, 2002). The second wave of African American manhood studies and syntheses emerged in the 1990s after movements (i.e. Million Man March), highly publicized trials of African American men, and infusion of the hip-hop era to center connections between race and gender in their scholarship and essays (Akbar, 1991; Belton, 1995; Billson, 1996; Carbado, 1999; Davis, 1999; P. B. Harper, 1996; Hunter & Davis, 1992, 1994; Hutchinson, 1997; Kelley, 1997; Madhubuti, 1990; Majors & Billson, 1992). This discourse continues in the 2000s with sexual identity and historical construction of masculinity dominating much of the scholarly dialogue (Byrd & Guy-Sheftall, 2001; Constantine-Simms, 2001; Davis, 2000; hooks, 2004a, 2004b; D. M. Jones, 2005; Neal, 2005; Poulson-Bryant, 2005; Reese, 2004; Reid-Pharr, 2001; Summers, 2004; Wallace, 2002; Young, 2004). The following studies are highlighted as seminal work on African American men’s manhood and masculinity.

Hunter and Davis’ (1992) study of 32 African American men was conducted in an effort to define manhood. In this study, African American men defined manhood as a multidimensional construct that defines being man in three different ways (1) in terms of self (2) relationship and responsibility to family, and (3) worldview or existential philosophy. The researchers used a conceptualization methodology to cluster attributes deemed important to men about their manhood. Subsequently, a q-sort technique was used to allow respondents to rate the importance of clusters of attributes. The following
clusters emerged: (1) education/intellectual skills, (2) spirituality and religion, (3) risk-taking, (4) being respected and (5) authority. According to Hunter and Davis (1992), African American men define manhood in multiple arenas and contexts both within and beyond traditional notions of masculinity and the male role.

I. Harris and Torres (1994) lend support to the findings of the Hunter and Davis (1992) study. I. Harris and Torres’ work suggests that African American men develop responses to dominant cultural norms as they grow older differently than white men. The researchers were interested in the responses of white men and African American men to dominant norms of masculinity within the United States. The study describes a general model for male identity formation which includes the influence of cultural perspectives, dominant cultural norms and specific circumstances. Their work evolves from an exploratory research study conducted during the 1980s on the influence of male messages on men in the United States. Male messages define (1) what it means to be a man and (2) set standards for male behavior in the United States in the latter half of the 20th century. Examples of male messages include adventurer (men take risks and have adventures; brave and courageous) and be like your father (Dad is your role model. Men express feelings in ways similar to their fathers). Findings were quite telling. Younger African American men possess notions about masculinity more similar to white men than older African American men. Additionally, African American men are motivated as they mature to help family members and friends and to become involved in civic and church associations. Also, African American men valued the notion of “doing battle to survive”, were less likely to express their feelings, and valued control, money and breadwinner status.
In 1994, Hunter and Davis conducted another study using the 32 adult African American men who informed their previous study in 1992. The researchers found that the African American men in their study understand men’s sex-roles in different ways than those posited by Western, Eurocentric ideals. The researchers studied 32 adult New York African American men with a range in age, educational level, occupation, and class. The researchers used a conceptualization methodology which involves generating and sorting ideas and constructing a conceptual map of what manhood means to the participants. After interviews, four major domains with 15 distinct clusters emerged concerning how the men in this study conceptualize manhood: (1) self-determination and accountability, (2) family, (3) pride, and (4) spirituality and humanism.

Watts (1993) reports similar findings. Watts identifies key themes in manhood development as understood by the African American men who work within organizations designed to guide boys into manhood. Data were collected from 40 leaders of manhood development organizations using interview methods that allowed respondents to define concerns for themselves. Watts found that community leaders who worked with African American youth wanted to inculcate and cultivate in young African American men spirituality, a desire to give back, and understanding of themselves though an appreciation of African culture. Watts reports congruency between the assertions about manhood posited by African scholars and the type of manhood that community activists endeavored to develop in African American men.

Alford’s (2003) findings confirm the community and cultural approach considered in the Watts (1993) study. Alford evokes the voices of African American boys in the Ohio Africentric Rites of Passage (AA-RITES) Program. The AA-RITES program,
like many others of similar nature, sought to impact the manhood development of young African American men in urban areas. Qualitative inquiry in this study examined the AA-Rites program and assessed the benefits of this program vis-à-vis self-esteem and ethnic identity enhancement for adolescent African American men in out-of-home care. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the AA-RITES program. Findings of the study suggest that the diasporic grounding of the AA-RITES philosophy had a positive impact on the participants’ worldviews. For example, participants report heightened awareness of their identities as young men of African descent and strengthened self-esteem and cultural values.

Early Development of African American Masculine Identities

In this section, I review the research on masculine identity for African American boys. The behavioral experiences of African American boys are salient for understanding how masculine identity is shaped. The extant literature on African American masculine identity is largely shaped by research on the experiences and behaviors of young African American boys. Scholars suggest that young boys construct their masculine identities and ideologies through overcoming obstacles and subsequently earning a sense of autonomy and mastery (Blos, 1962, 1979; Chodorow, 1978; LaVoie, 1976; Stoller, 1964; Wainrib, 1992). However, this pathway to manhood is critiqued as Eurocentric in scope. F. Harris (1995) argues that African American boys engage more eclectic pathways to masculine identities that reflect combinations of Eurocentric, Afrocentric, and alternative standards.

Scholars found that the juxtaposition of categorizations as “popular youth” and “classroom sinner” led to a range of behaviors, strategies, and constructions within and beyond schooling spaces that impact the manhood construction of African American
men. Some of these categorizations carry life-long implications for how African American boys come to define themselves as men (Billson, 1996; Davis, 2000; Ferguson, 2000, 2007; Majors & Billson, 1992; Polite & Davis, 1999; Sewell, 1997). African American men who attended school in the early educational systems tell graphic stories that bear out the previous statement (Cose, 2003; Wright, 1945/2005). Specifically, their autobiographical sketches reveal the impact of disparate schooling and collegiate experiences on the construction of early manhood.

For example, Black Boy (1945/2005) by Richard Wright provides an autobiographical description of an early African American boy’s experience in school. hooks (2004b) writes, “a reader and a thinker, Wright was constantly interrogated by classmates and teachers who wanted him to remain silent. They wanted to know ‘why do you ask so many questions?’” (p.35). Cose (2003) writes that poor African American children in that era were deemed unable to learn. Wright argues that learning to read and write in his early childhood angered white American communities who wanted him to remain uneducated. hooks (2004b) observes that African American men of all ages tell the same stories today as they did in the 1920s. For example, the work of Cose (2003) aligns in similarity with the work of Wright. Cose reflects his experiences:

That elementary school experience made it difficult for me to take school seriously. I was never a bad student, but I simply didn’t see it as a venue where much learning would take place or where my mind would be stretched. And the more schooling I received, the more my assessment was confirmed...[I learned to be] so mistrustful of school, so alienated from its methods, and so convinced that I was too smart to be there, that I was in no mood to give it my heart (as cited in hooks, 2004b, p. 35).

In Makes Me Wanna Holler, McCall describes the racial harassment he encountered as an eleven year old alone in a predominantly white school:
I was the only [African American] in most of my classes. When I walked into one room and sat down, the students near me would get up and move away…It wasn’t much better dealing with white teachers. They avoided eye contact with me as much as possible…It was too much for an eleven-year-old to challenge, and I didn’t try. Instead, I tried to become invisible. I kept to myself, remained quiet during class discussions, and never asked questions in or after class. I kept my eyes glued to my desk or looked straight ahead to avoid drawing attention to myself. I staggered, numb and withdrawn, through each school day (as cited in hooks, 2004b, p. 37).

As the previous narratives illustrate, the behavioral outcomes of African American men are rooted in their schooling experiences and primarily influenced by peer groups (F. Harris, 1995; Kunjufu, 1986). Scholars also suggest that these experiences can even reverse home-grown values (Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992). Kunjufu contends that African American boys learn to behave in accordance with a culture in which “coolness” is most respected and attained by breaking rules or receiving poor grades in school. Taylor (1989) and F. Harris (1995) also write that peer groups are perceived as sources of security, achievement, belonging, status, and self-validation. Kunjufu (1986) argues that African American boys are perceived as manly as early as in the third grade if they are successful in athletics, fighting, or risk-taking or “playing the dozens” well. Playing the dozens is defined as a competitive ritual characterized by an exchange of verbal insults related to the participants or members of the participants’ families (F. Harris, 1995).

Anthropologists and sociologists describe the ways in which African American men who do not participate in fights, athletics, or other risk-taking activities are deemed suspicious in these circles. Research suggests that African American men who perform well academically are perceived as “selling out” and “acting white” to receive individual gains (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Peer group acceptance or rejection, however, is not the
only force that shapes masculine identity (Kunjufu, 1986; Steinberg, 1996). In fact, Noguera (2003) adds that there is also an institutional dynamic at play. He writes, “[African American] men may engage in behaviors that contribute to their underachievement and marginality, but are more likely to be channeled into marginal roles and to be discouraged from challenging themselves by adults who are supposed to help them” (p.452)

Ferguson (2000) makes a similar argument as Noguera (2003). Ferguson asserts that African American men exhibit aggressive behavior because they are labeled as “unsalvageable” at the beginning of their educational experiences. Ferguson reports her findings of ethnographic research of 20 fifth-and sixth-grade boys at the urban Rosa Parks Elementary School over a three-and-a-half year period (from January 1990 to May 1993). Ferguson labels ten of the boys as Schoolboys to describe those boys identified by the school as “doing well” (p.9). Ferguson also labels ten of the boys as Troublemakers to describe those boys identified as “getting into trouble” (p.9). The purpose of this study was to unearth the ways in which racial inequalities are reproduced covertly and informally through (1) institutional practices, and (2) cultural representations of racial difference. Ferguson (2000) writes that Bad Boys is a study of these two modes: how institutional norms and procedures in the field of education are used to maintain a racial order, and how images and racial myths frame how individuals perceive themselves and others in a racial hierarchy.

Ferguson (2000) conducted a series of in-depth, unstructured interviews with African American boys, classroom teachers, principals, discipline staff, the district truant officer, school psychologists, social workers, school janitors, and parents. She finds
evidence that school environment contributes to the marginalization of African American boys. Specifically, labels such as “troublemakers” placed by authorities (teachers, principals, staff) predispose African American boys to socially unaccepted and deviant life outcomes. Additionally, Ferguson found that African American boys in the study become less eager to persist in their fourth grade year and learn to model themselves after future professional athletes or African American men in urban neighborhoods at the same time.

The “unsalvageable” notion discussed in the work of Ferguson (2000) aligns with similar observations of Garibaldi (1992) and hooks (2004b). Garibaldi argues that teachers have a seminal role to play to reverse the negative academic and social behaviors of African American men. However, Garibaldi contends that teachers are susceptible to internalizing and projecting negative stereotypes and myths to unfairly describe African American boys as a “monolithic group with little hope of survival and success” (p. 8). Garibaldi suggests that teacher perceptions cause African American boys who may possess positive self-concepts and outstanding personal expectations to disassociate themselves in the learning experience. hooks recalls how African American boys excelled in all-African American schools and how they were deemed smarter than even the smartest girl in her childhood memoir:

White teachers were not eager to teach black boys and white parents were not eager to have black boys sitting next to their sons and daughters. Suddenly, smart black boys were invisible. When a “special” black boy was allowed to be in the gifted classes it was only after he had proven himself to be appropriately subordinate. Always, he was the one smart boy who managed to excel, learned to be obedient, to keep his mouth shut. Smart black boys who wanted to be heard, then and now, often find themselves cast out, deemed troublemakers, and placed in slow classes or in special classes that are mere containment cells for those deemed delinquent. Individual poor and working-class boys who excel academically in the public school system without surrendering their spirit and
integrity usually make it because they have an advocate, a parent, parental caregiver, or teacher who intervenes when the biased educational system threatens them with destruction (p. 38-39).

Ferguson (2007) used her study to inform further synthesis on young African American manhood behavior in schooling contexts. She contends that African American boys, to a large degree, learn to perceive manhood in terms of power struggle. Ferguson describes three key behaviors that African American men use in the embrace of the masculine “we” as a mode of self-expression (p. 112).

1. **Heterosexual power (understood as male heterosexual).** Ferguson (2007) writes that personal violations of heterosexual power include transgressive behaviors (i.e. sexual curiosity and attraction). Ferguson suggests that African American boys use physical, biological and representational differences to perform acts (i.e. physical touching) that define African American boys as perpetrators and African American girls as victims. Ferguson also describes how this power is exercised within African American male peer groups. When African American boys want to show supreme contempt for another boy they call him a girl or liken his behavior to a girl’s behavior. Davis (2001) adds to this notion and asserts that African American boys who are perceived as not adhering to the prescribed rigid masculine codes are victimized and alienated from inclusion in the African American boy cultures at school.

2. **Classroom performances that engage and disrupt the normal direction of the flow of power.** Ferguson (2007) finds that many African American boys use power to disrupt the standards and well-scripted roles in classrooms (i.e. constant noise, rapping, laughing, crumpling paper). School perspectives
characterize these actions as disruption while African American boy peer
groups perceive them as lively, fun, exciting, and disrupting to an otherwise
bland context (Davis, 1999). Ferguson (1997) argues that the use of
confrontational voices allows African American boys to establish a reputation
and make a name for themselves. P. B. Harper (1996) adds that how African
American boys use their voice becomes an identifying marker for masculinity
and that “a too-evident facility in white idiom can quickly identify one as a
white-identified Uncle Tom who must also be weak, effeminate, and probably
a fag” (p. 11).

3. **Fighting.** Ferguson (2007) suggests that fighting is a mechanism used by
African American men who by and large do not trust authority figures in
school due to sociohistorical and present power relations in their communities.
Ferguson contends that fighting is (a) an exploratory site to construct
manhood as observed in movies or video games (b) a social practice of
entertainment and (c) to evoke fear in others to avoid future confrontations.

S. M. Harris (1992) aligns with Ferguson (2007) in the suggestion that African American
boys who exhibit skill in the expression of alternative behavior acquire group status and
recognition as decision makers and leaders. S. M. Harris insists that those who show
competence in fighting, participating in sports, teasing, and reporting actual or contrived
sexual conquests are bestowed with greater privileges than those perceived as less
adequate in these areas.

To make similar arguments, scholars provide additional characterizations of
African American boys’ masculine behavior, demonstrations, and performances. Corbin
and Pruitt (1999) write that African American boys turn to sexual promiscuity, machismo, risk taking, and aggressive social skills to compensate for feelings of insecurity in a Eurocentric world. F. Harris (1995) writes that such insecurity manifests itself in changes in posture, clothing, dialect and language, walking style, and demeanor. Majors and Billson (1992) further characterize this behavior as a coping mechanism labeled “cool pose”. The authors define cool pose as

the presentation of self that many [African American boys and] men use to establish their male identity. Cool pose is a ritualized form of masculinity that entails behaviors, scripts, physical posturing, expression management, and carefully crafted performances that deliver a single, critical message: pride, strength and control (p. 4).

Majors and Billson (1992) argue that African American boys, prior to college, learn early to project a façade of emotionlessness, fearlessness, and aloofness to counter the poor self-image and confidence expected from the race to which they belong. Majors and Billson also suggest that the “cool pose” becomes pathological in a sense, or self-sustaining, because of its continued use as coping mechanism. To view African American boys (and men) in only this light, however, is problematic. Scholars and activists write that the endorsement of a behaviorally restrictive or unidimensional conception of manhood, (i.e. tough guy, player of women) is viewed as dysfunctional in a cultural frame of racism and economic oppression (Hunter & Davis, 1992).

Billson (1996) expands the tough and cool guy typologies as she analyzes the stories of five, young 7th-grade African American boys via the Pathways to Identity Project. Since 1966, Pathways to Identity has been a longitudinal research project which conducts intensive interviews with 61 African American male adolescents who live in Boston. This project was created to provide systematic data from a specified population
used to develop broad theoretical frameworks. *Pathways* concentrates on the experience of African American boys as they live through the formative years of adolescence, a period of expanding personal and racial awareness during which potential roles for the present and future are tested, rejected, altered, and sometimes adopted. Billson draws archived data taken from the five African American boys during 1967, 1970, and 1973.

Billson (1996) develops a typology of strategic styles that describe young African American behavior that include: (1) the cool guy (i.e. “the together guy”) (2) the conformist (i.e. “the too-good guy”) (3) the tough guy (i.e. “the troublemaker”) (4) the actor (i.e. “the con artist”) (5) the retreater (i.e. “the withdrawn kid”). Billson posits these typologies as the tools with which shapes and structures interact to control African American boys’ behaviors and satisfy needs for affection, approval, intimacy, status, and other emotional connections. She suggests that these styles develop into opportunities for African American men to display deviant behavior in their environments. Scholars and researchers assert similar findings and syntheses in more recent work as well (P. B. Harper, 1996; Madhubuti, 1990; Majors & Billson, 1992). Further, Billson suggests that strategic styles serve as an intervening or mediating variable between an African American boy’s social environment and his individual behavior. Billson argues that African American boys need to be exposed to experiences that inform their insight, autonomy, and balance between power and their personal affiliations. This, she contends, supplies African American boys with alternative styles of behavior that decrease likelihood of deviant behavior.

Tough guys or players of women are often perceived as “real” men to African American boys and influence their masculine internalization process. To test this notion,
Reese (2004) gauged the perceptions, attitudes, and general knowledge of 756 African American boys (aged 13-19) in twelve high schools across Atlanta and Los Angeles to understand the types of African American men perceived as “real” and those perceived as “fake.” In this study, “realness” and “fakeness” refer to how the respondents view African American men’s cultural authenticity. Reese obtained data by survey and constructed a Realness scale to measure participant perceptions. He also performed follow-up interviews. Results are astounding. Approximately 42% of respondents aspired to be professional athletes or entertainers. Athletes and entertainers were deemed most “real”, or culturally authentic, by the respondents. Additionally, urban or disadvantaged African American boys were largely unaware of current African American organizational leaders and politicians. Ninety-five percent of participants who were aware of African American leaders and politicians were enrolled in private schools. Reese argues that families and communities must expand the intellectual awareness of young African American boys to inform their masculine identities and their life paths. The findings of this study contend that African American male adolescents largely accept and endorse one model of masculinity.

Often times, a singular mode of masculinity is taught to African American boys in their social experiences. Young African American boys are usually taught to be independent and active (Brown & Davis, 2000; Davis, 2001; Davis & Polite, 1999). Like Ferguson (2001), Davis and Polite (2000) contend that traditional masculine behaviors may contribute to academic difficulties throughout their school years but lead to social rewards like popularity. In elementary schools, teachers report that there are a unique set of concerns that inhibit the learning potential of boys relative to their girl counterparts as
these boys are striving to reach an acceptable level of masculinity (Davis, 2001). As Ferguson (2007) suggests, African American boys learn to equate the academic world to femininity because elementary school teachers consistently reward behavior that is traditionally feminine (conformity, quietness, and cooperation) and punish behavior that is traditionally masculine (independence, adventurousness, and rebellion to authority).

African American boys may also consider academic engagement less masculine because of how it is valued in families. In fact, hooks (2004b) argues that “soul-murdering” even occurs in families to detrimentally affect the self esteem of African American boys and shames their authentic selves:

in some [African American] families where reading is encouraged in girl children, a boy who likes to read is perceived as suspect, as on the road to being a “sissy”. Certainly as long as [African American] people buy into the notion of patriarchal manhood, which says that real men are all body and no mind, [African American boys] who are cerebral, who want to read, and who love books will risk being ridiculed as not manly (p. 40).

Additionally, hooks (2004b) argues that work pressures and family concerns increasingly interfere with African American boys’ choices to pursue education. She reflects on experiences in her home in which her brother was constantly humiliated by her father for “not measuring up to the standards of patriarchal maleness” (p. 89). hooks suggests that African American boys are valued and indulged for being male, but also shamed for not conforming to acceptable “patriarchal boyhood” (p. 89). Concurrently, she also charges educational systems with failing to impart or inspire learning in African American boys. Both, hooks writes, infect the masculine identities of African American boys with powerlessness and hopelessness.

Because of these early socialization experiences, researchers claim that African American men quickly understand the social rewards associated with exhibiting
masculine behaviors and derogatory name calling and peer disapproval frequently associated with feminine behaviors (Davis, 2001; Ferguson, 2007). At elementary and high school levels, African American boys have the highest suspension and dropout rates. Also, Hrabowski, Maton, and Grief (1998) write that the academic performance of African American boys is lower than those of their white and Asian counterparts in both urban and nonurban settings. These experiences inform African American men’s collegiate perceptions. There are a number of well-rehearsed gender roles that negatively correlate with African American’s men collegiate perceptions by the time African American men reach traditional college age (Davis & Polite, 1999; Fleming, 1984, S. R. Harper, 2007).

The Development of Masculine Identities in Collegiate Contexts

This section reviews the limited research on the masculine identities of African American men in college. The study of African American manhood in college scantly exists in the literature. The study of white collegiate manhood mainly dominates empirical inquiry (Czopp, Lasane, Sweigard, Bradshaw, & Hammer, 1998; Townsend, 1996). Institutions by and large ignore the masculine experiences of African American men. Broader and more diverse definitions of acceptable masculinity are needed at the college level for African American men (Connell, 1995; Davis, 2005). Davis (2005) writes that in higher education settings, the masculine role may create a reward and punishment structure that undermines academic engagement. The following studies consider masculine inquiry in college in relation to African American men.

Czopp, Lasane, Sweigard, Bradshaw and Hammer (1998) compared African American men in HBCUs to white men in HWIs. In both contexts, the authors found that
men with pronounced masculine attributes who present themselves as unconcerned about academic performance on a test were evaluated by college students to be more socially attractive and more masculine than men concerned about test performance. In a related study, Lasane, Sweigard, Czopp, Howard, and Burns (2000) found that college students perceived an academically organized, studious student as less masculine and less socially attractive than a disorganized, less conscientious student. Further, participants described more disorganized academic self-presentation style as more likely associated with men in college.

It is also important to note that African American men may feel cultural pressure not to “act white” in college (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Osborne (1999) argues that the work of Fordham et al. suggests that African American men consciously or subconsciously interpret learning environments as displacement processes detrimental to social identity, sense of security, and self-worth. Ogbu (1986) contends that students of color who voluntarily engage academically are more successfully integrated into the academic experience even if they are not a part of the dominant ethnic or linguistic group. However, Osborne (1999) suggests that African Americans observe that even those among them who succeed in college are not fully accepted or rewarded in the same ways that white students are accepted or rewarded across white communities. Along these same lines, educational attainment among African American college men may become devalued. hooks (2004b) suggests that African American men who have acquired undergraduate education may even devalue their learning when conversing with uneducated African Americans to attempt to bond themselves to anti-intellectual African American circles.
Osborne (1999) supports the arguments of hooks (2004b) when he asserts that African American students, particularly men, fail to achieve their full academic potential because of social, psychological, and cultural hurdles that include (1) psychological mechanisms that protect them from anxiety, evaluation apprehension, and adverse outcomes; (2) having to give up their identification with their minority group in order to identify with “white pursuits”; (3) peer group resistance to valuing education and rejection of those who do; or (4) psychological reactions that display heightened or ritualized masculinity which also prevents the individual from succeeding in academics.

Many inner-city, disadvantaged, and underserved African American men are persistent in their quest to attain a college degree in the face of racial hostility and stereotyping (M. C. Brown, Dancy, & Davis, 2006; Davis, 1994; Davis, 1999). Davis (1999) writes that the voices of African American men are not heard, misunderstood, or simply ignored. In a previous study, Davis (1995) highlights the assertions of an African American man who frames his masculine struggle in college:

Being a man is very connected to my success in college. Black men have to do well. There is so much pressure and it makes it very difficult with relationships. Expectations are high. If I don’t do well in school it does not mean that I am not a good [African American] man. (Davis, 1995, p. 2)

Davis (1999) contends that the social construction of African American men on college campuses is imbued with hegemonic masculinity. Another statement from an African American man in Davis’ (1995) earlier study illustrates this position:

[African American] men on campus are constantly in transition. There is a constant need for us to transform to the community. How one speaks, how you talk is very important—it’s an indicator whether you are part of the community…There is high expectation to talk like a ‘[African American] man,’ with that attitude and manliness. Being a good proper guy is not always important, it doesn’t get you very much. On campus, it’s important to appear very
sexual, you get man points...And if you play basketball, you are cool as hell. I don’t play, so I have to make up for it in other ways. (Davis, 1995, p. 3)”

Davis (1999) assembled a set of descriptors from the Student Opinion Survey (SOS) database to focus on the nexus between the racialized and gendered environments of HBCU and HWI college campuses and the academic and social lives of African American men. A major finding of this study is that African American men in HBCUs are significantly more engaged than African American men enrolled in HWIs. Davis contends that findings from this study beg a reconsideration of traditional approaches to focus on race-based and gender-based approaches. Unaddressed in this study is whether the negative collegiate experiences of African American men are linked to (1) systemic pressures of the institution or (2) incongruence within African American, masculine-charged spaces. Higher education institutions can use the knowledge gleaned from research in this area to craft supportive programs for African American in college. For example, Davis (1999) suggests that assistive/supportive programs should aim to augment the manhood experiences of African American men in college by providing the positive presence of African American male faculty in school settings. Davis also identifies mentoring programs as value-added manhood experiences in which African American male undergraduates are assigned to African American American male faculty and staff for mentoring and guidance.

Studies are also few that consider the nexus between gender roles and collegiate engagement for African American men in college. Davis (2005) is one of few empiricists who addresses the link between gender roles and collegiate engagement for African American men. Davis selected two colleges to serve as the setting for the research project—a historically black college in the South and a predominantly white university in
the Midwest. The sixty-two participant sample of African American men represented various socioeconomic backgrounds and precollege experiences. The participants had a mean age of 18.85. Three instruments were used to gauge the participants’ endorsement or criticism of masculine-role construction and academic engagement behavior: (1) Index of Masculinity, (2) Hypermasculinity Index, and (3) Behavioral Preferences Checklist.

Davis employs a correlational design to forward the inquiry. The investigators in the study used two subscales of the *Index of Masculinity*, a nineteen-item questionnaire, which correspond to conceptualizations of aspects of traditional masculinity (i.e. competitiveness) that would likely facilitate and inhibit academic engagement: Mastery Competitiveness and Antisocial Competitiveness. The researchers created scale items for each of the subscales of the *Index of Masculinity*. Items from the Mastery Competitiveness subscale include “I continuously strive to perform better than others in my classes.” Sample items from the Antisocial Competitiveness subscale include “When I force my ideas upon others, it is often perceived as disruptive to the group”.

The researchers used statistical tests for reliability. Regression analyses indicated that gender role orientations (competitiveness and hypermasculinity) significantly predicted academic engagement behaviors. African American men at historically black colleges scored higher than their peers at historically white colleges on the subscales measuring Hypermasculinity and Anti-social/Competitiveness, while there were no differences on the Mastery Competitiveness subscale. In other words, specific aspects of masculinity are related to the level of academic engagement. Davis’ (1999) findings highlight two needs for research that this study considers—(1) qualitative inquiry of like research and (2) the impact of collegiate cultural environments.
To address this paucity, S. R. Harper (2007) reports qualitative findings that similarly align with the assertions of aforementioned research on the masculine identities and behaviors of African American men and boys. S. R. Harper gleaned data from 32 high-achieving African American undergraduate men across research universities in the Midwest to inform a study on involvement and subsequent research on how African American men conceptualize masculinity. According to S. R. Harper, the participants in the study used a limited number of variables to describe masculinity that include (1) dating and pursuing romantic or sexual relationships with women (2) athletic activity (organized sports, individual exercise/bodybuilding) (3) competition.

However, the study is limited by the interview protocol used to collect the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). At best, only five questions of a thirty-question protocol addressed issues of masculinity and therefore yield suspect findings. Additionally, descriptors of masculinity reported in this article are not completely grounded in the experiences of the participants themselves but in the notions of friends of the participants with no discussion of how participants internalized (if at all) these experiences. According to S. R. Harper, participants actually defined masculinity in unconventional ways. S. R. Harper (2007) provides no definition of masculinity/masculinities as they inform the study and no account for the diverse identities of African American men though diverse sexualities are represented in the study. At times, it is unclear whether masculinity or success is being measured according to the data in the study. Recommendations include campus counseling centers and “men’s only sessions” but seem unfounded by this inquiry.
Diverse Masculine Experiences in College

The presence of supportive collegiate programs is especially salient to the manhood experiences of men who are diverse in their sexual orientation. In America, sexual orientation refers to the direction of an individual's sexuality in relation to the sex or gender that the individual finds sexually attractive (Shively, Jones, & DeCecco, 1984). The most commonly used categories of sexual orientation are heterosexuality (being sexually attracted to members of the opposite/other sex), homosexuality (being sexually attracted to members of the same sex) and bisexuality (being sexually attracted to members of either sex). Early writers like Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud, believed sexual orientation and behavior was intrinsically linked to one’s gender. Accordingly, the belief was that a man who was attracted to a man would have feminine attributes (Murray, 1996). Later, this idea evolved to view gender, behavior, and sexual orientation distinct from each other with the findings of studies that discovered differences in sexual behavior and proposed more fluid models of understanding sexual identity and gender (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948). Notwithstanding, the origins of same-sex attractions are difficult to discern because children are seldom asked if they have sexual attractions for other boys or girls (Savin-Williams, 2007). Therefore, researchers largely rely on the reflections of adults.

In a study conducted by Savin-Williams (2007), gay and bisexual boys reported three sources for their awareness of “difference”: (1) a pervasive and emotional captivation with other boys that felt passionate, exotic, consuming and mysterious; (2) a strongly felt desire to engage in play activities and to possess traits usually characteristic of girls; (3) disinterest or, in more extreme cases, a revulsion in typical boys’ activities,
especially team sports and rough-and-tumble physical play. Savin-Williams notes, however, that all gay or bisexual men do not recall these sources or senses of difference. Heterosexual boys may also feel different, experience same-sex desires, enjoy feminine activities and avoid aggressive pursuits (Savin-Williams, 2007). The ideal that these boys, who become men, are “less than men” is a social construction in American society (Kimmel & Messner, 2007; Rhoads, 1994). This social construction, which centralizes patriarchal notions of manhood, has worked to marginalize sexually diverse men in American institutions of higher education (Dilley, 2002; Rhoads, 1994).

In response, the presence of supportive programs is often positioned to aid the transition of GBT men who are disadvantaged by the marginalizing spaces of college (Rhoads, 1994). The programs are postured to push against the presence and power of compulsory heterosexuality in college. The concept of compulsory heterosexuality describes the ways in which the sexual identity of men leads to social power struggles in America. Compulsory heterosexuality is the assumption that women and men are innately attracted to each other emotionally and sexually, and that heterosexuality in America leads to an institutionalized inequality of power not only between heterosexuals and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons, but also between men and women, with far reaching consequences (Rich, 1994). Poet Adrienne Rich introduced the concept of compulsory heterosexuality to challenge the notion that heterosexuality is a natural expression of human sexuality and other forms are unnatural.

Rich (1994) argues that compulsory heterosexuality is patriarchal as men dominate all aspects of women’s lives, including their sexuality, childbirth and rearing activities, safety, physical movement, labor, and access to knowledge. Compulsory
heterosexuality also leads to discrimination against, intolerance of, and/or invisibility of LGBT persons in society (Rich, 1994). In this frame, the interests of GBT men are sacrificed under compulsory heterosexuality if they do not conform to heterosexual ideals and behavior. The act of “coming out” in a compulsory heterosexual world represents rebellion and often leads to the marginalization of LGBT persons. Accordingly, same-sex relationships are taboo and, often, criminalized, while pressure is placed on people to form heterosexual relationships and bonds (Rich, 1994). As Rich conceptualizes the presence and function of compulsory heterosexuality in America, she suggests that the need cultures feel to enforce male-female relationships suggests that heterosexuality may be less of a natural response and more of a social conditioning.

Albeit research on the manhood experiences of GBT men is limited, some understanding is found in Rhoads’ (1994) study of eleven GBT male collegians. The overarching goal of this research was to uncover the ways in which GBT men in this study experience coming out of “the closet” (proclaiming GBT identity in a unifying sense) or staying in “the closet” (concealing queer, gay, or bisexual identity). Rhoads defines “the closet” as the oppression of lesbian and GBT men who are forced to remain silent about their sexual identity. Only one African American man informs his synthesis of eleven student narratives. However, Rhoads does discuss data gathered from African American GBT men to inform his discussion on sexually diverse identities in collegiate spaces. One African American man student describes his experience with the African American community:

When I came out as a bisexual man, I disowned all my [African American] friends with whom I had been politically active. I thought they would reject me when they found out, so I didn’t give them the chance. I rejected them first. Most
of my friends then became white people in the queer community (Rhoads, 1994, p 135).

Rhoads’ (1994) sample of African American men lacks transferability to similar inquiries in African American contexts given two glaring details: (1) the large historically white collegiate context in which the study took place maintained a strong lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender organization and (2) the African American men interviewed in this study were active in GBT organizations and possessed forms of economic and social capital atypical to the majority of African American men in college. Rhoads does, however, acknowledge that African American men face uniquely significant barriers to identify with gay communities in college. Further, he suggests that African American men who are GBT may experience difficulties because of their dual identities as GBT and African American. Recently, research suggests that African American men perceive GBT men more negatively than African American women in historically black colleges (W. G. Harris, 2003; Herek & Capitanio, 1995). The thinking in these studies highlight a need for further research focused on the manhood experiences of African American GBT men across collegiate contexts.


Riggs argues,

I am a Negro faggot if I believe what movies, TV, and rap music say of me. My life is game for play. Because of my sexuality, I cannot be black. A strong, proud, “Afrocentric” black man is resolutely heterosexual, not even bisexual…My sexual difference is considered of no value; indeed it’s a testament to weakness, passivity, the absence of real guts—balls. Hence I remain a sissy, punk, faggot. I cannot be a black gay man because by the tenets of black macho, black gay man is a triple negation. I am consigned, by these tenets, to remain a Negro faggot.
And as such I am game for play, to be used, joked about, put down, beaten, slapped, and bashed, not just by illiterate homophobic thus in the night, but by black American culture’s best and brightest (p. 293).

West (2001) articulates a similar ideal, arguing that African American gay men are both marginalized in white America and penalized in black America. African American men who embrace themselves as such are told they are not authentically “black men” (West, 2001, pg. 306). How this experience internalizes itself in the minds of African American gay men in college goes extremely understudied (Washington & Wall, 2006). In Chapter VII, a vignette is presented that highlights this experience in the mind of an African American gay man in college.

Riggs (2001) may offer insight into the masculine pressures men face that inform perceptions of and experiences in college. His work argues that, under the pressures of African American communities, African American masculinity “admits little or no space for self-interrogation or multiple subjectivities around race” (p. 296). The Afrocentric ideal about African American manhood, embraced by African American communities, is clear in its mandate that African American men “do not flinch, do not weaken, do not take blame or sh**, take charge, step-to when challenged, and defend themselves without pause for self-doubt” (Riggs, 2001, p. 296). This type of thinking, whether held by GBT or heterosexual men, may conflict with the Eurocentric and conformist ideals, values, and norms of college. College ideals may be fundamentally at odds with who African American men believe they are (or should be) and may therefore bring disparate collegiate outcomes (Anderson, 2007). Sexual diversity only further oppresses African American men in African American communities and white communities (in which they
are already oppressed). The pressures that GBT men feel, especially those who are African American, are also further convoluted by homophobia.

**Homophobia.** Research suggests that the manhood experiences of GBT men are further complicated by the presence of homophobia. Homophobia is defined as the “fear or hatred of homosexuals and homosexuality” (Plummer, 2001, p. 60). Researchers argue that homophobia plays a powerful role in male peer culture (Connell, 1995; Constantine-Simms, 2001; Plummer, 2001). Plummer describes the ways in which the nature of homophobia is gendered, used to construct cultural borders, and enforce behavior codes:

Homophobia has emerged as a complex phenomenon, which plays a fundamental role in reinforcing stereotypical masculinity and in patrolling a key male intragender dividing between “real men” and “others”. In the process, it has become an inescapable conclusion that homophobia has a tremendous influence over all men – not just those who are gay (p. 69).

Plummer’s (2001) quote suggests that men are influenced by homophobia. In fact, Plummer notes that homophobia is perceived as a behavior code violation prior to the development of boys’ sexual identities. Young boys learn early to avoid certain foods (i.e. chicken salad sandwiches), certain drinks (i.e. low-alcohol drinks with umbrellas) and certain behaviors (i.e. showing compassion) (Plummer, 2001). Homophobia, therefore, influences how men present themselves to others, their social networks, and their education, career and life plans (Plummer, 2001). Accordingly, they are pressured to engage in high-risk behavior (i.e. driving cars dangerously, joining a gang) to construct a border between themselves and others perceived as GBT. Those who do not choose this behavior are heavily scrutinized in the African American community.

Riggs (2001) writes that African American communities possess a fundamental need to oppress a “convenient other” within the African American community who can
assume blame for the “crises afflicting the black male psyche” (pg. 293). This need, Riggs argues, is at the heart of homophobia in African American communities. Riggs further elaborates

[Black gay men]…function as the lowest common dominator of the abject, the base line of transgression beyond which a black man is no longer a man, no longer black, an essential Other against which black men and boys maturing, struggling with self-doubt, anxiety, feelings of political, economic, social, and sexual inadequacy—even impotence—can always measure themselves and by comparison seem strong, adept, empowered, superior (p. 293).

Collins’ (2001) work on intersecting oppressions is also helpful to understand the burden that African American GBT men face. Collins contends that African American men are raised with both racism and homophobia and are therefore far less likely to escape beyond the attitudes of the African American community. This oppression gives rise to the hegemonic spotlight of the “down-low” in African American communities like those communities existent in HBCUs. The down-low describes men who have sex with men but keep secret sexual preferences and behavior (Boykin, 2005). Institutional type aside, research suggests that African American faculty and staff across institutions must be inclusive of students who are GBT in similar ways they are inclusive of students of color (W. G. Harris, 2003). Few studies, however, investigate, how (if at all) GBT African American men feel a sense of inclusion in college (Rhoads, 1994; Washington & Wall, 2006). Even fewer studies consider the nexus between the all-male spaces of fraternities and African American GBT men in college (Kimbrough, 2003). Notwithstanding, gay African American men become members of collegiate fraternities that are, by and large, black greek letter organizations (BGLOs). As suggested above, these fraternities reflect, even more intensely, the compulsory heterosexual patriarchy and
homophobia described above. This lens is useful in analyzing the homosocial world of
fraternities.

**The Homosocial World of Fraternities.** In short, what it means to join a
fraternity is to establish a sense of brotherhood, a deep connection, or camaraderie with
other men (Kimbrough, 2003). Although black greek fraternalism and white greek
fraternalism have similar roots in the American college system, black greek fraternities
are different (R. L. Jones, 2004). Black fraternities uniquely evolved in the fraternal
world, as a “response and contestation to white privilege, racism, and elitism” in
American society (R. L. Jones, 2004, p. 25). The research that follows reveals the ways in
which the manhood of African American men in college may be impacted by
membership in fraternities.

One perspective Lyman (2007) offers is that male bonding in fraternities often
takes the tone of a joking relationship. Joking refers to the indirect expressions “of the
emotions and tensions of everyday life by ‘negotiating’ them, reconstituting group
solidarity by shared aggression, and cathartic laughter” (Lyman, 2007, p 154). According
to Lyman, acceptable vulnerability in fraternity men is shown in the joking relationships
between men. Lyman argues that joking relationships suspend the socially constructed
rules and responsibilities of everyday life relative to the intimate male group friendships
shared in fraternities. Lyman asserts that men in fraternities use joking relationships to
create a serial and “safe” kind of intimacy to negotiate the hidden tension and aggression
they feel toward each other. Lyman concludes that joking relationships (i.e. banter, sexual
humor, lewd demonstrations) among men allow a needed connection without being self-
disclosive or emotionally intimate. Any men who display emotional involvement in
fraternal contexts reveal their vulnerability at the same. Therefore, joking (i.e. “Man, I was just playing. You actually believed me?) compliments the inherent need for men to be perceived as “cool” by their fellow fraternity members. Lyman’s study, however, was not largely informed by African American men, and their manhood constructions in fraternities encompass a more complex struggle (R. L. Jones, 2004).

In *Black Haze*, R. L. Jones (2004) posits that African American men enact aggression on each other in ritualized ways to shape and define manhood among aspiring fraternity members. Fraternity rituals, R. L. Jones argues, reflect the sacrificial rituals of ancient times and fulfill individual and collective desires for a black male identity. Additionally, R. L. Jones suggests that African American men not only feel the need to be perceived as “cool” but also “hard” “down” and “real” (R. L. Jones, 2004, p. 108). The latter perceptions point to the degree of cultural authenticity that African American men bring to the fraternal space. Jones argues that violence and struggle “have become reified as tools for acquiring critical social rewards. These have become achievements in and of themselves because everything else seems to have failed” (p. 108). The historical impact of violence and struggle enacted against African American men in American society, Jones hypothesizes, creates little difference in the ways in which this society perceives “unacceptable” groups of African American men (i.e. gangs) and “acceptable” groups of African American men (i.e. fraternities). In both groups, linguistic and physical violence represent a subconscious need in African American men to shape a definition of manhood that is fraternal (R. L. Jones, 2007).

Jones (2004) also writes that black fraternities seek to expose aspiring members to rituals that, historically, represented ancient rights of passage for boys who wanted to
become men. Jones suggests that African American men bring an authentic self (who they are at core) to a fraternity which seeks, through rituals, to imbue these men with a fraternal self. Accordingly, the fraternity purports that its members, after initiation, are more informed in their manhood constructions. One approach that black fraternities take in their attempts to “make men better” is what Jones terms “the father figure” symbolism (R. L. Jones, 2004, p. 116). The father figure symbolism represents the ideal that members of the fraternity (the “fathers”) place in front of aspiring members (the “sons”) in a ritualistic fashion. Tension is built into these rituals as the “fathers” facilitate a symbolic journey for the “sons” to embark toward the ideal placed in front of them. These tensions, eventually, reach a climactic point in which father and son embrace as brothers (R. L. Jones, 2004).

R. L. Jones (2004) poignantly elaborates,

The premise of these [fraternity rituals] is that even in life, fathers discipline their sons to “show them the correct way to live,” and fraternities attempt to create this dynamic. The fatherly discipline often becomes physically violent in the black case because, as we have seen, this is the only way that many black men felt they could assert some measure of power and prove themselves as men (p. 116).

The design of fraternities, especially black fraternities, rejects in its rituals, governance, and work, any presence of weakness or vulnerability. Being perceived as “soft” and “not cool” brings intense suspicions of fraternity aspirants and members (R. L. Jones, 2004). Notwithstanding, the fraternity also represents an intimate association between men. Many sexually diverse men carefully negotiate their interactions with men in fraternities, particularly while in the fraternity space. Fraternities, though they provide outlets for men’s intimacy, remain largely homophobic and patriarchal (Kimbrough, 2003; Lyman, 2007).
**Sexual Diversity In Fraternities.** African American men who are gay and bisexual negotiate membership in fraternities with extreme caution. Gayness and bisexuality are threats to the homosocial worlds of men in fraternities because they are perceived to represent social and sexual vulnerability (Lyman, 2007). Recent synthesis, however, ironically notes that many fraternity practices are similar in nature to the practices of sexually diverse cultures (Kimmel, 2007). Notwithstanding, displaying vulnerability in various forms distinguishes men in fraternities as weak (Lyman, 2007). Intimate emotional relationships with women also define men as vulnerable in fraternity spaces. Therefore, men are encouraged by fraternities to treat women as sexual objects, which confirms heterosexuality, but prevents true intimacy with women (Capraro, 2007).

In *Black Greek 101*, Kimbrough (2003) lists the reasons sexually diverse African American men join black greek-letter fraternities. Reviewing data from the Case (1998) study, Kimbrough writes that sexually diverse men largely join fraternities for the same reasons as any man: friendship, social activities, and a sense of belonging. Kimbrough’s work also argues that sexually diverse men are terrified of being exposed as gay or bisexual and use the fraternity as a way of hiding or denying sexual orientation (Case, 1998; Kimbrough, 2003). In addition, sexually diverse men are found to work with extra tenacity within fraternities (Case, 1998). In Case’s work, he found that gay men in fraternities were high achievers, with 80 percent of the sample holding executive-level positions within their chapters, and 20 percent holding the office of president (Kimbrough, 2003). Kimbrough re-emphasizes Case’s position that many sexually diverse men may possess a tendency to overachieve as a coping mechanism. Kimbrough
goes on to reassert that sexually diverse men fear rejection from the group and strive to gain acceptance and respect by demonstrating commitment and contribution.

**Conclusion**

This review of research argues that African American men develop their manhood in myriad ways. However, the development of African American manhood is detrimentally affected by hegemonic and patriarchal forces alike. Given this review, African American men who conform in educational spaces and reject the socially constructed borders of manhood are largely ostracized. As a result, they are further placed at risk to display deviant behavior to maintain accepted status in their peer communities. Conversely, African American men who decide to conform to the rules and standards of and perform well academically in historically white educational systems may only be valued as “good” by instructors if they do not pose discipline problems. Other forms of detachment in African American male behavior (i.e. loneliness, culturally transgressive behavior) are largely ignored in educational contexts and remain unidentified by teachers, faculty, and staff if this behavior does not interfere with the learning of others.

Many of the researchers who study the discipline problems of African American boys deconstruct their behaviors and find them rooted in social learning. Subsequently, deviant behavior is best understood as attempts to perform gender to impress, conform, and respond to pressure created in families and peer groups. Additionally, the scholars in this review suggest that African American men feel an obligation to perform their masculinity in traditionally patriarchal ways to avoid rejection from African American
communities and white communities which are both largely homophobic and clear about how African American men are expected to behave.

The few studies that consider the ways in which these issues take shape in collegiate contexts confirm and align with the findings of studies in K-12 contexts. Various displays of African American manhood risk incongruence in historically white and historically black institutions and interfere with academic engagement. Sexually diverse African American men experience great risk for marginalization in negotiating the compulsory heterosexual patriarchy and homophobia in both institutions. According to the limited literature, this marginalization is intensified in black communities (i.e. historically black colleges) and particularly within groups of African American men (i.e. black greek-letter fraternities). The incongruence of identities and behaviors may lead to attrition in both historically black and white institutions and possibly compromise the life trajectory of African American men. Clear questions are exposed in the synthesis: What are the impacts of the patriarchal and hegemonic spaces for African American men’s collegiate decisions and behaviors? Are negative perceptions of college linked to African American men’s maladaptive definitions and perceptions of masculinity? How are these reflective of internalized messages received during their pre-college experiences and home life? Chapters VI and VII contribute to existing knowledge in these areas of need.
CHAPTER IV
METHODOLOGICAL SCHEME AND PRAXIS

If you wish to know the mind of a man, listen to his words.  
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Qualitative methods were used to ascertain manhood beliefs and behaviors in the in-class and out-of-class environments of the colleges in which African American men are enrolled. Specifically, tenets from grounded theory, phenomenology and case study guided this inquiry in all aspects of the research design. This chapter first introduces qualitative inquiry and discusses the methodological approaches that frame the inquiry. Subsequently, a description of the research sites is introduced. Next, this section provides a broad sociodemographic profile of the participants as well as individual biographies of study participants. Last, I discuss data collection and analysis procedures. The research questions that guide this inquiry are:

1. How do engaged African American men construct their manhood while in college?
2. How do these constructions compare based on enrollment in an HBCU and HWI?
3. How do these students perceive the institutional role in shaping their collegiate experiences and manhood constructions?

Qualitative Methods in Education

Qualitative methods facilitate study of issues in depth and detail. Patton (2002) contends that “qualitative data describe. They take us, as readers, into the time and place of the observation so that we know what it was like to have been there. They capture and communicate someone else’s experience of the world in his or her own words.
Qualitative data tell a story” (p. 47). In this study, quantitative methods were not elected as they required the use of standardized measures so that varying perspectives and people can be fit into a limited number of predetermined response categories to which numbers are assigned (Patton, 2002). Qualitative studies usually provide fuller, more detailed descriptions that reflect the lived experiences than quantitative studies involving survey completion and statistical analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Moustakas, 1994).

This research paradigm is constructivist and transformative in nature. Stage and Manning (2003) write that researchers must understand the paradigm into which their thinking falls. Stage and Manning add that the constructivist paradigm is highly effective in bringing forth individual meaning and depth. Researchers who operate within a constructivist paradigm centralize the experiences of participants to identify themes that emerge from the data (Stage & Manning, 2003). Additionally, constructivist research assumes that realities are multiple and socially constructed (Stage & Manning, 2003).

This research paradigm has the potential to be transformative in nature. Mertens (2003) suggests that scholars who make assumptions about social power are transformative in their research approach. She contends the following of transformative scholars:

Transformative scholars assume that knowledge is not neutral, but is influenced by human interests, that all knowledge reflects the power and social relationships within society, and that an important purpose of knowledge construction is to help people improve society…transformative theory is used as an umbrella term that encompasses paradigmatic perspectives such as emancipatory…anti-discriminatory…participatory…and Freirian approaches…and it is exemplified in the writings of feminist…racial/ethnic minorities…people with disabilities…and people who work on behalf of marginalized groups (p.139)
Mertens (2003) describes the transformative paradigm as placing central importance on the lives and experiences of marginalized groups, such as women, ethnic/racial minorities, members of the gay and lesbian communities, people with disabilities, and those who are poor. The researcher who works within this paradigm consciously analyzes asymmetric power relationships, seeks ways to link the results of social inquiry to action, and links the results of the inquiry to wider questions of social inequity and social justice.

In this study, I analyzed the power of gender in the lives of African American men in both historically black and white institutions. It is imperative that power relationships are centered in the analysis given research that characterizes the interests of African American men as largely ignored, particularly in the patriarchal spaces of white institutions (Dancy & Brown, 2007). In historically black institutions, African American men may conform to one mode of manhood and subsequent behavior, leaving diverse others in the periphery. Accordingly, study findings inform historically black and historically white institutional treatment of African American men and bridge social equality and educational opportunity gaps present in those spaces. Wider questions of social justice for African American men are posited in Chapter VI.

**Constructivist Grounded Theory**

Guba (1990) poses the following question about methodological considerations in qualitative research, “How should the inquirer go about finding out knowledge” (p. 18)? In an effort to answer, Patton (2002) writes that “no rigid rules can prescribe what data to gather to investigate a particular interest or problem. There is no recipe or formula in making methods decisions” (p. 14). Approaching fieldwork without being constrained by
predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth, openness, and detail of the behavioral context (Patton, 2002). I drew upon this ideal in my study of African American men.

To facilitate the analysis of African American men’s manhood construction in college, tenets from grounded theory were used. Grounded theory methods emerged from the collaboration of sociologists Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss during their studies of those who were dying in hospitals (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) text articulates the strategies that social scientists use in other areas and advocates the development of theories from research grounded in data. Charmaz (2006) writes that “grounded theory methods [are] a set of principles and practices, not prescriptions or packages” (p. 9). Previous work of Charmaz (2000) contends that constructivist grounded theory investigates “how variables are founded to give meaning in subjects’ lives. Meanings and actions take priority over researchers’ analytic interests and methodological technology” (p. 524). Charmaz also notes that grounded theory methods can complement other approaches to qualitative data analysis, rather than stand in opposition to them. Techniques involved in grounded theory approaches emphasize analytical interplay between researchers and data. Researchers are expected to use a set of coding procedures that help provide some standardization and rigor.

I also drew upon Addison’s (1989) descriptions of the following tenets and practices for conducting grounded theory research. Grounded theory researchers:

1. continually question gaps in the data—omissions and inconsistencies, and incomplete understandings. They continually recognize the need for obtaining
information on what influences and directs the situations and people being studied.

2. use open processes in conducting of research rather than fixed methods and procedures.

3. recognize the importance of context and social structure.

4. generate theory and data from interviewing processes rather than from observing individual practices.

5. collect data, code and analyze simultaneously and in relation to each other rather than as separate components

6. induce theory that is grounded in data (p. 41).

Constructivist grounded theory is interpretive. Charmaz notes (2006) that constructivist grounded theory places priority on the phenomena of study and views data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data. She adds that constructivists study how-and sometimes why-participants construct meanings and actions in specific situations. In logical terms, the extension of the constructivist approach is defined by Charmaz as learning how, when, and to what extent the studied experience is embedded in larger and, often, hidden positions, networks, situations, and relationships. Charmaz additionally charges constructivist grounded theorists to reflect on the research process and products and consider how theories evolve in the process. In this frame, the constructivist approach is defined as more than interpreting the individual situations of participants. Charmaz (2000; 2006) suggests to constructivist researchers that they not only theorize the interpretations of participants but also acknowledge that resulting theory is interpretive.
In her words, “the theory depends on the researcher’s view; it does not and cannot stand outside of it” (Charmaz, 2006, p.130).

**Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument (Creswell, 1998; Gall et al., 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). Moustakas (1994) contends that the heuristic researcher has a personal experience with and intense interest in the phenomenon under study. Douglass and Moustakas (1985) argue that “heuristics is concerned with meanings, not measurements; with essence, not appearance; with quality, not quantity; with experience, not behavior” (p. 42). Similarly, Patton (2002) writes that the reports of heuristic researchers are filled with the discoveries, personal insights, and reflections of the researchers. In this frame, the process of discovery engages open-mindedness, a relinquishing of control, and “tumbling about with the newness and drama of a searching focus” (p. 108). Patton argues that this process requires “asking questions about phenomena that disturb and challenge” (p. 108). Patton further (2002) illustrates heuristic inquiry in the following way:

The uniqueness of heuristic inquiry is the extent to which it legitimizes and places at the fore these personal experiences, reflections, and insights of the researcher. The researcher then comes to understand the essence of the phenomenon through shared reflection and inquiry with co-researchers as they also intensively experience and reflect on the phenomenon in question. A sense of connectedness develops between researcher and research participants in their mutual efforts to elucidate the nature, meaning, and essence of a significant human experience (p. 108).

It is difficult for heuristic researchers to separate their experiences from the experiences of participants. African American researchers bear the overwhelming task of decolonizing or surrendering their thinking before they conduct this type of this research (Hare, 1995). In this effort, I drew most heavily upon German philosopher Edmund H.
Husserl’s (founder of phenomenology) concepts of the noesis-noema and the epoche. Moustakas writes that the “noesis refers to the act of perceiving, feeling, thinking, remembering, or judging—all of which are embedded with meanings that are concealed and hidden from consciousness” (p. 69). In contrast, “the noema describes all points to the noesis. Wherever a noesis exists it is always directly related to a noema. Meanings are then recognized and drawn out” (p.69). In other words, for every subject, there is an object. Along similar lines as Duboisian double consciousness thought, Johnson (2001) writes,

a rule for phenomenology is that there is never an object without a corresponding subject, and that [as Husserl quotes] ‘consciousness is always conscious of something’. Given the universality of these structures for consciousness, it is reasonable to say that there is neither an impenetrable “white” or “black” experience, which are mutually exclusive, but rather that there are diverse human variations upon experience, which can always be communicated imaginatively or vicariously across racial, political, and cultural lines through language in its two analytic forms: philosophy and literature…it is presupposition of the philosophy of experience—phenomenology. (p. 224)

Husserl believes that the challenge of researchers is to engage in the Epoche or, in other words, the process to release researcher suppositions (Moustakas, 1994). As I gathered and analyzed data, I engaged in an epoche process to set aside my prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas (my “world”) (p. 85). Moustakas argues that this way of perceiving life involves “looking, noticing, becoming aware, without imposing prejudgment on what is seen, thought, imagined, or felt” (p. 86). In the analysis, words were read as brand new, and my concentration was keen. As Moustakas suggests, I found quiet places to engage in deep meditation on the specific situation/phenomena and forsake all else. The process from data collection to analysis therefore challenged me as a heuristic researcher. This process charged me to “be transparent, to allow whatever is
before [me] in consciousness to disclose itself” (p. 86). During the data collection, I engaged in epoche by keeping a research journal to note my thoughts and biases (Gall et al., 1996). Moustakas recommends that researchers begin with a full description of their experiences of the phenomenon under study (see Chapter I for my story).

**Sites**

The study used twelve institutions as the sites for data collection. The selected colleges and universities are higher education institutions in the 19 southern and border states. M. C. Brown (1999a) writes that 19 states continued to operate dual systems of higher education despite Title VI of Civil Rights Act of 1964 barring legalized segregation: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia despite Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Institutions were selected according to criteria set forth by the Carnegie Classification Commission.

**Carnegie Classifications.** Recently, the Carnegie Commission revised college classification descriptions. New classifications include: doctorate-granting institutions, master’s level institutions, baccalaureate institutions, special focus institutions, and tribal colleges. Doctorate-granting universities include institutions that award at least 20 doctoral degrees per year (excluding doctoral-level degrees that qualify recipients for entry into professional practice, such as the JD, MD, PharmD, DPT, etc.). Master’s colleges and universities include institutions that award at least 50 master’s degrees per year. Baccalaureate colleges include institutions in which baccalaureate degrees represent at least 10 percent of all undergraduate degrees and that award fewer than 50 master’s
degrees or fewer than 20 doctoral degrees per year. Special focus institutions (i.e. Faith, Engineering, Business) and Tribal colleges are not included in this institutional sample. The colleges selected for this study were all four-year institutions that are similar in size as stratified by 2006 Carnegie classifications. Institutions selected in this study were additionally disaggregated by institutional funding (i.e. private vs. public) and population served (HBCU, HWI) (See Figure I). In the interest of confidentiality, the selected institutions were given pseudonyms. The doctorate-granting universities are described below:

(1) The Benjamin Harrison University (BHU) is a public, historically white university located in a southern state. The enrollment of BHU is 12,000 (approximately 9300 undergraduate) students. About 33% of the undergraduate population is African American. About 40% of all students are men. BHU is the second largest college in its state by enrollment. This university also maintains a law school.

(2) The Mary McLeod Bethune University (MBU) is a public, historically black university in a southern state. MBU’s business and computer programs are ranked among the highest in the United States. The enrollment of MBU is 8,351. Approximately 7,800 students are undergraduates. Enrollment is predominantly African American. Thirty-nine percent of students are African American men.

(3) The James Buchanan University (JBU) is a public, historically white university in a border state. JBU is known for its law school and international affairs programs. JBU enrolls approximately 24,500 students. Approximately
10,000 of these students are undergraduates. Enrollment of African American students is around 6%. Of African American students, African American men are 2% of the total undergraduate population.

(4) Martin Luther King University (MLKU) is a private, historically black university in a border state. Historically, MLKU played an instrumental role in the Civil Rights landscape. The current enrollment is approximately 11,000 (including 7,000 undergraduates). Thirty-three percent of all students are men. MLKU has graduate schools of law, medicine, dentistry, and divinity.

The master’s level institutions are as follows:

(5) The Zachary Taylor University (ZTU) is a public, historically white university located in a southern state. ZTU is noted for its programs in Education, Occupational Therapy, and Physical Therapy. The current enrollment is approximately 11,000. Around 9,500 students are enrolled in ZTU as undergraduates. Approximately 15% of undergraduate students are African American. Approximately 5% of the undergraduate population is African American men.

(6) The Malcolm X University (MXU) is a public, historically black university located in a rural neighborhood of a historically rich city in a southern state. MXU was recently ravaged by natural disaster and has faced economic hardship in the aftermath. About 3,647 students are currently enrolled in SUNO. The population of the undergraduate is predominantly African American. Approximately 35% of total students enrolled in the institution are men.
(7) The Martin Van Buren University (MVBU) is a private, historically white university located in a southern state. A Jesuit university, MVBU is the largest Catholic University in the southern United States. MVBU maintains an enrollment of approximately 5,900 students (3,800 undergraduates). Forty percent of the student enrollment is men. Nine percent of the undergraduate population is African American.

(8) The W. E. B. DuBois University (DuBois University) is a private, historically black, Roman Catholic University in a southern state. Of the 102 historically black colleges and universities and 253 Catholic colleges in the United States, it is the only noted both African American and Catholic. Today, more than half the population is non-Catholic and 10% is non-black. Twenty-five percent of the student population is men.

The baccalaureate level institutions are described below:

(9) The James K. Polk University (JPU) is a public, historically white university in a rural town of southern state. Approximately 3,000 students are enrolled in the institution. Of these students, 46% are men. The university is situated on 1388 acres and maintains a 19:1 student-to-teacher ratio.

(10) The Thurgood Marshall University (TMU) is a small public, historically black liberal arts college in a southern state. The university is known for its agriculture program. The current enrollment is approximately 3,000 students. Approximately 2,900 are undergraduates. Ninety-five percent of
students enrolled are African American. Forty-four percent of total student 
enrollment is men.

(11) The John Adams University (JAU) is a private, historically white 
university located in a border state. JAU is widely known for its Roman 
Catholic and Jesuit ties as well its program in international relations. 
Approximately 7,000 undergraduate students are enrolled in John Adams 
University. Approximately 7% of undergraduate students are African 
American. Of these, only are African American men.

(12) The Harriet Tubman College is a private, historically black college 
affiliated with the United Methodist Church. It is located in a southern 
state. Current enrollment at Harriet Tubman is approximately 850. Over 
90% of students are African American. Thirty-five percent of the student 
enrollment is men.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doctorate-granting institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBCU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HWI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure II. Institutional Matrix
### Master’s institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public HBCU</th>
<th>Private HWI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malcolm X University</td>
<td>W. E. B. DuBois University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zachary Taylor University</td>
<td>Martin Van Buren University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public HWI</th>
<th>Private HBCU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thurgood Marshall University</td>
<td>Harriet Tubman College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James K. Polk University</td>
<td>John Adams University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Participants

**Sampling Strategy.** The methods that informed the sampling strata in this project are purposive and convenient. The identification of African American men in the proposed institutions by random probability sampling methods would have been difficult for this study to attain (Patton, 2002). I believe that my membership in a black greek-letter organization (BGLO) conveniently positioned me to access qualitative data from African American collegians who also hold membership in black greek-letter organizations (Charmaz, 2006; Gall et al., 1996).

Additional purposive procedures increased the inference quality of this study. Using fraternity membership as a criterion also allowed me to make tentative assessments of the manhood constructions of engaged African American collegiate men. In addition, freshmen members of the fraternity were excluded from the study to further consider participants whose pre-collegiate and collegiate experiences were broader in scope. The use of snowball sampling was used as necessary to identify key informants. Patton (2002) argues that well-situated people often emerge as the best resources to assist the researcher in this task. In each state, in each locality, and in each university, student affairs administrators, graduate-level fraternity officials, college chapter advisors and presidents assisted me to identify participants who met study criteria.

Criteria for participant selection involved selecting men enrolled in four-year colleges who were African American, traditional college-aged (18-24), and not freshmen. The participants in this study were majoring across a breadth of disciplines. Each, as the fraternity policy mandates, maintained a 2.5 grade point average (G.P.A) or greater. Participants were also, more or less, interested in civic service and thoughtful about
politics, culture, and society at the time of this study. As mentioned in Chapter I, fraternity involvement is a vehicle of engagement for its members. Fraternity members, as I anticipated, were very articulate about how their manhood experiences impacted their decisions to engage or disengage in college. The use of the fraternity selected was justified in Chapter I. However, a similar description is provided here as well to highlight how the participant group of this study was defined.

**Fraternity Membership.** Recent accounts in both public and academic media highlight the historical presence of the fraternity in which participants belonged. Historically, the fraternity was founded because African American students at American universities were largely excluded from the personal and close associations that white student populations enjoyed in fraternal organizations. Fraternity founders worked to lay a solid foundation for principles of scholarship, fellowship, good character, and the uplift of humanity. Since that time, chapters of this fraternity proliferated at historically black schools and were later developed at historically white institutions. Today, fraternity chapters and members are encouraged to dedicating themselves to improving men through fraternity aims and national symposia.

Membership in the fraternity occurs at collegiate and alumni levels. More than 175,000 men have joined the ranks of this fraternity since the organization’s founding. The fraternity is international with chapters located throughout the United States, the Caribbean, Europe, Asia, and Africa. The fraternity is comprised of over 300 college campus chapters and over 300 alumni chapters in local communities of 44 states. The organization has been interracial since the 1940s. An aspirant (man seeking membership into fraternity) may apply for membership into a college chapter as an undergraduate.
student in good standing at a fully accredited four year college or university. Collegiate aspirants are only eligible for membership at a college or university where an active chapter is present. Aspirants may apply for membership into an alumni chapter as a graduate who has earned a degree from a fully accredited four year college or university. Completed application packages for African American collegians include: (1) original applications (2) official college transcripts (3) three letters of sponsorship (4) proof of voter registration (5) essay (6) updated resume (7) updated passport photo (8) memorandum of understanding (9) two photocopies of the entire application packet (10) initiation fees.

The fraternity stresses to its members the need for educational attainment and educational, economic, political, and social action among its members. Collegiate members conduct and participate in educational awareness programs, voting campaign drives, and housing programs for underserved populations. Collegiate members of this fraternity comprise approximately 10% of total African American men enrolled in four-year colleges.

**Participant Group.** Patton (2002) writes that there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. He adds that “sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what is at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources” (p. 244). This study is part of an ongoing project about African American men’s manhood experiences and behaviors in college. Here, though, I report two narratives per institution (24) to inform dissertation research. To obtain these narratives, I solicited participants who were more and less engaged in their institutions to obtain a broader range of experiences among engaged men.
in this study. More specifically, I identified one participant per institution who was more engaged (engaged in the fraternity and one or more collegiate engagement activities) and less engaged (engaged in only the fraternity). As abovementioned, I was assisted in this effort by student affairs vice-presidents, fraternity chapter presidents, fraternity chapter advisors, and macro-level fraternity leaders.

**Sociodemographic Characteristics.** Study participants fit the mold of the sampling strategy. Participant grade point averages were self-reported and ranged from 2.7 to 3.87, though most participants reported grade point averages below 3.0. The participant group was largely comprised of seniors. Approximately 30% of the participant group were juniors. Less than 5% of the participant group were sophomores. As expected, each participant was also extremely thoughtful about civics and cultures. This may have been due, in part, to the concentration of seniors in this study which allowed me to glean a broader understanding of the total collegiate experiences of these men.

The participants were majoring across a breadth of disciplines. At the time of data collection, African American men in the study largely elected majors in the biological sciences and liberal arts. Those who selected biology, chemistry, or related majors had aspirations to become medical doctors, pharmacists, or biomedical researchers. Most of these students attended historically black colleges. A similar number of men in the study were also pursuing liberal arts degrees in majors including sociology, the classics, English, and mass communications with intentions to pursue academic or corporate careers. Most of the liberal arts students attended historically white colleges. The next popular majors among African American men interviewed were those in the business
fields. Other majors included those in the applied sciences, education and graphics/visual arts.

Study participants reported diverse family backgrounds. Half of the participants in the study were raised in a two-parent household consisting of a mother and a father. The other half of the participants was raised in single-parent households. Of these participants, one was raised by a female guardian and most of the others were raised in single-mother households. At the time of this study, six of these men were also single-parent fathers. Many of the men report family sizes around 4 or 5 members but with family incomes that range between $40,000 and $50,000. Many of the men also report family sizes of 4 or 5 members with family incomes that range between $60,000 and $79,000. Four of the men report family sizes between 4 and 6 members with family incomes between $100,000 and $139,000. One participant declared himself presently “emancipated” from his family and reported an income of less than $20,000.

The majority of participants attended predominantly black high schools prior to enrolling in college. Almost as many participants attended racially diverse high schools. Less than five participants attended predominantly white high schools. All but two of the participants attended public high schools prior to enrolling in college. One attended a performing arts high school, and the other attended a private high school.

**Data Collection Procedures**

Qualitative interviewing methods were used to collect the data. There are considerations for researchers who elect an interview approach. Issues of access and protocol are considered in this section.
Access. I shared a study description and criteria for participation to executive board members of the fraternity selected to inform them of the existence of, and intent for, this study. I received a letter of support from the national headquarters of the fraternity. I do not include the letter in this dissertation to ensure fraternity confidentiality. In addition, a gamut of advisors, district (state) and regional officers, and chapter presidents were also notified and agreed to nominate informants who were African American men, between 18 and 24 years old, and not freshmen. Each participant was contacted via telephone to schedule interviews. Selected participants completed a profile form with closed, fixed responses prior to the interview (see Appendix C).

IRB Compliance. I submitted materials to the Louisiana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for exemption from IRB approval in advance of the data collection. Accordingly, I submitted to the university’s screening committee a completed Exemption Request Form, a project summary, consent form and instruments. In the Exemption Request Form, I described the exemptability of the project and applied for exemption. To address terms of confidentiality, participants received a confidentiality statement that explained the study and detailed the ways in which they may appeal the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix B for a confidentiality form).

Interview-Guide Approach. A protocol was designed to guide the interview and answer the research questions posited. Patton (2002) writes that the interview guide approach ensures that the interviewer will make the best use of time available. He adds that delimiting issues covered in advance makes the interview process more systematic and comprehensive. I intensely listened to participant descriptions of their experiences and departed from the protocol when necessary. The interview protocol partially included
questions outlined in Terenzini et al. (1992) *Transitions to College* interview protocol to assess participant pre-college, in-class, out-of-class experiences in college. Examples of questions that were used in my study include “What is it like for you as a black man getting used to life as a student at (institution)?” and “Are black men valued here? If no, who is valued? In what ways? If yes, in what ways?” This interview guide was mailed to me by Dr. Patrick Terenzini (The Pennsylvania State University) with permission to use it in forthcoming projects. Additional questions were inspired by the Billson (1996) protocol published in *Pathways to Manhood*. An example of these questions include, “Imagine that you are attending a social event at this university where you are one of many black men. If all of the black men behaved differently from you (i.e. “nerds”, “bougie”, “thuggish”, “ghetto”), in what ways (if at all) would you change your behavior to fit in? Why or Why not (Where does that come from)?”

The range, wording, and appropriateness of questions included in the interview guide are informed by seminal researchers in this area of study including Dr. James Earl Davis (Temple University), Dr. Becky Ropers-Huilman (University of Minnesota), Dr. Vernon Polite (Eastern Michigan University), and Dr. M. Christopher Brown II (University of Nevada at Las Vegas). Additional questions are informed by the theory and research around African American male behavior, identity, and trajectory to manhood. See Appendix A for interview protocol. Interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriber, and I reviewed them for accuracy.

**Data Analysis**

The data in this study were analyzed both categorically and contextually. This work centered African American men in the analysis. M. C. Brown and Davis (2000)
argue that any comparison to white men in this type of inquiry is obsolete. The authors observe that studies offer a more complex and higher-ordered understanding of African American men by analyzing within groups instead of between them. The categorical analysis was broadly framed and largely influenced by analytical techniques described in grounded theory: (1) line-by-line and incident-by-incident coding (2) focused coding (3) axial coding and (4) theoretical coding.

The data were first coded line-by-line or incident-by-incident apropos to the coding approach that best fit data collected from individual participants. Researchers define line-by-line coding as naming each line of written data (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Line-by-line coding assists researchers to “remain open to the data and to see nuances in it” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 50). Incident-by-incident coding is a “close cousin” of line-by-line coding and is conducted by comparing incidents (Charmaz, 2006, p. 53). To add rigor, each expression (line or incident) was coded with action terms (i.e. being left out, feeling rejected) to keep the codes close to the data, show actions, and expose dilemmas more clearly (Charmaz, 2006). As Moustakas (1994) contends in his discussion of phenomenology tradition in qualitative research, the focus is on understanding and describing the “lived experiences” of the participants involved the study. Using action terms kept the analysis close to the lived experiences reported.

Phenomenological study was introduced by German philosopher Edmund H. Husserl. In his conceptualization, he proposes that the world (epoche) of the researcher is bracketed out of the analysis to create a purified consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). The use of bracketing is further described by Denzin (1989). Denzin writes that the researcher examines the phenomenon for serious inspection by extracting it from the world it occurs.
Participant responses are dissected and treated as strictly text or a document rather than subjected to interpretation through standard meanings given to it by the existing literature. To this end, key phrases or statements that relate to the phenomenon are identified and extracted and re-read as though foreign. As I read each line of text, I placed my assumptions, reactions, thinking, and reflections in brackets and re-read the text as though foreign.

In complement to grounded theory, Moustakas’ modification of the van Kaam (1966) method of analysis was used to analyze participant data in this study because it allows for rigorous interplay between myself and data. First, I listed all codes that were relevant to the participants’ experiences (horizontalization). These codes were then tested for invariant constituents—parts of the data that: (1) contain a moment of the experience (i.e. manhood construct, perception of the institutional world and treatment) that is necessary for understanding the broader phenomena; and (2) that can be abstracted and labeled into themes (horizons of the experience) separately from irrelevant expressions. Charmaz (2006) describes this process as focused coding in which decisions are made about which codes make the most analytic sense to categorize data. Invariant constituents are clustered and themed as cores of the experience. Charmaz refers to this as axial coding. Axial coding specifies the properties and dimensions of a category (Charmaz, 2006). Last, I compared invariant constituents against interview transcriptions.

Subsequently, I constructed for a peer debriefer (Dr. James Earl Davis, Temple University) Individual Textural Descriptions of the experience and included verbatim examples from the transcribed interview. These descriptions elucidated participant experiences collectively. I also constructed for and subsequently e-mailed to research
participants a *textural-structural description* of the meanings and essences (the “whats” and “hows”) of the experience by incorporating the invariant constituents (relevant codes) of each participant as well as by institution, institutional classification (doctoral/master’s/baccalaureate) and institutional type by population served (HWI/HBCU) (Moustakas, 1994). This served as the study’s member-checking vehicle. Charmaz (2006) defines member-checking as taking ideas back to research participants for respondent validation.

Contextual analytic procedures were used in tandem with categorical analysis. In other words, as participant narratives were individually analyzed, they were compared to each other to discover patterns of consistency or differences across institutions. This analysis is consistent with theoretical coding. Charmaz (2006) defines theoretical coding as the ways in which all substantive codes relate to each other as “hypotheses to be integrated into theory” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 63). Once the categorical data analysis was completed, contextual analysis integrated all the relevant codes across institutional contexts. In tandem with categorical analysis, the data were analyzed contextually with case study methods prescribed by Yin (2002) and Stake (1995). Case study research (CSR) has been in existence for many years, emerging separately in several fields including anthropology, history, law, political science, evaluation research (Yin, 2002; Stake, 1995). Case studies uniquely examine contextual issues of cause and effect.

The holistic analysis allowed me to engage universities as more complex systems (Yin, 2002). Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) describe these systems as multiple cases “nested” in multiple campuses with multiple classroom/out-of-class experiences. In similar language, Yin’s (2002) Type 4 design involves multiple-case designs with
multiple units or levels of analysis. Stake adds that in intrinsic case studies (those in which the case is of primary interest) aggregating instances of data across institutions allows for correspondence to take place. Stake (1995) defines correspondence as the search for patterns or consistency that emerge when data are aggregated. I grouped patterns across respondents, collegiate classification (i.e. Carnegie classification, collegiate type (public vs. private), and collegiate context (i.e. historically black vs. historically white) to display themes that are consistent across these categories.

The Inference Quality

I employed six procedures to increase the inference quality. First, I maintained a reflexive journal to note assumptions, perspectives, biases, and thoughts. Subsequently, I compared findings from the data analysis to journal notes for consistency. Second, thick description techniques give this study transferability. The study involved thick description of the participants’ non-verbal responses, verbal responses and inflections, demeanor, and behavioral responses. These are apparent in the participant introductions. These techniques were useful in assessing my sense of axiology and informing my reflexive journals.

Member checks and peer debriefing enhanced the credibility of this study. As a third strategy to strengthen the inference quality of this study, member checks (emailing the textural-structural descriptions discussed above) confirmed the validity of participant narratives and emergent themes (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). Fourth, peer debriefing is defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as “a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the
The inquirer’s mind” (p. 308). The peer debriefer for this study is Dr. James Earl Davis. Dr. Davis received his Doctor of Philosophy from Cornell University in Social Policy and Evaluation Research. Presently, he is Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Dr. Davis interacted with me at every point of the dissertation process from conceptualization to completion. Specifically, Dr. Davis challenged all aspects of the research design, including conceptual and theoretical frames, institutional site selection, participant selection, and methodology. Accordingly, when originally selected sites became unavailable, Dr. Davis suggested like-situated institutions that would fit within the institutional site matrix.

Fifth, an audit trail was used to address issues of dependability and confirmability. Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) define an audit trail as documentation of the research process. Six types of documentation are considered for inclusion in audit trails: (1) source and method or recording raw data, (2) data reduction and analysis products, (3) data reconstruction and synthesis products, (4) process notes, (5) materials relating to intentions and dispositions, and (6) instrument development information. Along similar lines, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that auditors can examine the process by which the various stages of the study, including analytic techniques, are conducted. The auditor determines whether this process was applicable to the research undertaken and it was applied consistently. To illustrate confirmability, I maintained a record of the inquiry process including all taped interviews, notes from interviews and discussions and copies of all transcriptions. Dr. James Earl Davis, Professor at Temple University, served as the auditor for this study. Dr. Davis reviewed the data, methodology, and analytical
documents for consistency and applicability, and offered feedback, suggestions, and confirmations. At times, Dr. Davis provided me feedback on ways in which to nuance coding techniques during the analysis to get my best possible understanding of data. Additionally, Dr. Davis guided my thinking as I worked through uncertainty about the clustering of certain codes into broader themes.

Scope of the Inquiry

In this section, I note that the strengths of this study may also be perceived by some research purists as limitations. First, the scope of the inquiry focuses on the manhood constructions and collegiate experiences of engaged collegiate men, specifically those who also share membership in a fraternity. I note that the participant group was likely to be thoughtful and articulate about national, social, and personal movement as well as similarly situated in terms of social disposition, social capital, GPA, and heightened awareness of their manhood development. Second, this research, in mapping engaged men, sampled twelve chapters of the same fraternity and not twelve institutions. Study findings will not be generalized to other African American men at the institutions represented in this study or those enrolled in colleges in other areas. Third, this research does not include the perspectives of peers, participants’ family members, or faculty/staff at any of the institutions in this study.
CHAPTER V

PARTICIPANT INTRODUCTIONS

Memory is the selection of images; some elusive, others printed indelibly on the brain. Each image is like a thread, each thread woven together to make a tapestry of intricate texture and the tapestry tells a story. And the story is our past.

Eve’s Bayou, Trimark Pictures, Kasi Lemmons (1997)

In Chapter IV, I provide a description of the sociodemographic characteristics of the participant group. The participant group is not homogeneous by demography or personal, social, and academic backgrounds. The broad overview of the participants in Chapter IV, however, does not reveal the richness of their identities, influences, experiences, and contexts. To be sure, neither do these introductions. Notwithstanding, these introductions are an attempt to focus, in a more detailed sense, on the fullness and complexities of the participant influences, experiences, and contexts. In the interest of confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned to the twenty-four participants in this research. In these introductions, I pay close attention to the earliest ways in which the power of race and gender came to work in their lives.

I was well-screened by the participants when I contacted them by telephone to engage the work of introducing myself, introducing the study, and scheduling an interview. Upon hearing an unfamiliar voice on the telephone, many of the men placed before me an instant roadblock shaped by suspicion of the unrecognizable African American man’s voice on the phone. Sometimes, my greetings were interrupted with what I perceived to be a near-irritated, “Who is this?” The men seemed on guard, like warriors with spears, ready to address any perceived “attack” with reckoning. Later, some said they thought I was a bill collector or a man who wanted to challenge them over a
woman they were dating. In contrast, some were immediately open. Moreover, when all participants realized that I was a doctoral candidate, and far more “friend” than “foe”, they were extremely warm, open, receptive, and happy to participate in the interviews.

When we met face-to-face, many were, in a Eurocentric sense, conservatively dressed and groomed with button-down shirts, slacks or khaki pants. Others, however, clung to more Afrocentric hairstyles and culturally eclectic wardrobes. Some participants opted for a more urbanized style complete with tattoos, earrings, industrial boots, and sweat-shirts with hoods or “hoodies”, as they are commonly referred. Many people in American society view these images as roadblocks because they are intimidating symbols, reminiscent of times and cultures foreign to whites and thus marginalized (Collins, 2005; Hutchinson, 1997). The following introductions are testaments to the richness “behind the masks” that people often miss because they do not endeavor to go beyond the roadblocks.

At Benjamin Harrison University

(1) Walter invited me to speak with him on a cloudy and unusually cold winter day during his final spring semester in college. A self-identified “military brat”, Walter lived in Europe for five years as a young boy. Walter identified his mother as largely influential in his life and insisted it was she who encouraged him to go to college. Walter is tall, broad-shouldered, was dressed in urban clothing, and his hair was worn in shoulder-length, dreadlock style, or “dreads”, as they are commonly called. 4Because of his physical image, Walter contended, people may be intimidated and presumptuous about his

---

4 Dreads are a “natural” way of matting hair, and they refer to a culturally stylish observation of the materiality and individuality of the texture of hair of people of the African diaspora (Mercer, 1994).
intellectual prowess. Notwithstanding, Walter was extremely articulate, thoughtful, reflective, and intellectual. He aspires toward graduate work in liberal arts and also wants to become an airline pilot. At the end of our conversation, he spoke movingly about the importance of exposing children to flying. Walter recalled “learning how to shake hands” and “learning from mistakes” as his first manhood teachings. After moving back to the United States, Walter recalled “seeing” his race differently. In Europe, he reflected, “a [black man] is European but in America, it’s our color first, and our culture second”. After moving back to the United States, he was criticized by his relatives and classmates for his accent and diction, and therefore, worked to change how he spoke. He also recalled early fears to drive his car because, “I was scared the [white] police would stop and harass me”.

(2) Nigel was professionally dressed for our interview which took place in a contemporarily furnished lounge of one of the college dormitories. He, like Walter, donned a dreadlocked hair style. Nigel wore a dress shirt, neck tie, and dress slacks, and I got the impression that he was no stranger to this uniform. Nigel saw himself as the hope for his family which consists of extended and nuclear members, but being the hope of the family, he admitted, also brings its share of internal pressure. His eyes set on attaining the doctorate, Nigel told me that he intends to be listed by Forbes Magazine among the wealthy and powerful. He proclaimed, “I am an elitist, but I believe in pulling people up with me”. During our conversation, he recalled first being aware of his blackness when he was falsely accused by his white teacher of
stealing from a white student. He was only vindicated when another white student, who was the culprit, confessed. Nigel still insisted, however, that he was branded “a troublemaker” at school thereafter. This, he said, influences his earliest manhood lessons as well. He said, “black plus male equals danger or life in prison”. Early reflections also included memories of being “singled out” by African American others because of his dark complexion. Nigel recalled that he “grew up white” because his enrollment in advanced placement courses prevented him from seeing his African American friends who were not in those courses (hardly any African Americans were). To adjust, he said, he played sports because it allowed him to “cross over” into African American acceptance. Nigel is also a single parent of two children.

At Mary McCleod Bethune University

(3) Troy is persistent in college though his family life is one of turbulence. Troy grew up in a family in which alcohol, among myriad problems, was a constant and disruptive presence in the home. Because of this, Troy insisted, “I kept to myself in school. I never knew who I could trust”. He chose to become active in school and college to “keep my mind off home problems”. Troy’s father, he recollected, said “if you choose to major in anything other than medicine or computer science, you won’t be anything”. Accordingly, Troy’s father was furious when Troy transferred to Bethune University from a university widely known for its placement of African Americans into medical programs. The frequent family arguments, disagreements, and oppression were enough. Troy now declares himself “emancipated” from his family and is self-supporting in
every way. Troy also revealed that he is “suspect”, particularly in the African American community because he is not traditionally masculine. He says he first noticed his maleness “because he hung around females all the time and was told by many that this was a problem”. Prior to joining a fraternity, he recalled a strange “cold shoulder” he received from groups of African American males in college. When Troy and I met in the beautiful Bethune library, he was wearing a stylish sweater, stylish glasses, necktie, dress slacks, dress shoes, and trendy coat. He appeared body-image conscious and very well-groomed. He is a student leader, both well-respected and well-spoken. Troy’s private pain is not discernible to the public eye. Troy insisted that black men negotiate a strange dichotomy, “we either have to solve the problem, or cause the problem”.

(4) I also met Earnest in the Bethune University library. Leaving the college gymnasium, he was wearing athletic clothing. At the beginning of our conversation, Earnest revealed that he had transferred from a small, historically white baccalaureate college to Bethune. He was pleased with this transition because of the engaging campus life that Bethune offers and because his sister is a “local celebrity” at the college. Before he enrolled in college, Earnest was one the most popular black males in high school. Earnest regularly engages the socially respected work of lifting weights, perfecting his player-of-women performance, and well-grooming himself. He and his friends were the star athletes at his high school. A veritable “big man on campus”, Earnest declared that his family and friends greatly admire him. Earnest came
to know his blackness, he said, when his interracial relationship with the white daughter of one of the town’s prominent businessmen sparked local controversy. “Eventually”, he recalled, “[her parents] were so set against us being together, they sent her off to an all-girls boarding school”. Earnest came to know he was a man, he reflects, when he “became attracted to girls. I was what you call ‘mannish’, always after the girls”.

**At James Buchanan University**

(5) In the evening of a cold winter day, Edward and I arranged to meet on a block in the city-like, historic area of the Buchanan campus. His figure approached me, totally hooded, conjuring the image of the ghost of Christmas past in Dickens’ (1843) novel, *A Christmas Carol*. He greeted me with an urbanized, baritone, “what’s up man?”. After our exchange, he removed his hood and led me to the student activities offices where we engaged the interview. I noticed his greetings changed (i.e. “hi”, “how are you”) as we passed the white faces at the prestigious university. Apparently, he was well-known at the university. Edward always believed he “was more mature than other people”, but remained enthusiastic that Buchanan University would “grow him up”. Hailing from a low-income, working class campus, Edward’s parents were unable to fund his college education or transportation once he arrived on the campus. He feels privileged to be attending Buchanan with the aid of scholarships. He recalled television depictions and African American male performances as introductions to meanings of African American men. He elaborated, “[black football players] are often described as athletes like
runners without minds. [White football players] are quarterbacks, the masterminds behind the plays”. During our interview, he described how his racial identity was an internal point of contention. He recalls “wearing and receiving hand-me-downs from white people”. This, he felt, led to an internal wish that he was “made up” of other cultures to make himself feel more interesting. He tried to reject this, he reflected, through militant behavior and growing dreadlocks. On the day of our interview, however, the now clean-cut participant said he was “beginning to understand others’ differences”. Edward is also attentive to what people think about his enrollment in the well-known and historically white Buchanan University. Who knew this was behind that shrouded figure that approached me on the cold, university street corner?

(6) Martin is from a city in the northern United States largely populated with immigrants. The first generation of his family to attend college, Martin is the son of parents who hail from islands off the coast of Africa. Martin said that his “parents instilled the importance of a college education”. He chose Buchanan because of its academic reputation and because he received a need-based scholarship. Not only is Martin in the first generation of his family to attend college, he is also the only one attending such an expensive, highly ranked college. Those family members who are not in jail, he said, elected junior colleges in the northern United States. He said that his family “knew he was special and would always go to Buchanan”. Martin said he noticed his blackness when he could not relate to the customs and traditions of other African American students. He believes the charge for African American men
are to be “heads of households, to take charge, and protect their families”. Notwithstanding, he said that “being black is an automatic strike. We have to try harder, to work harder. Because of this, I try to be ‘proper’ to change what people think of me”. Martin is tall, athletically built, and projects an image described by texts written to teach men how to be traditional “gentlemen”.

**At Martin Luther King University**

(7) Of all the participants in this study, Joseph is the man who most clearly lives a more economically privileged life, and he was one of only two participants who attended predominantly white high schools. Joseph is fresh-faced, well-dressed, and largely emblematic of the traits of cultural envy among African Americans as described in texts like Lawrence Otis Graham’s, *Our Kind of People: Inside America’s Black Upper Class* (2000) or traits reminiscent of the historical community of the gens de couleur libres⁵. Though from a southern state, Joseph attends college on the east coast. The son of a physician and civil engineer, Joseph’s childhood was filled with tennis matches, social and athletic popularity, and weekend trips, parties, vacations, and meetings in Jack and Jill of America.⁶ Joseph’s parents encouraged him to major in business though Joseph’s focus was on attending a culinary arts school. He

---

⁵ *Gens de couleur libres* is a French term meaning “free people of color”. This term refers to the mulatto descendants of French men and African slave women prior to the abolition of slavery who were given or bought their, limited, freedom. Some of these descendants lived in Louisiana and owned slaves prior to slavery. The *gens de couleur libres* largely shaped the history of cities like New Orleans (see www.creolehistory.com)

⁶ Founded in 1938, *Jack and Jill of America* has long been one of the defining organizations for families of the African American professional class. It has 218 chapters throughout the United States and Germany, and its membership includes more than 30,000 parents and children. It focuses on bringing children together aged two to nineteen and introducing them to various educational, social, and cultural experiences. *Jack and Jill* is very selective and admits members by invitation only. *Jack and Jill* is among prominent African American families, particularly in major American cities. For generations, it has served as a (Graham, 1999, p. 22-23)
chose to attend King University after his girlfriend decided to attend King and after representatives at the ivy league, historically white college to which he applied told him, “we have given out the last of our minority funds”. Joseph recognized his blackness early in his childhood. He remembered, “I always had two sets of friends [black and white]…I am a very good tennis player and because I was the only [black who played] in the tennis club, I fascinated them and I began to feel like they adopted me…they asked questions like ‘shouldn’t you be playing basketball?’”. Many African Americans also rejected Joseph, calling him “Tiger Woods”, who largely represents, in the African American community a symbol for “acting white” (Reese, 2004). Joseph also recalled early manhood lessons of being instructed “not to cry”. He also described the longing for his father, who was often busy in medical practice. His grandfather often substituted this presence and taught him to “watch CNN because it is particularly important for men to know what’s going on the world and take political action”.

Corey’s background is monumentally different from Joseph’s background. In Corey’s mind, he “made it” to the east coast-situated King University from the rural, Mississippi Delta region of the United States. As Corey remembered, “I stayed in the projects”. The “projects” refers to the government-owned and subsidized housing projects in ghetto areas of the United States. Corey lived in “the projects” with his mother (who is his sole parent) and five other members of his nuclear and extended family. He wanted to go to college to get away from the rural depressions of his hometown and to pursue the “hope
of having something better”. In his community, he remembered that many of
his peers and family either are dead, “struggling” single parents, or working
“little 9-to-5 jobs”. A self-identified “bad boy” who fought and sold “weed”
(marijuana), Corey recalled that people in his native neighborhood told him,
“You’ll never amount to anything”. He seemed extremely grateful to attend
King University because it is the “most prestigious black school”. Corey
remembered, “I knew I was black when white students in school were put in
gifted programs over me even though I had higher grades”. He also recalled
the “driving-while-black” syndrome as an early indicator of his blackness.
“Driving-while-black” referred to the disparate incidence of black men
stopped in transit by police. He said the following about his early memories of
his maleness, “I was ‘a dog’. I treated females like they were nothing…I had a
cousin who influenced me…He used to treat women like they were
worthless…I only changed when I met a woman who was ‘a dog’”.

At Malcolm X University

(9) The son of a working class police officer and professor, George was very
friendly and engaging. In fact, he gave me a small tour of the Malcolm X
campus which had been greatly altered in the aftermath of natural disaster.
George is slim-framed, well-groomed, and, on the day we met, was very well
dressed in an eclectic mix of denim, wool sweater, dress shirt, and necktie. He
remarked to me that he is a former model and hopes to return to New York
soon to pursue that line of work. George recalls that his decision to go to
college was “embedded” in him by his parents. However, he says that the
professors at the first college he enrolled, “wrote him off”. At the time, he was attending a predominantly white institution, but insists the treatment he received from professors at the white institution and the loneliness he felt were major factors. He also recalled many instances of “getting into it (arguing) with students who he felt were jealous of him”. Afterward, he transferred to MXU at his mother’s request and felt he “belonged here”, so he remained. He recalls, “I thought MXU would be ghetto (distasteful) but I found that it was a regular college and students were serious about education”. He remembered the way white women treated him as though he was “acting mannish” in a swimming pool as one of his earliest awareness of his blackness. He did not recall performing in this way, but insisted he was perceived as hypersexual in that pool. George said his family gave him the following instruction to “help” him live life as an African American man, “You must always look upstanding and put your best foot forward”.

(10) Jamal persists through college despite a life of economic hardship and strife. Jamal, however, does not appear to live a life with challenge. He wears clothes from popular urban stores and drives a newer model and sporty coupe. Jamal is sure to display the labels of the designer clothes he sports. Of all the participants, Jamal was most meticulously groomed with obvious attention to skin, eyebrows, hair, and facial condition. Notwithstanding, Jamal is a single father, was born in “the projects”, “bounced from house to house as a little boy”, and slept on the streets of his rough neighborhood while he aged 14 through 16. Jamal’s childhood was abusive, neglectful, and discouraging. “My
mom”, he recalled, “worked two jobs to try to get us out of the ghetto…She tried to always make sure we were, at least, clean”. Jamal was the eldest sibling in his home. Accordingly, Jamal also recalled competing with his stepfather for the fatherly responsibility in the home. Of his stepfather, he remembered, “he had a bad drug problem and he stole all of our money”. His biological father, however, also sold drugs and stole money from the family to support his dangerous habits. An aspiring pharmacist, Jamal chose to attend college to “get a better life for my self and my children”. Jamal recalled “knowing he was black” when a routine return of a purchased DVD player became a hostile interrogation and detainment by police. One of the police referred to him as a “dumb a** black”. This interrogation only halted when a customer, who was an African American man and lawyer, intervened and threatened litigation. Early memories of his maleness included learning that “men always strive for the best”. Jamal lives in a trailer in the aftermath of the natural disaster which devastated the city. We interviewed in a conference room at a different university than the one he attends. Our conversation was so engaging, he missed most of an evening class in which he was enrolled. He revealed this, to my chagrin, at the end of our interview.

At W. E. B. DuBois University

Leonard is a self-proclaimed “a**hole”. He described himself as “vain”, “bossy”, chauvinistic at times to the point of misogyny, certain that almost everyone he meets is jealous of him, and in his words, “an arrogant, know-it-all”. His voice was deep and booming in ways that bring to mind the way
individuals describe the voice of civil rights activist and concert singer Paul Robeson. What became evident in our interview is that the dark-skinned, bald, earring-clad man seems to gain power by intimidating others. My interview with Leonard was among the longest of the interviews, lasting over 3 hours. Leonard was extremely articulate, poised, confident in his assertions, and admitted that he “loves to talk and for others to listen.” Leonard is from a southern state. Leonard was raised by his aunt but is the son of an ambitious father from the Caribbean and a mother whose “issues” took her away from Leonard’s life early. Leonard’s father remains connected with Leonard though Leonard’s words suggested longing for an authentic father-son connection. The father’s voice still, however, strongly sways Leonard’s decisions. One example included Leonard’s choice to change his major from business to pharmacy. The latter major, Leonard’s father thought, was more economically promising. Leonard also reflected on his blackness. He said, “In high school, I remember a white guy calling my friend a nigger…I always knew I was I was black but, then, I didn’t always embrace it…Now, I believe black is as powerful as white is. Whiteness in white people is just a false sense of hope…and [African American] men must trust no one”. Leonard said that he came to know his maleness through its social power. He insisted, “male voice carries more weight everywhere and particularly on this campus. Females are cutthroat, fight over men, territorial…and have compromised the world position of the United States”.
Daniel and I met on a cold evening in a King University conference room. Daniel seemed very relaxed in this brown t-shirt, jeans, and athletic shoes.

Daniel, who is also a single parent, was born and raised in Chicago in a low-income home. Daniel lived with his mother until he was in the 4th grade. Subsequently, he lived with his father to attend a better school. He has known ever since he was 12 that he wanted to pursue a healthcare career. His plans to become a physician heavily influenced his decision to attend DuBois University. At the beginning of our interview he remarked, “I am from [poverty and disadvantage], but not of it”. He is also first in his family to attend a 4-year university. Daniel recalled connecting with his blackness through the diversity he observed in the African American race. While living with his father, he said he became exposed to different kinds of black people because his father was “well connected”. Those experiences, he recalled, allowed him to the opportunity to “travel between worlds” of African Americans. He said “black male means once [we are] successful, we must role model and we must be uplifted to know that we can accomplish [our goals] in America”.

At Zachary Taylor University

Kevin is an extremely engaged student at Taylor University. We interviewed during the holiday season at what appeared to be the loving home of his mother (who raised him) and his stepfather. Kevin is very expressive, articulate, and exudes passion in nearly every sentence. He is president of his fraternity and active across many student government offices, committees,
events, and university-sponsored outreach efforts in the community. An aspiring talk show host, he admitted to academically underperforming in high school but decided to change to seriously prepare for a career in communications. Early memories of the importance of race in his life included “being booed…and hearing racial slurs at ball game” while he played on a diverse baseball team in an alleged racially segregated town. He also recalled early teachings of maleness as being discouraged from “doing things girls do”. Kevin insisted that his identity as an African American man means “I must give back and set an example for others to follow”.

(14) Sean enjoys the diversity that Zachary Taylor University offers because he transferred from another historically white institution which was less diverse, and subsequently, less comfortable for Sean. Sean hails from a small town in a southern state. With a disabled father and a mother who supports the household, Sean felt that it was best to attend college in the state where he lives. Sean is the first in his family to attend college and this fact, he said, inspires him to persist. Sean noted many examples of family and friends whom he saw make different choices toward a life he did not want to have. His sisters either became early mothers or otherwise “got loose (sexually promiscuous) and out of control” and did not finish college, and four of his friends were killed in circumstances of mishap, tragedy, and crime. Before entering college, Sean started an organization for young black men in his hometown to improve their senses of self. Sean is heavily influenced by his mother who he has seen “work hard and do without” and his grandmother
who “worked just as hard cleaning up houses for white people”. Early memories of blackness, he described, were marked by racial stereotyping and police harassment. One example included being followed by department store staff when he was age 16 while noticing white customers shopping freely. He noticed his maleness in the differences between the ways in which he was raised alongside his sisters. He said, “I was always given the keys to drive…males get more freedom…I always took care of my sisters, they never took care of me…no one watched out for me”.

**At Martin Van Buren University**

(15) I met John at the library of the aesthetically pleasing Van Buren University on a sunny, yet chilly day in the spring semester of his senior year. John is “artsy”. In other words, he is deeply engaged in the world of art both graphic and visual. John is anything but clean-cut. His style and appearance float somewhere between Bohemian and Neo-soul. Bohemian style refers to the eclectic mix (reminiscent of the hippie culture) of textures, colors, and embellishments that borrow from past and present trends. Here, neo-soul style refers to the look of music artists (i.e. dreadlocks, relaxed wardrobe) of the 1990s and 2000s who fused contemporary rhythm and blues music, 1970s style soul, classical music, and jazz. John came to Van Buren because he wanted to leave his hometown. Proudly unconventional, John said his Christian identity is important to him but he is still very “questioning and free-thinking” about his place in the world. Early memories of blackness included an incident in which John was falsely accused of stealing crayons by a white
student and white teacher. John attended predominantly white schools and maintains a 3.8 grade point average. He aspires to attain a master’s degree in design and achieve a successful career in the graphic arts.

Spencer is spirited, very articulate, and very hospitable. He invited me to interview him at his dormitory on the Van Buren campus. When I walked into his room, his love for music and movies was palpable. A huge stereo sat atop a dresser. A number of musicals including *Rent*, and romantic comedies like *Rumor Has It* were present. Spencer hails from an upper-middle class family and attended a competitive performing arts high school. Spencer dons dreadlocks that extend to the middle of his back. Early memories of blackness included the learning he received about the African American culture in school and church, particularly during Black History Month. Spencer also recalled elementary school teachers who would specifically encourage African American men “to speak and carry themselves confidently and to maintain good posture”. Spencer’s mother taught him an early manhood lesson as well when she said, “All a man really has is his word”. Spencer identified his Christianity as a significant identity for him. During our conversation, however, Spencer discussed how his sexual identity (Spencer self-identifies as gay) often conflicts with Christian teachings as well as college life and his fraternity membership. Notwithstanding, Spencer, a student leader, is president of his fraternity and holds memberships in other student organizations. He says each day is spent becoming more comfortable with who he is as an African American man.
At Thurgood Marshall University

(17) I met David one sunny Saturday morning at his home in the college town that surrounds Marshall University. David has a love for music as evinced by the huge keyboard, sheet music, and compact discs that flanked his bedroom. David was raised in a low-income household but, by no means, was the ideal of college attendance new in David’s home. David was raised in an area of a southern urban city which was infused with low-income African American families. David said that he became enlightened about blackness when he was exposed to learning about the Civil Rights Movement and “found out what it was African Americans stood for”. David’s earliest recollections of his manhood ideals included observing men’s “freedoms” in comparison to women. David also recalled summer camp and church activities in which he was instructed to “let women go first in line”. David is undecided about his plans after college. He pondered, “maybe teaching, maybe entrepreneurship, maybe going out and helping with the family business…I’m just taking it one step at a time”.

(18) Jaden decided to attend a college close to his hometown. Jaden, who was raised by his mother, is of Jamaican and English ancestry, but self-identifies as African American. At the beginning of our conversation, Jaden noted that African American men are often at a crossroads at the end of high school. The “two options are either fail or succeed. The path chosen is informed by the [African American] community”. Jaden, who was born in England, first noticed his blackness “when [white] teachers made fun of my accent and [the
teacher] just kept on making me repeat [words], repeat [words], repeat [words], [because] she got a kick out of it, and then other teachers would come over and she would want me to say it, and then that’s when I realized at that point, it was kindergarten, that I was going to have to speak like them in order to fit in.”. An early memory of maleness included the lesson from his father, “not to cry when hurt”. Before I left Jaden’s room, I took note of a sheet of paper Jaden had tacked to his wall. On the paper was a list of academic goals, health goals, school goals, professional goals, and post-undergraduate expectations. The wall also held a creed which read, “This is the beginning of a new day…we want it to be good, not bad, gain not loss, success not failure, in order that we will never regret the price we paid for it”.

At Harriet Tubman College

(19) Joshua is a native of the city in which Tubman College is located but the son of parents who are from the Caribbean islands. Joshua was also fortunate to receive an academic scholarship to attend Tubman College where he is pursuing a degree in biology. Joshua finds that his circle of friends continues to evolve as he negotiates the trajectory to degree. Like many of the men in this study, Joshua said he felt his blackness through racialized incidents that also involved whites. On a family trip to Disney World, Joshua recalled a white family who looked disapprovingly at his family while posing the question, “Who are they?” During our conversation, Joshua also discussed his blackness in relation to his behaviors around diverse groups. He says, “[growing up], my attitude might have changed when I was around one of my
white friends, middle-class friends...[around them] I act high-saddity (snobbish), but then with my black friends, I’d probably act more [relaxed], I probably don’t know why, I guess it was just, I don’t know... I have no idea why”. Early recollections of maleness did not come to mind easily as he seemed to measure it against femaleness. He said, “I wasn’t raised around...sisters, so, [if I was] that would have probably made [my memory of maleness] easier to [describe]...It’s hard to answer that, I can’t even think about that question”. About being an African American man, however, he said, “[African American men], we [are] always dominant...If blacks would come together in this country, we’d all be dominant instead of going up against each other...just being black is dominant or stronger [and] especially when you’re male.”

Orlando hails from the western United States. He was influenced to attend the southern state-situated Tubman College by his relative who also attended that college. He said that the lack of diversity at the college and the surrounding city was discouraging. Orlando was raised by his mother in a single-parent household, and decided to go to college after experiencing life with just a high school diploma. His peers in his hometown did not make such decisions. He reflected, “They [do] what they can do...so they can survive, or just [do] whatever to [be able to] eat. Orlando suggested that he “sees” his blackness more clearly now that he lives in the southern state. He recalled about the western state he is from, “you know, a couple of Hispanics and Asians you know filter through [this city], but it’s more diverse in California,
so [while] racism [is an] issue it ain’t in the wide open like it is out here”. He knew he was a man, he said, when he saw the different ways in which men and women are instructed. He elaborated, “males are taught to be more independent, you know, [to] be more conscience and aware of different things around.. Women [are] taught to be probably a little bit more sheltered, you know what I’m saying, a little bit more, want somebody else to do for them, you know…”. Orlando said people in college misjudge him because of his image which is comprised of a large build, the frequent use of fluent slang, lazy delivery of grammar, and aloofness.

**At James K. Polk University**

James K. Polk University was perhaps the most rural institution I visited. A small, predominantly white institution, I was greeted by a pasture of cows as I approached the modest campus. It was here that I met and interviewed Terrance. Terrance is from a low-income family in which his mother works as a sales associate in a department store and his father works in construction. Already a single parent of two, Terrance said that he decided to attend college “to help me provide for my girlfriend and son and daughter”. He applied and received a pell grant to attend Polk University which, he said, was an added incentive. Similar to other men in the study, Terrance’s African American male peers befell a gamut of fates. He said, “some actually went to college, some are in jail, and some died”. Also similar to other men in the study, Terrance’s early awareness of blackness came through the accusations of white teachers and white students and the ever-present experience of “being
followed in stores”. Quiet and apparently introverted, Terrance was open about how it felt “to grow up not having things”. He said the charge for African American men is “to try harder than others and to prove yourself more”.

(22) Like Terrance, Steven is also a single parent pursuing the bachelor’s degree at Polk University. Steven is a talented saxophone player in the university band. The short, friendly, and well-groomed student is also active in the university science club, theater, and organizations that promote musical talent among college students. He said that he is a member of a family in which most relatives that are his age, “are all single parents and are not doing anything productive. They now regret their decisions”. He feels “pressured” to make the “right” decisions by his family. Specifically, his family pressures him to finish the degree in order to become a music teacher. He chose Polk University because of the financial aid and because it is a short distance from his daughter. He said that African American men need to “step up and be ready a moment’s notice to defend their culture. Whites will try (test or challenge) [African Americans], and I watch movies that remind me of the ways it used to be”. During our interview, he gave an expressive statement about his early awareness of his blackness, “I first noticed that I was black when I worked at the store…that’s when I really saw prejudice..I had to [pack] people’s groceries and stuff, and then you know, this white lady I went to [pack] hers and I…asked, “paper or plastic?” She didn’t have no response and [I said it] nice and clear [and I thought], she [is] doing this because I’m
black. I know if it was a white kid working [and] doing her groceries, she would respond and say, you know, I want plastic or paper. So that kind of, you know, that was around my 9th grade year, and that’s when I really, you know, I noticed that I was black…[whites] just pretty much told me, you know, showed me [by] the way they react… some [are] still stuck to the past and they don’t like black people…”. Early awareness of maleness was reflected as follows, “you know, I tried to hustle in the right way…[I would help] my mom out, take care of my sisters..you know, I had manly deeds I did things that [were] suppose to have been done, you know, anything, like rake yards, that’s a man’s job you know…”

At John Adams University

(23) During our interview, Hakeem told me that he was always interested, even gifted, in school but was never pushed to academically succeed. Hakeem, who hails from the northern United States, said that he had to “balance between cool cliques and smart people”, but he could not deny the inner aspiration “to want to walk across the stage and receive honor roll certificates”. A former “gang affiliate”, Hakeem appeared emblematic of the hip-hop, urbanized generation, with long dreadlocks, “gangsta” style, utility boots (men’s shoewear of choice across many urban communities), and interests in music and lyrics “with a purpose”. His room contained posters with messages that are consistent with our conversations about his college experiences. For example, I noticed a poster advertising the movie, Scarface, which depicted the main character of the movie, Tony Montana (who is a Miami crime lord).
Under the Tony Montana image was the phrase, “Who do I Trust? Me.”. Another poster displayed murdered gangster-rapper Tupac Shakur with the message, “Only God Can Judge Me”. An additional poster portrayed Malcolm X delivering a speech. The message on this poster read, “By Any Means Necessary.”. Last, another Scarface poster was present that read “Money. Power. Respect.”. At the time of our interview, Hakeem was reading The Audacity of Hope by Barack Obama. Hakeem, who is very intelligent, chose the historically prestigious and widely respected John Adams University though he was accepted by one of the most highly selective historically black colleges in the nation. Hakeem said that he noticed he was black when he was “called a nigger at a young age and when he was pulled over by police for no reason”. During high school, he also thought about blackness as something one does. For example, he recalled “a white girl [who danced well] and was called black”. Hakeem thinks that “society forces African Americans to think about themselves as African Americans first and not as Americans”. This notion, he said, also informs his conceptualization of his racial identity. He says that his parents and family have always encouraged him to embrace his black identity and to always uplift his race. Early memories of his maleness included being “taught what was manly and what wasn’t…and having my choice to [draw] scrutinized instead of playing football [which is what others thought I should do]…”

Emmanuel, like Hakeem, also hails from the northern United States. Raised in a two-parent household, Emmanuel insisted that he did “fairly well”
in high school, ranking in the top 5% of his senior class. Emmanuel chose to attend college as a first step toward his career aspiration of becoming a lawyer. Though he considered other institutions, Emmanuel was influenced by high school teachers to attend John Adams University. His family is very adamant that he persists, in high-achieving ways, through college. He reflected, “Once I stopped college for a semester, my family [greatly scolded me]”. Emmanuel said that he “knew he was black” following many conversations that were held within the African American race. “I grew up in an area with much [within-race] conflict…always problems between light-skinned and dark-skinned”, said Emmanuel (who is dark-skinned). He described how his awareness of his blackness is more closely tied to his skin color. “I remember [black] people asking me, ‘how you did you end up so dark?'”, he recalled. He remembered that this question always carried a negative connotation. He was also referred to as “black-ey”. He, like many of the men in this study, has experienced “driving-while-black”. He, however, also mentioned the ways in which “driving-while-black” is gendered. He reflected, “not even black women have the problems black men do because they can [acquiesce] to police. Emmanuel, who was arguably the most articulate man in this dissertation research, said men negotiate “dueling expectations. We must expel (dismiss the negativity) of one side (African Americans) and exceed [the expectations] of the other side (whites)”. Early awareness of maleness were learned through the expectations of his family.
He recalled, “men were not allowed to hit women in my family…and if I left the toilet seat up, I heard complaints from all the women in the house!”

**Conclusion**

As the introductions attest, this study is informed by men who are diverse in their backgrounds, experiences, abilities, thinking, as well as class, sexual, skin-colored, and spiritual identities. Though these men hold membership in the same fraternity, their stories are not unlike the stories of African American men who are not engaged or choose to participate in different organizations. In fact, institutional type, region, and pre-college experiences held more significant implications for their collegiate experiences and manhood constructions than fraternity affiliation. Chapter V reports the common themes across interviews that address the research questions and inform how higher education should change given this research. Chapter VI continues a discussion of dissertation findings with illustrative vignettes that represent the various manhood typologies emergent from the twenty-four interviews.
CHAPTER VI
EMERGING THEMES

The real voyage consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes

Marcel Proust

This chapter reports findings from face-to-face interviews I conducted with twenty-four engaged African American men enrolled in college. The men in this study attended four-year, historically black and white colleges situated across the nineteen southern and border states. These men construct their manhood and masculinity in college with great difficulty, internal pressure, and conflicting consciousnesses. Data analysis revealed the ways in which the manhood consciousnesses of these men are raced, gendered, classed, sexually oriented, skin-colored, and spiritual. Scholars realize, and this study agrees, that these consciousnesses also intersect such that race is gendered, classed, sexually oriented, skin-colored, and spiritual and, in concert, gender is raced, classed, sexually oriented, skin-colored, and spiritual (Asher, 2007; Davis, 2000; P. B. Harper, 1996; R. L. Jones, 2004; Pinar, 2001). To be sure, each consciousness is influenced by, interconnected and imbued with the others to develop in these college men a sense of their manhood.

In this chapter, I disclose narratives, reflections, experiences, and thinking of African American men that describe the abstract, but also incarcerating, world of African American manhood in college. The men in this study put voice to the masculine conflicts they endure in college, and occasionally, seem to push through innate resistance to discuss how their enrollment, persistence, and engagement in higher education is impeded by the institution, faculty, staff, and groups of students. The participants in this
study also reveal how African American communities, African American families, African American male spaces, and cultural others scrutinize their decisions, pressuring African American men in ways that hamper their decisions in college and, ultimately, senses of autonomy and social movement.

**Manhood Constructions in College: Engaging Interview Intersections**

How do African American men construct their manhood while in college? The men in this study articulated meanings of manhood that fit a similar framework proffered by Hunter and Davis (1992) but that also reveal the limitations of this framework. In a broad sense, common or major themes emerged from the data that defined manhood in terms of (1) self-expectations (2) responsibilities and relationships to family, (3) worldviews and existential philosophies and (4) double consciousness. These broad categories are used in this section to organize and guide the presentation of the data. Each of these manhood constructs is presented and described along with its invariant constituents, or domains.

A discussion of the second research question follows a discussion of the themes that address the first research question. The second research question was posited to investigate the impact institutional type has on respondents’ constructions of manhood in light of research which hypothesized African American’s gender role differences by institutional type (Fleming, 1984). The third research question investigates the institutional role in shaping collegiate experiences and manhood. In a broad sense, the following themes emerged: (1) institutional recognition (2) constructing faculty/student relationships (3) mentoring and supporting and (4) bridging campus and community. Each theme is described with supporting data gathered during the interviews. The
discussion that follows presents the common or prominent themes that emerged from the data and answer the research questions.

**Self-Expectations**

Respondents in this study construct their manhood in terms of self-expectations. Self-expectations refer to the statements of self-determinism and answerability that African American men construct. Themes in the self-expectations construct of manhood included “achieving goals” and “being authentic”, and “being responsible”. Examples of invariant constituents included “acquiring my dough (money)” and “being comfortable with who I am”. The following self-expectation constructs were common across the interviews: (1) being resilient, which encircled notions about leadership, strength, self-pride, and trying one’s best, (2) being responsible/accountable and (3) being “real” (authentic to self constructions of manhood).

**“Man-Up”: Being Resilient.** The respondents in this study clearly identified resilience as a seminal manhood construct. All participants articulated statements that, at times, placed resilience at the core of their manhood. Sean, a junior at Zachary Taylor University said, “Like my mom and dad, I don’t really give them the opportunity to do for me, you know what I mean? I try to do it for myself. I’ll appreciate it more.” Most described manhood as “self-dependency at all times” and “overcoming during times of adversity”. Corey described how men’s self-expectations require resilience:

When someone tells me to “Be a man,” that’s pretty much telling me, that you as an individual have to take account for any and everything that you put yourself into, and whatever it is that you’re doing, be sure to finish it or be sure to complete any and everything with the best that you can, and pretty much do things with the slight thought of perfection always in your mind. So whatever it is that comes your way, no matter what problem it is, overcome, pretty much basically just to hold your own…”
Jaden offered his take on how resilience assists in shaping manhood and how he felt this differs from most African American men:

I think all black men are inspired to be something, or at least [think] about being something in life, just no one has ever shown them the key or the way to get there. I see it in every [black man’s] face on campus, they want to be something…so either [black men] join a fraternity or join a gang. Black men want to be something in life; they just need the opportunity and the way to get there. [What makes me different] is that I’m going to find that way. I’ve read Chris Gardner’s book, *Pursuit of Happyness*, and he said, “The most dangerous place on this Earth is the library, cause the library has everything you need to know to find out how to do something.” So anything I don’t know, I get on the internet or go to the library and I’ll research it.

Jamal insisted that “Be a man” means “don’t give up, toughen up, be the best and strive for the best”. Jamal, who is a single father, added, “I would tell my son [about being a man], ‘Don’t ever just, you know, just try to get by. Don’t ever try and do equal’”. He elaborated,

Toughening up mentally is necessary because all things that happen in life physical are not the big thing[s] you should overcome. I mean it’s not many people physically holding you back, but mentally that can be a problem. [For example], you go up for this [employment] position, and you’re applying for that position, and you don’t get it the first time, don’t give up. Even though mentally you’re probably thinking you know, Okay if they hired a white guy you probably thinking oh they’d never a black guy, and then instantly when that position becomes available again, you don’t apply because you’re already under the impression that they’re going to hire white guys, so mentally you’re already messed up.

Hakeem also constructed a definition of manhood that encompasses the ideals of resilience but adds a more intentional focus on leadership and self-pride. Interestingly, he positioned a conversation about the balance between “leadership strength” and “sensitive strength”:

To me, be a man [means to] “man-up”. A man needs to be strong, be a leader, provider, but also balance that strength [with], I don’t want to say, “sensitive side.” But you’ve got to have, you know, you have to also not only be a provider, but also be a nurturer, you have to be able to listen…You also have to have pride,
and have pride in who you are. To be courageous, brave, stand up for what you believe, you know, never back down, but be able to understand when you’re wrong and listen and see why you’re wrong. But then always have that courage to stand up and speak on behalf of what you believe.

Spencer articulates a similar balance of strength that men should expect to have:

Black men should be self-sufficient, confident, and compassionate. I think that encompasses it all for me. Confident in what you do, but compassionate to every other need of someone else. Um, that means you have to have a soft heart and a firm mind, or a soft heart and a firm behind [if bad decisions are made]…

“Feeling I Am Grown”: Being Responsible. The idea that African American men are responsible for self and others was also an emergent theme under the self-expectations construct of manhood. David described how manhood means expecting to assume self-responsibility:

Being a man to me, I’ve heard that phrase so many different times. You might have been crying and your parents said, “Be a man.”…Your parents might have wanted you to take on some different kinds of responsibilities. [When somebody tells you] be a man that[suggests] that you’re not doing what you’re suppose to do. “Be a man means responsibility…be responsible for yourself.

Steven asserted a similar notion and described how he arrived to this line of thinking during the maturation process,

I tried to hustle in the right way…I did things that were supposed to be done, anything, you know, like rake yards, that’s a man’s job…that would pretty much…made me, you know, feel like I was grown and [now that I am] I have responsibility, I got to pay the bills…[When I’m] off-campus I like to party but I know I can maintain myself and still be able to get up and go to class…I’ve matured so much, and like all the childishness is gone, you know, it’s time to take care of responsibility and stuff you know…

In a similar vein, Kevin described how the self-expectations of men, particularly black men, require responsibility for self and others. His description is also peppered with inward obligations to push against the widespread stereotypes about African American men. He said,
I think the black man is suppose to be more responsible, more accountable, is suppose to take care of family you know and everything. But, you know, times are changing, you know like women are stepping up [to the challenge] and doing it big…but being a black man still means being more responsible and taking care of business…

“Just ‘Do You’ and ‘Be Real’ ”: Being Authentic. The self-expectation construct of the respondents’ manhood also included ideas of staying true to an authentic self. This was a more prominent theme that emerged from data analysis. Many of the men stated that they did not pay attention to whom they are and whom they want to be until they reached college. Jaden describes how this notion took shape for him in college:

I think since I have come to college, I may have changed some characteristics for the betterment of myself…I think I feel more comfortable with who I am. I know who I am to a certain extent, and I learned what I was lacking. I was lacking discipline and those are the things I just didn’t come up with when I was growing up, for real…But I had to learn to discipline myself academically and mentally as well.

Nigel said that becoming more comfortable with who he is as a man requires “being real” with himself. He elaborated,

I say just be real, be real with yourself…I say be real…because a lot of people are trying so hard to be “the man” [whether it’s through] money or accolades…You know how people say “I’m going to do me, you do you”. [I] try not to worry about what [I’m] “suppose” to do and do what [I] say [I’m] going to do. I [always] say my word is bond, I mean cause you know, that’s real, you know, not pulling any punches, just say, “hey I’m going to do this, I’m going to be a man about my word, I’m going to say if I mess up I’m going to admit defeat, or say I lied, or whatever else I did, just be real. If you “be real”, things will be a lot easier, and everybody is not going to like you, not here to please everybody, you know. That’s something I had to realize you know, just “do you”, what you think is suppose to be done and quit trying to please everyone else. And that’s what a lot of guys do, a lot of guys that sit there and do all that superficial stuff [and then] go home and cry probably…

Joshua described how constructing an authentic sense of manhood involves honoring his beliefs and compulsions, even when those are incongruent with the beliefs and compulsions of those around him:
I’m not going to ever degrade myself by trying to be down (get along) with [others]. I want to always be myself…you shouldn’t really have to degrade yourself. [Doing that] is part of noticing the people around you…I guess that [thinking] comes from growing and being a man, I guess that’s the definition of being a man, just sticking by what you believe, what you have to say, like if you got to say “this”, you say “that”, just go ahead and say what you have to say, just being a man.

Sean expressively described the way in which authentic manhood involves an owning of past deeds and how doing this releases the imprisonment of functioning in a world defined in the expectations of others:

A lot of people say, “How can you, are you not ashamed of yourself?” Man, I’ve done [it all]. I’ll tell them I’ve drank, I’ve smoked dope, I’ve stole, I’ve done it all. But had I not done that, that wouldn’t make me the man I am today. I mean, like I’m not ashamed of who I am today, I’m ashamed of who I was but not who I am today. I had it hard, you know, I tell those stories all the time. Many, many, many mornings I had to get up and go to a hog pen and feed the hogs, go wrestle with the chickens and get eggs out the chicken coop and I don’t mind telling these stories especially if I can keep someone from making similar mistakes… I’m happy with who I am

Sean even described how this line of thinking factors into his selection of a college major. He reflected,

…A former teacher made me fall in love with English…I [could have] become a doctor, you know, the money’s good and I was originally offered that as a major, but then I was like, “Naw the money’s good, but it’s not what I love, English is what I love but it was hard you know because I almost got caught up in that money thing…but I realized if I’m gonna go to work everyday, I’ve got to be true to myself and I have to be able to love it.

As the data above attest, self-expectations are constructs of the respondents’ manhood. Specifically, the men in this study expect to (1) represent personal definitions of leadership, strength, pride, and best efforts (2) assume senses of responsibility and answerability in apropos contexts and (3) being authentic, or otherwise, true to the definitions of manhood they construct.
Family Relationships and Responsibilities

The responsibilities/relationships-to-family construct refers to the ideas that men presented that position them as patriarchs, sons, and brothers. Themes in this construct included “knowing dreams of the family”, “learning masculine work from Dad”, “Mom impacts my decisions”. Respectively, examples of invariant constituents included “knowing I am first generation to attend college”, “Dad’s work is men’s work”, and “feeling Mom’s impact on my decision making”. Borrowing from hooks’ (2004a) language, the ideas the respondents shared about their manhood constructions framed these men as benevolent patriarchs. Also discussed in Chapter II, African American benevolent patriarchs aspire to provide for and protect women, particularly African American women, and children. Orlando, a senior at Harriet Tubman, said, “One [constant] thing through our life [is that] a man got to work. Whether it be with his hands, or mentally, he just going to have to work to get, to provide for his family…” The following relationships-to-family constructs were common across the interviews in this study: (1) being a torchbearer for the family (2) mothering for manhood (3) fathering for masculinity.

“It Was a Dream of My Family”: Being a Torchbearer. Many of the respondents in this study were first-generation college students. This, they felt, placed a “spotlight” on them in their families and further intensified the other masculine pressures these men internalize (i.e. not giving up, being resilient). Joshua, who attends Harriet Tubman College, said,

I had a lot of friends that went the wrong way when I grew up but I decided that I was going to go the right way and go to college. It was a dream of my parents to go to college but they didn’t…that was a main goal for me, to go and make something better of myself. I am first-generation to go to college...
Notwithstanding, many respondents choose to attend college, feeling pressure to be “good” sons and to set examples for their younger siblings and other relatives. Kevin declared,

I feel responsible to set an example for my little sister, whose going to be going to college in about 3 or 4 years [and] my little cousin…he’s a young, black man and you know, I feel a responsibility to my family members and especially the younger family members because they are watching me and observing what I am doing…

Nigel espoused,

I feel pressure cuz I want [my degree] too, but the day that I graduate, I bet you it would be as glad a day for [my family] as it would be for me…I’m [not] the savior of my family, but they kind of like, a lot of them joke about it, and I know in their mind they really are serious…I have to make it, and if I don’t [make it], the people under me, you know, they probably won’t. [I say to my cousin] Man, you can do it too… and he was like, “well, I don’t know” and when I moved away [from my cousin], I kind of felt bad, because I wasn’t there to help guide him along, and like he dropped out of high school and I was like, “What’s wrong with you, what are you doing?” And he was like, “I just, you know, don’t care anymore.” And I was like, okay, I can never quit for the sake of my family…

These pressures intensified for the six respondents in this study who were single-parents. Many of the single-parent participants experience cross-generational pressures, those from their parent(s) and siblings, those from their children, and those from their children’s mothers and/or other lovers, fiancées, and companions. For many of these men, they are their family’s “last resort” in achieving the dream of college graduation and a life of success “the right way”. Sean explained,

Just being able to be the first one in my family went into my decision [to go to college] I was the youngest one [in my family]. My half-sister, when she got 18, she kind of ran into some trouble, 19, 20, 21 years old, she’s out there on her own and just kind of started her own family. My middle sister, she almost a year and a half older than I am and she was actually the first one to have the opportunity to graduate from college. She started school, and I started right after her your know, but when she first got to college, she got loose (wild) after 2 years, kind of got out of control and, you know, never finished school, and I think the motivation the
family got was that [she would finish]. This was the opportunity to be the first child, the first grandchild, first anything in the family period…and when she lost the opportunity it was on me to represent for the family. You know I’ve been through a lot, just knowing that she had the opportunity to be the first [and lost it], it kind of inspired me to continue on…

Steven described a similar family experience and how it was additive to his masculine pressures:

Everyone in my family is so emotional because they’re pretty much not doing nothing, you know, half of them didn’t finish high school, some didn’t even get their diploma. And you know, I am the one in the family that everybody looks at and be like, “you are going to be the one who steps up and make it through. You’re going to make it to college. You’re going to be a music teacher”, but, see, you’ve got to go to college to before you do [become a music teacher], so I pushed myself…to try to make it to college…

Steven, who is also a single-parent, further elaborated on the masculine challenges and experiences of the single-parent father in college:

At first I was scared to death [when my daughter was born]…and I chose Zachary Taylor University because…it’s closer to home so I can be able to commute back and forth to see my daughter, so she’ll know who her father is, and also I have that quality time with her…I am the reason my daughter is here, I did the job [that got her here] but I got to handle my business and I ain’t gonna let nobody stop me…

Terrance, who, too, attends Zachary Taylor University, is also a single-parent of a young son and daughter. He said the following of the pressure he feels:

I always wanted to go to college because ever since I was little, everyone [was] telling me “if you go to college, you’ll make more money”, but what really made me decide to do it was when I had my first child, and I wanted to give him the same opportunity I had when I was young…that’s the main reason. Once I had my child, I knew I had to do more… I’m not the kind of person that you know, to have a baby and then just leave him, so you know, I’m going to stay here, and provide as best I can for him…

Mothering for Manhood, Fathering for Masculinity. Perhaps the most compelling finding in this dissertation research is the way in which respondents articulated how observed gender roles in patriarchal households, particularly the ones
mothers and fathers assume, influenced respondent manhood constructions. Data analysis clearly supported the ideas that mothers and/or other valued women were linked to manhood while fathers and/or other valued men were linked to establishing senses of masculinities in study participants. This finding was supported by those participants who were raised in two-parent households as well as single-mother households. This finding did not hold true for one participant, David (a sophomore at DuBois University) who was raised primarily by his father and, secondarily, by his only living grandparent (his grandfather). David does not cite influences by, or any proximities to women during his childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. Conceptual frameworks for masculinity and manhood in this study are provided in Chapter I.

The other respondents in this study described men’s influences on their manhood in terms of behavioral, physical, or performance-oriented imprints. In other words, men, particularly fathers, influenced the respondents to think about manhood as something “one does” which, given the conceptual frame in this study, is actually masculinity, a behavioral extension of manhood. For example, invariant constituents include, “learning hard work from Dad”, “recalling Dad’s work to be physical work”, “my uncle taught me to lift weights”, “learning manly deeds”, and “learning what to do and what not to do”. Women, particularly mothers, on the other hand, closely and clearly impacted the respondents’ manhood in ways that were more humanistic, global, and definitive. In other words, women, particularly mothers and guardians, were linked to the construction of ideals or how “one thinks” about the meaning of manhood and how this thinking should be shaped through interactions with others. Invariant constituents included, “my mom is my role model” “mom is impacting my decisions”, “receiving guidance from mom”, “my
aunt made me the man I am today”, “learning from mom’s choices”, “learning how to understand women from mom”, and “feeling raised by my grandmother”. Given the clear differences in how most respondents viewed the impact of mothers, fathers, guardians, and valued others on their manhood, only two participants, Sean and Earnest (a junior enrolled at Bethune University), who were both raised in two-parent households are able to voice, or otherwise credit, their mothers in this way. Sean reflected,

My mom taught me how to be a man. She even taught me about women...It’s kind of odd, you know, because I’m not taking anything from my dad, not saying that he didn’t teach me anything but outside of the hands-on, physical labor, my mom taught me how to be a man, how to carry myself, how to talk to people, I’m just being real with it…

Most men in this study did not voice the notion of a mother teaching them how to be men. However, Emmanuel, who is a senior at John Adams University gave a thoughtful quote about how women are positioned in developing a sense of manhood in men:

It doesn’t have to be a man that teaches you, per se, some of these lessons. Um, I think we can learn from women by listening to them, and listening to sort of the struggles that they have and sort of the things they have gone through with men, I think that can help shape you. Because something inside of you should say I don’t want to make [women] go through these things or, you know, I don’t want to be a contributor to these things whatever they may be, and in that sense it shapes your actions as a man…

Most participants clearly suggested women’s stronger influence on manhood and men’s stronger influence on masculinity even if they did not voice women as manhood teachers. For example, a difference is clear in Joshua’s reflections about how his mother and father assume different places in his manhood constructions and behaviors. About his father, Joshua recalled:

I learned how to be strong from my dad. Me and my dad, we would work on houses together. And when I was smaller he was always the one fixing the house
or fixing on cars and so he was always the stronger one in the household, taking control, taking care of the house. If something needed to be fixed or anything like that, he’ll take care of it…

About his mother, however, he reflected:

I have changed since I became an adult. When I was a little boy, I was just living life and not worrying about tomorrow or what’s next week or what’s a year later but now I’m worrying about my future, what I need to do, what I can do, and how I need to do it. [My] going and talking to my mom influenced me to get serious…she always told me I could do anything even if I wanted to just go off into the [military] service, but I know that she wouldn’t want me to do that. My mom inspires me. She talked to me about making decisions in my life and one reason why I chose this major was because she was also in healthcare and it kind of helped me to choose a major that I’m in and seeing that helped me decide what I want to do in life…

Later, during our conversation, he discussed each parent’s influence in relation to the other:

My mom was there, but as far as a “man aspect”, the main thing is doing projects, like manly deeds and things, like working around the house, being macho, being strong, you got to do the things outside the house, but my mom did impact me in making the right decisions. She talked to me about life, women, stuff like that…

Clearly, Joshua’s father instilled a manhood construct steeped in orthodox masculine behaviors of men (i.e. working around the house, fixing things). Conversely, Joshua’s mother provides directions that Joshua uses to decide who he is, who he is in relation to others, and who he wants to become. These differences paralleled across the interviews. Corey, who was raised singularly by his mother and now attends Martin Luther King University, gave a touching statement about his mother in a similar vein as Sean:

Honestly, the only person who ever really looked out for me was my mother, cuz she had the opportunity to go to college, so she instilled that vision to me. Most people I grew up with around the hood, told me I wasn’t going to be nothing. They told me that I had to be a fool to think I’m gonna actually be able to make it and make something out of myself…My mother definitely influences me. People always think that role-models have to be famous people or a role-model has to be
someone who is high-powered…but my mother is definitely my role model. She taught me the will of drive and determination…I mean just the way she grew up. She chopped cotton at the age of 3 on an [old] plantation back home all the way up until she graduated. She had me when she was in the military, she served in Desert Storm, uh, she still managed to find a way to get her Master’s degree and I was very sick as a child…I almost died twice. She was able to take care of me, go to school with pretty much little or no help….

Unlike Sean, however, Corey is unable to credit his mother when other questions are posed. This cognitive paralysis suggests that he was raised in a place in which the adage, “Only a man can teach a boy how to be a man” was reinforced. During the interviews, it became clear that the respondents think manhood pedagogy can only be facilitated by men, while women assume a lateral position of “influence” or “model” in the participants’ subconscious. Yet, they were voicing women as teachers of manhood whenever their answers, in their minds, did not require that the gender of “a teacher” be identified. Many women act as accomplice to this type of thinking. Leonard’s vignette, in Chapter VII, supports this idea. In response to the question, “Who taught you how to be a man?”, Corey reminded me that he never had a father figure. He continues,

[My father] left when I was very young so uh, I don’t know [who taught me]. When I was in high school, I was pretty much raised outside in the streets by the thugs and drug-dealers on the corner…All I know is that I stopped doing it because I got a sense of what’s right and what’s wrong early on…

Kevin’s position is similar to Corey’s position. Both men struggled, hesitated, and pondered, when thinking about who taught them how to be a man. During a conversation about his growing up to be “the college man he is today”, Kevin reflected about what he most liked about himself and who was responsible for creating that sense in him as he grew from boy to man:

I honestly feel like I was raised by my grandmother. She taught me when you walk into a room, you speak, you have respect, you show common courtesy, and I learned it so young. You know, stuff like that, sticks with me and I was just taught
to be a nice person, you know, and that hasn’t changed at all, and like my grandmother always taught me about the importance of opening your mouth, being nice, being courteous, and your appearance, and I think, out of all of those, my appearance is one thing I never forget…my grandmother used to wake me and [tell me] to have respect for myself, to not walk around this house with no shirt on, she never allowed to do that, and I never understood why until I got older but now I do. If not for her, I don’t think I would have held [all the leadership positions] I held…

During our conversation, however, Kevin does not recall his earlier description as seminal to his manhood construction. Instead, he struggled to find an observed example from men. Kevin said the following:

My personal opinion, I’d probably say I taught myself how to be a man but I observed my grandfather when I was younger. One thing he loved to do was wash cars…he had his own business and you know, you could call him and he would go pick up your car, leave his car with you and wash your car and he had a good reputation [for that]…I also kind of learned what to do and what not to do from my stepfather…

Each respondent was asked about his manhood meanings directly, particularly with the question, “What does the phrase ‘Be a man’ mean to you?” Given their responses, mothers and other female influences clearly emerged as teachers of the manhood meanings they constructed (and continue to construct). Fathers, if they were present in the home were less involved with their now college-enrolled sons about constructing meanings of manhood. Fathers and other male influences are observed for their behaviors and physical work which are extensions of manhood ideals like responsibility, self-pride, elevating voice, and resilience that women, particularly mothers, had already taught. Along the lines of social role theory, if participants did anything less, contrary, or different from the behaviors of any guiding men in their lives, participants were “suspect” or socially disapproved. George remembered the way in which his masculinity was policed,
My mother taught me how to carry myself with respect and dignity, my father taught me, how to present myself as a man, as far as you know, don’t be afraid to talk. You know, cause when I was younger I used to talk [in a low voice]. [My dad would say], “I can’t hear you, speak up!” He does that to all my friends [who were black males] too, a lot of my friends would come over and he would be like…I can’t hear you, can you speak up? Be a man!” My brothers [would speak the same ways], and [my dad would say] “Stop acting like a fag, don’t do that!” You know so that [experience] taught, and then just life you know, is teaching me how to be a man…

Unfolding the respondents’ descriptions of, experiences with, and assertions about their family experiences finds three major common or prominent themes. Specifically, most of the men in this study see themselves as their families’ “beacons of light”, “last hopes”, and “pride”. Study participants described the ways in which they feel pressure to fulfill their families thinking about their achievement potential. In addition, mothers and/or other valued women were clearly connected to the respondents’ manhood constructions given this study’s conceptual frame. Conversely, fathers and/or other valued men were linked more clearly to masculinity in its behaviors and performances.

**Worldviews and Existential Philosophies**

The worldviews and existential philosophies that men articulated largely revolved around the following themes: (1) being spiritual/religiously affiliating, (2) thinking in an Afrocentric sense, and (3) being culturally aware of and mistrusting whites. The first theme, *being spiritual/religiously affiliating*, refers to how respondents viewed themselves in relation to a divine being (i.e. God) and how grounding themselves in awareness of this divine being is a central element of manhood. Invariant constituents, for example, include “fearing God”, “putting things in God’s hand”, “seeing religion as a

---

7 Spirituality refers to the essence of possessing an animating force within living beings; having incorporeal consciousness; the essence of a human being’s association with the mind, will, and feelings (Watson, 2006). Religion refers to “belief in and reverence for a supernatural power or powers regarded as creator and governor of the universe; A system grounded in such belief and worship; A set of beliefs, values, or practices based on the teachings of a spiritual leader” (Watson, 2006, p. 113)
common ground between black men”. The second theme, *thinking in an Afrocentric sense*, refers to participant statements that identify and describe the importance of organizing the African American community in ways that will strengthen this community educationally, spiritually, and socioeconomically. Invariant constituents included, “giving back”, “never forgetting the past”, “uplifting blacks”, and “pushing power among the black community”.

The third theme, *being culturally aware of and mistrusting whites*, suggests that respondents position whites in more Afrocentric ways. Specifically, whites are not identified as a group in which respondents plan to “give back” or “uplift”. Participants in this study make this clear. The men in this study, more or less, express ideas, and even examples, of “good whites” but their thinking about the broader white culture is replete with stories about uncovering true motives, discovering covert agendas, and feeling marginalized by whites as they grow from boys to men. On the whole, whites are seen as untrustworthy adversaries who, in school, college, and society will seek to confuse, ignore, misunderstand, silence, intimidate, punish, or otherwise, mistreat African American men. The respondents, who partially construct their manhood on being empowered, articulate feelings of disempowerment in college and society at the hands of Euro-centered institutions.

**“Putting Things in God’s Hand”: Being Spiritual and Religious.** Spirituality and religion were clearly interwoven ideas that the respondents used to construct their manhood. Spirituality, particularly belief in God, is unique in the respondents’ manhood constructions because this belief is one of only two beliefs the men profess, either directly or indirectly, as sources for dependency (the other entity is other African
American men). David describes how his spirituality and religion imbue his manhood consciousness:

> There are so many things I would like to do after college, honestly I’m just putting it in God’s hand; I’m a big religious person, so when it comes down to it, whatever God got for me [that] is what he got for me. I’m putting it in his hands. Maybe teaching, maybe entrepreneurship, maybe going out and helping with family businesses…I’ve always been that kind of man, whatever God got for me, he got for me…

George was influenced by his mother in shaping a spiritual-based manhood. He, like David, feels much of his will and determination as a man is predestined by God. He describes the ways in which he depends on God:

> I’ve got [a biblical scripture] tattooed on my arm it’s um, “I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me,” and that’s one of the things that stands out. And to this day [when] I don’t think I can do it, [it is reinforced] “I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me.” My mom taught me more of the spiritual strength that I have, and she’s the reason why I have my relationship with God now, you know. And you know, like it’s just words to live by, “I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me”, you have to be strong, but you also have to lean on the word of God and trust in him because without him there’s nothing, you know…

Corey describes himself as a “God-fearing man”, locating his spirituality at the very core of his identity:

> I’m definitely a God-fearing man, and um, Christianity has definitely played a big role, it’s definitely the reason why I’m here. Finding God was a big part of my life, and it still is. If it wasn’t for him, I definitely wouldn’t be here…

Hakeem, who attends John Adams University, delivered a very interesting quote about the nexus between manhood, religion, and spirituality. Hakeem, who is clear that the self-expectations of men are to “question truth”, discussed how he does not question his belief in God but does question “man-made” religion after an intervention in a college classroom. His statement also suggests the ways in which colleges may expose African American men to curricula that impact manhood constructions:
…I believe in God. I believe [what you call me] is agnostic. I was raised by my aunt to be a Catholic, but my father was a Muslim. Religion wasn’t really a big issue in my household…Like I’ve been to church, I’ve been to mass [but] I remember always questioning the issue of religion, not the issue of God per se, but the issue of man-made religion, and the issue of the Bible, and things of that nature at an early age. I’m very interested in why people believe the way they believe, things like that—Theology. I like religion class because it gave me the opportunity to just tackle questions I always wanted answered…

Spencer placed his religious affiliation, Christianity, at the center of his manhood. This location, however, is also the source of conflict in his manhood consciousness because Spencer, who self-identifies as gay, says that the biblical canon and the African American community that interprets it, conflicts with who he is naturally. Spencer elaborated,

Christianity is an important identity for me cuz all I did was church. All I know is church, um, I know a lot more now, but when [I was] growing up all [I] knew was church. I was in church everyday of my life, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday [and] we had church in my house on Mondays. So I had one day off during the week and that was Tuesdays...So definitely church was a big identity in me because it taught me…how to be a person and a functioning being, being able to cater to people’s needs and understand who they are. Um, and you can get that sometime from [other sources], but not like the [biblical] scriptures, they make it so plain… Um, [the combination of] church, black, and um, sexuality was something I dealt with a long time cuz the dealing with “are you gay or are you not gay?” is hard. It’s really hard, when I have a good, strong, Christian foundation I hate talking about it cause I always cry…When you have a good strong Christian foundation [being gay] is a battle that you deal with.

In a thoughtful response, Emmanuel, who is a senior at John Adams University, interestingly describes the nexus between his manhood, Christianity, race, and gender. His statement gives a glimpse into how religion adds an added consciousness to his raced, gendered, and budding professional self. Subsequently, his statement refers to the ways in which he feels others pigeon-hole African American men’s aspirations. He described the following in a conversation between African American men:
I was riding with my uncle and a friend of his one day. We’re talking about me wanting to be a lawyer, and [my friend] said, “You can’t be a Christian, and become a successful lawyer.” Um, I said, “that’s ridiculous, why can’t you?” That’s ridiculous, why do they not go together? And I think the problem when people view all of [your identities] together; people kind of put you in a box, if you will. Because when you look at corporate America, a lot of times people think corruption, when they look at lawyers they think corruption, even government they think corruption. So it’s like “Christian black male?” What are you going to be? A pastor? You know, that’s kind of the only avenue that is widely expected, and in some sense accepted for [black males]. So it becomes ever more important to show that you can be successful while still holding on to those principles that you hold because of your faith, um and at the same time, holding onto your identity as a black male and not “selling out” or turning your back on the race. Um, so it becomes a very difficult, a very difficult I think…

“Giving Back”: Thinking in an Afrocentric Sense. Chapter I defines Afrocentricity as placing the African culture, expressions, teachings, stories and ways of knowing at the center of thinking and doing (Asante, 1995). Respondents expressed needs to (1) embrace the meaning of the African American culture and, at times, other cultures in the African diaspora and (2) support, fortify, lead, and serve as examples to the African American community. Steven asserted,

I really do I feel like I’m representing blacks [by attending college], we got to step up and let people know that blacks can do better…things are not like they used to be…If someone were trying to [brainwash me], I would fight the hardest to know where I came from, background stuff, cause I want to know if and what blacks did, you know, I want to know, you got to know where it came from, you got to remember black people…We came from blacks, African Americans, you know, as your background, you know…that’s the main thing the background, knowing your family…God made me black, I’m going to leave this earth black…you got to do for blacks, cause they did for us, back in those times…

Hakeem talked about how the meaning of African American men involves being a role model for the community and how this added pressures to his manhood constructions. He particularly identified stresses that he believes plague African American men and make the “responsibility” of role modeling difficult:
To me, being a black man [means to] try to be a role model for your community in some sense. That’s my personal opinion, because we lack such role models in these communities. We don’t have that many doctors and lawyers or successful black men within these communities. Um, often times, they get their goals to get successful and leave, you know, similar to “white flight”, they get money and they get out, so a lot of our youth don’t get to see them. So to be a black man is to, it means to be something much larger to your community as a sense. You just have to, it comes with extra, I don’t want to say “baggage” it comes with so much extra responsibility within this society and this community as being a black man, because you’re always going to be seen as a black man. No matter what you do, No matter how much money you have, you’re walking down the street in the middle of the night and [the police] don’t know who you are, you’re a black man and you could be pulled over, you could be whatever, but you still need to just stand up and try to make a change to make a community…

Nigel also insisted that his identities as an African American man in college charge him “to be a positive influence in the black community” upon his graduation. He explained,

You can “be a man” and be a positive influence to your community, but don’t forget where you came from. If you make it, then you know, make sure you reach back, find out what your purpose is, be a purpose-driven leader, you know don’t just do it, just cause, or cause it looks good, do it because you want to do it. You know that’s something I think that black men have failed [at doing]. In my eyes, we’re desperate to become kings and queens. [If that’s true], we need to take the throne and do what we’re suppose to do... [We got to] look out for one another...you know, be a positive influence, because you know, we have the hardest time I think, you know, not just in this country, but you know period. I mean, it’s some crazy stuff happening in other places. I mean, people think racism is so bad out here, man they need to take a look and learn about some stuff in Africa, I mean just, you know, we [have to make] sure that we teach, because we don’t do that. We don’t teach whether it’s about finance, literacy, entrepreneurship, we don’t teach...

Daniel, a junior who attends DuBois University, focused not only on the sense of obligation he feels to “give back” to the African American community, but also on the intrinsic feelings of cultural pride that accompany this sense:

Being a black male in America is uplifting. It’s uplifting to know your history um, to know you’ve accomplished “this”, you know most of the time it’s not always the case. But it is the case with me, and so I’m going to go ahead and say it, my struggle far out weighs other struggles that I see [other cultures endure]…I love it
and I take part in it because honestly um, a lot of the [black] people around the area where I grew up you know, I know they look up to me you know. Even the young guys they’re like, “Man, I’m glad to see you in school like you know, even the guys who are a little bit older than me like 22 [and] not doing a whole lot you know, I’m still, even though they’re not [in college], I’m still giving them a little hope, I’m still inspiring them…

The above findings were also discussed in relation to how these men feel membership in a fraternity influences their manhood constructions. Many of the participants discussed fraternity membership in relation to increasing their Afrocentric views of American society. Many of the men insisted that they already were interested in “giving back to the black community” or “leading the black community in a positive direction” before they were initiated into the fraternity. However, many of the men acknowledged the fraternity as a platform which strengthened, elevated, and further contextualized the need to improve the African American community. As an illustrative example, Martin, whose parents are immigrants, explained how the fraternity impacted this cultural awareness:

I would say that I’m learning to, to be a black man [in America] in the fraternity. I don’t think I’ll learn to be a black man [in America] from [my dad], cause he’s not [from America]. He didn’t grow up in America and he still, to some extent, is not quite assimilated into American culture. Being part of a fraternity, people I’ve been interacting with, I’ve learned, just kind of, to look at things differently and think about different issues, different things that now affect me. I guess I started to learn, I kind of learned more about what is it to be a black man in America and start to think about a lot of the issues that affect black America and the black community and I really didn’t [used] think about it as much. …

“*We Must Never Forget*”: Cultural Mistrust and Awareness. Most of the respondents came to “know they were black” through racialized experiences in which they had been discriminated against, called a “nigger”, followed, suspected, and falsely accused. Those who did not cite these experiences as a genesis of their blackness, identified skin-colored conflicts in which lighter skinned African Americans showed
contempt for those who were darker skinned. As Chapter II discusses, these distinctions bring to mind the patriarchal, skin-colored caste system whites constructed upon transplanting people of the African diaspora to America. Memories of and stories about the historical and present racial exclusion of African Americans are not lost in the respondents’ consciousnesses. Cultural mistrust invades and pervades the very core of who they are as black men. Corey, at DuBois University, insisted, “To me [being a black man] means don’t let the outside, white people, corporate America which is ran by white people deter you from any dreams of things you want to accomplish…” Experiences that shape a sense of cultural mistrust in college are also included in this section.

Most respondents in this study suggest that they became suspicious of whites after experiences in which the men felt they were unjustly treated or racially marginalized by whites. Many respondents identified experiences that were egregious prior to enrolling in college. They all, particularly those enrolled in white colleges, remain focused on the ways in which they feel whites may attempt to treat them unfairly. Jamal, who is a junior enrolled in Malcolm X University, provided an example of these experiences. Jamal reported the following that he experienced one day when he was off-campus:

I knew I was a black man in America when I remember I was in [a department store] one day and I was trying to return a DVD player with my receipt. Instead of [making the return] they brought a “Loss Prevention” manager (who was white) over there and he just blew up in my face, and when he blew up, I was just like, “okay, it’s time for me to go.” But before I could make a move to leave, the police was standing right there. So I’m like, oh my God, what’s going on? You know, I didn’t steal the DVD, it’s not coming up stolen, the serial number is coming up in there, all the information is right there but they’re trying to figure out [whether I stole it]. So there’s no reason for Loss Prevention or the police to even be there. So the police officer started escorting me out of the store and I’m like, “well why do I have a police escort like I was stealing something?” I told the police, “man I said I didn’t do anything,” and the police officer was white. I was like, “I don’t know why any of you are here…it’s because I’m black right?” And that’s when [the white police officer] looked at me he was like, “you know what? It’s because
you’re a dumb-a** black, you right, you right, it’s because you’re a dumb-a** black.” I was like, “What?” My uncle witnessed this…he said, “and if you keep talking, I’m going to arrest you”. I asked [him a question] and he slammed me up against a wall and handcuffed me. But a man, [who was witnessing], I think he was an attorney [said], “If you arrest this man, I will have you in court”. The [attorney] was a black guy, a strong black guy…so the police officer basically took the handcuffs off…

Such experiences, more or less intense, informed (and continue to inform) participants’ manhood constructions in college. Specifically, these men enter college with a certain level of mistrust of whites. According to Steven, James K. Polk University is a breeding ground for prejudiced thinking. He said that the small, southern, historically white college is comprised mostly of only African American and white students. He described how his past experiences with racism affected the way he entered college:

There are times when I feel like some of the teachers, and professors be a little prejudice, you know, they show their prejudice side every once in a while. It might be something small, but you’ll see it, you know, you’ll notice it especially if you had that experience back when before you came to college, you know, and I look at that, I like when they be like that, cuz they don’t like to see blacks in college first of all, and that pushes me to gone on and get through and let them know you ain’t scaring me away…you think you going to stop me from getting my degree, but you know, I just look forward, keep striving….

These experiences were not only commonly reported in small historically white colleges but also large white colleges. Nigel spoke at length about a professor who stereotypically referred to blacks as future “fast food workers”. He said African American students feel powerless to challenge the tenured white professor but they can warn newly enrolled students not to take his course. He pondered:

I believe whites still think they are smarter…I still look at that professor [with disbelief] when I see him, you know I try to tell blacks, “man, don’t take that class, and actually one of my homeboys took it and he said that the professor said something similar in his class…I don’t know if maybe his superiors or whatever said something to him about it or what…
Respondents, like Steven (James K. Polk University), also reported the sense that white students complain when more black students arrive on campus than they expected. Hakeem, who is a Classics major attending large, private, and historically white John Adams University, said that he is “harassed” in a sense by white students and campus police. He continues,

Black men are not a part of that “buddy system” that my white counterparts are. So when we do something wrong…it’s not like we just made a small mistake, it’s like we meant to do it, or especially when you get stopped by the police…we get stopped by campus and even neighborhood police. Like when we moved into a house real close to campus [in a section lived in by Adams University students] and if we have friends over, or have a house party with no loud music even and they see black people in the back you know automatically an alarm goes off [in white people’s head] and they call the cops. I guess they think we’re doing something wrong or we’re here to break into their houses? I don’t know what they think…

The worldviews and existential philosophies that these men constructed emerged when the data were analyzed. The notion that “men believe in god” is a governing philosophy of the respondents’ lives. Many of the statements in this section point to the ways in which the respondents’ thought about themselves in relation to a spiritual deity. Also included in this section, the men articulated worldviews that are clearly bifurcated. Much of the “we” and “us” that men used to describe the strengthening of a cultural collective referred to the African American community, while other ethnic identities, particularly whites, are discussed in terms of “they” and “them”. The men’s distinctions draw cultural borders between African Americans and whites, viewing whites more antagonistically and suspiciously.

**Cognitive Dissonance: Double-Consciousness in Black and White**

The manhood constructions of the African American men in this study are infected with cognitive dissonance. Perhaps the most difficult part of the data analysis
was distinguishing between the participants’ self-constructs of manhood vs. manhood constructs they believed others (whites and other African Americans) expected them to have. The men in this study not only give statements that reflect their self-expectations, senses of relationships and responsibilities to their families, self-perspectives, self-philosophies, and self-worldviews but also statements that represent attempts of the men to position their manhood according to others’ expectations (i.e. behaving for white acceptance).

Along lines of DuBois’ double consciousness, many respondents reported pressure to conform to what they believed to be white expectations of African American men’s behavior. A significant part of these men’s constructions of manhood is not self-constructed, but constructed through whites’ eyes. Invariant constituents of “being proper”, “entertaining others”, “keeping a smile on my face” and “making others laugh” to appear “good” emerged from conversations in which these men discussed themselves in relation to whites. Thus, these constituents represent internalized pressure for these African American men to think about themselves and then act consistently with expectations of whites. The themes were most strongly reported among African American men enrolled in white institutions. African American men enrolled in historically black institutions also revealed double consciousnesses in relation to whites through broader conversations about social movement in America.

Cognitive dissonance is intensified in these men’s minds because they also described pressure to conform to widespread media depictions of African American men (i.e. rap artists, athletes, criminals) that they believe the African American community values in manhood constructions. These constructions often counter the selves they are
trying to construct as African American men in college. As Edward, a junior at Buchanan University, described, “the positives of being an African American male on campus is that you stand out. The negatives are also that you stand out.” Respondents also reported expectations of thinking, behavior, and presentation that they feel African American communities have for them. Likely, the double consciousness that respondents encountered in African American communities find historical and present place in the patriarchal images that whites implant and have implanted in the consciousness of African Americans since transplantation from Africa (Collins, 2005). What is certain is that these participant statements are not articulated as self expectations, nor “white” expectations, but “black” and “black male” expectations. This finding was supported through the following invariant constituents, “feeling pressure from the black community” “being what blacks want”, “trying to be LL Cool J (a professional rapper) or Michael Jordan (an professional athlete)”. Respondents who were enrolled in historically black institutions more prominently discussed how double consciousness is shaped in the largely African American communities of the historically black colleges they attend. African American men enrolled in historically white institutions reported these in broader conversations about social movement in America.

Specifically, the common themes support the idea that engaged African American men construct a manhood ideal, not only around self-expectations, but also expectations of an oppressor (whites) and others in the broader African American community. This is double consciousness. Subsequently, themes also emerged in which respondents identify another consciousness that is shaped through interactions with other African American men. Unlike double consciousness, this awareness is shaped by race and gender. These
forms of cognitive dissonance apply pressure to the manhood constructions of these men and find them walking a delicate balance between authentic and inauthentic manhood constructions. Many of the respondents discussed how these are manifest in their behavior in college.

**“Trying to Be Proper”: Pressures from Whites.** Martin, who is a senior at the prestigious James Buchanan University, gave a statement that suggested that double consciousness in African American men is learned. Martin admitted that he was never the “standard” African American man. He declared that being raised by parents who were not from America (his parents were immigrants) was the main reason for this “different standard” of thinking and doing in his African American male mind and body. It was not long, however, before double consciousness began to take shape in his school and collegiate experiences:

[At Buchanan University], I try to be as proper as possible, as dignified, as respectful as possible to feel as though that will hopefully change people’s expectations…I think I take it upon myself to set an example to be a black male, I feel like um, what America’s perception of black males, or blacks in general you know, are based on a lot of what they see in pop culture. And so you know, I try to carry myself in a way in which I want to change their perceptions of what it means to be a black male….

Hakeem, who attends John Adams University, discussed the ways in which his double consciousness is manifest in the social arenas of the campus as well. He also insisted that this affects his collegiate experience in a more holistic way. He stated,

Black men don’t have those “comfort zones” to be a part of to go to and just relax at [Adams University] without having to be that only black person at a party, or that only “token friend” or having to worry about what you say cuz it could be taken the wrong way, or you have to do a representation for your race and sometimes you don’t want that…and as a result you get so overwhelmed, not with courses just with trying to fit in just trying to be a part of the community that you lose focus, you can’t concentrate as well, you don’t do as well…
Sean, who attends Taylor University, described how feeling this double consciousness pressure is one of the most negative experiences at the institution he attends. He is less aware about the way in which double consciousness functions in his psyche. Sean believed that he does “the right thing” by sitting in the front of class to change how white others perceive him in class. In contrast, he is disgusted by African American students who choose to sit in the back. He explained,

I believe I get the stereotype that, “oh, he’s a black male, he came here for the parties”…I may not wear a shirt and tie everyday [and because I don’t do this], I got to be that thug. I can wear [urban clothes] and make just as good grades as the next man. When I go to class, when classes first start, I’m going to be on the front row, And you catch one or two [whites] come in and [think], “look at that. He’s on the front row”. I’m embarrassed because all the other black people are in the back…

Later, he looked at his fellow African American students through a double consciousness lens. He reflected,

At first, I wasn’t expecting a lot of the black students here to be serious. It’s actually a lot of black students here that are here for their education…I remember I saw this cat walking around on the yard (the campus) [and] this cat got his hat turned backwards, and t-shirt, dickeys (urban wear) on and I’m thinking he’s one of the ones that is at this school to party. He’s not really here for an education. He don’t want to be no doctor or lawyer. Whites judge all of us for him doing that…[Later], I saw him enrolling in classes and I knew he was serious….

The reasons these African American students to which Sean refers choose to sit in the back of this class or choose to dress in urban clothes are unclear. However, Sean clearly elected a wardrobe and a seat at the front of the class to present himself distinctly from how he believes the majority-white institution views him as an African American man, not to glean the most from his academic experience. Kevin, who is also an active student at Taylor University, described how “going between black and white worlds” is a customary practice for an African American man’s engagement at Taylor University.
Later, he showed disappointment for African American men who do not conform to an “institutional” standard:

[Taylor University] has key-white organizations and key-black organizations but if you just know all of the black organizations, that’s not going to help you with the white people. If you know all the white people, that’s not going to help you with the black people…There’s not a good representation of black men. Like black men walk around with wife-beaters (tank-tops) and go to class [like that]. I always look presentable. I wear a blazer everyday, nice briefcase, a laptop, you know what I’m saying? Like I try to present a positive image for black men [so] I don’t feel black men are valued at [Taylor University] and it’s all [black males’] fault….

“Trying to Be Down”: Pressures from African Americans. Perceived expectations from the African American community place a stronghold on the manhood constructions of the men in this study. The result is added pressure to conform to a model of African American man in which the values are often inherently incongruent with the values of the institutions that the men in this study attend. One of the participants, Jamal (Malcolm X University), talked about how he was practically raised by media images of African American men with no different observable constructions of African American manhood. As a result, double consciousness was shaped in his identity. Since no other images of African American men were displayed, Jamal turned to media imagery to determine “how to be”. Eventually, Jamal embraced these images since the African American community embraces them:

Nobody really taught me how to be a man, but um my role-models were L.L. Cool J (a rapper) and Will Smith (rapper and actor)…[Will Smith] was a black man that I knew in the black community was doing something. I mean he had his rap, he was rapping back then, and he had his sitcom. And it was a black television show, and he was young, he was everything that I wanted to be…He had fun, he was happy. In my life, I wasn’t happy with myself, so I always wanted to be happy like Will was….And L.L. Cool J, to be real with you, he had all the ladies. I wanted Will Smith for the happiness, but L.L. Cool J. because he had all the ladies…Even now, that’s all you hear about…the black doctors out there are rarely recognized but you always hear about the rappers…the athletes…and if you
grow up seeing that, then that’s what you want to be so [black men] really have to be self-determined cuz it’s not was always pushed…

Daniel, who attends historically black, DuBois University, also cited a similar example as Jamal, expressing frustration at “the image” African American men have to push against in college but also embrace, to an extent, to feel culturally authentic. He said,

In the [black community], we saw the Michael Jordans, the black NFL players, the Barry Sanders (black professional athlete), it’s like they were making such big contributions to the world, you didn’t hear much else, but you know, I see it now. There were Dr. Martin Luther Kings and Malcolm Xs, and they’re seen as great but in a different light…The [social popularity] of athletes hasn’t changed with college. I mean as you get older, it decreases, but as far as the outlook for [black men] it’s the same way in the college student body’s eyes…I think people here still would rather talk about Michael Jordan [than] Martin Luther King…I think because of this a lot of black males are not on a real college level…I wish we could have conversations on a broader scale around [campus] about life instead of “who’s a better rapper?” What about if Barack Obama is gonna really make [the presidency]?

Daniel, who is a single father, said he believes he gets more “man points” in his black college community for fathering a child and going to college. He links this belief to the expectations that he feels the African American community has for African American men. He elaborates:

I believe [black men] are given more “man points” if you have children and you’re still going to college more so than someone who is a black male in a social organization or athletics, or just a black male in college. And then you know, it’s like your breaking down walls, breaking down what people, particularly black people, think is not achievable…

Orlando, who attends Harriet Tubman College, said that he feels that the small college campus in not much different from high school in terms of what it expects from the images of black men. He does believe, however, that college is a little more tolerant than the black community. He detailed:
At [Tubman College], you see more people who, they more accepted for being smart when they are in their neighborhood but for the most part Tubman is like a high school where you know some smart black men tend to get labeled a lot in our community...they might call them “square” they might call them “nerd” but you know how black people do. We label…

Maintaining balance between “being proper” for cultural others (mainly whites) and “being down” for African Americans place pressure on African American men in college. Emmanuel (John Adams University) describes this double-consciousness articulately as “dueling expectations”. His statements illustrated how these pressures manifest themselves in his consciousness and threaten to interfere with future trajectories:

I think black male has a lot of different meanings [which] come with a certain amount of pressure, as well as a certain expectation, dueling expectations if you will. Um, it becomes important to dispel one side of it, while exceeding the other. I think the “majority” [which is] corporate, white, America, there’s an expectation that black men are like 50 cent (a gangster rapper) or something like that. So that’s the type of image I don’t want to be categorized with, whereas, from a certain proportion of the black community, and there’s a certain proportion of the black community that [thinks about you as a “50 cent” too], but a certain proportion of the black community, realizing the small numbers of educated black men, there is this expectation that any black man that goes to college will be on a higher level such as Barack Obama or something like that. So there’s that pressure to live up to that standard and exceed that if possible, and to get away from the other stereotype as much as possible...

“Trying to Be a Part”: Pressures from Other African American Men. The pressures African American men place on other African American men are also not lost in the consciousnesses of these respondents. To be sure, some of these participants feel this pressure more than others. In Chapter VII, a typology of men is presented, The Trangressors, in which these men seemed most attentive to the ways in which they feel challenged to adopt a sense of manhood authentic to the African American men whom they feel police it. However, men outside of this typology also comment about these
pressures to which they hate to conform. Corey, at Martin Luther King University, described:

It’s important to “adapt” to be able to get a point across to [black men] sometimes…You don’t want to become a “white washer” I think they call it here…I always wanted to be a person able to have a conversation with the President [of the United States], and still be able to have conversations with thugs out in the streets. I didn’t want to compromise who I am as a person but I admit I have done it under pressure…I feel black men are pressured by the black community and black men [to hide themselves] because they want to become a part of something…

Martin, who attends Buchanan University, described a pressure he faces to mask his upbringing which he believes is different from many African American men with which he comes in contact. Martin was raised in a middle-class family with two professional parents. He describes:

You don’t want to be seen as a “sell-out” or anything…I try to adapt a little bit to [different] groups of black males. I mean, I grew up in the inner-city so I know kind of how to talk the slang or you know to act in that sort of manner, I don’t really feel comfortable doing it. [If groups of black males] are different from me, I try to find one or two people who are not as extreme, stick to them, and not try to associate myself with the larger crowd…

Many of these consciousnesses were further bifurcated relative to the participants other identities (i.e. religious, sexual orientation, skin color). However, common themes across all interviews locate race at the core of consciousness in these men’s manhood constructions. All men in this study, as the above statements offer glimpse, described experiences in which they attempt to view themselves through the eyes of African Americans and whites.

**Manhood Constructions by Institutional Type**

How do the manhood constructions of these men compare by institutional type? This question was posited to respond to a previous assumption in research that there were
differences in the gender role construction of African American men by institutional context (Fleming, 1984). No invariant constituents and subsequent themes support that these men construct their manhood differently across institutional types. The direct response to this research question is that the manhood constructs of self-expectations, relationships/responsibilities to family, worldviews, and double consciousness were common themes across the men’s manhood constructions in the broader, American society, thus holding firm in American institutions of higher education. However, this finding is nuanced when institutional types are considered. Specifically, institutional contexts reinforce certain constructs of manhood already shaped in American society. For example, all men in this study thought about the African American community in collectivist ways, emphasizing a need to strengthen a racialized “we” and “us”. This worldview construct of manhood is further reinforced in historically black contexts, which are, by and large, abounding with African American communities. In contrast, all men in this study thought about non-African Americans, particularly whites, in suspicious ways, highlighting the presence of cultural mistrust as a worldview construct of their manhood. This construct is further reinforced in historically white contexts, which are, by and large, abounding with predominantly white student bodies and cultural others.

An additional example is the ways in which respondents’ manhood is shaped by double consciousness. Respondents’ manhood is shaped around double consciousness in the broader society but reinforced through the cultural spaces of institutions. The men in this study who tried to “be and act proper” in HWIs are not more likely to think and do this than the men enrolled in HBCUs when HBCU-enrolled men inhabit a majority-white
space. All respondents experienced similar forms of double consciousness before entering a particular type of institution. All respondents experience both types of consciousness apropos to the space they inhabit and the people within it.

Data in this study does not bear out Fleming’s (1984) assertions. One reason may be Fleming’s conceptualization of institutional context as “world” and not a “world” nested inside a “world” (colleges as institutions in the broader American society). Specifically, Fleming (1984) asserts that African American male students exist in a state of complacency due to perceived control in historically black institutions and, in a sense, become “big men on campus”. This study does not bear out that finding. In this study, respondents enrolled in historically black institutions flatly rejected any suggestion that they become complacent or perceive a sense of control in collegiate contexts. Many respondents did, however, perceive that some HBCU faculty feel a greater need to cognitively, socially, and academically support African American men given their low numbers on campus in comparison to African American women. The ways in which faculty support African American men and women, some respondents asserted, differ.

Fleming’s (1984) work also suggests that African American men enrolled in historically white institutions are predisposed to competing against others in college competitively. I discovered no theme in my study which suggests that African American men feel they compete in college in any way unique to their identities. In their words, most of their efforts are to clarify and improve how their identities are perceived in college, not position them in ways that competitively push them ahead of others in college. Fleming further presupposes that African American men are unable to control feelings of detachment, depression, and low self-image relative to small numbers on
campus. This study does not bear out this finding either. Despite many of the raced and
gendered experiences the respondents report, respondents strive to maintain a sense of
self-control and high self image notwithstanding small numbers on campus. Depression
was not a condition that any respondents reported either. Across invariant constituents,
African American men report institutional treatments that differ across institutional types
but not across manhood constructions as manhood constructions tend to point to broader
understandings about American society and their place within it.

**Collegiate Experiences and Manhood: The Institutional Role**

Interwoven in the respondents’ manhood constructions have been examples,
influences, and experiences (many in higher education contexts) that offer glimpses into
how higher education may improve the experiences of engaged African American men in
college. This section presents themes in which the men speak most explicitly to higher
education about how they perceive the institutional role in shaping their collegiate
experiences and manhood. Study respondents saw the institutional role in terms of the
following emergent themes: (1) institutional recognition (2) constructing relationships
with faculty (3) mentoring and supporting and (4) bridging campus and community.

**“I’m Still Here”: Institutional Recognition**

Each of the respondents was extremely thoughtful and articulate as they opined
about self-value in relation to the institution in which they were enrolled. The majority of
the respondents did not feel as if African American men were treated, valued, engaged, or
embraced equally in their institutions. Nearly all of the participants felt as if college
athletes were the most valued at the institution. Invariant constituents like “giving
athletes perks” “athletes bringing money to the university”, and “thinking the athletes are
loved” supported emerging themes. Others felt that whites and international students were the most valued students in their institutions. The remainder of the respondents insisted that African American men could be valued at the institution but it is their responsibilities to ensure the institution they attend notice them. All of the men provided examples of how institutional recognition matters (or should matter) to their collegiate experiences and informs their manhood constructs and sub-constructs (i.e. self, expectations and cultural mistrust, respectively). Several quotes are provided below that point to the theme, institutional recognition, and how it matters to the men in this study.

“The President Called Me by My Name”. At least five of the men in this study felt the most positive experience of their enrollment at the institution was that the college president knew their name, conversed with them, and expressed interest in their collegiate experiences. Sean clearly identified it as one of the hallmarks of his collegiate experience at Zachary Taylor University. He said that, to this day, Taylor University’s president probably does not know what it meant to Sean for the president to call his name. Unfortunately, however, his peers at the university thought the president knew Sean because he “must have been in trouble before”, revealing how stereotypes about African American men loom large at his institution. He reflected,

I would say to someone, “Don’t leave Zachary Taylor University until you’ve met our president, Dr. [Smith]. He’s a real good guy and a lot of people don’t know that, especially the African American students. I remember when I walked into his office, and I’ll never forget this…I walked into his office with nothing on, just shirt and jeans and the way that he embraced me was more than [because] I’m African American. He wanted to get to know me as more than that. He [gives the impression] that he walks into a room with students and a lot of people wouldn’t know who he was, they would think he was his own man, you know…The way he embraced me [I couldn’t believe], and I mean, he’s old, he’s active, he’s white and, you know, he’ll even see you at the ball game…and it made me feel good when I was at the game with some of my peers and he called me by my name. You wouldn’t believe the way people looked at me like, “You know the
president? You must have been in some trouble…got caught up on the judicial board or something…

Kevin, who also participated in this study and attends Zachary Taylor University, gave a similar statement about this same university president. Many other study participants noted how knowing senior leaders, not only the president, at their institution matters. Spencer, who attends Van Buren University, described a similar experience:

I think, because I’m outspoken, faculty and staff want to get to know me. I’m outspoken and my name is always in something. I’m the one who says something and so then [faculty and staff say], “Who’s that boy who stood up and said something? Who’s that boy that did that? He’s doing some things. What’s his name? That’s what the vice-president did. I’m really close to our new vice-president and she knows me, by name, and even wrote me a recommendation for graduate school…

Daniel had a similar experience with a student affairs dean at DuBois University:

The first time I met Dean [Smith] was during freshmen orientation. He was talking to all the current freshmen and I bumped into him a time or two and, eventually, would see him around campus more and more and then he said my name, “How are you, [Daniel]” That’s when I knew there was a relationship there…

“*They Look at Us Like Roughnecks*”. Across institutional contexts, respondents insist that African American men are viewed in stereotypical ways. Invariant constituents for this theme include, “they are prejudging us here”, “they are judging our looks here”, they are ignoring our intellect”, and “how we are dressing causes us problems here”. Many of the respondents (who are all members of a fraternity) insist African American men who are members of fraternity are viewed, even more intensely, in stereotypical ways (i.e. hyperaggressive, hypersexual, and violent). Nigel, who attends Benjamin Harrison University, offered a powerful thought about how the institution acts compliantly in perpetuating stereotypical images of African American men:
To an extent, Harrison University does not value its black male students. It may be because I don’t see enough of us around or see enough of us doing positive things. Usually when I hear about a black male [on campus], it’s something bad. Even if one does something great, or does something good or successful, I don’t hear about it, which is sad. Here, international students are [most valued] because [no matter what] they do, everybody [loves it]…they take pictures of them and place them in the student union…

Troy, who is a senior at Bethune University, reported that his college often persecutes all African American men, either directly or indirectly, because of violations that only a few African American men make:

If [Bethune] values its black males it’s hard to tell. A lot of times it seems black males get all the flack on campus. I always hear the bad things…the police running and chasing down a black guy, or a black guy getting expelled and I don’t know why black guys are doing this but I’ve heard too many stories in which black males get arrested, are falsely accused, and in some ways, good black men get the backlash if a few bad apples get out of hand, like in a dorm, the university punishes good ones along with black ones because the university can’t tell who’s the problem. We all get privileges taken away…

Joshua, who attends Harriet Tubman College, described how the institution shapes these images of black greek-letter organizations (BGLOs):

In some ways, the university doesn’t really value African American men [because they] see us sagging (pants hanging below waist) and things like that but they don’t look at what’s in the brain…Many people on campus see my fraternity as rebels, but we’re not really rebels we just different…Some people think of my fraternity as [being dressed in a certain way] but we don’t dress like that all the time…Once I overheard [a staff member] on campus make the comment that we were “ruffheads” (thugs) because we might wear baggy clothes or tennis shoes all the time…we might have a lot of hair of our head, or braids, or dreads, or other things of that nature….

“Why Did You Say We Have to Live in The Worst Dorm Again?” Many of the respondents who are enrolled in HBCUs are attentive to the ways in which gender works in their institutions. These gendered experiences seem to appear more visibly to these respondents when they attend institutions largely populated by the same race (African American). These were described most noticeably in classroom, student
activities, and dormitory assignments. The latter space, the college dormitory, was a point of discussion for Joseph who attends Martin Luther King University. He described,

Women are most valued at [King University]. You can tell by the dorms I used to work in residence life, like [King University Dorm] Hall doesn’t have air, it’s cement blocks, broken old beds, community bathrooms. Women don’t have that. The girls got air conditioned suites, kitchens, ovens, like the freshman male dorm has one kitchen and the oven is broken and one weight room which is messed up. The girls have two kitchens on every floor, two wash rooms on every floor, suites, new furniture, because girls make complaints. Guys don’t make complaints, we just think that’s how it is, and faculty and staff will tell you that staying in the [King University Dorm] Hall is part of the freshman male experience and you let it pass because you’re a guy why would you complain? We’re expected to not want anything nice…The school is reactionary. They won’t build a new dorm for guys until one dies from heat stroke…

Troy (Bethune University) made the following observation about the ways in which student affairs could send an equitable message between genders at the historically black institution:

Something that bothers me…We have a Miss Bethune but not a Mr. Bethune University and it bothers me that Miss Bethune’s escort is not Mr. Bethune, just her escort and I don’t understand why we don’t have a male representative. Why do we go through great pains and lengths and qualifications to elect a Miss Bethune? Black males see who the focus is on…Last year, the SGA President was a woman. Of course, Miss Bethune was a woman so where was the representation? I don’t think that’s fair. There are so few positive black males out there and Bethune doesn’t highlight the positive ones enough…

Joshua described how he even notices the ways in which professors’ gender their pedagogy. He describes,

It was a struggle getting used to all the teachers, how they teach. Um, sometimes you might even see differences between their teaching habits basically. Cause you might have the males [who] might teach a little different from females. [I remember] I had issues where I sat in another class where a male was teaching the class, and then a female was teaching the class. It was a little different, but it was the same class… The male was more, uh, uh, aggressive on what he was teaching. The female lady, she was uh, interacting with the students more but that’s why I like it here. [People] said that this campus, the teachers, interact with the students more because the ratio to the student is like 10 to 1…
Earnest, who attends Bethune University, made the following statement about the way in which he feels African American women acquiesce to their professors in ways African American men cannot:

I would say that women are valued a little bit more than the males. Cause I’ve seen a lot of cases where um, females, if they don’t get the grade, they like, you know, they go talk to the professor, and you know they’ll get the grade changed. But for black males, we stuck with the grade we have. I’ve seen that in a lot of cases, so I think females are valued a little more…

“We Need to See Ourselves”. Nigel, who attends Benjamin Harrison University, also provided suggestions for what colleges can do to recruit African American men to college. He, like many of the respondents in this study, feels institutions need to engage more raced and gendered efforts to draw African American men into campus. In Joseph’s (Martin Luther King University) words, “the institution needs a focus strategy geared towards black males. Women are coming here, they don’t need to be recruited like that…the ratio here [of women to men] is 11 to 1!” Recruiting, he feels, is linked to institutional recognition. Nigel, like most of the other men in the study, said that he would also like to see more African American faculty hired, particularly African American men. He said,

Young black males should be asked to recruit. [Black] males that have graduated from the university can also actually help recruit, because if a white male tried to recruit me, it’s going to be a little bit of a different response than if a black male tries to recruit me…kind of like black males can convince other black males to be in the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Program…Things become pretty copasetic when I see someone like me. When I go into a classroom [and] I see a black, male professor, I know its going to be some things maybe they’ve encountered in their life that I encountered in my life…At my college orientation, I didn’t see no black professors, they probably didn’t even invite him. That may in some [black] people’s eyes, affect their decision to go [to the college]…I’ve never had a black male professor but I sure would like to…
Hakeem (John Adams University) says that if he was president of his institution, he would implement similar initiatives. Powerfully and articulately, Hakeem declared how he believes Adams University thinks about African American faculty and staff and how he internalized what he feels are institutional perceptions:

I think there should be an effort and a push to have more African American students here, as well as, more African American faculty. In this [large and largely diverse city], we only have about 3 or 4 African American professors, I think only one has tenure. When most of our workers [in the college] are Hispanic or Black and, you know, are everybody who cleans, who works in the cafeteria, who works the grounds, you know, it kind of like, if you just stop and look for a second, it kind of shows like how society values you, or thinks where you should be… Everything that we claim to be successful is run by white males or white women. You know professors, deans, most of them, you know, they’re white, white men and white women. But then you have “the help” and they’re all like African Americans, it’s like [whites] don’t want us there, and then they’re not [recruiting] us there and basically it’s in your face. It’s like telling you that [“the help”] is what you should be, because you can’t do what we’re doing…

Hakeem said that he used to be excited when he overheard conversations that John Adams University would be receiving an African American studies program. In his mind, an African American studies program means a greater opportunity to learn about his cultural heritage and see and engage with African American men and women faculty. He went on:

I think our faculty needs to be a little more diverse, so that we can tackle more diverse topics and we need more classes and courses. And also they need to expand the category of catalog courses and majors. It’s very limited in my opinion in certain schools. We need to actually have an African American studies major and things like that. We’ve been working to my understanding about 10 years, or something like that, to get [an African American] studies major so we can have that. Study of that might interest the African American community. It’s been a long fight, and we’re still fighting to get that…

The men felt that scholarships also mattered to make them feel the institution cares about them. Jaden observed, “I would like to see universities recognize at least the outstanding black male, or the most-improved black male, you’ve got to do that, some
kind of perk or a scholarship, something to that extent.” Jamal also talked about how a scholarship made him feel the institution cared, recruited him to college, and was required to maintain his enrollment in college. Jamal, who is enrolled in Malcolm X University, talked about something innovative his university did to recognize his struggles as a single-father enrolled in college. He described:

Malcolm X University definitely values its black males. Malcolm X University [has] a scholarship that comes around for black men. Well, at least they had it last semester…You had to be a single, black male with a child and I fit that description so that’s one way [I feel valued] because they honored the single, black male parent…

Kevin (Zachary Taylor University), who is a more engaged student at the university he attends, reported that he notices differences between the appropriations that African American and white student organizations receive. His statement suggested that the difference he perceives between organizational allocations is a covert action of the university to promote inequality between races. Kevin insisted that, once African American men enroll at Taylor University, the university does not support their aspirations to bring speakers to campus to cognitively engage them. He described:

At [Zachary Taylor University] we are wrestling for equalities…Taylor University is segregated, but it’s not like one of the biggest battles [black males] face at Taylor…I’m about to be president of [black student organization], and right now, all the minority organizations, all the money for campus organizations are put in one pot and they allocate it to each organization. [A predominantly white club] gets $10,000 to go to Washington, DC for a conference, but [two black organizations] cannot even get [a total of] $5,000 to bring Martin Luther King III or Melba Patillo, [who was] one of the Little Rock Nine. Taylor University doesn’t care if or how black students are represented…

“Promoting Cultural Understanding” A prominent theme that emerged from respondents enrolled in HWIs suggest that higher education institutions need to engage the work of connecting different student cultural communities in college. Many of the
respondents asserted that the institution can assume a role in shaping cultural understanding between students. Hakeem, who attends John Adams University, even discussed how interventions may happen in smaller settings in college with other students who either show some cultural understanding or willingness to learn about other cultures. Reading his words brings to mind ideas about the ways in which higher education institutions can orchestrate cultural understanding by pairing and grouping African American men with others who are diverse by race and gender:

I often have debates with one of my good friends here. He happens to be white and he’s a singer as well. And we just talk about various different issues you know, dealing with race, class, and whatever. He did make a good point where he said, African-American men, well African-American community should at least be 12.5% of the student body since we’re like 12.5% of, I guess, the people here in the United States population. He understands that [something is wrong] and wants to increase how many African-American students [the college] takes…

Terrance, who fought against reticence during our interview, discussed how he perceives benefits from knowing students from cultures. He said,

The real learning [here] comes from the interaction that we have with our peers. Like you have diverse cultures out there with international students, and I’m willing to learn. When I see an international student, I want to know about where you come from, so I can get an insight about how you live…

Steven delivered a statement about the difference that cultural understanding makes to his social experiences in college:

I was expecting to find different [ethnicities] when I got here. Like, I even got frat brothers that came from Africa. You know there are people coming, students from different countries you know, Ghana, India, Nepal, and Jordan. It was like that in high school but you see it now and it kind of surprised me but it became a pretty cool experience because I got to know things about them and some of them are friends now…

In this study, it seems that where participants perceived equality in college, the men focused on appreciating diversities among African American peers. Many
respondent statements align with language used in the Cross (1991) Model of Nigrescence and indicate that these universities inform their constructions of blackness. Such was the case among participants who attended historically black colleges. Corey said that he did not expect to be impacted in any kind of meaningful way upon enrolling at Martin Luther King University. However, he reported the following change in his understanding about cultural diversity at the historically black institution he attends:

People at this college are really down-to-earth, you know. Some of them came from neighborhoods just like I came from and some of them can definitely relate to me, in all different ways, and their way of thinking, they’re way of knowledge from different areas, in other countries in the United States is very remarkable. The learning experience I get from these people is pretty good; I learned a lot of different cultures just in the United States alone. People from down south, up north, west coast, mid-west people, it’s just a real good experience…

Thurgood Marshall University similarly impacts David in this way. He described,

The real learning in college goes on in campus life. Everything, including the classroom, you learn that people are not of the same, I guess you can say, background, so you learn that people are not influenced in the same way you might be influenced. There are so many black students here from many different cities, and it’s a learning experience, a chance to grow, a chance to understand that we’re all different, but yet still trying to serve one common purpose…

“We Need to Hear Ourselves”. Most respondents expressed interest in attending or either participating in lectures or town-hall meetings in which African American men are at the center of the discourse. These, the respondents insisted, elevate African American men’s voices in college and show the institution that African American men, too, attend the institution. Many study participants also expressed a need for different conversations to comprise what is considered “normal” African American men’s discourse. Corey said the following about what he felt could be done to improve African American men’s collegiate experiences and inform his manhood constructions:
Maybe we could have something like a convention, a once-a-year convention or a
week that centers on black men and, like, invite black men to attend, or just hold
different workshops or talk about different things. Like a “State of the Black
Man” conference…I don’t know the advantages or disparities that would be
involved to get black men to come in and join but we should [have the
conference] and then top it off with something that celebrates [black males], to
give black men credit for being in this society and overcoming the obstacles and
different things in life. And I would do that for the females too. Maybe once a
semester for the males, make it a males’ week and next semester for the females,
that would be real nice…

Joshua (Harriet Tubman College) discussed an innovative program that his
college structures in which African Americans (many of whom have been African
American men) speak to, inspire, and motivate the student body:

If I were president of the college, I would probably have more African American
males come speak, like right now we’re having different hip-hop lecturers come
[as part] of the campus lecture series. They come and speak, but speak more on
things that involve black males. [If I were president], Maybe [we would] even
have a session or a seminar about how a male should act or things like that…even
tie in different things about different male natures and stuff like that make it more
interesting…

Joseph expressed a similar desire to see King University provide a space in which
conversations between men could expand and diversify. His words suggest that higher
education institutions are equipped to combat the ubiquitous stereotypical images of
African American men in school, college, and society:

One thing that’s positive about [King] University is that you don’t have to be
embarrassed to be intellectual. You don’t have to be embarrassed because you
actually know what you’re talking about. I never would have been able to
exchange ideas if I attended [another college]. I can go from a conversation
talking about ESPN to a conversation about Barack Obama and black males can’t
do that everywhere…

Notwithstanding fraternity membership, many respondents discussed the benefits
that come from friendships between African American men. As discussed in Chapter III,
the fraternal space often shuns vulnerability. Therefore, many respondents described
healthy friendships in which they felt they could confide in, trust, and “lean on” other African American men. In some cases, respondents’ friends were fraternity brothers. In other cases, they were non-greek and non-engaged students. Many invariant constitutions emerged like “depending on black men” and “standing with black men”, referring to personal and social connections with other African American men that respondents construct on campus that aid their trajectory to degree and “a better self”. Leonard’s words, “males embrace males”, reflected a shared sentiment across interviews. In line with social role theory, most respondents feel comfort in friendships with African American men. Kevin (Zachary Taylor University) described:

I have a group of friends (black males) and all of them are important to me...Cause we are all on the same goal. Sometimes, we may go to every party that Taylor University has to offer, but that’s not all we do. I had migraine [headaches] all last week, but two out of those days I was in the library all day, all afternoon studying. One of my homeboys was like, “Man, I know you’re sick, but you already know you got to study for this test, we got to go do this study guide. And so you know, I just sucked it all up, throwing up and everything...I know that’s what I had to do, and so like, to get that from my friends or whatever, you know, that support and that encouragement...that’s good, and they’re very important to me...

Later, Kevin added:

Being a part of organizations like [a black male organization] changes the way people look at you and that just gives you that extra “hmmph” (momentum) so I would say just involving like [black male organizations] which are fraternity-like. All [of] that gives you motivation. I feel like, to do better, we got to have to fight regardless, whatever organization I’m in, we got to have to fight, and if we don’t have that, then we [are] inept...[black male organizations] help you to network with other [black males] and knowing and networking is one of the most important keys in college out there...

David gave a similar statement that brings to mind DuBois’ assertion, “men know so little of men”. He described the urgency with which African American men need to connect with each other in college:
As black men in college, we have to help each other. If we’re not helpful, who’s going to be helpful? As black men, we are diverse, as men, we are diverse, in so many different ways, and I mean we can learn so much from each other. All black men don’t want to be athletes. Some of the athletes that are out there, they [have] been dreaming about [athletics] all of their lives. That’s what they were bred to do, me I wasn’t bred to be no athlete but my best friend (a black male) I’m glad to see him [participate in athletics]. I’ll say whatever I can say to motivate him, cause he needs that motivation, that’s his strength, and what he chooses to do…

In this section, examples are provided in which study respondents discussed the ways in which colleges, and collegiate personnel, advantage or disadvantage men’s college experiences in ways that not only impact these men’s collegiate engagement, but also intersect with the earlier manhood constructs presented earlier. Many of the men described feelings of acceptance, comfort, and importance when high-ranking college administrators, particularly the college president, spoke their names, knew them, engaged them on campus, or any intersection of these behaviors. Additional concerns were discussed in terms of (1) respondents’ disapproval of the ways in which they believe African American men’s stereotypes negatively impact collegiate experiences (2) observing the power of gender work against their social imprisonment relative to unique identities as African American men and (3) requiring conduits to learn about cultural others. The participants discussed these topics to inform a broader conversation about the ways in which they perceived the institution as undervaluing them, their interests, and unique experiences.

“Knowing the Teacher Behind the Suit”: Constructing Faculty/Student Relationships

All respondents discussed the ways in which faculty impacted their collegiate experiences and shaped thinking and manhood. The best relationships between faculty and the respondents were those in which respondents sensed sincerity in faculty actions
and language. Respondents also found faculty engaging who were sensitive to the multiple identities, issues, and struggles that affect African American men. Many of these identities, issues, and struggles are uniquely linked to respondents’ social locations of race, gender, sexuality, religious affiliation, class, ability, and other identities. Faculty who shared similar profiles were highlighted as proficient in both engaging these men academically and shaping their manhood constructions. More specifically, respondents insisted they received a more critical perspective of society (and their places within it) from faculty who drew upon culturally relevant pedagogies and informal connections.

In addition, study participants identified classroom experiences as largely shaping the holistic collegiate experience. As facilitators of that experience, faculty were largely interconnected with respondents’ in-class perceptions. Many respondents became acquainted with their professors by introducing themselves to their professors or because professors “saw something in” the men in this study. When the respondents felt they “knew” their professors, respondents availed themselves to academic feedback, advice, mentoring, and the disciplinary parameters that many professors offered and constructed.

Corey said, for example, that many King University faculty were sensitive to his pre-college experiences. Corey believed that certain faculty feel vested in him because of his rough childhood of poverty, crime, and trouble:

When I first came to [DuBois], I told a couple professors where I was from and how I was raised. I talked to them after class and I told them my [life] situation and shared [my apprehensions] about the class, and they said, “Oh you’ll do just fine, trust me.” And since then, they just really showed me a lot of love out here, and I really appreciate it. I, personally, come into their office during office hours and talk to them and just have like casual conversations outside of the course curriculum. If I need help, they told me to feel free to call them, they’re very understanding teachers.
For David, professors largely comprise the “family-oriented” environment of Thurgood Marshall University. David said that he was not proactive in getting to know his professors. Rather, the professors took an interest in him. David, who attends a historically black institution, also noted that he attends the same church as a couple of his professors who, in turn, remembered that shared experience. He describes the ways in which he feels more comfortable at the institution:

Marshall University is a family-oriented institution and I learn a lot here. I learned that there’s a lot of people that look out for you. It was a different experience for instructors to take me out to lunch. Instructors inviting me to their houses for holidays, making sure that I had food to eat, making sure that I had someone to talk to. If I needed someone to talk to, I was able to talk to different instructors. They even help me get a job on campus. These are people who care…

One semester, Emmanuel decided not to return to John Adams University. He was contacted immediately by the sociology professor whom he feels is a very supportive member of the Adams University community. Emmanuel said he was positively impacted by the sincere concern he sensed in the professor. He described,

Dr. [Jones] is very helpful whether it be [writing] letters [for you], she’s helpful, always gives a lending ear. She gave me her cell phone and her house number and, you know, that’s the certain level which you don’t necessarily get. I met Dr. Jones in her class and she is very forthcoming and really looks out for the students.

At first, Spencer (Van Buren University) said he abhorred, but now, appreciates the disciplinary parameters that his voice professor constructs. During our conversation, he said the following about his voice professor:

My voice teacher is so supportive, it’s ridiculous. It’s almost like he pacifies me but with, it’s like he’s not negative though, but he pacifies me to the point where like, “[Spencer] I know you’re going to get this, you just need time to come into yourself, you haven’t gotten it yet.” Now, I can see how much I’ve grown now. It was what I needed, and I didn’t know…
Many respondents indicated appreciation whenever the instructor pedagogy held some cultural relevance. Corey said that the professors at the historically black university he attends make learning relevant for African American men and are sensitive to the different ways in which students learn. He continued,

The way the lecture, or the education, is presented from a stand point that is relevant to the black man is very, very remarkable. I remember when I was in a sociology class my freshmen year, and I saw a white teacher give the same lecture to a group of white kids and the black teacher give a lecture to the black kids, and it was the same material pretty much, but the way of understanding for the uh, for the kids in the black classroom was more relative to me. I think black people teach and learn differently from whites…

Several respondents provided examples of professors who “could care less” about the identities of the students in the classroom. For example, Nigel described his in-class experience with a professor who did not engage him in class. His professor’s pedagogy was not culturally relevant. In fact, Nigel reported that he and other African American students believe the professor was racist. Such pedagogy tapped into the cultural mistrust construct of manhood defined earlier. Nigel describes,

I had a professor in Economics once that, I don’t know if he was racist, but we were talking about minimum wage, and he said that if we raise minimum wage to $10.00 that might be a really good idea. A black person in the class [asked] “why?” And then he was like, “because if you raise minimum wage then you all won’t have any jobs anymore.” So then I said, “What do you mean you all?” The professor said, “Well if you raise the minimum wage to $10, then all the white kids, even the ones in high school, they’ll take your jobs, even the low-level jobs like McDonalds and retail and things of that nature.” You know I’m like, “Man, what are you talking about man?” And [the professor] said, “it’s just like a proven fact that you know that we” and I’m like okay man, who is we? The professor said, “White people today, we can still get a job over you all you know. If it wasn’t for affirmative action, we’d probably have all your jobs.” I lost it and I had to leave the class…

Hakeem (Adams University) provided a thoughtful statement that explains how he feels “left out” by professors in-class and on campus. When Hakeem meets a professor
who utilizes a cultural relevant pedagogy and displays sensitivity to Hakeem’s unique social locations, he feels far more engaged in class and on campus. The following statement describes how he experienced difficulty trying to find a common ground between an African American masculine self and white faculty. He asserted:

I’ve often found that I did not associate myself with white professors very much. I just didn’t feel we have similar interests, or we didn’t connect on different levels. I didn’t play hockey, I didn’t play golf, and I found that some of my white counterparts would talk to my teachers about that, just various things about going to country clubs. You know, I never had that, that wasn’t my passion or my avenue, so I never could connect with my teachers on that level outside of the classroom…

Hakeem, however, conversed about a professor who engages him inside and outside the classroom:

Professor [Jackson], she’s a sociologist here. I mean she really touched me. Her classes were always so understanding of all kinds of people. She always sparked my interests, we always had good debates, she also happens to be a “sweetheart”, so we connect on various levels…She’s probably the only teacher I would stop and talk to really…

According to many study participants, faculty hold the power to not only promote student knowledge of course content, but to tap into students’ manhood, imagination, life trajectory, and practical competencies. In this same conversation, Corey described a professor at King University that captivates and inspires Corey and all African American students, particularly African American men:

One of the important figures here is a professor by the name of Dr. [Johnson]. His name rings a bell to every literally every student here on [DuBois’] campus. If you’re an undergrad, you definitely take a class with Dr. [Johnson], not because you really had to, cause you definitely just want to. He was one of the most inspirational teachers I’ve met. Um, he instills different perspectives among all the students here on campus about changing the way they [think] about things. He teaches philosophies about the world society and world situations. His reputation is huge. He started a protest with different demonstrations at Congress. He shed so much light on the situation I swear he’s one of the pioneers on this campus. He is a real good teacher and a very good philosopher in all aspects. He teaches
African American Literature and History. I really like his talks about the time between slavery and now and he exposed me to the book, *40 Million Dollar Slave*, a book talking about the mistakes of the black man, how if they can’t make it through-out sports entertainment, then there’s no hope for them. It’s opening my eyes. I have real interesting conversations with him…

Orlando said that he appreciates faculty who take time to make their teaching relevant to the real world. Much of the language Orlando used to describe this type of teaching was also used in how he constructed his manhood, particularly self-expectation constructs of manhood which involve ideas of “overcoming adversity” and “solving problems”:

One of the most valuable things that [Tubman College] students should acquire is being able to deal with problems, because in life it’s going to be like I guess, you are going to run into a lot of problems and a lot of setbacks that you going to have to get around, over, under, you going to have to overcome and you know, get it done. So, I think that’s one of the most valuable things you can get from a professor. If they can teach real-life lessons sometimes, that’s helpful. This will help us stick to our guns, and accomplish goals no matter what the obstacles are…

Corey delivered another powerful statement about how he would like to see professors assume an interest in shaping in African American men both societal critiques as well as practical competencies of African American men. Corey observed,

The classes here are sometimes not relative to the outside world and I’m saying politics and society. Like I am in an AIDS class where we talk about the origin of AIDS but sometimes the professor deviates from that lesson plan and, at times, we talk about things such as how predominantly whites account for one-eighth of the United States and yet they still run the country such as CEOs and Presidents and people in Congress. Those [topics] are wonderful things to learn and talking about different things like how the government uses population control in different low socioeconomic societies. I wish more professors would teach real-life lessons because it lets you know what’s out there in the world, how we’re perceived, and how things are meant to keep us down in a sense.

In this section, the respondents described the ways in which they feel faculty assume a role in shaping collegiate experiences as well as manhood. In short, caring faculty adopted inclusive postures in- and out-of-class, were sensitive to respondents’
pre-college and outside college experiences, and linked academic gains to “real-world” competencies.

**“From Pals to Peers”: Mentoring and Supporting**

Various examples of mentoring are cited among the participants in this study. Most participants felt supported by institutional mentoring programs as well as faculty, staff, and other students who assumed a mentoring capacity in their lives. Respondents emphasized the importance of college student affairs which served as the conduit under which they received mentoring. The attention respondents received from institutional mentors made them feel as though others cared about their persistence to degree and were available to not only evaluate academic and social progress, but also to provide directions for next steps after college. Respondents suggested that each mentoring moment in which they participated held a sense of uniqueness that emerged from mentors’ understandings of participants’ identities, experiences, and desires.

Nigel provided an example of the mentoring program in which he participated at Harrison University:

The minority mentoring program here has an upperclassman teaming up with a underclassman. And mine um, his name was [Mike] and he for the most part you know, he showed me the ropes, you know like [Nigel] you going to do this, we had the same major at the time. He was like, you know, you need to do this and that; we would go out for lunch and things like that. He would like expose me to the campus, you know, little by little, you know. From him, I began to understand, the stuff they show you at orientation is nothing compared with what the “real deal” college experience is like…

Hakeem described a mentoring program which served as a medium through which he became connected with a professor who inspired him. He described,

I was so impressed with this professor who spoke about Malcolm X and his influence on society. I met him through a program, but most of my teachers and associates here I met through class or working with them at the Center for
Minority Students and things like that. [Adams University] also has a program for minority students. Before you start [Adams] you come to a summer program for about 4 weeks or so, and that allow you to just, I guess, get adapted, not assimilated, but adapted or accustomed to [Adams], the surrounding area, how things work…I appreciate the program because it allows for us to be connected at an early stage…

Joseph made the following observation about the way in which he feels mentoring matters to African American men at King University:

African American men need a mentor, someone to tell them dos and don’ts. Luckily for me I had someone (a black male) to do that for me. Otherwise, I never felt like there was anyone I could talk to. There is an organization here that is supposed to be a mentoring group but its party-oriented. At Freshman Week, I was walking around campus lost. The mentoring group was only for freshmen anyway and it needs to continue through the senior year, I mean pals can be pals, but at some point they need to become peers. I would pair a [freshman] with a senior so when he’s in the work world then you’re a sophomore, and he’s telling you what’s going on so you can prepare for that, and as he moves forward, then you move forward…

Some participants discussed institutional faculty and staff who mentored them. These relationships furthered engaged the men in ways they felt brought them closer to the center of institutional value. Leonard (DuBois University) described how his relationship with a student affairs dean has supported him in myriad ways as a young African American man in college:

I got close to staff when I ran for Freshman Class President but Dean [Smith] saw something in me and took me in and gave me a job in his office and paid me out of his pocket to help me. He would introduce me to people. And if you are with Dean [Smith], and everybody knows Dean [Smith], then everybody will know you…Dean [Smith] is like my father, I could say so much about him. He is a father away from home. He gives me advice and scolds me like I’m his son…People on campus call me Dean [Smith] Jr…

Leonard suggested that this experience held an even deeper meaning for him as his father is not a constant presence in his life, and Leonard was raised by only his aunt.
Joshua described times when he felt supported by institutional staff. A more engaged student, his campus activity predisposed his proximity to campus staff. He also identified university staff who literally solicited his participation as supportive to him on campus. The telephone calls from staff, he insisted, added to the value that he felt at his institution:

I feel very connected at Tubman College. On a day-to-day basis, I get a lot of phone calls to come to this meeting and do this. Now, I’m on the homecoming committee, planning that, so they call me to work on special projects. They call me on different occasions, or come to meetings or getting this and that situated so I feel very connected at the college. Even the Dean of Students will call me because he might be organizing an event and thinks I may be good to help with that and I really like that. It makes me feel important…

As the statements above describe, student peers and collegiate personnel played a very important role in clarifying the college experience, guided respondents’ movement on campus, and extended invitations to the respondents to become involved in campus traditions and events at the center of institutional value. Study participants’ statements offer both confirmations of, and suggestions about, the ways in which colleges think about and structure mentoring program continuity, consistency, and selectivity of program mentors.

“Opening My Eyes to the World”: Bridging Campus and Community

Most of the men discussed the importance for (1) men to be involved in and see different communities, particularly African American communities, (2) how they perceive the institutional role in structuring campus-to-community experiences, and (3) how they feel these experiences develop them personally. Spencer, who attends Van Buren University, admitted that greek life “is not for everyone” and says that it is
imperative for African American men to get involved in the community and particularly to find ways on campus that will link them to the community. He continued,

   African American men need to find something [to do] like getting involved in community service. I think when you [do this] you meet people that are like-minded about community service, or you just meet good wholesome people. It’s like a match. Good people who look to be with good people find them in community service…

Corey (Martin Luther King University) discussed how a college professor exposed him to not only community service, but also to other enriching experiences in the community that the professor thought would more holistically develop Corey’s college experience. Specifically, a professor inspired Corey to go beyond college and see what the surrounding city had to offer and encouraged Corey to try to bring that knowledge into the college classroom in some creative way. Corey took the professor’s advice and described:

   I never planned to do anything when I got here…I was just going to go to school. But I just opened my eyes to realizing that you have to make your mark on life enough to get [and] give a national perspective and take advantage of your opportunities…like one thing I really appreciate myself doing is going down to the National Mall and visiting the different museums and like the Smithsonian Institute and stuff…just seeing American history and they have this African American Art Museum…That’s very, very remarkable to me. I really like that just, you know, getting to see the different things…

Leonard, who attends W.E.B. DuBois University, talked about how community service is highly valued at his university:

   The biggest thing that separates a [DuBois student] from other school students is that DuBois really pushes community service. Before you come to school, DuBois University has a community service project. Participation is voluntary but you’d feel embarrassed if you didn’t participate. The importance of community service didn’t hit me until college…
Sean delivered powerful thoughts and suggestions about the role higher education can play in linking African American men to the community in ways that shape thinking about the collegiate experience and manhood in more meaningful ways:

I wish there was some better ways that the college and community could team up...like, for instance, I’m always willing to reach out to the elders. Just going to sit in nursing homes, just to sit and talk to them and [the elders] actually enjoying it and to see the smile and to see the tears or the sadness when it’s time for you to go. To be able to talk to them and hear about their stories and, in a sense, it’s kind of helped me, maybe they’ve been through something that I haven’t been through and learning from them makes me a better person as a man, as an individual. I used to visit the elderly when I was boy scout and I remember one lady I had to talk to, was in a wheelchair, and her family don’t even come to see her but for a stranger to come in and see her, I could tell she really appreciate it. She may never be able to do anything for me but she’d give me a peppermint every time I visited...These type of things I’d like to see colleges do like nursing or gerontology majors could do this stuff...

Martin informed me that Buchanan University requires its students to do community service. He said that he is glad that the university he attends structures this experience for him. He continued:

I think helping with community service activities is good. [Buchanan University] emphasizes that it is important for me to get into [community service]. And I like it too, cuz it feels like I’m giving back to the community and kind of gives you a perspective. As for me, I tutor and I mentor 8th grade students. So, I just like to talk to them, talk about their day, listen to their experiences, and hear about what they go through on a everyday basis in the [city’s] public school. It kind of gives you a perspective on like your life and where you may have come from and how fortunate you are. I think that’s always a good experience...

John, who attends Van Buren University, said the following about doing community service in college:

I do community service and I help little kids with simple stuff, reading, math, and we play games with them and I feel that just for them to have an afterschool program betters the community. The best off-campus experience for me as a college student is community service. There should always be a college component that ties to community service in some way...
The respondents suggested that involvement in communities outside the college further develops the collegiate experience and draws them nearer to understanding career and life purpose. Undoubtedly, these campus-to-community experiences, not only holistically developed these men’s college experiences, but also reinforce manhood constructs (i.e. self expectations of responsibility or worldviews of “giving back”).

Conclusion

This chapter answers the research questions that guide this study. Findings from this study align with, but also extend and reshape previously posited models of African American manhood (Hunter and Davis, 1992). Like the Hunter and Davis study, African American men constructed their manhood in terms of self-expectations, relationships and responsibilities to family, and worldviews/existential philosophies. In the Hunter and Davis frame, however, only spirituality and Afrocentricity emerged as worldview constructs of manhood. The Afrocentric worldview in the Hunter and Davis study, as well as my study, is only articulated with reverence, respect, and regard for the strengthening of the African American community. In my study, however, the worldviews/existential philosophies construct is extended by its sub-construct, cultural mistrust, which refers to the worldview and philosophies respondents felt toward non-African Americans and whites, in particular. This additional finding may have emerged for two reasons: (1) most participants in the Hunter and Davis study were aged 35 to 54 with only 13% of the total participant group aged younger than 25 years old and (2) the institutional population (i.e. historically black, historically white) in my study was clearly considered in my research design.
An additional finding in my study is the presence of double consciousness in the respondents and the ways in which double consciousness manifests itself in African American male collegian’s manhood constructions and collegiate experiences. The double consciousness manifestations of “changing behaviors”, presentations of poise, and good articulation are not to be confused with the preparations one engages for a job interview or to make a good impression. Rather, these presentations are negotiations of cultural authenticity, attempting to conform thinking and behavior to that which surrounding cultures deem authentic representations of African American men.

The manhood constructions of the men in this study are not shaped by institutional contexts, but by American society. Institutional types, in their cultural spaces, reinforced various constructs of these men’s manhood already shaped by the broader society. Discovering this distinction allows this study to respond, in a more nuanced way, to a previous assumption in research that there were differences in the gender role construction of African American men by institutional context (Fleming, 1984). No invariant constituents and subsequent themes in my study support that these men construct their manhood differently across institutional types given Fleming’s frame. In addition, this study did not bear out Fleming’s posits about African American manhood, masculinity, and the ways in which these contribute to African American men’s engagement in college. These distinctive lines are likely drawn between studies as Fleming’s study views institutional context as “world” and my study views institutional context as a “world inside a world” (institutions nested in the broader society).

The engaged African American men in this study perceive the institutional role in shaping their collegiate experiences and manhood in terms of four emergent themes: (1)
institutional recognition (2) constructing faculty and student relationships (3) mentoring and supporting and (4) bridging campus and community. Contextual analysis revealed the different ways in which predominant institutional population affects institutional handling of African American men. Many of the African American men who were enrolled in HBCUs aligned language about manhood and their collegiate experiences resonant with the missions of HBCUs. This finding highlights congruency between institutional missions, African American manhood, and collegiate experiences thus supporting the notion that men enrolled in the HBCUs felt valued. Also, respondents enrolled in HBCUs report far more cognitive and affective functioning in those contexts versus those attending HWIs. In this study, the holistic cognitive benefits that faculty, staff, and students provided point to HBCUs as a more effective model for the student selves and many masculine selves of African American men. In these same contexts, however, participants identified gender differences that they believe sacrifice the interests of African American men and attempt to pigeon-hole their campus movement and subsequently, their broader social movement.

Contextual analysis also revealed the ways in which HWI-enrolled men perceive their interests as sacrificed and their presence as undervalued in these contexts. Many participants described mentoring programs that their HWIs had in place. However, participants reported that the institution acted counter to the work of mentoring programs in covert ways. Examples included culturally insensitive lecture series, widespread publication of African American male misdeeds and achievements of international students, and disparate student organization allocations. Further, respondents also reported faculty and students who compromised the work of mentoring programs through
culturally insensitive lectures and conversations, tokenism, and summoning the police to question African American men’s social gatherings.

As participants attested, they do not persist through college without experiencing tremendous pressure from themselves, their families, and their institutions. Those manhood constructions that have not already been shaped and policed by their pre-college experiences are challenged to conform to orthodox African American manhood (in HBCUs) or to negotiate cultural mistrust (in HWIs). In the following chapter, I also group the men in accordance with the manhood typologies that emerged from their narratives. This allows me to further illustrate the fullness and complexities of their manhood constructions in the broader conversation of common themes in the research. I also include vignettes to briefly, but intentionally, highlight the aspects of the manhood typology (Stake, 1995).
CHAPTER VII

WE WEAR THE MASKS: MANHOOD TYPOLOGIES AND VIGNETTES

We wear the mask that grins and lies, It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes--
This debt we pay to human guile; With torn and bleeding hearts we smile
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise, In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us while, We wear the mask.

We smile, but oh great Christ, our cries, To Thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh the clay is vile, Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise, We wear the mask!

Paul Laurence Dunbar (1913)

To view the respondents’ manhood constructions in light of only the common or
prominent themes, however, is to misunderstand the fullness and complexities of these
men’s manhood constructions. The ways in which these men constructed their manhood
in college differed along sundry masculine lines. The differences between
consciousnesses, identities, and experiences prevent a representative construction of
manhood for the men in the study. In the analysis, four types of engaged African
American manhood in college emerged from the data: Sexualizer, Transgressor,
Misogynist, and Self-Actualizer. To be sure, these categories are not mutually exclusive.
Some of the participants’ constructions were nuanced with characteristics of the other
manhood types discussed in this chapter. Notwithstanding, these typologies reflect clear
differences that draw distinction between groups of men who participated in this study.
To bring this study closer to understanding these different constructions, one narrative
from each typology in this study is presented.
Sexualizer: Sexualizing the Masculine

One categorization of men emerged from the data in which men constructed manhood and masculinity in ways peppered with hegemonic forms of masculinity, including the objectification of women, homophobia, or hypermasculine bravado. The African American men in this group, more or less, direct masculine expectations in accordance with orthodox meanings of African American manhood. Many of these meanings locate the relationship between the gendered body and the masculine self at the center. In other words, participants in this type tended to articulate biological models of manhood. Historically, biological models focus on the ways in which innate biological differences between males and females may program different social behaviors (Kimmel and Messner, 2007). Some of these men placed emphasis on the physical and sexualized constructions of manhood, or, as Earnest describes, “birds and bees lessons”. At center, is an awareness of how one utilizes body parts, particularly in sexual actions, movement, and behavior (Reid-Pharr, 2001). Many of their reflections and opinions align with what Kimmel and Messner term, “gendered speech”, language that uses gender terms to make its case (i.e. “a nut-check”). David’s sentiment provided an example:

Researcher: What does the phrase, “Be a man” mean to you?

David: …I guess you can say, it’s more like um, and I guess in the street terms, “a nut-check [testicle-check] kind of thing.” “Be a man” as in do what you need to do, make sure your nuts [testicles] still hanging. Got some balls [testicles] about yourself, stand on your backbone. ..

Additionally, this typology of men espoused statements that described their manhood in terms of heterosexual relationships and romantic relationships with women, or “females”, as the men refer to them. Each articulated a meaning of manhood that centered on heterosexual attraction, male organs, or maintaining a romantic relationship
with the same woman consistently as what “good” African American men do. Orlando, for example, described the way in which heterosexual attraction matters to his construction of a masculine self:

   Researcher: If someone was trying to brain-wash you to change everything about you, what would you fight the hardest in order to keep the same about yourself?

   Orlando: My manhood. Yeah, I’ve got to stand on that!

   Researcher: And what does that mean? Standing on my manhood?

   Orlando: I mean to stand on it, like, I mean, I don’t know if you want to take it to like a sexual orientation type of thing? Where you know I feel like being a man as being, you know, a man, actual men like women, you know what I’m saying, I mean, anything else is un-natural to me, you know what I’m saying? I’m not saying it’s good or bad, it just ain’t, that ain’t how I was designed to be…”

   Some of the participants even identified the presence of women as a reason they chose to attend the college in which they enrolled or identified romantic relationships with women as a major construct of how they believe they are perceived by others.

Consider Orlando’s assertions:

   I’m the type of dude, you know, I go to class, I try to maintain my grades, um, you know, I’ve been with my girl for like 3 or 4 years. You know [faculty and staff] look at stuff like that, you know what I’m saying? And I guess they stereotypically, [see me] as a good, black, male.

Orlando’s thinking that faculty and staff consider his committed relationship with his girlfriend in assessing his “goodness” is telling. Sexual attraction pervades the core of who they are, who they want to be, and even how they want others, including collegiate faculty and staff, to see them.

Research suggests that these men’s foci, which consider topics of sexual attraction, gendered language, and biological parts (and how they are used), are not only rooted in white American patriarchy (i.e. African American men as hypersexual beasts)
but are propagated in African American communities (Collins, 2005; D. M. Jones, 2005; Neal, 2005). These, researchers suggest, are directly tied to the sexualized manhood that African American men construct as well as the sexualized image that others expect from them (Collins, 2005; D. M. Jones, 2005; Neal, 2005). Most of the men in this study, at various times, felt pressured to construct sexualized ideals of manhood. Conversely, some of the men effortlessly constructed sexualized definitions of manhood. However, all men clearly walked the dual line between cultural authenticity (traditionally masculine and “down for your people”) and cultural inauthenticity (i.e. being a “punk”/weak or “acting white”). While some of the men in this study declared that their communities were proud of them for trying to “better themselves”, some of the men in this study insist they were indicted with cultural inauthenticity when they returned (absent a perceived sexualized construction) to their communities for holiday vacations from college.

**Vignette 1: The Importance of Being Earnest: “It’s All in the Swagger”**

Swagger – n. the way a person presents self to the world; the way a person walks, talks and dresses

The Urban Dictionary (see [www.urbandictionary.com](http://www.urbandictionary.com))

When I asked Earnest what he would the fight hardest to keep the same about himself given he was being brainwashed, he replied his “swagger”. Earnest and I engaged the topic of swagger at length since he located it at the core of who he is. Swagger is a masculine behavior akin to cool pose. As mentioned in Chapter III, cool pose refers to the attitudes and actions that African American men construct to cope with the feelings of second-class status, self-doubt, insecurity, and inner turmoil (Majors & Billson, 1992). With the infusion and proliferation of hip-hop, the term, “swagger” seems to add a hypermasculine and hypersexualized dimension. Its roots are widely traced to the term
"swagger-walk" which represents a hypermasculine form of walking to intimidate men with one’s power, strength, and dominance, or to attract women (Alexander, 2006). The media largely constructed images of the swagger-walk around hypermasculine actors like John Wayne. However, African-American men are widely known to drag one foot and limp from side-to-side in a "pimp strut" or "cool walk". As Earnest described,

[Swagger is] the way I talk, the way I walk, the way I look I mean even, it’s a feel that says that this guy has his head on right, you know, he know what he wants out of life. I’ve actually had you know, a lot of females tell me, you know, when I ask them what [they think]. They say I feel like you have you're head on right…so that’s how I feel like my swagger has its way. And there is most definitely a coolness about it! I wouldn’t be myself if you take [the coolness] way”

As highlighted in Earnest’s biography (Chapter IV), Earnest is a muscular, former athlete who today, by his mere presence, may invoke the emotional responses of sexual admiration and fear (Collins, 2005; Poulson-Bryant, 2005). Earnest hails from the South, and actually lived a number of places in the south before his family settled in a southern state of their choice. When I asked him what he was like when he was boy, he responded, “I was always after girls. You know, as a kid running around, feeling, touching [girls] on the playground and stuff. I guess, then, I felt like I was a man or soon to be a man, you know, I knew what I wanted.” As he aged, Earnest says he “was a dog” but has now “settled down a bit”. The term “dog” refers to the player-of-women posture that is largely adopted in groups of African American men as a complement to cool pose. Earnest’s positioning of self as “dog” positions women as objects, even trash. He reflected,

a dog [means] running around, messing with all kinds of girls…You know, I used to target girls, and my main target was classy girls, rich girls, um beautiful girls, white girls, yeah but I wouldn’t settle for nothing, I wouldn’t settle for no trash, you know I will not talk to an ugly, I don’t know what you define ugly, but if they weren’t to my standards, I wouldn’t talk to them.
During our conversation, Earnest insisted that his “swagger” was attractive to women and that women affirm his behavior. I asked Earnest how he could teach this “swagger” to someone who may have to take his place in the in-class and out-of-classes spaces of college. He replied, “I would…say look man, you got to walk like this, talk like this, you go to say this to the girl at the right time, it can be learned…you got to keep the people laughing”. “Keeping people laughing” is a behavioral construct of cool pose that is posited as African American men’s coping strategy in a patriarchal world (Majors and Billson, 1992). Later in the conversation, I asked him about his best friend on the Bethune University campus. Consistent with the tenets of social role theory, Earnest aligns himself with other African American men who uphold traditional manhood constructions and behavior. Earnest describes his best friend as follows, “He [is] a clown, he’s just like me, uh he a dog though. He’s a dog to the 5th power…He fun to be around, and we interested in the same thing—females, clubbing, and trying to get out of school…”

Earnest does not “see” his maleness, and in fact, never thought about it. As a man, Earnest did not think about the ways in which gender affects his life. He is more reflective about his race, because his racial experiences, not his gendered ones, place him at a sociological margin. Earnest easily recalled noticing his blackness when he dated a girl, who was white, during his high schools in the small southern town in which he lived. Earnest insists her family was one of the town’s richest and prestigious families. Her father, was a prominent business man and locally-regarded captain-of-industry. Earnest even recalled visiting the businessman’s home as a young basketball player on a team
sponsored by the white girl’s father. In high school, he became acquainted with the
businessman’s daughter, and eventually, they began dating. Earnest continued,

And, you know, it got a little serious, she got to the point she wanted to tell her
parents…what was going on. So she told [and] the next day they sent her off to an
all-girls school in Fox Croft, Virginia…that’s when I finally realized I was black
and you know, there ain’t no changing that. I mean he liked me as a basketball
player, he liked me as a kid, but he didn’t like me in the family, you know. And I
bet he realized I was black then [too, because he didn’t want in his white family].

Nothing about the meaning or centrality of his gender, however, is obvious to him.

Kimmel and Messner (2007) write,

…People of color are marginalized by race, and so the centrality of race both is
painfully obvious [to them]…Similarly…working-class people are often painfully
aware of the centrality of class in their lives…In this same way, men often think
of themselves as genderless, as if gender did not matter in the daily experiences of
our lives…[for example,] we treat male political figures as if masculinity were not
even remotely in their consciousness as they do battle in the political arena.” (p.

Earnest epitomizes the orthodox tradition of manhood in educational institutions.

He learned early to not only construct, but palpably construct, his manhood and
masculinity on, what researchers term, four traditional and basic requirements of
manhood 1) Be a big wheel; 2) No sissy stuff; 3) Be a sturdy oak; and 4) Give ‘em hell
(Anderson, 2007; David & Brannon, 1976). These requirements, however, are racialized
and revealed themselves increasingly throughout our conversation. Earnest, in a double-
consciousness frame, “sees” himself through the eyes of whites. For example, Earnest
described how he attempted in high school to “be a big wheel” and to “give [whites] hell”
as he was conscious that whites think of him in inferior terms. He elaborated,

I tried to stay in my books in high school, I stayed ahead in sports, I tried to live
above the white people, that’s what I tried to do in high school. A majority of the
time I did. I played football, basketball, and track. I was top in football, I was
[high-achieving] in basketball, and I was A-1 in track. You know, so I stayed
ahead of…them that way and I showed, you know, my ability that I do good in
the books as well…for honor roll, or whatever awards we had. Not only my football scholarships. I also got academic scholarships you know, that also showed them [whites] that a black man can be successful in books as well as in sports.

During our conversation, Earnest also emphasized the homophobic, “no sissy stuff” construct of the traditional black masculine canon. I asked Earnest what he feels he shares with other African American men at his college. He replied, “School I guess, I mean I can’t say females cause you got a lot of little homos running around…”. When I asked Earnest what he feels made him different from other African American men at his college, he responded, “If you put us [African American men] in a room with a lot of females. I feel like I [would get the most attention] because of the way I talk, they way that I, you know, make my surroundings smile….I feel like could win [females] over with my swagger, with just the way I act”.

Earnest constructs his manhood against an “other” (whites and women) in ways that are physical and sexualized. Along the lines of the DuBois theory of double consciousness, Earnest “feels his twoness”. He attempts to look at himself through the eyes of whites and aligns his movements with what he believes will impress them and change their minds about African American men. His gendered belief about himself is shaped by his existence in a patriarchal country, and within this, a patriarchal African American community. In this vignette, Earnest declares his swagger “can be learned”. It is also maintained to hide his true feelings and to objectify women and men who transgress orthodox notions of masculinity. He, as social role theory states, shows disapproval of those who do not conform to his masculine behavior. His true construction is deeply buried inside his psyche. All that remains of his definition of his manhood is, at core, a mask, masculine performance, a façade, and a cool pose.
Transgressors: Banishment from African American Manhood

One categorization of men that emerged in this study was that of the transgressor. The social location of men who, for a variety of reasons, do not adhere to orthodox notions of masculinity, or in other words, the behavior code (see Chapter I), are referred to as transgressors in the literature (Davis, 2000). In this study, men who were distinct, or otherwise “stood out”, in their masculine behaviors were likely to experience social sanctioning in the African American community, in groups of African American men, in school, and in college. Earnest’s vignette clearly maps how African American men are supposed to think about themselves and behave. Accordingly, a socially discernible focus on women is at the core of this expectation. Many of the transgressors in this study, however, located intellect and talent as a core aspect of who they are without behaving in ways that suggest a focus on women, athletic prowess, hypermasculine or hypersexual performance. In this study, transgressors include many student leaders whose focus was not on attracting “females”, but on shaping a more confident and high-achieving self. The transgressors interviewed hardly used slang, though seemingly comfortable in the interview space. They spoke articulately with impeccable posture, thought, and with no semblance of aloofness, or a “cool pose”.

Men who transgress the African American behavior code are extremely suspect in African American communities, and particularly, in groups of African American men. As the men in this study indicate, suspicions largely include cultural inauthenticity and sexual diversity. Men in this study who transgress in college often experience internal pressure to “wear the masks” of imposters. They are in constant consideration of surrounding identities and will rework their behavior to meet the expectations of these
communities in order to affirm feelings of cultural authenticity, sexual diversity, or heterosexuality while misleading others about how they define themselves as men. The transgressors in this study, like other men in this study, clearly mistrust whites but, unlike other men in this study, articulate mistrust of the African American community and, in particular, groups of African American men (i.e. sexualizers). Troy provided a description of his transgressive world:

I was ostracized because I didn’t follow the black stereotypes because I was raised to be articulate…I was teased because of that, you know, I talked proper. I talked white. I wasn’t ghetto…the girls thought it was funny and the guys teased me and they thought I was gay because I talked proper and because I didn’t like sports…because I wasn’t a big fan of soul food, pigs feet and so on…I also had a thing with females…I didn’t know [why] but I tend to get along better with females than I do males…I don’t know why… In my household, the females were my support system…so when I would go outside [my home], if I had a choice to hang with the guys or hang with the females, I would choose the females…but then the guys would say ‘why are you always with those girls’ and the girls would say [with disapproval] ‘why are you always hanging around girls’…As a black male, I’ve been told I’m a problem to black women and other black males…

Given Troy’s transgressive position, it was interesting to discover why he joined a fraternity, which is a men-only space, and how he negotiated his presence within it. He reflected,

I was never able to get along that well with other guys. I thought that if I joined a fraternity I would form this tight bond, this unbreakable bond [with other guys]…I don’t know why I don’t get along well with guys…I’ve asked my friends and myself and I just don’t know why…[my friends say] other black males are jealous, intimidated, and some say it’s because…I’m on a different level and most guys my age can’t handle that or it’s hard to talk to me because I try to be uncompromising in who [I am]…but it gets hard because I know they talk about me behind my back…

The college men in this study who described transgressive manhood ideals acknowledge the ways in which these postures are considered affronting to other African American men. To avoid this end, some of the participants admitted to performing in
ways acceptable to the behavior code albeit it may not be an authentic reflection of who they are. At times, these surroundings influenced the pride, or lack thereof, that these men displayed in attaining a college education. George described,

I don’t deliberately try to hide my education, but I will act differently. My best friend, he [is] what you [would call] “hood”, when I’m around his friends, I may not speak too much correct English, or I may, my voice will probably be deeper, my [southern drawl] accent might come out a little more. I may walk, you know, a little more differently instead of with my head up, walk with more of a slouch, you know…I just think you do things naturally to fit in…I guess it’s just more of making yourself comfortable so they can feel comfortable around you…

He additionally elaborated,

I think [black males] are pressured to be one way because typical black males are viewed to be basketball players, [black males] got all the women, [black males] got [to have] the flyest car, and party the hardest. But they never really think about the black man who don’t have kids, because he’s into his books and education, and…may not have the right car because he’s saving his money for the future or buying books for school…

Researcher: And who or what is at the root of this pressure?

George: I think society [and] TV… and the black community makes people think this is what black people are about…

Vignette 2: Outing the Transgressive Self, Breaking Silence

Spencer is a performer at heart, a singer, and a consummate perfectionist who friends would describe as a “crazy man who no one understands when [he] directs a choir”. Spencer aligns his language with that in the Christian biblical canon. He talks about “the spirit” and about “being evenly yoked” with peers. Spencer moves from obstacle to opportunity, from dream to reality, accomplishing each of his endeavors with ease.

No one told Spencer, however, that he was born to experience pain. His embraced identities of African American and gay, however, predestined it. His mind is a sea of
painful memories like the memory of the elementary school teacher who seemed so set on “fixing” him by trying to get him to play basketball with the boys. This, he said, was his introduction to his maleness, a message that his natural movements needed to be “fixed”. Other memories also are ever-present. There were the lies he told his parents in order for them to allow Spencer to pursue music vigorously when they deemed that pursuit, “suspect”. Then, there are the pointing fingers, the whispers, the disapproving looks whenever he walks by, the jokes, the piercing sound of the word, “faggot”. And then there was Jesus, always Jesus, who was constantly put in his face as his redeemer and his condemner for his sexual experiences.

Spencer went to church every day of his life as a young boy but could not understand what it meant when church and school told him one identity is wrong but the characteristics of musical and organizational talent, academics, personal reliability and work ethic are so right. He felt that what was positive about him had to outweigh what was deemed socially negative. Everything must be perfect. Nothing must lack. As he moved through his worlds of church, family, school, and college, he did so with “so much second guessing…Am I acting to feminine? Is this the standard?”

Spencer reached an epiphany during his junior year in college. He reflected, “There are so many negative stereotypes for gay, black, males…why? [when] sexuality is nothing more than who you are attracted to and who you sleep with….”. During our conversation, as Spencer reflected, he looked downward, fidgeting with his dreadlocks, and eventually pulling one to rest behind his ear. He began to describe how his fondness for men led to his engagement in same-sex intimacy and how this conflicted with the church and biblical dogma. “You know…Christianity is so important to me,” he said as
he began to cry, “but my issues with this have to be over. It’s too much of a fight…When you have a good, strong Christian foundation, it’s such a battle [and you’re told] it’s not right because it goes against what’s spiritual but you know in your heart, this is who you are…I now know [that] who I am cannot be negated for anyone… This is who I am and how I am.” This central idea strengthened and enabled Spencer to out his transgressive self in college. When he did this, he also intensely outed himself as a leader which, he said, he innately possesses. He also equally outed his Christianity, insisting that it informs his steps toward high-achievement.

Now in his senior year in college, Spencer says through constant meditation, he has garnered the strength to refuse to accept silence that comes with intolerance for his sexually diverse self. Because he elevated his voice, Spencer purported, he is president of his fraternity, the hotbed of orthodox manhood and masculinity. “It was hell coming into this fraternity…I was very nervous…but I don’t wear my sexuality as a broach…and after my first semester in the fraternity [they got to know me]”. “People know”, he says, “that when I take control, [the projects] will be right…they know [this] so well, they become frightened”. Spencer suggests that his obvious comfort with himself pushes others into silence, “No one talks about it. I don’t say [what my sexual orientation is] or wear it on my sleeve. But, if you ask, I’ll tell you. But I never have to [tell others] because no one talks about it.”

Though not without its patriarchal moments, the majority of Spencer’s manhood definition is constructed around the notion of self-sufficiency and a balance between confidence and compassion. He says, “you must be confident in what you do and compassionate, a combination of a soft heart and a firm mind…being a black man…there
is no room for sub-par. You must not be afraid to speak out…The stigma is still on [black men]…” When I asked him how the added labels of black and gay alter his definition of the phrase, “Be a man”. He replied, black, gay, man means to be frightened, very frightened, very scared…it’s very negative”. Spencer says that, despite this, he fights against silence in college because it’s the only way he knows to survive. For example, he asserted, “I will speak out against college teachers who [mistreat] me”. He does the same with all others in college. To say nothing, he insisted, takes him backward in the journey to embrace himself.

**Misogynist: The Paradox of (Woman-Policed) Oppression**

Confessions are difficult because they force me to visit ghettos in the mind I thought I had long escaped…I once hated women, and I take no pride in this confession.

Kevin Powell, Confessions of a Recovering Misogynist (2007)

During data collection, one student stood alone in his manhood typology. Steeped in patriarchy, misogyny, and homophobia, he described his manhood in ways that were, at times, consistent with the sexualizer and transgressor types presented in this chapter, rendering a clear categorization in either, impossible. His statements do not simply frame women as sexual objects and his statements do not simply discuss the mundane details of biological maleness as the sexualizers tended to do. Rather, his conversation transcends a focus on sexual construction toward openness about the systemic advantages of one culture (men) that oppresses another (women). His openness classifies him as an acute form of sexualizer. Unlike the transgressors who will alter masculinity to appear culturally authentic, this student says he possesses the inner strength to “overcome suspicions about his sexuality or blackness for all one needs to do anyway to receive
acceptance in the African American community is to be athletic”. This typology is highlighted as it centers on an open and cognizant dialogue about power dynamics and inequalities between men and women in the black community, the black college, and the broader American society.

Additionally, the vignette that follows highlights how women, particularly black women, act compliantly in allowing, policing, and teaching men to think and act in ways that oppress women and others in college. Because this student sees himself as oppressed by whites, he “feels entitled to African American women’s self-sacrifice and deference” (Ikard, 2007, p. 49). This student clearly dominates African American women, as Ikard writes, “as a way of feeling empowered in a world that denies full access to the white trappings of manhood” (p. 78). Clearly presented in his vignette, a woman (his aunt) acted as accomplice in this manhood definition. In Confessions of a Recovering Misogynist, Kevin Powell (2007) remembers,

My “education” at home with my mother, at school, on my neighborhood playgrounds, and at church placed males at the center of the universe…my mother, working poor and a product of the conservative and patriarchal South, simply raised me as most women are taught to raise boys: the world was mine, there were no chores to speak of, and my aggressions were considered somewhat normal, something that we boys carry out as a rite of passage…

Leonard, whose vignette is presented below, conversed with me about how a boy who was raised consistent with Powell’s reflection acts and thinks as a man in college. Leonard’s espousals bring to mind Powell’s writing about how his misogynistic development informed and affected his collegiate experiences:

I entered Rutgers University in the mid-1980s, and my mama’s boy demeanor advanced to that of pimp. I learned quickly that most males in college are some variety of pimp. Today I lecture regularly, from campus to campus…and I see that not much has changed. For college is simply a place where we men, irrespective of race or class, can—and do—act out the sexist attitudes entrenched
since boyhood…Pimpdom reigns supreme [in college]…There is the athlete pimp, the frat boy pimp, the independent pimp, and the college professor pimp. Buoyed by the antiapartheid movement and the presidential bids of Jesse Jackson, my social consciousness blossomed along racial lines, and behold—the student leader pimp was born.

**Vignette 3: Leonard: Tales of a “Student Leader Pimp”**

Leonard wore his sexist nature like a badge, honoring and praising women, at times, for their “subservience”. He clearly upheld notions of orthodox manhood and masculinity but was also open about his, sometimes feminine, behavior and how it may affect how others in college perceive him. Notwithstanding, he described the ways in which he uses his traditional masculine behaviors (i.e. his loud and booming voice) and masculine attributes (i.e. tall height and broad shoulders) to intimidate women and other African American men he deems weaker. Unlike the sexualizers, who are so decadently unaware of the power of their gender, Leonard is aware of the power of his gender and tries to knowingly use it in every way possible to attain power over others in his own race, and particularly, African American women. He is quite arrogant about the gendered power he possesses at the historically black college he attends. However, a deeper look reveals painful memories.

During our three-hour long conversation, Leonard located “arrogance” at the core of who he is, insisting that “it sets the tone for who I am…it encompasses me…it sets the tone for how I walk around this campus, how I dress, and how I speak…” He is certain, even proud, that his fellow students would describe him as an “a**hole”, albeit he feels is just “blatantly honest”. Leonard’s candor about his own arrogance seems a mask for an inner masculine pain. He is the son of a mother who is no longer a part of his life because “issues” prevented her from raising him. At an early age, Leonard was sent to be raised
by his aunt after his father skirted fatherhood responsibility in hopes of attaining a
successful business career. His father is always available, however, to scrutinize his
decisions and inform him about what is most expected for African American men to
attain any semblance of status and success in America. Leonard’s memories of his
tumultuous experiences with his family were largely discussed. Therefore, it is difficult to
disbelieve that Leonard’s preoccupation with competitiveness, more specifically,
presiding every student organization that “mattered” before and in college, is not some
extension of developmental turmoil.

Leonard is a walking anomaly. He dresses in “button-up dress shirt and slacks” to
fit into a mold of a “black elitist”, and white male patriarch, and to reflect power and
leadership, but dons the hip-hop body décor of earrings and tattoos. Leonard “loves his
blackness” and insisted on attending an HBCU, but also loves the bougie and elitist air of
DuBois University and admitted “looking down” on most HBCUs. He elaborated, “I
visited other HBCUs and they are just a whole other world…I couldn’t believe these
[black] people [who attended other HBCUs] were even in college…it was a just a bunch
of black people in the same area…two totally different standards of living…” Leonard
also said he “loves women” but also thinks they “have ruined the world position of the
United States”. He is also aware of how his own masculinity does not always shadow his
manhood ideals. For example, Leonard touts the tenets of orthodox manhood and
masculinity, insisting that men who are sexually diverse or act feminine should “keep it
under wraps”. He is also, however, aware that he has feminine behaviors that sometimes
lead his African American counterparts, in particular, to question his sexual orientation.
Leonard reached a sexualized conclusion in college. He revealed, “College made me understand how much power a black man can hold and sometimes that power can be our downfall”. He came to understand this power of African American men when he saw women place themselves in a “weird and wonderful” sort of collegiate harem in his college, which has a low enrollment of African American men. He added, “I now realize I can get any female I want especially with all the leadership positions I hold on campus…the females are cutthroat [in competing] for me.” Shortly after the conversation, though, he articulated a statement that centered on men’s systemic oppression of women. Leonard arrogantly declared,

Men will always be the dominant force. I like to think that my voice will carry more weight than a female’s would on this campus…God created Adam first for a reason…Should Hillary Clinton be president? No. We all know how females are under stress and the [female menstrual period] prevents her from being able to be in power over this country…I wouldn’t want to describe myself as sexist but I have to, I am. I believe males are the dominant force…I believe the wife cooks and clean and I am the breadwinner, that is my job…like my wife will never ever cut the grass and she’ll never have to get her oil changed. That’s my job… At the same time, I don’t plan on cooking and cleaning, that’s a [woman’s] job. I feel like there are gender roles in the home…for example, my girlfriend now brings my food to me, I don’t get up, and that’s not something I had to tell her, that’s part of her nature…but I respect women with the utmost, particularly, black women, so much…”

Later, during our conversation, Leonard reflected on where this learning is rooted. He reflected,

I probably got [this thinking] from my aunt because I don’t think I cooked and cleaned growing up. She brought my food to me, but at the same time, she better not be outside cutting grass, she better not be getting her own oil changed…because as a man I know more and I need to stop a woman from getting [taken in by other men]…ironically, this was put in me by a female…it’s only natural that I would feel like this after thirteen, fourteen years of [being raised] like this…”
It was equally intriguing to learn how this thinking manifests itself in his collegiate movement. He said “too many females” on campus is a negative aspect of the college experience. He added,

A lot of the executive boards and committees I’ve served on…some of which I was even heading, was primarily female and I have a loud, dominant voice but when you’re head of a committee, you can’t vote…We, as males, would feel like [certain things were important]. Them, as females, thought [something else] was important and so we would be outvoted…but we had to do things democratically and I think this is a downfall… I wish more males would step up on this campus…I fight tooth and nail to place black males on student committees in college because [when] it’s all females, it damages my morale. When females dominate on these committees, male involvement goes down.

Leonard also witnessed the ways in which women act in compliantly in their own oppression in college when leaders are being selected in student organizations:

[Another example] of how males are dominant and can supercede females…if you put a male against a female for student government president even though this is an 80% female school, I bet you anything the male will win and it’s not just [my thinking], you’d be surprised how many females will vote for a male before they vote for a female. Most females probably think men are more apt in leadership roles…I think males embrace males…I know I embrace the fact we need to uplift the black males who are here… I don’t think a female is going to have the same sentiment by her nature…she’s just mad that there are not enough males for her [dating or procreation]”

The appearance of arrogance seems a mask to hide his confusion about moving in a society in which he is oppressed by whites, but also an oppressor of women and other men, particularly African American men. The masculine behavior or arrogance, like cool pose, clearly resembles an attempt to remain unaffected by others (Majors & Billson, 1994). He insists that he, like the other men in this study, mistrusts whites. Moreover, Leonard says that mistrusting everyone, no matter who they are, must be a central construct of African American manhood. Also in his definition of his manhood, Leonard, like previous generations of many races, uses the Bible to justify systemic placement of
men in the forefront of leadership. Subsequently, his definition of what it means to be a man conflates manhood with leadership. He stated, “When I think about what it means to be a man, I feel like God wanted men to be leaders and wanted men to lead the Earth. Take care of your child, respect women, be an example to other men.” Oppression, however, is inherent in the “respect for women” and “example to other men” if they are not (and cannot be) in leadership.

It is easy for Leonard’s inward struggles to be misunderstood by his outward actions in college. This misunderstanding, subsequently, also opens doors for discrepant shaping of his collegiate experiences. Notwithstanding, he maintained many student leadership roles and seemingly moves in “healthy” student ways as prescribed at the institution but a deeper look reveals patriarchal thinking and masculinity. Leonard’s vignette is an example of the extremity of African American male collegiate oppressed-and-oppressor syndrome. This closer look also revealed an accomplice in his definition of manhood. As Leonard insisted throughout the interview, “my aunt made me the man I am today”.

**Self-Actualizers: Toward an Authentic Masculine Self**

The final categorization that emerged in this study was that of the self-actualizer type of manhood. Most of the men in this study were classified in this typology. Men in this typology constructed manhood definitions around moving toward a more self-actualized self. Along the lines of Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy of needs, self-actualization is the intrinsic growth of what is inside of a person. More specifically, self-actualization refers to the instinctual need of humans to make the most of their abilities and to strive to be the best they can. These men most consistently described the ways in which they were
on a trajectory to embrace the following aspects of a “self-actualizing” manhood: awareness (i.e. ethical vs. inethical), honesty (i.e. voicing multiple cultural concerns), freedom (i.e. personal autonomy), and trust (i.e. acceptance of self, others, nature and resistance to enculturation) (Maslow, 1943). More specifically, their words 1) embraced the facts and realities about themselves and others 2) showed creativity and interests in shaping experiences for others to strengthen senses of self and 3) try to discern people and situations objectively (Maslow, 1943).

To be sure, men in other classifications articulated statements that suggested they would like to be, or will become, self-actualizers. In this analysis, however, the self-actualizer classification was used to group men who did not discuss transgressive experiences as salient to their manhood constructs. And unlike sexualizers, self-actualizer men did not articulate biological-model or sexualized statements that positioned manhood against womanhood or sexually diverse manhood. Though patriarchal, statements from these men were not homophobic, sexist or misogynist in nature. These men appeared closest to reaching their fullest, self-designed potential, independent of social authority as expressed in the Maslow (1943) framework. Common phrases in this typology included, “becoming more of who I am”, “taking a combination of masculine and feminine attributes to make me better”, “being the best me I can be”, “achieving the most I can to make me proud of myself”.

A self-actualizing type of manhood is at the core of conversations about the authentic self, or authentic manhood. In the African American community, a “street” or “ghetto” cultural authentic is largely articulated as tenet of African American manhood with misogyny, homophobia, and hyper-heterosexuality as masculine representations
(Collins, 2005; P. B. Harper, 1996). The men in this study, however, attempted to describe this social construct and get underneath it to try to describe who they are or want to be authentically. Jones (2004), for example, reminds,

The authentic self speaks to who we are at our core, and our interpersonal and societal socializations construct it over long periods of time and through diverse successes and failures. The authentic self is overarching and all other selves are really nothing more than subsidiaries or tributaries (p. 109).

Accordingly, there was a sense in these men’s interviews that they thought about themselves in college as moving toward one overarching self (who they are and want to be at core) with subsidiary selves (i.e. the sexual self, a raced self, the masculine self, the student self, a family self, a school self, a fraternal self and/or other selves). The vignette that follows illustrates one story that was categorized in the self-actualizer typology.

**Vignette 4: Sean: “Being Me to My Fullest”**

Unlike study participants who live or lived in largely diverse metropolitan cities, Sean hails from one of the most rural towns in America. Yet, he was among the most reflective, thoughtful, and respectful about how he thinks about himself in a diverse world. This may be due to the fact that his life in his small, rural town has been anything but the serene and friendly oasis that people have come to associate with small town living. Sean is a former drug dealer who used to have no problem “being in the streets and not in class”. The bodies of many of Sean’s African American boyhood friends and classmates have been fatally ripped apart by bullets, simultaneously ripping apart Sean’s boyhood innocence, vulnerability, and naivété. Perhaps Sean has formed a more self-actualized type of manhood because he has been forced, through school projects and neighborhood experiences, to take a critical look at the power of race and gender in his
life. It was interesting during our conversation to learn those experiences that inform his
definition of manhood.

One experience involved an effort in which he participated to inform the personal
and social choices of young African Americans in the community. To escape the
discouragement he felt in the wake of the murderous tragedies, Sean co-founded an
organization that would make young African American men and women take a critical
look at themselves and their life choices. He co-founded this organization before he went
to college. He was also motivated to do this after taking a critical look at the role his
mother (whose voice was prominent in his family’s household) played in guiding his
decisions and after realizing that this role was absent in the lives of community youth and
young adults he wanted to positively impact. The work of this organization then evolved
to attempt to “get information from different colleges and to…present the information on
different high school campuses and different churches in the community, just trying to
help spread the word”. He noted the intrinsic reward he received from seeing the
difference he was able to make the life directions of community youth. This difference,
he reflected, helped to bring him closer to his purpose in life.

A second experience that was salient to Sean’s raced and gendered
consciousnesses was a project he engaged in high school in which he chose to do a mini-
experiment on race and gender. He described, with fresh awe, a school project in which
two groups of two high school boys (one African American and one white) drove similar
profile vehicles. Each, Sean said “had [silver tire] rims, black, tinted windows, and loud-
playing music”. According to Sean, the only difference in this situation was how the
races were situated in the car. One car had an African American driver and white
passenger, and the other had a white driver and African American passenger. Each car drove around a neighborhood in which police officers were posted. Despite similar vehicle profiles and behaviors of car passengers, the car with the African American male driver was pulled over and reprimanded for loud music. Sean said he learned the following after the experience:

That’s when I knew I was a black male…I have to do more than the whites to get by…I have to try my best to do better than the whites just to be put on the same pedestal. I have to over work them to be seen as equal…I have to finish the race 2 or 3 minutes before him to be even put on the same pedestal. I have to work so much harder…

He located the above neighborhood and school experiences as core experiences of his manhood. When I asked him what the phrase, “Be a man” means to him, he replied,

It really doesn’t have that much meaning to me. I would say [the phrase] “be yourself” actually means more to me than “be a man”…Being a man is being me…I know a lot people say “be a man” means you got to run your household, you’ve got to top everything, but that’s not me. Being a man to me is being me to my fullest, to the best of my ability…Some people say any man can be a dad, but it takes a real man to be a father but I feel like any male can be a man…it’s all about being a bigger man though…Being a man is just being yourself, being true to yourself first of all…

Deeper analysis reveals differences between Sean’s story and the stories of other men in this study. He feels heavily influenced in his manhood philosophy by his mother and his best friend, who is also a woman. Unlike the men in this study, whose manhood conceptualizations are also influenced by their mothers, he is able to voice his mother as central to how he shaped his sense of manhood. Also, most of the men in this study did not befriend women. Notwithstanding, he also formed relationships early with racially diverse others to inform his worldviews. It is for these reasons, he said, that he chose to attend a predominantly white college. The promise of diversity was great. This diversity, Sean said, prevents him from being “weak-minded”. He elaborated,
My whole thing is you can’t let somebody on the outside determine who you are on the inside…Growing up, had I been weak-minded [and] let people outside dictate who I was on the inside, I would have put my music down a long time ago [when black people said] ‘oh, he gay, trying to play the piano’…that wasn’t the people I hung out with or the people I was around…but when I was young, you know, [black boys] don’t play the piano. And then really when I started the violin, that was really odd [to black people]. [They] said “man, you a punk for real” but I also play basketball, I play football, you know, I’m going to get out there and get dirty…I do different things so you can’t let someone outside run and dictate who you are on the inside…

Conclusion

These categorizations are not mutually exclusive. To be sure, during the interviews (which were over two hours each), participants expressed statements which, at times, were consistent with criteria for placement in other manhood typologies. Each participant in this study was classified as a sexualizer, transgressor, or self-actualizer consistent with the dominant way in which each answered manhood-focused questions. Specifically, five were classified as sexualizers, four were classified as transgressors, and fourteen were classified as self-actualizers. The remaining participant, Leonard, was not classified in any of the typologies. Leonard’s thinking about his manhood, at times, clearly aligned with participants in the sexualizer classification. However, he also articulated many statements that fundamentally represent transgressors and self-actualizers. His construction of his manhood was so complex that it precluded a clear categorization in the other typologies. His story is presented for three reasons: (1) the unique complexity of his manhood construction (2) the articulate statements which are not just compulsory heterosexual (see Chapter III for definition) but point to a broader patriarchal system of oppression between men and women that extends beyond sexuality and (3) the salient way a woman acted compliantly in this manhood construction.
It is also important to note that Spencer’s vignette was not chosen to illustrate the transgressor type because Spencer self-identifies as gay. Clearly, one of the other participants’ stories, like Troy’s, could illustrate the transgressive manhood typology. In fact, Spencer could also be classified as a self-actualizer given the description provided for the self-actualizer manhood typology. Spencer, though terrorized for being gay, improved his social experiences in college through constant meditation and the coping mechanism of involving himself in student leadership. This allows him to construct manhood ideals that align themselves with who he authentically is and wants to be as an African American man in college. Notwithstanding, Spencer admits transgressive constructions in school and college. Also, Spencer continues to negotiate a strange duality in college, like transgressors, that is rooted in his banishment from orthodox African American manhood by the individuals with which he engages in college. His reflections suggest that others praise him for what he does, but secretly despise him for who they believe him to be sexually. Through a transgressive lens, his story represents one way in which transgressive African American men may break through some of the subtle (and not so subtle) thoughts and actions that threaten African American men’s engagement and comfort in college. His story illustrates how an African American man may construct a transgressive manhood definition of self and move beyond that definition in ways that improve self-perceptions and collegiate experiences.

The manhood typologies above are presented in this dissertation research to further highlight the complexities, underscore the pressures, and draw attention to the ways in which society, and its sundry contexts, further complicates these men’s manhood constructions. There is a very interesting common theme of dualism present in these
typologies. Sexualizers wear the masks of a hypersexual man with all the cool pose behaviors of aloofness, coolness, and swagger. Earnest can easily be admired for his determination to beat the odds in a racist society but also despised for his objectification of women. Transgressors wear the masks they feel will square them with those behavioral expectations of African Americans and African American men, trying to locate an uncontested manifestation of cultural authenticity. Spencer, as earlier noted, knows others praise him for what he does, but believes they secretly despise who he is. The transgressors in this study walk a balance between being themselves or being accepted in the raced communities with which they most identify.

Leonard, who was classified as a misogynist, revealed the presence of both sexualized and transgressive masks at different times. However, his duality is most clearly that of the systemic oppressed (African American) and the systemic oppressor (male). Last, the self-actualizers represent those most seemingly close to reaching a place of comfort in their manhood constructions in which all of their identities, or selves, align. These constructions, however, are not without moments of double consciousness. Specifically, even the self-actualizing men in this study negotiate a dual view of society. At times, they will wear the mask they feel is pleasing to whites to push against stereotypical images of African Americans, specifically African American men. At other times, they will wear the mask they feel is pleasing to other African Americans to assure this community their allegiance and solidarity. Each step is delicately taken from racial side to racial side in hopes of offending neither in the wrong context. To be sure, this was the case with all manhood typologies. In the words of Paul Laurence Dunbar, they wear the masks.
CHAPTER VIII

CENTERING AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN IN COLLEGE: SUMMARIES, IMPLICATIONS, AND NEW DIRECTIONS

Knowledge becomes wisdom, only when it is put to practical use

Unknown source

This study explored the manhood constructions and collegiate experiences of twenty-four engaged African American men enrolled across twelve, four-year colleges. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to inform these colleges about the ways in which these men construct their manhood. The intent was to understand how these constructions inform colleges about engaged African American male collegians’ enrollment and engagement. Selected colleges were situated across the nineteen southern and border states of America. The African American men who participated in this study were engaged students at their institutions. Engaged students are those who participate in activities that reflect the seven principles of “good institutional practice” (i.e. internships, community service, study abroad) (Kuh, 2003). Each participant also held membership in a historically black collegiate fraternity. This shared commonality among participants proved meaningful to this study in providing strong scaffolding for a virtually unexplored topic. Though disciplined with a shared fraternal affiliation, the study yet illustrates diversity, fullness, and complexity among manhood constructions and collegiate experiences among African American men. The participant selection scheme was bifurcated according to the degree to which participants were engaged in college. At each institution, one participant was selected who was more engaged (held membership in a fraternity and at least one other organization), and one participant was selected who was less engaged (held membership in only the fraternity). Institutions were disaggregated.
according to predominant population (HBCU, HWI) and institutional funding type (public, private).

This chapter provides a brief summary of the study, including study significance, extant literature and research, methodology, and major findings. Second, implications for theory and research are offered. Third, I discuss how higher education may change given these findings. To be sure, there are myriad implications for parents, cultures and communities, and K-12 schooling. Specifically, however, this discussion includes only higher education implications, focusing on the practical implications and strategies for institutions, student affairs, and faculty and administrators. Last, I conclude with a brief summary of implications, directions for future research, and words of reflection about this study.

**Study Summary**

The impetus for conducting this research was birthed from my need to address a dearth in the research about African American men’s collegiate experiences. Enrollment, persistence, and degree completion trends baffle researchers, higher education workers, and media pundits. These trends continue to decrease over decades while African American male collegians’ self-perceptions about their abilities are on the increase, calling into question the apparent incongruencies between African American men and the institutions that serve them. Upon interrogation of higher education literature, disturbing findings (or lack thereof) were discovered: (1) the nexus between African American men’s masculine identities and collegiate contexts was either understudied or scantily addressed; (2) seminal studies on African American men were largely quantitative, ignoring African American male testimonies of their lived experiences as evoked through
qualitative methods; (3) the higher education research on African American men was skewed toward topics of racism, cognitive and academic paralysis, collegiate maladjustment in historically white institutions, attrition and dissatisfaction, and student involvement (4) the extant men’s studies literature was uninformed about the manhood constructions of African American men in college and (5) the samples and participants of past studies did not reflect the fullness and complexity of African American men’s identities and consciousnesses. I sought to contribute to lines of research in which others investigated or discussed the experiences of African American students in college, particularly African American men (W. R. Allen, 1984, 1985; W. R. Allen et al., 1991; Astin, 1977, 1982, 1993; M. C. Brown & Freeman, 2004; Cuyjet, 2006; D’augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Dancy & Brown, 2007; Davis, 1994; Feagin et al., 1996; Fleming, 1984; Flowers & Pascarella, 1999; S. R. Harper et al., 2004; Kuh et al., 1991; Lamont, 1979; Nettles, 1988; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Roebuck & Murty, 1993; Willie & McCord, 1972). More specifically, I believed (and now know) that study respondents’ manhood constructions are reinforced by, influenced by, and essential to higher education experiences.

As a first step in addressing this void in the literature, this study sought to understand the ways in which African American men construct their manhood and how these diverse constructions may contribute to engaging or maladaptive collegiate experiences. The central question of this research was, “How do engaged African American men construct their manhood while in college?” Additional questions were also posited to guide this inquiry: (1) How do these constructions compare by
institutional type? (2) How do these students perceive the institutional role in shaping their collegiate experiences and manhood constructions?

Like previous studies on African American boys and men in school and college, my study also attests to the systemic oppression, pressures, and labels that impede African American men’s movement when these men enroll in college. My study finds uniqueness within, and extends the findings among, studies which investigate African American men’s masculine identities in college (Cuyjet, 2006; Czopp et al., 1998; Davis, 2005; S. R. Harper, 2007; Lasane et al., 2000; Rhoads, 1994). These studies were reviewed in this dissertation. Unfortunately, these previous inquiries compare African American men to white men in collegiate contexts, are quantitative, or conceptually cloudy. My study, which centers African American men in the analysis, further conceptualizes, explains, and enlarges the scope of African American men’s masculine experiences across various cultural contexts in college. At the same time, this study finds a place among, not only raced and gendered writing about African American men, but also sexually oriented, classed, and spiritual work on African American men (Collins, 2005; hooks, 2004a, 2004b; Washington & Wall, 2006; Watson, 2006). These studies, among others, were reviewed, and the authors’ arguments are largely supported by my empiricism.

A qualitative research approach was used to forward this study. Specifically, a combination of grounded theory, phenomenological, and case study methodologies examined the nexus between African American manhood and collegiate experiences. These approaches were positioned in complement to each other to increase the analytic power of respondent narratives. The research methods were applied to data gleaned from
face-to-face interviews conducted with twenty-four engaged African American men. Average interview length was over two hours long. Respondents were African American, traditional college-aged (18-24), and upperclassmen (sophomores, juniors, and seniors). The participants in this study were majoring across a breadth of disciplines. Each, as the fraternity policy mandates, maintained a 2.5 grade point average (G.P.A) or greater and was, more or less, civically concerned and intellectual at the time of this study. Additionally, they were also extremely reflective, thoughtful, and articulate in answering interview questions. Each of the 24 participants was contacted by telephone to arrange an interview that would range between 1 ½ to 2 ½ hours. After I conducted the interviews, they were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. I reviewed them for accuracy and then compared transcriptions against my research journals.

After conducting analysis on each interview, I compiled textural-structural descriptions of manhood constructions and collegiate experiences for each participant. Textural-structural descriptions are simply the “whats” and “hows” of their experiences. These, which captured the themes of each participant’s interview, were e-mailed to participants to serve as vehicles for member-checking. Participants confirmed and/or clarified themes from their interviews before the data was categorized as displayed in Chapters VI and VII. Common and prominent invariant constituents were grouped to give rise to the following themes of manhood constructions and collegiate experiences: (1) self-expectations (2) relationships and responsibilities to family (3) worldviews and life philosophies (4) double-consciousness (5) institutional recognition (6) constructing faculty/student relationships (7) mentoring and supporting (8) bridging campus and community.
The manhood constructions of the respondents in this study did not differ by institutional context. I pursued this direction in my research to respond to a previous assumption in research that there were differences in the gender role construction of African American men by institutional context (Fleming, 1984). No invariant constituents and subsequent themes support that these men construct their manhood differently across institutional types. Rather, institutional type reinforces manhood constructs that the broader society informs. In addition, this study did not bear out Fleming’s posits about African American manhood, masculinity, and the ways in which these contribute to African American men’s engagement in college.

Contextual analysis revealed the different ways in which predominant institutional population affects institutional handling of African American men. Many of the African American men who were enrolled in HBCUs aligned language about manhood and their collegiate experiences resonant with the missions of HBCUs. This finding highlights congruency between institutional missions, African American manhood, and collegiate experiences thus supporting the notion that men enrolled in the HBCUs felt valued. Also, respondents enrolled in HBCUs report far more cognitive and affective functioning in those contexts versus those attending HWIs. In this study, the holistic cognitive benefits that faculty, staff, and students provided point to HBCUs as a more effective model for the student selves and many masculine selves of African American men. In these same contexts, however, participants identified gender differences that they believe sacrifice the interests of African American men and attempt to pigeonhole their campus movement, and subsequently, their broader social movement.
Contextual analysis also revealed the ways in which HWI-enrolled men perceive their interests as sacrificed and their presence undervalued in these contexts. Many participants described mentoring programs that their HWIs had in place. However, participants reported that the institution acted counter to the work of mentoring programs in covert ways. Examples included culturally insensitive lecture series, widespread publication of African American male misdeeds and achievements of international students, and disparate student organization allocations. Further, respondents also reported faculty and students who compromised the work of mentoring programs through culturally insensitive lectures and conversations, tokenism, and summoning the police to question African American men’s social gatherings.

As participants attested, they do not persist through college without experiencing tremendous pressure from themselves, their families, and their institutions. Those manhood constructions that have not already been shaped and policed by their pre-college experiences are challenged to conform to orthodox African American manhood (in HBCUs) or to negotiate cultural mistrust (in HWIs). Many of these pressures emerged when the participants answered manhood-focused questions. Emerging divergent perspectives informed a grouping of these men into manhood typologies. The four manhood typologies emergent in this study are: (1) sexualizer (2) transgressor (3) misogynist and (4) self-actualizer. The manhood typologies were presented in this dissertation research to further highlight the complexities, underscore the pressures, and draw attention to the ways in which society, and its sundry contexts, further complicates these men’s manhood constructions.
Implications for Theory and Research

Four theories framed this research: (1) DuBois’ (1903) Theory of Double Consciousness (2) Cross’ (1991) Theory of Nigrescence (3) Eagly’s (1987) Social Role Theory and (4) Tinto’s (1987; 1994) Theory of Social and Academic Engagement. The data gleaned in this study clearly weaved in and out of these theories, serving as constructive lenses for the research questions posited. Participants, individually and collectively, were assessed within the theoretical frames. First, I viewed the data through these raced and gendered lenses to understand how and why manhood phenomena become shaped in African American men’s thinking. Second, I merged the theoretical power of the raced and gendered theories with Tinto’s theory of social and academic engagement to situate participants’ manhood constructions (which encompass ideas, norms, and values) in collegiate contexts. This theoretical scaffolding provided a fresh perspective as to the “what”, “why”, and the “how” African American men’s manhood constructions inform their collegiate experiences.

In (1903/2005), DuBois ominously wrote,

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil and gifted with second-sight in this American world—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro: two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. This history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self…(p. 12-14)

This theory is wholly supported in the findings of this research. As mentioned in Chapter VI, the greatest analytical difficulty was divorcing the respondents’ manhood
constructions from the constructions respondents believe others wanted them to have. The men in this study all describe moments of discomfort in their manhood consciousnesses. These participants felt their “twoness” in college. These discomforts were either alleviated or aggravated according to the presence of others in historically black and historically white contexts. In historically black institutions, these men were most directly reminded of their twoness with reflections of life before college or their lived experiences outside the college. In historically white institutions, moments of “twoness” are ever-present. The men in this study clearly identified experiences in which they were attentive to where they sat, what they said, how they said it, and what they were seen doing in recognition of their presence in a world of cultural difference that historically “cursed and spit upon them” (DuBois, 1903/2005, p. 15) These men are haunted by the images of African American men that dominate the media and that they believe dominate the thinking of cultural others about who and what African American men have evolved to become. Thus, much of their academic and social involvement is engaged in an effort to serve as examples to others in their colleges about what African American men are and can become in college. Hence, the study participants feel compelled to persist and engage in college not because they “want to” (like the choices of the enfranchised in American society) but because they feel they “have to”.

Research recognizes that double-consciousness is a constructive theoretical approach to understanding African American men’s experiences in the broader society (Byrd & Guy-Sheftall, 2001; P. B. Harper, 1996; Wallace, 2002). However, few studies in higher education use this theory. Ricky Jones’ (2004) work, Black Haze, is one of the few studies to situate double-consciousness as lens to analyze the experiences of African
American men in college, but that work chiefly addresses African American men’s movement in the black greek-letter fraternal world, not the higher education world. Quantitative research is hard-pressed to capture such lived experiences through closed, fixed response questionnaires and surveys and without vehicles that delve deeper into the consciousnesses of African American men. This may be why much quantitative research, and some qualitative research, on African American men illuminates many problems including maladjustment to HWIs, academic and cognitive paralysis, unwelcoming collegiate atmospheres, and attrition (W. R. Allen, 1984; W. R. Allen et al., 1991; Astin, 1977, 1982, 1993; Cuyjet, 2006; D'augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Davis, 1994; Feagin et al., 1996; Fleming, 1984; Flowers & Pascarella, 1999; S. R. Harper et al., 2004; Kuh et al., 1991; Nettles, 1988; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Scholars know that these problems exist but not why African American men believe they exist. Previous research has greatly ignored the voices of African American men who can testify about how and why their lived experiences in college impact the discouraging findings in the research aforementioned. Possibly, viewing African American men’s college experiences through a double-consciousness lens may bring researchers closer to understanding why trends of enrollment and persistence steadily decrease while African American male collegian’s self-perceptions of their abilities increase.

To be sure, this study also points to additional consciousnesses in respondents’ manhood constructions that further bifurcate thinking, movement, and behavior of this group. In DuBois’ (1903) language, African American men are born with a second-sight in America. This sight represents a peculiar duality in which they see themselves through the eyes of others, particularly those they view as their oppressors (whites). However, the
gay man in this study also saw himself through the eyes of heteronormativity. The dark-skinned men in this study saw themselves through the eyes of those who were light-skinned. Interviewees from low socioeconomic status backgrounds saw themselves through the eyes of others who were higher socioeconomic status. Each identity additionally added a layer of oppression to the consciousness of these men and, therefore, manifested in their movements on campus.

The second theory, Cross’ (1991) nigrescence theory, was also a constructive theoretical lens to bring to this data. Cross’ nigrescence theory groups racial identity into three clusters: (1) Pre-identity (2) Immersion-Emersion Identity and (3) Internalization. Each cluster describes the attitudes African Americans feel toward their race, or in Cross’ words, blackness. The pre-identity stages refer to the attitudes African American internalize that resemble self-hatred or low salience for African Americans. Some participants, particularly those who attended institutions in the deep south of the United States gave statements that aligned themselves with the Immersion-Emersion construct of the Cross theory. This cluster represents the first step toward internalizing African American identity. A few of the participants mentioned watching movies like Roots, Rosewood, and Amistad, or reading books which depicted and described the egregious, heinous, and excessive ways in which whites treated African Americans historically. These experiences, and others, placed them in the Intense Black Involvement stage of the Immersion-Emersion construct (Cross, 1991). Other research argues that participants who engage these visual and literary materials often enter a racial identity stage marked with a particular dualism (Vandiver et al., 2001). Specifically, engagement with these materials is positive, enlightening African American perspectives about African American people
and history. On the other hand, negative aspects of this engagement include the rage, guilt, and anxiety that emerges after learning about these histories (Vandiver et al., 2001). Some participants in this study clearly fit this construct and insisted that they negotiated anti-white attitudes more cognitively and would not dare verbalize their thinking.

The majority of the respondents fell into the Internalization construct of Cross’ (1991) model in which they are all on various trajectories of blackness. Each respondent’s trajectory varies in the ways in which he views culturally diverse others. All respondents, however, viewed culturally diverse others with some level of mistrust. Most participants spoke at length about ways in which to strengthen the African American community, lending support to their classification in the final stage of internalization. Cross writes that the final stage of internalization is experienced when individuals begin to engage issues that take them beyond a personal sense of blackness. Nearly all of the participants in this study described experiences in which they were engaging the community in some way to uplift African Americans. Other researchers have also found African American men, particularly engaged African American men in college, to exist in stages of either Immersion-Emersion or internalization (C. M. Taylor & Howard-Hamilton, 1995).

Also, participants in this study were asked whether they would take a pill which could change their raced and gendered identities to any combination besides African American and man. This question got to the root of the blackness (and gendered) internalization process. They all replied with an emphatic “No!” This finding brings to mind a prophetic assertion by DuBois (1903/2005):

[The American Negro] wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He
would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face… (p. 15).

Third, respondent impressions were consistent with social role theory. Eagly’s (1987) social role theory posits that the behavioral differences between men and women are the result of cultural stereotypes (how they are supposed to act) and the resulting social roles that are taught. These differences, Eagly argues, are rooted in developmental experiences in which labor is divided between men and women. These divisions are constructed to shape men and women into roles that society then polices. Virtually all of these men reflected about experiences in which they came to “know they were men”. This knowledge, as Eagly states, was shaped through experiences in which parents, guardians, or elders divided labor between boys and girls, men and women. When the men in this study were adolescents, they were taught to drive, and their sisters taught to ride. Some of the boys were instructed to perform “mannish” behaviors, particularly those who are classified as sexualizers in this study. The girls, interviewees felt, were taught to find that pursuit pleasurable.

Breaches of these expectations brought shameful disapproval. Men in this study, particularly those classified as Transgressors, who picked up girls’ toys, played with girls’ toys, or in other ways engaged girls that did not involve “harmless molestation” were shamed or otherwise classified as weak or, somehow, less than men. Many participants in this study are clear that not much about these rules change in college. While study participants insisted their intellect is more easily embraced by other African Americans in college, they also declare that social expectations of what African
American men are supposed to do, choose, and be in college remain. In the respondents’ minds, men are the pursuers while women are the pursued. Men must complete college, find a job and provide, while women can enter the workforce if they choose. Notwithstanding, the men in this study feel they do not have as much flexibility in their collegiate or post-collegiate choices. In the respondents’ thoughts, words, and suggestions, men will provide for women and children or they will receive a certain social banishment from manhood. As Chapter VI reports, fathers or other African American men were clearly identified as police of masculinity. In the vein of social role theory, the respondents were required to behave as, and stand with, men when gendered topics were discussed or social roles discernible. This may be why most participants cannot voice (or have difficulty and hesitancy voicing) their mothers as teachers of manhood because to do so centers women in the construction of their masculine identities.

The respondents in this study believed that the expectations of communities, particularly African American communities, have evolved to manufacture African American men who are “supermen” or “jacks of all trades”. At all times, they are expected to be physically strong, athletic (or at least look athletic), provide leadership, entertainment, and quiet emotional strength to their families and their communities and be intelligent. Participants, by and large, locate their pressures to conform actions and pursuits to media-produced images of African American men and others in the African American community. The ways in which these men act and pursue, they insist, are policed by families and other African Americans regardless of whether participants attended historically black or historically white institutions. For example, a significant
number of participants transferred institutions or changed liberal arts majors to those in
the hard sciences to satisfy those who believed the latter majors were more suitable to
provide a man with the type of social movement he “should” have. Many participants
who felt free to elect their own majors believed their career choices would remain
pigeonholed by social expectations. One interviewee stated that he will no longer pursue
a career in the culinary arts because his family’s edict requires him to pursue a career that
will position him in ways to support a wife and children. This requirement inwardly
incarcerates the participant, preventing him from pursuing his passion. Notwithstanding,
colleges are charged to foster senses of personal freedom and autonomy in their students
(Baxter Magolda, 2000). Little research, if any, investigates the ways in which African
American men’s movement in college is hindered by social role expectations.

Last, respondents’ impressions pervaded but eventually stagnated within the
integration process that Tinto’s (1987; 1994) theory of social and academic engagement
outlines. Tinto's theory first stated that students who perceive incongruence between
themselves and the institution will experience difficulty becoming integrated and,
therefore, are less likely to persist. Tinto’s later modifications of his model sought to
better explain the ways in which students move, behave, and interact with institutional
environments, and how these behaviors and interactions impact persistence. Tinto details
the process as one navigated through stages of separation, transition, and incorporation.
More specifically, students leave the norms of past communities pre-college (i.e. family
and friends), become exposed to unfamiliar norms, and are incorporated when (and if)
they adapt to institutional norms. Once incorporated, according to Tinto (1994), students
become integrated but do not necessarily persist. Studies, since, have sought to give this
theory empirical grounding (Bean, 1983; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983)

Tinto (1994) also writes that students who experience difficulty academically and
socially integrating face a certain propensity to abandon collegiate persistence despite the
odds. Findings in my study suggest that Tinto’s assertions may be more multifaceted in
respondents’ lived experiences. The men in this study, despite feelings of social
disengagement, are rejuvenated and persist against the odds from places deeply rooted in
their manhood constructions. Across institutional contexts, many respondents engaged
themselves in activities considered “good institutional practice” (Kuh, 2003). However,
most participants continued to feel unincorporated, disinvited or otherwise undervalued at
the institutions they attend. As discussed in Chapter VI, many of the respondents who
were enrolled in HBCUs articulated manhood constructs that were resonant with the
missions of their institutions. This suggests strong incorporation of the (more or less
engaged) respondents into the historically black institutions they attend. Some of these
men, particularly Transgressors, reported the ways in which African American men’s
choices are scrutinized and their choices paralyzed in historically black contexts.
Subsequently, they highlighted the ways in which they feel devalued at their institutions.
This finding suggests that participants who construct more transgressive manhood
definitions may feel better incorporated or valued in an institution (i.e. HWIs) in which
their masculine actions are less scrutinized, particularly if the participants feel more
socially marginalized by their manhood constructions than race. Such an institution
would hold more institutional diversity with less visibility on differences within one
group or race.
HBCU-enrolled interviewees who felt this disconnect, however, never stated or even suggested that they would leave their institutions given feelings of insignificance. Their persistence reflects their unique masculine struggles to fulfill a promise to their families to reclaim positions as benevolent and community patriarchs and to escape the stereotypical strongholds of American society. In other words, these men described how they were ignoring the observed misdeeds of their institutions and remained focused on incorporating themselves into the broader American society, not the institution. It is difficult to assert that the participants in this study were more likely to leave their institutions due to perceived incongruencies between self and context.

All HWI-enrolled participants, to varying degrees, feel marginalized by their race in historically white contexts. This finding is manifest in participant discussions about perceived institutional inequalities and their focus on “giving back” expressly to African American communities. In HWIs, these participants (who are also more or less engaged), do not feel incorporated but they are involved in their institutions to various degrees. They, like HBCU-enrolled respondents, insist that feelings of marginalization and undervalue does not detrimentally affect their persistence. Rather, they are motivated to disprove what they believe to be dominant expectations for their failure and attrition. Participant statements suggests that institutions of higher education may need to ask more than “What are your pre-college experiences?”. Another helpful question may be, “What are the ways in which you experienced these?” Answers to these questions may help colleges funnel transgressive men, for example, into social experiences that become stronger predictors for their persistence or attrition. Concurrently, research encourages institutions to focus their attention, not only on the availability of good institutional
practices, but the applications, deliveries, and behaviors associated with these (Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2000). The juxtaposition of these empirical findings may point to a revisiting of the Tinto theory toward a more holistic model of applicability.

Implications for Practice in Higher Education

Institutional Context and Climate. This research joins with previous research that encourages institutions to mine the sources for improving institutional context and climate (Altbach, Lomotey, & Rivers, 2002; antonio, 2004; Bowman & Smith, 2002; M. C. Brown & Freeman, 2004; Cabrera et al., 1999; Hurtado, 1992; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). Higher education must work to construct an institutional climate that clearly does not tolerate, and is no way complicit, in perpetuating prejudicial thinking and actions. This is particularly salient for institutions that seek to retain engaged African American men, and possibly all African American men.

The interviewees clearly expressed the ways in which they felt their professors, culturally diverse students, and African American students used stereotypes to inform their interactions with the men in this study. Colleges must bring together administrators, faculty, staff, students, and parents (if possible) to weed the cultural tensions and work to foster a climate of inclusion for African American men. Multiple stereotypes that attempt to locate African American male collegians’ cultural authenticity have no place in college and only fuel the student divisiveness the men in this study perceived on their campuses. These stereotypes include but are not limited to: former gang member, soft, hard, hypersexual and sexually endowed, nerd, sell-out, dangerous, pimp, athlete, player, stupid, lazy, criminal, thug, or as many interviewees described, collegiate thugs. Nothing
about an African American male collegian who constructs his manhood and masculinity in ways comparable to United States senator, Barack Obama should change how higher education is delivered to an African American man who constructs manhood and masculinity comparable to Snoop Dogg (a rap artist). They are both engaged African American men in college and deserve equal opportunity, as any student group, to feel entitled to any institutional resources deemed “good institutional practice”. The delivery of these resources can, in no way, reflect a colonized institutional axiology of intolerance, closedness, and presumptuousness.

Respondents’ perceptions of racialized and gendered ideologies among college personnel reinforced manhood constructs and subsequent migration toward others who shared similar backgrounds, experiences, and raced and gendered profiles. As previous research finds, cultural awareness workshops are required on all campuses to discuss strategies of fostering climates of equity, tolerance and inclusion (Cabrera et al., 1999; Hurtado et al., 1998). In these workshops, open dialogues should not only focus on race. These conversations should evolve to consider the intersections of race, gender, sexual orientation, spirituality, skin-color, and other consciousnesses. These cultural workshops should be required and held both routinely and as needed with diverse faculty, staff, and student representatives required by institutional policies to participate. Thinking about these additional consciousnesses may inform deeper and more diversified strategies aimed at serving many types of African American men (i.e. sexualizers, transgressors, misogynists, and self-actualizers). Cultural awareness workshops must include conversations about engaged African American men, and possibly all African American men, in their unique consciousnesses. These workshops and open dialogues must be at
the center of institutional conversations about recruitment, enrollment, retention, and persistence strategies. These conversations should occur often to ensure institutional accountability for and commitment to serving the needs of ever-changing institutional student populations, particularly engaged African American men who, like all African American men, are enrolling in and graduating from college at dire rates.

Institutional ideologies must include the understanding that African American men, particularly those who are engaged, come to college from multiple pre-collegiate contexts and experiences and are not to be viewed monolithically. Readers of my study may even assume that because these men share membership in the same fraternity, a singleness of pre-college or college experiences is indicated. To make this assumption is a grave mis-negotiation of the complexity of these men’s identities as well as the complexities of their collegiate- and worldviews. Fraternity membership notwithstanding, the respondents in this study were multicolored in their past and present experiences, perceptions, and thinking. Some were single-parent fathers; some held regionally (i.e. northern vs. southern United States) influenced beliefs; some were from first-generation college students, and some were not; some were former gang members; others were budding thespians; some were in the center of African American upper class society; others self-identified as socioeconomically “poor”; some were athletes, while others enjoyed music and visual arts. All of these pre-college experiences influenced the ways in which study participants transition, experience, engage, and persist in their institutions. Today’s college campuses must better understand the complex experiences, identity constructions, and ideologies African American men bring with them to campus.

Considering these complexities bring institutions closer to understanding how to
construct a greater sense of community and bridge raced and gendered divides among students and between African American male collegians and higher education professionals.

The participants’ narratives and statements suggest HWIs have much work to do. The HWI-enrolled men conversed about experiences that point to the primacy of race at the institutions at which they attend. Many of the men in this study voiced concerns about social systems and/or networks in college in which they will never be a part. In turn, these men believed that these networks contributed to institutions that knew less about them, and therefore, were more likely to discriminate against them, treat them unfairly, and sacrifice their interests. The respondents noted efforts historically white institutions had in place “for minorities”. Respondents’ statements suggested that they believed the institutions viewed these efforts marginally and that these efforts required more attention, financial support, and other cultural involvement to create a sense of community. Further, the HWI-enrolled respondents described university actions that countered any of their “minority efforts”. The respondents’ assertions reflected three ideologies which, research finds, continues to permeate historically white institutions: (1) deeply rooted cultural values about the proper role of whites over African Americans, (2) systematic institutional practices that reinforce and fulfill these indigenous cultural values, and (3) individual beliefs and attitudes that reflect such core American cultural values, related informal arrangements, and formal practices (Smith, Altbach, & Lomotey, 2002).

Study participants listed many ways in which institutions may begin to reverse these ideologies and create institutional environments that signify institutional commitment to valuing engaged African American men, and possibly, all African
American men. Historically white institutions that purport a commitment to better serving African American men, particularly those who are engaged, must embrace affirmative action by maintaining a commitment to culturally sensitive hiring practices for faculty, staff, and administrators. One study participant stated how seeing the majority of African Americans in janitorial capacities does nothing for his perception of an equitable campus community. These men desire a social system in which they may feel centered. These men see African American professors and administrators (particularly those who are male) as most sensitive to their issues, concerns, and experiences. The presences of African American professors and administrators who are women, however, also were identified by participants as contributing to a centered feeling. Other participants identified the need for more topics of race, gender, and culture to be discussed in class, particularly those participants who were enrolled (or planned to enroll) in liberal arts courses. Other suggestions involved committing to, and moving more intentionally toward, African American studies programs which fulfill the study participants’ longing for stronger cultural situatedness at the institutions they attend. According to study participants, institutional commitment to the creation of African American studies curricula not only improves their collegiate experiences but strengthens these men’s constructions of their masculine identities. These latter ideas, the men suggest, hold opportunities for professors to challenge their cognitive growth and cultural awareness in healthy ways.

In HBCUs, as stated earlier, the other identities that study participants brought to college were more visible and thus further scrutinized by other African Americans. Perceived identities included sexual orientation, class, and region. In this vein, antonio
(2004) writes that “increasing the racial and ethnic diversification of a student body can make a single majority group and culture less visible” (p. 571). Since the historically black institutions that participants attended were predominantly populated by African Americans, other identities were easily visible. These other visibilities in colleges affected African American men’s manhood development and collegiate experiences differently. In this study, participants with sexualizer and misogynist types of manhood constructions found adjustment in their HBCUs while participants with transgressive manhood types found maladjustment. HBCUs are required to tease out gendered and homophobic ideologies. University faculty, administrators, and staff are required to discuss the ways in which historically black institutions perpetuate, act complicit, or seek to imprison men in gender roles that lead to the oppression of women or men deemed weaker. One participant noted that institutional staff at the historically black institution he attended told him that residing in near-dilapidated dormitories was a “man’s right of passage”, while the institution is more focused on providing women a more comforting and affective functioning in institutional dormitories. Open dialogue should focus on strategies to encourage men to elevate their voices if they feel the institution does not serve their needs without being branded “a troublemaker” “soft”, a “sell-out”, or a “fag”.

It is not lost in this research that HBCUs were cutting-edge in the higher education landscape, being perhaps the first type of higher education institutions to enroll students from diverse backgrounds (M. C. Brown & Freeman, 2004). This study also recognizes previous research which identifies HBCUs as providing African American students a more congenial atmosphere and forming African American students into college graduates and productive members of American society (despite disparate
funding and resources) when other institutions denied these students’ enrollment (M. C. Brown & Freeman, 2004; Lamont, 1979; Roebuck & Murty, 1993; Willie & McCord, 1972). With these historic and present milestones in mind, HBCUs must move forward, continuing to set trends in institutional climate by weeding any patriarchal ideologies that view men and women unequally, threaten institutional retention of African American men, and perpetuate hidebound, and long-gone thinking about what African American men (or women) are supposed to do, think, act, and become. Historically black higher education must lead in expelling, not mimicking the closedness of the African American community.

**College Personnel Relationships with African American Men.** All the participants discussed the ways in which their experiences and manhood was shaped by those who engaged the work of mothering. Specifically, mothers, grandmothers, other valued women, and even college administrators, staff, and faculty were identified as engaging the work of mothering. Study participants tied this work directly to their manhood constructions and collegiate persistence. Interview analysis leads this study to another conclusion—Faculty need to do more than “put their faculty hats on” while other higher education personnel need to do more than “clock in”. In a similar vein as M. C. Brown and Davis (2000), I pose the following question to higher education, “Where are all the mothering faculty and staff?”

Colleges, as sites of manhood constructions and learning about self and others are cultural spaces (M. C. Brown & Davis, 2000; Freire, 1993, 1998). In these spaces, faculty and staff who are also charged with transferring cultural knowledge, traditions, and values as well as facilitating, serving, and nurturing African American men’s intellectual
awareness and social movement should engage the work of mothering. Additional research aligns with this idea, arguing that the work of mothering should be placed in the center of faculty pedagogy in, and personnel interactions with, African American boys and young men in both schooling and collegiate pipelines (M. C. Brown & Davis, 2000; Dancy, forthcoming, 2008; Davis, 2000; Underwood, 2000). However, findings in the present study tie this argument to collegiate contexts more explicitly. Perusing the dictionary or relevant academic work locate the definition of mothering as treating a person with kindness and affection and trying to protect them from anything dangerous or difficult; nurturing (M. C. Brown & Davis, 2000). Historically black colleges and universities draw upon this approach, thus serving as the best possible model for enrolling, engaging, and graduating African American male collegians (M. C. Brown & Davis, 2001; M. C. Brown & Freeman, 2004; Dancy & Brown, 2007; Lamont, 1979; Roebuck & Murty, 1993). Participant narratives and reflections bear out this assertion. Toward a mothering end, female and male collegiate personnel can “mother” the African American men in this study. Underwood (2000), who is an African American man, describes his epiphany about the gender of mothering:

Looking back over the past ten years, I have learned that motherhood is not necessarily determined by gender…In African American families, roles are often flexible, with a support system to help adjust, meet, and cope with life demands…The African American male has multiple cultural roles to play…Primary care-giving, mentoring, modeling, nurturing, and assessing were probably the most important responsibilities for me as a mother…

Though Underwood (2000) locates his understanding of mothering in the context of the African American family, all collegiate personnel, regardless of race and gender, are required to do the work of mothering engaged African American men, and, possibly, all African American. African Americans, women, and other minorities should not bear
the brunt of mothering African American men, or any other diverse students, in college. This expectation draws cultural taxation. Cultural taxation is defined as the obligation to show “good citizenship” toward the institution by serving its needs for ethnic participation (Padilla, 1994). This cultural taxation manifests in a variety of disparate ways. For example, African American, women, and other minorities who are college faculty negotiate a hidden workload in which diverse faculty are assigned disproportionately heavy loads of committee work or are sought by diverse students who believe they share like histories of oppression (M. C. Brown, 2000; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Therefore, all faculty, administrators, and staff are required to center a mothering position in their epistemologies and axiologies. This will help relieve the institutional burden of diverse faculty, staff, and administrators who may do the work of mothering but often are prevented or excluded from reaching leadership positions across institution-wide areas (M. C. Brown, 2000). As the men in this study insist, seeing diversity, particularly African Americans, in institutional leadership reinforces their self-expectations of themselves as men and informs their senses of value in the institution.

The above research and recommendations align with arguments presented by Anita Allen (1997) and Patricia Hill Collins (2005) who suggest that African American women can possess a special meaning to African American men enrolled in college. Given my study’s findings, men can “mother” and women, particularly African American women, can be African American men’s mentors, informing constructions of manhood and collegiate movement and persistence. The men in this study emphasized the importance of mentoring to their manhood and collegiate trajectory. Faculty and staff, particularly those in HWIs, are encouraged to identify college personnel who are
authentically interested in the work of mentoring engaged African American men, and possibly, all African American men. This initiative must be a university-wide approach. African American men, upon their campus arrival, are to be introduced, linked, or otherwise connected with college personnel who will mentor them. In *African American Men in College* (2006), successful mentoring programs are profiled from which other institutions may draw components that fit institutional infrastructure. The following are shared characteristics across mentoring program literature and other syntheses (M. C. Brown, Davis, & McClendon, 1999; Cuyjet, 2006):

1. Assigning a faculty or staff mentor.
2. Assigning of a student or peer advisor.
3. Formally establishing student or peer networks.
4. Offering academic assistance workshops.
5. Offering computer skills workshops and assistance.
6. Offering tutorial assistance
7. Constructing social activities and programming.
8. Offering provisions for financial assistance.
9. Creating orientation or welcome programs.
10. Offering career decision-making and planning workshops
11. Offering transition-to-graduate school support

Faculty and staff are also encouraged to align their mentoring of African American men, particularly engaged men, in a combination of the following mentoring paradigms: (1) academic midwifery (2) role molding and (3) frientoring (M. C. Brown et al., 1999). Each is highlighted below:
1. Many participants in this study described the ways in which faculty and staff tapped into their manhood, intellectual curiosities, and imagination by exposing them to books, museums, movies and projects. Faculty, in particular, were more explicitly tied to the enlightenment of these students in such ways. Staff who are also in close proximity to engaged African American men, can assume a similar mentoring posture as well. Accordingly, academic midwifery is defined as the way in which faculty assist their students in producing new ideas and intellectual insights (M. C. Brown et al., 1999). These relationships with students often begin as college personnel engage the mundane capacities of their work but become mentoring relationships when college personnel “bring to life the sleeping potential within their students that, without assistance, would otherwise be wasted” (M. C. Brown et al., 1999, p. 113). Academic midwives coach students to bring the best thinking to class. Academic midwives respect diverse ideas and are committed to positively affecting students’ intellectual, personal, and professional development.

2. Role-molding is not to be confused with role-modeling. Role modeling would involve college personnel serving as a symbol of what is possible or aspired (M. C. Brown et al., 1999). Role molding, on the other hand, involves college personnel taking an active role in shaping engaged African American men into who they intellectually and professionally aspire to be. College personnel are warned against trying to shape these men into any other molding than what these men seek to be and become for themselves.
3. Collegiate personnel are also encouraged to “frientor” engaged African American men, and possibly all African American men in college. This infuses the friendly relationship into the faculty, administrative, and staff posture. This mentoring paradigm is often viewed as complex as college personnel are often discouraged from engaging such relationships with students (who are viewed in more inferior ways) as it draws ethical questions for many college personnel (M. C. Brown et al., 1999). As M. C. Brown et al. reminds, however, discouraging these relationships (which often take place out-of-class) counters the idea of what it means to mentor students. In this paradigm, college personnel provide guidance and wisdom beyond that in students’ daily movement on campus while students maintain a position of respect and reverence. This relationship, though complex, can also be most rewarding as faculty and students develop a sense of agency in each other as well as mutual respect and value in each other’s thoughts, ideas, and intellectual pursuits.

Administrators, faculty, staff, and upperclassmen who mentor engaged African American men are required to be knowledgeable about programs offered by institutions and be ready to suggest them if they come to mind as apropos complements or interventions that improve the experiences of this group.

Again, college personnel need to do more than just “put their administrator, faculty, and staff hats on”. Instead, they are required to don hats of cultural guardianship. Cultural guardianship is defined in the literature as advancing professional and personal developments of students by nurturing and protecting the respect for different cultural
identities (race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, etc.) (Mobley, 2000). In this effort, college personnel, particularly faculty, are encouraged to do two important things: 1) critically examine their own cultural identities and 2) think about how the ways in which these identities intersect and interact with engaged African American men (and possibly all African American men and other cultural identities). Personnel, particularly faculty, who act as cultural guardians, structure, create, and follow practices that meet these men’s academic, cognitive, and social needs. Many scholars have noted the ways in which acting as cultural guardians involves reducing prejudice and shaping equity pedagogy (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; Howard, 2000; Solorzano & Villalpando, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2000). One of these syntheses draws on cultural guardianship principles specifically for African American males (Howard, 2000).

In class, faculty should approach their use of language with care. Faculty language, unknowingly, can betray faculty intentions. Many participants in my study reported experiences to this effect. Faculty (and all college personnel) need to familiarize themselves with the widespread stereotypical ways in which American society views African American men so college personnel (1) will not perpetuate these in their thinking and language and (2) can shape environments that clarify, tease out, and eradicate the presence of these stereotypes where they reside in-class and out-of-class. In complement, faculty who seek to shape an equity pedagogy in class embrace communication patterns, norms, teaching, and projects that are culturally sensitive to African American men, particularly engaged men. Also, faculty need to exhaust their thinking about the ways in which open conversations about cultural differences may take place in class. Nearly all
the African American men in this study identified needs to learn about other cultures as they also learn about themselves.

Faculty, staff, and administrators may consider holding conversations with engaged African American men outside the classroom, particularly with incoming freshmen (who may become engaged). These conversations should assume the tone of acquaintance and welcome. These conversations may even be held with all students (if possible) so engaged African American men do not feel patronized. At the beginning of the semester, personnel (particularly faculty) may wish to send introductory e-mails that are open and encourage students to stop by the office for one-on-one acquaintance. Such a conversation can be life-changing to both the collegiate trajectory and masculine identity construction of engaged African American men, and possibly, all African American men. Once a familiarity is established with the students, college personnel can then expose them to all sorts of intellectual pursuits that meet their unique curiosities without being presumptuous about the interests they believe African American men hold.

Higher education administrators, staff, and faculty should ask themselves a critical question: Are they mothering or producing academic orphans? Some college personnel continue to masks themselves, knowingly and unknowingly, as headmistresses and headmasters who look down their noses at African American men in their collegiate classrooms and other campus buildings, referencing historic and patriarchal imagery to either consciously or subconsciously marginalize them as nothing other than “collegiate thugs”. Borrowing from a DuBois (1897) quote, students learn more from who people are than what they teach. After these men graduate, they may increasingly remember less about course content. However, the ways in which these men perceived their professors,
administrators, and staff will linger in their consciousnesses as *aide memoires*, informing reflections of the holistic collegiate experience as well as subsequent social movement and perceptions of others in America.

**New Directions for African American Men.** The abovementioned implications suggest a rethinking of programs (mentoring, “rap sessions”, and forums) that institutions place to serve African American men in college. These programs are typically of two genres: assistive/supportive and reconstructive (M. C. Brown et al., 2006).

Assistive/supportive programs position African American male facilitators at the center of mentoring programs for African American men’s outreach. Reconstructive programs focus on healthy self-esteem and ethnic identity. Cuyjet’s (2006) text chronicles many assistive/supportive or reconstructive programs like the Meyerhoff Scholarship Program (University of Maryland, Baltimore County), The Black Man on Campus Project (Bowling Green State University), the Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB) (headquartered in Toledo, Ohio), and the Black Men’s Collective (Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey).

The participation of African American male faculty, staff, and administrators is crucial. To be sure, these personnel, must first be hired by colleges. The participants were clear that men may only depend on men, suggesting a strong homosocial relationship that sustains these men’s manhood constructions in college. The men in this study suggested that they need all-male spaces in which they can privately discuss matters of being, achieving, becoming, and socially moving. Notwithstanding, college men in this study described the ways in which women were significant to their manhood constructions. Given the descriptions provided in Cuyjet’s (2006) work, it is possible that institutional
programs that serve African American men, particularly engaged men, may place too much emphasis on the presence of other African American men in initiatives purported to improve the collegiate experiences and manhood of African American men.

Clearly, these all-male programs assume a critical place in college as they heighten the masculine, cultural, educational awarenesses of engaged African American men and, possibly, all African American men. These programs must remain and be supported by the institutions that house them. However, these programs are required to look for ways to, at times, invite African American women faculty, administrators, staff, and students to discuss the ways in which these men’s experiences may be improved, perspectives informed, and raced and gendered understanding gleaned. At times, these conversations are required to invite other diverse groups of college personnel and students. According to the men in this study, African American men who were exposed to diverse others (either formally or informally) received an informed sense of cultural understanding within these diverse cultural spaces. In turn, this may result in birthing a worldview (a construct of their manhood) in these men that becomes more culturally open than culturally closed.

Last, “men’s sessions”, “rap sessions”, and institutional lecture series need to broaden and diversify to recognize the multiple identities of engaged African American men and the intersections of these identities. Speaker panels, which often include college personnel and students, must represent a diverse group of African American men if speaker panels are all-male. One’s identities as African American man do not automatically connect that individual with all African American men who engage different activities, bring different pre-college and family experiences, and different,
sundry, and multilayered consciousnesses to college. Engaged African American men (and possibly all African American men) bring different types of manhood constructions to the spaces that seek to engage them. These spaces must not serve, aid, and enlighten some, but all. Also, structured conversations between or about African American men should be attended sometimes by the college president. The men in this study identified the college president as symbolic to feeling valued at the institutions in which they were enrolled. At some point, the college president should engage these men, learn about them, and speak their names.

Institutional lecture series share similar implications as mentoring and men’s session programs. Institutions are required, in a more intentional sense, to center lectures that hold cultural relevance to different types of African American men, particularly engaged men, in their lecture series dossiers. The Bless the Mic lecture series held on the campus of the historically black, Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Arkansas, is an example of the type of cutting-edge lecture series that seeks to ignite the imagination and the intellectual awareness of African American students, and within these, African American men (see http://www.philander.edu/lectureseries.aspx). The hip-hop lecture series, like traditional lecture series, seeks to stimulate intellectual discourse on college campuses. Unlike traditional lecture series, however, the hip-hop lecture series at Philander Smith College seeks to bring in noted scholars, authors, politicians, and public intellectuals to expose the campus community (and the surrounding community) to diverse and culturally relevant ideas and concepts. The lecturer catalog is replete with speakers who are eclectic and diverse in their background and interests and attempt to connect with contemporary generations of African American students. This lecture series
has brought many lecturers who have discussed topics that the men in this study highly identify as engaging. Bless the Mic lecture series topics include: race, gender, sexuality, homophobia, misogyny, racism, linguistics, and multiculturalism, and many other topics that, according to the men in this study, inform their worldviews (an emergent construct of their manhood). Institutions are encouraged to (1) develop lecture series if they are not in place and (2) to weave in speakers who bring diverse perspectives and may speak on diverse topics that hold relevance to the life and collegiate trajectories of engaged African American men and, possibly, all African American men. Lecture series, like the Bless the Mic hip-hop lecture series, provides a model that should not be ignored.

Conclusion

Many of the implications outlined for higher education do not suggest the investment of institutional financial resources as much as these implications beg administrators, staff, and faculty to take a critical look at themselves before they plan to make decisions that affect, serve, or educate African American men in college. The twenty-four, engaged African American men who informed this work have testified to the ways in which institutional actions affect their collegiate experiences and how these reinforce or disrupt manhood constructions. Institutional shareholders who serve African American men, particularly engaged men, should remain ever-cognizant that colleges are reflections of the broader society, often mimicking society’s thinking and actions (Bowman & Smith, 2002). When African American men, who may also become engaged, arrive on campus, they should find open institutional climates attuned to embracing difference, as well as opportunities to see and hear the voices of African Americans and, within these, African American men. Culturally sensitive hiring
practices, mentoring programs, lecture series, and the raced and gendered cross-pollinations of these efforts, represent effective beginnings to improve the higher education experiences and inform the manhood constructions of engaged African American men in college.

This study was constructed to yield a foundation upon which subsequent research may be conducted on African American manhood in college. Given the empirical foundation of this study, future research should investigate the development of masculine identities among other groups of African American men, not just those who are engaged in college. Future research should also investigate manhood constructions among African American men enrolled in community colleges as this group of collegians comprises the majority of African American college men (S. R. Harper, 2006). Additional study should also consider the meanings African American men construct through their friendship and informal relationships with each other and other diverse students. These may inform institutions more clearly about attitudes toward diversity and, thus, give institutions insight into the ways in which they can shape similar experiences institution-wide. Such an empirical investigation would build upon research which identifies men’s friendship groups as sites to study openness to diversity (antonio, 2004).

Higher education institutions have to engage the cultural work of knowing African American male collegians and the diversity work of weeding hidebound ideologies that oppress this group. Colleges cannot wholly serve students they do not know. This research more clearly positions African American men, particularly engaged men, as walking paradoxes, in college. They are oppressors and the oppressed; they are gods and monsters; they are Dr. Jekylls and Mr. Hydes and both comedy and tragedy.
African American men are punishers and the punished who fight both internal and external manhood pressures, even fears.

The twenty-four men who participated in this study reached deeply into their souls, opened the doors to their manhood consciousnesses and revealed these fears. These fears include, but are not limited to: the fear of our own bodies, the fear of our own culture and our “place” within it, the fear of otherness, and the fear to be authentically who we are. Marianne Williamson (1992), moreover, would suggest that it is the inner power these men possess, but are unaware they possess, that is the deepest fear. This study illuminates many of the ways in which society and, within it, higher education may compliantly or explicitly shape fears in African American male collegians. The twenty-four narratives in this dissertation indict those believed to be most responsible. As for other African American male collegians, future work will tell. Certainly, the study participants’ fears are melted into their manhood constructions and inform their movement across American institutions of higher education. Marianne Williamson (1992) colorfully offers words that former South African President Nelson Mandela spoke at his presidential inauguration. I, too, offer these words to the men in my study who I know persist, despite (and to spite) what close-minded and uninformed others who serve, educate, engage with and alongside them, believe:

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us...Playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won’t feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do...It’s not just in some of us, it’s in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others. (p. 190-191)
I thank the twenty-four men in this study who allowed me to be a part of letting their light shine. May we and others become liberated through your stories, enlightened by your influences, informed by your experiences, and motivated to improve your contexts.
REFERENCES


predominantly white universities. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN.


Polite, V. (2000b). When "at promise" black males meet the "at risk" school system: Chaos! In M. C. Brown & J. E. Davis (Eds.), *Black sons to mothers* (pp. 193-212). New York: Peter Lang.


APPENDIX A

SAMPLE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Pre-College Information
1. Tell me a little bit about yourself before you came to college.
2. Tell me about what went into your decision to go to college.
3. Why did you choose (institution?) Who or what influenced you to come here instead of going somewhere else?
4. Think about your family and high school friends. What are they doing these days? What would they say about your enrollment in college?
5. When did you first notice that you were Black? When did you first notice that you were a man? What did those two identities mean to you when you were growing up? What other identities were significant for you as you think about how you grew up? (possibilities: class, sexuality, region, disabilities, etc.)

Collegiate Environment
6. Tell me about what it’s like for you as a black man getting used to life as a student at (institution) [I will prompt for positive as well as negative aspects]
7. What did you expect before coming here? What did you find when you got here? [I will focus on experiences, students, and faculty if students do not]
8. Who is important to you while you attend and why are they important? [I will prompt for people inside and outside the institution]
9. What would you say are the most advantageous kinds of experience you’ve had since enrolling here? Experiences Off-Campus? On-Campus?
10. How (if at all) do you feel involved, a part of, connected with, comfortable at (institution)?
11. Think about the faculty and staff people you know here. How did you meet them and get to know them?
12. Are African American men valued here? If yes, in what ways? If no, Who is most valued? In what ways are they valued?
13. If you ran this institution what would you do to help Black men feel like they’re valuable members at [institution]? [If necessary, I will make clear that I am not asking for a general evaluation of the school.]
14. [For HWI participants] Research says that African American men are the “hardest hit” at the HWI. In other words, they have a hard time adjusting to life in a white college, feel hurt, and may leave. What do you think about that? [For HBCU participants] Research says that African American men at HBCUs are considered the “Big Men on Campus”. In other words, African American men are satisfied and may receive special treatment in relation to women. What do you think about that?

15. Think about “learning” in a very broad sense. Where does the real learning go on around here?

**Collegiate Manhood Questions**

16. What were you like as a child? How did this change? Who or what influenced this change?

17. Think about your K-12 years. Which Black boys were most admired? How has this changed in college?

18. What does the phrase, “Be a man” mean to you?

19. If I changed that phrase and said “Be a Black man”, how does that change your definition?

20. Who taught you how to be a man? [I will prompt for influences by men and women apropos to the influences participants describe]

21. If somebody was trying to brainwash you in order to change you as much as possible from what you are now, what about yourself would you fight hardest to keep the same?

22. If you could take a pill or an injection to make you any other combination besides “black” and “man”, would you take it? Why or Why not?

23. Let’s imagine that you wanted to disappear from the college scene for a while, but you had to get someone to take your place so that no one would know you were gone. You have to teach him, like with a spy, how to act like you so that no one would know the difference...How would you tell him to act with your friends? In class? On campus?

25. Imagine that you are attending a social event at this university where you are one of many black men. If all of the black men behaved differently from you (i.e. “nerds”, “bougie”, “thuggish”, “ghetto”), in what ways (if at all) would you change your behavior to fit in? Why or Why not (Where does that come from)? Would you ever change your behavior to meet the expectations of others? How do you do this?

26. If I polled faculty, staff, and students in college, what would they say about you?
27. Who is your best friend on campus? [If not an African American man], who is your best African American male friend on campus? What is he like?

28. In what ways are you similar to other Black men on this campus? In what ways are you different?

29. In what ways does your membership in a fraternity influence you as a man?

30. *[If a student leader]* Some people may feel that choosing to participate in student activities and organizations lacks manliness. What would you say to them? *[If an athlete]* Some people may feel that choosing to participate in athletics make you more “manly”. What would you say about that? *[If no participation in student activities or organizations]* Some people may feel that choosing to participate in activities such as athletics makes Black men in college seem more or less manly. What would you say about that?

31. Have you ever tried to hide your education or educational aspirations to “fit in” with a group of Black people? Why or Why not?

32. How have you changed as a man since your freshman year?

33. What are you planning to do after college? Who can we thank for your success?
APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

Title of Research: Manhood Behaviors of African American Men in Different Collegiate Contexts

Lead Researcher: T. Elon Dancy II, Louisiana State University

Purpose of Research
You are being asked to participate in research conducted by T. Elon Dancy II for his dissertation. The purpose of this study is to examine the collegiate experiences and behaviors of undergraduate African American men in different collegiate contexts. Your interview will be used to inform this dissertation and may subsequently be published in various forms. Pseudonyms will be used throughout the entire process in order to protect the anonymity of participants.

Methods:
In this research, participants will participate in a private, one-on-one interview about their experiences as college students. Interview length is variable, but sessions will likely result in up to 2 hours of interview. Of course, you may end the interview at any time.

Potential Risks & Benefits:
Your identity will be protected by the assignment of pseudonyms to your interview data, and masking all direct references that may reveal your identity. Because every effort will be taken to preserve confidentiality in this research, risks to participants are not perceived. Instead, the hope is that this study might be useful to current and future leaders in higher education who will learn more about different populations of college students.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw consent and terminate participation at any time without consequence. The lead researcher will provide you his contact information via business card. Feel free to contact him for questions, concerns, or changes.

“The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects’ rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Chairman, LSU Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the researchers’ obligation to provide me with a copy of this consent form if signed by me.”

Participant Signature   Participant Name   Date
APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM

Name______________________________________________________________

Campus
Address__________________________________________________________

City________________________ State____________________ Zip________________

Home/Campus Phone (        )___________________ Mobile Phone (     )_____________

Alternate Phone Number_______________________________________________

E-mail address________________________________________________________

Permanent Address (if different from above)

Street Address________________________________________________________

City________________________ State____________________ Zip_______________

Alternate E-mail address_______________________________________________

Academic Information

Year in School

☐ Sophomore

☐ Junior

☐ Senior

Major (s)________________________________________________________________

Minor (s)________________________________________________________________

High School GPA______________/4.00 scale (please be as accurate as possible)

Current College GPA__________/4.00 scale (please be as accurate as possible)

Degree Employment Aspirations (check all that apply)

☐ Master’s _________________________________(field)
☐ Ph.D.____________________________________(field)
☐ M.D._____________________________________(specialization)
☐ J.D.______________________________________(area of practice)
☐ Other_____________________________________________________
☐ Undecided

High School Demography
☐ Predominantly black
☐ Predominantly white
☐ Diverse

High School Type
☐ Public
☐ Private
☐ Other_____________________________

Household/family Information
☐ Two-parent household
☐ Single-parent household (Mother)
☐ Single-parent household (Father)
☐ Guardian

Yearly Family Income
☐ Below $20,000
☐ $20,000 to $39,999
☐ $40,000 to $59,999
☐ $60,000 to $79,999
☐ $80,000 to $99,999
☐ $100,000 to $119,999
☐ $120,000 to $139,999
☐ $140,000 to $159,999
☐ $160,000 to $179,000
☐ $180,000 to $199,000
☐ $200,000 to $249,999
☐ $250,000 and above

How many individuals live in your household?___________

What type of department stores (i.e. music, clothing, grocery, athletic) do you like best?________________________________. You will be sent a gift card for your participation.
T. Elon Dancy II is a native of Pine Bluff, Arkansas. Descendant from a family of educators, Elon is the son of a retired elementary school teacher and principal (mother) and owner and affiliate of independent businesses (father). In May 2000, Elon graduated with honors, after only three years, from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, with a bachelor of science degree in psychology. Elon earned a master’s degree in health services administration from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock in 2002. Subsequently, Elon accepted positions at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, managing projects in the institution’s office of university relations and development and teaching in the School of Education.

Elon entered the Department of Educational Theory, Policy, and Practice at Louisiana State University (Baton Rouge, LA) to complete the doctor of philosophy degree in educational leadership and research. A Huel Perkins Graduate Fellow and Southern Regional Education Board Doctoral Scholar, Elon’s program cognate was higher education administration. While enrolled in the program, Elon began to lay a foundation for a national reputation in higher education research.

Elon’s research and scholarly writing focus on the intersection of race and gender in colleges and universities. More specifically, this agenda focuses on identifying the strategies for improving African American men's social and academic experiences in different college contexts, as well as understanding African American male constructions of manhood and sensemaking. Additionally, careful attention is paid to assessing African American male persistence and outcomes. His research and commentary have been published in *American Behavioral Scientist*, other academic periodicals, and volumes. He
has presented original data collection and other scholarly work at several national
conferences. His scholarship carefully considers topics of curricular change, the
sociohistorical nature of schooling, and culturally relevant pedagogies in college. In
November 2006, T. Elon Dancy II was named the Emerging Scholar by the Association
for the Study of Higher Education Council on Ethnic Participation. Elon is also the
youngest ever to hold a board membership to the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff
Foundation Fund Board.