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ACT LIKE A LADY, THINK LIKE A PATRIARCH: BLACK MASCULINE IDENTITY FORMATION WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

by

KAYLA CHARLESTON

Under the Direction of Jonathan Gayles

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore how Black men and women negotiate ideas about masculine performances within the context of romantic relationships. The New York Times Bestselling book *Act Like A Lady, Think Like A Man*, which communicates a particularly patriarchal understanding of masculinity, was used as a point of reference. Six focus groups were conducted with 28 Black males and females between the ages of 19-60. Three general conclusions about masculine performances within Black male/female relationships were drawn from the findings.

INDEX WORDS: Patriarchy, Black male-female relationships, Gender roles, Masculinity

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by

KAYLA CHARLESTON

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2012

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2012

ACT LIKE A LADY, THINK LIKE A PATRIARCH: BLACK MASCULINE IDENTITY FORMATION WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

by

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May 2012

DEDICATION

This document and all that went into producing it is dedicated to the person whom I consider to be the embodiment of strength: my mother. Only a woman of tremendous fortitude could make the struggle of providing for and protecting her children sans the help of any man seem as though it came with the greatest of ease. It is because of you that I can conceive of no obstacle as insurmountable.

This document is also dedicated to all of my brothers and sisters of the diaspora. It is for and because of you that I am pursuing my passion.

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I would like to express my indebtedness to my thesis committee chair, Dr. Jonathan Gayles. With your guidance I was able to translate the issues I found most perplexing into a legitimate research topic that I enjoyed every moment of exploring. I also would like to acknowledge the professors of the African American Studies Department, especially Dr. Makungu Akinyela and Dr. Sarita Davis, for the guidance you two provided throughout this process. I truly feel like I have a second home in this department.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This chapter provides definitions of key terms and explains the background of the research problem. The problem statement, purpose, significance of the study and nature of the study are then addressed. The research questions and theory employed in this study are also explained. Finally, assumptions, as well as the scope, limitations and delimitations are discussed.

Definitions

The following definitions are provided because of their significance to the study. They are as follows:

- Patriarchy: "a political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence" (hooks, 2004a, p. 18).
- Ideal masculinity: "informed by binary and dichotomous thinking that is endemic to Western thought…the ideal man is currently an elite white heterosexual male. This is not a person but an ideal. And a man's masculinity is measured by how close he comes to the ideal" (Mutua, 2006, p. 12-13).
- Hegemonic masculinity: "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy" (Connell, 1995, p. 77).

Background

When seeking to understand Black masculinity, it can be advantageous to examine various factors that lend to its complexity. Hegemonic constructions of masculinity hold men to

the standard of ideal masculinity, but the legacy of slavery prevents Black men from attaining this ideal. Hegemonic masculinity is ultimately a means of legitimating patriarchy by embodying the gender practice of which patriarchy is comprised (Connell, 1995). Patriarchal masculinity, in which men find their selfhood only within the context of external power, is both dominant and pervasive (hooks, 2004a). Patriarchy acts as a proverbial double-edged sword for the Black men who choose to adopt its ideology. It may seem to these men that their dominion over women and other men deemed weak is to their advantage; however, patriarchy belies men's true humanity and even functions as a means to oppress those who embrace it. In a society where Black men do not truly hold the power, subscribing to patriarchy fundamentally renders them as failures that are not capable of being real men (hooks, 2004b).

Patriarchy is dangerous not only in that it devalues all things associated with womanhood, but also in its devaluation of masculine performances not in alignment with its ideal image. "Plantation patriarchy" is described as the form of patriarchy enacted by enslaved Black men who watched as their masters assumed the role of a patriarch (hooks, 2004b, p. 4). Thus, Black men will never have the means to effectively embody both qualities necessary of the true patriarchal image: being male and being white. Nonetheless, Black men are often portrayed as the ultimate doers of patriarchy. Hutchinson (1994) describes how media images of Black men depict them as violent, licentious creatures. In this way, the media are doing the work to maintain the image of a true patriarch while maligning the character of Black men. hooks (2004a) states: "mass media demonization of black males as the epitome of brutal patriarchal masculinity deflects attention away from the patriarchal masculinity of white men and its concomitant woman-hating" (p. 130). Hence, patriarchy undermines Black men's attempts at performing hegemonic masculinity by denouncing them when they adhere to patriarchal tenets

while at the same time illegitimating their endeavors to construct masculinities outside said tenets.

There are certainly implications for the interactions between those gripped by patriarchy's luring promises of power and those who are subject to them. Wallace (1978) kindled controversial debates when she cited Black men's acceptance of patriarchal ideology as the start of antagonistic relationships between Black men and Black women. Wallace railed against the Black men who professed the idea that it was too-strong Black women that precluded men from enacting true manhood. Her polemical book inculpated men for adopting patriarchy as their own. Inherent in this contention is what Collins (2005) establishes as the strong woman/weak man framework. Within this false dichotomy, a strong-minded, self-assertive Black woman cannot maintain functional relationships with equally strong men. The resulting assumption is that any man with whom she engages must be weak, and thus unable to achieve ideal masculinity. Sadly, these assumptions have become the bedrock of the larger society's understanding of Black male/female interactions. More than 30 years later, Steve Harvey's 2009 New York Times bestselling book *Act Like A Lady, Think Like A Man* operates as a vehicle for the continuance of some of the same concepts criticized by Wallace and elicited within the strong woman/weak man structure.

Harvey's book purports to provide women with extensive knowledge about how men think regarding love, relationships, commitment and intimacy. However, before one even opens the book, the title alone – steeped in patriarchal rhetoric – is a forewarning of what can be expected. In effect, the title suggests to women that there is something to be gained from aligning their thoughts with those of men. But also note Harvey's use of *lady* as opposed to *woman*.

Invoking images of virtue and prim behavior characteristic of a lady, Harvey sustains the imperative to act in a way desirable to men.

A look at the table of contents reveals further evidence of the sexist portrayals of masculine performances that lie within. The first section, entitled *The Mind-Set of a Man*, explains to women the supposed perspective from which they can expect men to approach relationships. Chapter two of this section, "Our Love Isn't Like Your Love," tells women that they are committing the fundamental error of expecting men to love them in ways reserved only for women. Harvey essentializes gender by asserting that men are not capable of or do not desire to demonstrate their love in manners traditionally associated with women. Protection and provision are how women should expect men to show their love, two components of a patriarchal value system.

The entire book continues in the same fashion. The section *Why Men Do What They Do* explains the motives behind men's actions. Chapter 5, called "First Things First: He Wants to Sleep with You," informs women that men, regardless of their approach, are *always* trying to ascertain the chances of sex upon first meeting a woman. Harvey reinforces the patriarchal notion that sex is integral to manhood by rooting all men's initial interactions with women in the pursuit of it. The last section, *The Playbook: How to Win the Game*, gives women advice about how to conduct themselves if they wish to have a man propose to them. Such advice positions marriage as the ultimate prize only to be awarded if women engage with men in ways that allow patriarchy to remain intact. Despite all of this, Harvey's book has amassed quite a following, signified by its feature film adaptation that will be in theaters in 2012 and his follow-up book *Straight Talk, No Chaser.* The success of this book points to one major implication: that women can be enactors of patriarchy as well.

Problem Statement

That *Act Like A Lady, Think Like A Man* communicates patriarchal mores and has met with such success in doing so merited investigation. Since the book was written with the intent to help women understand the male mind, it essentially reifies patriarchal structures from a man's perspective and suggests to women how they should maneuver within them. Women have the prerogative to accept or reject any idea or concept presented to them from the book. It is in their acceptance or rejection that we are given insight into their contributions to the construction of masculine identities. The expectations women hold for men, the qualities that they encourage in them and the ones that they discourage are all ways in which women perpetuate masculine performances. These experiences are contributing factors in men's formulation and reformulation of appropriate masculine performances. This necessitated that women be considered in studies about the formation of masculine identities.

Purpose

The purpose of the proposed study was to discover how Black men and women negotiate ideas about masculine performances within the context of romantic relationships. It endeavored to understand how these masculine performances reflected patriarchy and how they manifested, evolved and/or remained intact within these partnerships. It did so through the examination of attitudes toward a popular book that disseminates patriarchal values. More specifically, this study sought to use focus groups to get Black men and women talking about the patriarchal values offered in the book *Act Like A Lady, Think Like A Man*. The focus groups consisted of Black male and female students over the age of 18 at Georgia State University, located in Atlanta, Georgia. These women and men were asked how did or did not their values and experiences in relationships reflect those that were portrayed in the book. They were also asked to describe

expectations that they had for their partners in relationships so as to ascertain how their ideas may or may not have differed from the book. Their answers to these questions provided information as to how patriarchal masculinity were exhibited and how ideas of patriarchal masculinity were challenged and even validated within relationships.

Significance of the study

This study was significant in several ways. Masculinity studies have largely positioned women as consumers of masculinity instead of producers by not considering their contribution to its construction (Talbot & Quayle, 2010). Even in the scant literature that asserts women's role in masculine identity constructions, there is little focus given specifically to relationships between Black males and Black females. In these ways, the study fills the gaps in the literature. In ascertaining Black men and women's evolving understandings of patriarchal masculinity within relationships, women were factored into the process of masculine identity construction. This study also positioned Black men and women as more than just consumers of popular and pervasive ideas disseminated through the media. By obtaining the reactions to and negotiation of the ideas presented in *Act Like A Lady, Think Like A Man,* we can observe how individuals critically examine and interpret widely-accepted portrayals of themselves and/or the people they love.

Patriarchy is a system of oppression that works in conjunction with other oppressive forces. Thus, to support patriarchy is also to support oppression in the forms of racism, classism, or any other structure purposed for the discrimination of others. The results of this research are germane to the discipline of Black Studies because of the intersectionality of the Black experience (Collins, 2000). This intersectionality calls for the investigation of multiple interlocking forces set in place to impede the progress of Black people. The examination of the

manner in which one such oppressive system (in this instance, patriarchy) is interpreted, sustained and/or reconfigured is paramount to understanding how Blacks lend to their own oppression.

Nature of the study

A qualitative approach was best suited for the aims of the study. According to Creswell (2007), "Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 37). In this case, the social problem that was examined was the pervasiveness of patriarchal masculine performances as described by Harvey's book. Quantitative research is instrumental in developing a story about what happened, but cannot venture to establish *why* or *how* it happened. Were this research quantitative in nature, statistical analysis could have show whether the participants agreed or disagreed with the concepts presented by the book, but would not be able to support contentions made beyond that. No knowledge would be obtained about why the concepts were or were not embraced and how they came to be so. By conducting this study in a qualitative nature, individuals gave their own stories and a theoretical lens was used to explain participants' attitudes toward certain performances.

There is not sufficient data regarding the ways in which Black men negotiate their ideas about masculinity within romantic relationships, hence warranting the exploratory nature of this study. Examining a specific aspect of this topic would be difficult without the execution of the exploratory work that it takes to first ascertain the constituent parts of the problem. That being so, the focus groups used in this study served as a medium for beginning the conversation about women's roles in black masculine identity construction. The small community of men and

women created by the focus group environment hopefully encouraged open and honest discussion about experiences within relationships, which ultimately informed us about the prevalence of gender roles and their patriarchal manifestations.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

- Using *Act Like A Lady, Think Like A Man* as a point of reference:

  How do black men and women understand masculine performances within the context of romantic relationships?

  a) In what ways does their understanding reflect patriarchal constructions of masculinity?

  b) How do women perpetuate or challenge masculine performances?

These questions were designed to examine the processes of constructing and deconstructing masculinity that take place within relationships. Principally sought was an understanding of how the actions of men were conceptualized as appropriate forms of masculinity. Agreement with the ideas essentially aligned men and women with patriarchal sentiments elucidated in the text. The questions also focused on experiences that related to the underlying concepts of the book. It was here that women and men broached the subject of male/female interactions as influential to masculine identity formation. Participants were asked to disclose instances that were both like and unlike ideas from the book. Women were asked how they elicit certain performances from men while men were asked how women do such, thus revealing the negotiation of masculine performances.

These research questions vary in context and methodology from others asked in the area of Black masculinity. Scholars have explored the construction of Black masculinity within the

context of fraternity membership, economically disadvantaged communities and sports teams (McClure, 2006; Adams, 2007; Buford May, 2004). Others simply asked Black men to articulate their conceptions of manhood (Hammond and Mattis, 2005; Hunter and Davis, 1992). Chaney (2009) assessed how perceptions of manhood impacted Black men's romantic partnerships; however, she did so through the use of open-ended surveys. In fact, none of these studies were conducted using focus groups, the method preferred for the current study. With the exception of one ethnographic article, these studies used surveys and individual interviews to obtain data.

Theory

For this research, I employed Black feminist theory. Black feminism operates as Black women's "critical social theory" and places under scrutiny injustices used to practice discrimination against them (Collins, 2000, p. 12). In "A Black Feminist Statement," the Combahee River Collective (1982) disclosed the following regarding their politics:

> The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual and class oppression and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking" (p. 13).

Often cited as a central document in the establishment of modern Black feminism, the Combahee River Collective's statement made clear the agenda of Black feminists. Cited here, it emphasizes the intersectional approach taken in order to critically scrutinize systems of oppression. Dawson (2001) states, "Black feminists have argued for generations that the intersection of race, class and gender, which has defined the social position of Black women at the bottom of an often brutal American hierarchy of power, has shaped the political agendas and ideological projects of black feminists" (p. 138). Ida B. Wells-Barnett, who explored forms of social control for Black men

and women through her activism against lynching, and Sojourner Truth, who underlined her status as both Black and female, are two such examples from previous generations.

Collins (2000) identifies the features of Black feminist epistemology as follows:

1. *Lived experience as a criterion of meaning*: "Living life as Black women requires wisdom because knowledge about the dynamics of intersecting oppressions has been essential to U.S. Black women's survival. African American women give such knowledge high credence in assessing knowledge" (p. 275).
2. *The use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims*: "For black women new knowledge claims are rarely worked out in isolation from other individuals and are usually developed through dialogues with other members of the community" (p. 279).
3. *The ethics of caring*: "…the ethic of caring suggests that personal expressiveness, emotions and empathy are central to the knowledge validation process" (p. 282).
4. *The ethic of personal accountability*: "Not only must individuals develop their own knowledge claim through dialogue and present them in a style proving their concern for their ideas, but people are expected to be accountable for their knowledge claims" (p. 284).

These tenets of Black feminism were used to assess the ways in which Black men and women made meaning out of the construct of Black masculinity. Their lived experiences served as the basis from which they produced their knowledge of Black masculine performances. Approaching this study from a Black feminist perspective offered insight into Black women's participation in Black patriarchy and Black men's enactment of hegemonic patriarchal masculinity. Collins (1986) posits that it is the role of Black female intellectuals "to produce facts and theories about the Black female experience that will clarify a Black woman's standpoint for Black women" (p.

S16). Wells-Barnett furthered our understanding of Black sexual politics not through her attention to Black women, but through her attention to Black men (Collins, 2002). In much the same way, asking both Black men and Black women to speak about their conceptions of patriarchal masculinity garnered further understanding of women's experiences with it.

A number of other sociological theories could have been used as a framework for this study; however, these theories lacked the critical component of Black feminism that differentiates it from other, more traditional perspectives. Symbolic interactionism, a prevailing sociological theory, could have readily been used to explain the process by which Black men understand patriarchy in relationships and how these understandings may evolve. According to Blumer (1969), there are three central premises:

1. "human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them"
2. "the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows"
3. "these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters" (p. 2).

This theory emphasizes the role of social interaction between humans in the process of formulating meanings. Within the context of this study, the "thing" given meaning is patriarchal Black masculinity and the social interaction was between the partners in a relationship. Similarly, Burke (2004) explains that within identity control theory, a person attempts to maintain certain identities through interaction with others. When "perceptions of self-relevant meanings" do not match with identity standards set by others, individuals will act in ways that will "counteract the disturbance and restore the match in meanings between perceptions and

standard" (p. 5). While these theories provide effective frameworks for understanding the impact of interpersonal relationships in the development and transformation of identities, they are bereft of the social imperative inherent in Black feminist theory.

Black feminism stands apart from other theories because it is not scholarship for scholarship's sake. Rather, Black feminist scholarship is a means to the alleviation of oppression. Of this social mission Kelley (2002) states:

> "Radical black feminists have never confined their vision to just the emancipation of black women or women in general, or all black people for that matter. Rather, they are the theorists and proponents of a radical humanism committed to liberating humanity and restructuring social relations across the board" (p. 137).

It is the Black feminist focus on amelioration of conditions for all that prompted its use in this study. Rather than use a theoretical framework that simply described conditions or circumstances as they happen, I sought to produce research that may be constructive in dismantling systems of oppression. Contemporary sociological discourse can be enriched by Black feminist scholars and other groups of marginal intellectuals with distinct standpoints (Collins, 1986).

Assumptions

There is no one fact or circumstance that ignited my interest in patriarchal masculine performances. A number of considerations including, but not limited to, my own thoughts regarding how Black men women negotiate gender identities as it relates to romantic relationships played a major role in my interest. My own unique experience as a 23-year-old African American woman contributed to my academic curiosity and directly influenced the lens through which I viewed participants, formulated questions, and analyzed data.

My personal experiences and observations came together to create several assumptions and biases on my part. Having had friends try to explain away hurtful behavior consistent with patriarchal masculinity gave me an increased level of passion when it came to masculine performances. I believed that being Black female participants would automatically be less critical of patriarchal masculinity for fear that they would otherwise not have mates. Although I cannot eliminate my assumptions and biases from who I am I attempted to minimize them by exercising reflexivity throughout this research process.

Scope, Limitations and Delimitations

This study reports only the stories provided by Black male and female students at Georgia State University over the age of 18. The findings in this study cannot be used to generalize about the entire Black population in the United States because the sample is not representative. My status as a female may have influenced the men's willingness to speak candidly about their experiences; however, the focus group setting with the presence of other men hopefully acted as a buffer for this possibility. Lastly, I understand that there are implications for omitting Black gay males from this conversation, as they certainly can enact patriarchal masculine performances as well. I do not intend to assume a hetero-normative stance for the purposes of this study; unfortunately, time and resources did not allow for a more comprehensive look into this issue. For that reason, only heterosexual Black males were considered for this study.

Summary

This chapter provided an introduction to the proposed study, including its background and significance. Research questions and definitions were given to establish an understanding of the study. Also, the scope, assumptions, limitations and delimitations were addressed. The next

chapter covers a review of the literature surrounding masculine identity formations and Black romantic relationships.

CHAPTER 2

The purpose of the proposed study was to discover how black men negotiate ideas about patriarchal masculinity within the context of romantic relationships. It endeavored to understand how patriarchal masculinity manifested, evolved and/or remained intact within their partnerships. The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

- Using *Act Like A Lady, Think Like A Man* as a point of reference:

  How do Black men and women understand masculine performances within the context of romantic relationships?

  a) In what ways does their understanding reflect patriarchal constructions of masculinity?

  b) How do women perpetuate or challenge these performances?

The literature presented in this chapter represents a number of disciplines and their related databases, some of which include Academic Search Complete, Sociological Collection, PsychINFO and Women's Studies International. The literature is presented in four sections. The first section details the tenets of hegemonic patriarchal masculinity and what its masculine performances entail. The second section discusses what many scholars have cited to be the ways in which black men construct their identities. The third section addresses black masculinity and romantic relationships. Lastly, the fourth section explains the implications of patriarchy with black male-female relationships.

Hegemonic Patriarchal Masculinity

The construction of gendered identities and the resulting fiats that regulate human bodies are subject to a great deal of theoretical work. Scholars problematize the essentialization that has taken place in discourse apropos of gender and its function within society. The creation of such

social products as the masculine and the feminine necessitates a distinction between biological sex and socially constructed gender (Kaufman, 1994). Dworkin, a radical feminist theorist, contended that we are actually multi-sexed beings that are bound by the ideological construct of the binary gender structure and that we, ourselves, are not binary by nature (Grant, 2006). It is from within this binary gender structure, which reifies culturally produced sex roles and biologically manifested differentiations between bodies, that the subordination of women can come to fruition. However, our perception of gender as "being about the way bodies are drawn into a historical process" and recognizing "contradictions in existing embodiments" makes possible a re-embodiment for male bodies (Connell, 1997, p. 67).

Hegemonic masculinity provides the impetus for male bodies in the subjugation of female bodies. Accordingly, hegemonic masculinity does not demand alignment with the lives of actual men. Rather, it represents a model that conveys the ideals, fantasies and desires of a society heavily imbued with patriarchal values (Connell, 2005). Sculpted by ideologies of gender, age, class, sexuality and race, hegemonic masculinity requires the following benchmarks:

1. the definition of a man is found in *not* being like a woman;
2. along with maintaining control over women, men must also do so over their emotions;
3. "real" men bear no semblance to boys who behave immaturely and irresponsibly;
4. men are not dependent on others, but instead possess property and the power commanded upon its possession; homosexuality is in stark opposition to true manhood;
5. black men, in their very blackness, are rendered incapable of reaching ideal masculinity (Collins, 2004).

Subsequently, hegemonic masculinity enumerated in this way reveals its patriarchal proclivities. Missing from this, however, is the sexual imperative of patriarchy. "Sex is fucking. In patriarchy, there is an imperative to fuck – in rape and in 'normal' sex, with strangers and girlfriends and wives and estranged wives and child. What matters in patriarchal sex is the male need to fuck. When that need presents itself, sex occurs" (As cited by hooks, 2004b, p. 70).

Patriarchy's allegiance to the pursuit of power is predicated on a system of fear. In actuality, fear elicits the assertion of power in the degree to which men are gripped by said fear (Kaufman, 1994). hooks (2004a) states: "A man who is unabashedly and unequivocally committed to patriarchal masculinity will both fear and hate all that the culture deems feminine and womanly" (p. 108). Within this framework, "crying like a girl" or "playing like a girl" (in sports) become disparaging remarks and doing either of these excludes males from enacting ideal masculinity (Collins, 2004). Likewise, Collins explains that homosexual men, perceived as being like women, are viewed as the negation of masculinity and are considered to be effeminate. Evidenced by this reaction to gay men, homophobia is a culmination of the forces that impress patriarchal fear upon its adherents.

Patriarchal fear is also instrumental in men's unwillingness to show emotions. Even before committing acts of violence toward women, men perform an act of violence against themselves in the form of "psychic self-mutilation" when "they kill off emotional parts of themselves" (hooks, 2004a, p. 66). Men, believing that female characteristics are somehow loathsome when possessed by themselves, avoid emotionality. Ultimately, the emotions that men venture to suppress take hold over them and, regardless of how in control men may seem, dominate them (Kaufman, 1994). Kaufman explicates that this domination often takes the form of domestic abuse spurred by irrepressible rage, adolescent boys who participate in gay-bashing

against peers, and men who use their sense of impotence as a source of resentment against Blacks, Asians, Latinos or other viable scapegoats.

The illusory spoils of patriarchy entice both men and women. The thought of domineering, take-control men as apt mates seduces myriad females (hooks, 2004a). hooks explains that when these patriarchal men are not cruel, women cling to the idea that they are lucky to have a benevolent patriarch to protect and provide for the family. It is only when these men are continuously cruel that women reexamine their loyalty to patriarchal thinking. Men, on the other hand, make use of patriarchy by learning to harness their power as an ability to exact control over others (Kaufman, 1994). Connell (1997) describes the "patriarchal dividend," which accounts for the nearly double average income of men over women, men's greater control of corporate wealth and men's political access worldwide being ten times that of women (p. 63). These patriarchal payoffs become internalized by individual men in the development of their personalities, which results in the justification of the real-life domination and devaluation of women (Kaufman, 1994).

More, the prerequisites of patriarchy pledged to men manifest in intimate interactions between men and women. hooks (2004a) purports that men "act out" sexually "because it is the only social arena where the patriarchal promise of dominion can be easily realized. Without these perks, masses of men might have rebelled against patriarchy long ago" (p. 79). Dworkin argued that the patriarchal sadomasochistic domination scheme affects all sexualities and that without gender hierarchy, the lust we now know would be impossible (Grant, 2006). Following this line of thinking, the question becomes "If we knew that sex would lose its sexiness, would we still want to abolish patriarchy and other systems of domination?" (Grant, 2006, p. 976).

In past the decades, patriarchal men have developed reasons to reconsider their alignment with tactics of domination. That patriarchy demands men to feel pain but deny their feelings suspends them in an emotionally-crippled state and precludes them from practicing full humanity (hooks, 2004a). According to Kaufman (1994), the ascent of modern feminism has upset the balance between the prized power of patriarchy and its protracted pain. In cultures where men's power has shifted away from ruling over the domestic sphere with iron fists and stringently monopolizing the realm of work, the pain engendered by practicing patriarchy becomes too high a price to pay, Kaufman argues. With women's increased resistance to gender hierarchy and the resulting reduction in distraction from patriarchal wounds, men reevaluate their dedication to such an oppressive system. Similarly, men's interest in gender hierarchy is divided contextually by relationships and interests that they share with women (Connell, 1997). Mothers, sisters, wives, daughters, friends and partners create pockets of interest in reform for the men who care about them. To this end, women are not mere recipients of socially constructed product masculine product.

Women constitute an integral part of masculine identity construction. Collins (2004) states that women's role in the production of masculinities is so extensive that it appears to be an element of hegemonic masculine identity construction hidden in plain sight. In studying hegemonic masculinity, Connell (2007) stresses the importance of gender being relationally defined by its "contradistinction from some model (whether real or imaginary) of femininity" (p. 848). Hence, constructions of masculinity gain meaning and legitimization in their juxtaposition with constructions of femininity. Dworkin posited that as long as women choose to abide by traditional sex roles they are reinforcing and reproducing their own submission (Grant, 2006). Women, in turn, do the work of patriarchy when they subscribe to gender ideologies that lend to

their subordination. About hegemonic masculinity, Collins (2004) confirms that: "For this version of masculinity to be plausible, men require female validation as constant reminders of male superiority" (p. 188).

Hegemonic patriarchal masculinity has unique implications for black men. hooks (2004b) asserts that despite the unequal and often higher status of men over women in Africa, African men brought to America had to be taught to liken the difference in status with domination over women. Some scholars refute the ability of Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity to account for black male behavior, believing it to be an inaccurate model (Spraggins, 1999; Chaney, 2009). Demetriou (2001) cites the concept for its nullification of marginalized and otherized masculinities in their capacity to influence dominant or accepted forms of masculinity. Further along this line of reasoning, May (2004) argues, "cultural components of masculinities that appear to be African American in origin are not easily distinguished" (p. 175). Research on black masculinity and in its interaction with hegemonic forces is abundant.

The Construction of Black Masculinity

Some scholars have expressed a general dissatisfaction with the literature surrounding black masculinity. Wise (2001) indicts the literature for being limiting, oppressive and prejudiced in that it operates under the assumption that men are heterosexual. Franklin (1984) cites Wallace's *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (1999) as the point of departure for discussions that implicate black men as the source of conflict between black men and black women. Hammond and Mattis (2005) necessarily foreground the fact that many of the models in place that describe black masculinity are "blocked opportunity" models that often locate men "at or outside the margins of the opportunity structure" (p. 115). In Bush's (1999) literature review concerning factors that affect the construction of black masculinity, he expounds upon ideas

established regarding the effect of slavery, being under a matriarchal structure and economic oppression for black males. Bush's article is but one example of the scholarly work that is remiss in yielding a comprehensive account of black masculine identity formation. Ryan (2005) renders an apt explanation of what she deems to be the "paradigm of resistance," which is pervasive in the social sciences:

> Within the western academy, the paradigm of resistance develops from an external historical narrative…that designates race-centered crisis as the point of origin for African diaspora cultures and all related arts. This narrative designates Slavery, racism, colonialism, and other hegemonic practices as determining events and the inevitable starting point for the critical analysis of African diaspora cultures…The paradigm of resistance often conflates privilege and power, defining the latter solely as coercive agency (p. 16).

This particular stance is evident in much of the literature, which positions societal constraints and pressures as factors overarching the construction of predominant black masculinities.

Scholars inculpate racist gender norms for the conflict that black men experience when grappling with accepted expressions of masculinity. In the wake of slavery, black men are precluded from reaching the standard of masculinity ideally enacted by white men (Aborampah, 1989, Chaney, 2009; Pierre, Mahalik and Woodland, 2001; Wester, Vogel, Wei and McLain, 2006; Wise, 2001); however, that does not dissuade black men's internalization of said standards. Lease, Hampton, Fleming, Bagget, Montes and Sawyer (2010) found that there was a relative similarity in the endorsement of traditional masculinity by black and white men. This has problematic ramifications for black men. Gender role stress for men occurs in situations where they "perceive themselves as (1) physically inadequate, (2) emotionally expressive, (3)

subordinate to women, (4) intellectually inferior, or (5) performing inadequately" (as cited by Cophaver, Lash, and Eisler, 2000). Hence, black men who are bound by traditional gender norms risk levels of anxiety that could potentially be avoided by the more progressive thinker. Wester et al. (2006) found a relationship between gender role conflict (GRC) and psychological distress among black men. They assert that GRC is created in instances where traditional male gender norms clash with situations that necessitate nontraditional behavior. In their study they discovered that self-definitions among black men based on racist aspects of European American culture accounted for the relationship between GRC and psychological distress. Based on these studies, one may surmise that preeminent threats to black masculinity function under the aegis of asserting the standard of traditional white male masculinity.

In further support of this idea are the scholars who expound upon black men's sense of powerlessness in an economy that does not allow for them to assume the provider role (Aborampah, 1989; Franklin, 1984; Spraggins, 1999; Wallace, 2007). Smith (2008) extends the argument by stating that social inequality in the form of unemployment, underemployment and incarceration, which impede black men's capability to be the breadwinner, can act as a trigger for intimate partner violence. According to cbsnews.com, Black male joblessness rates have reached a high of 17.5 percent, comparable to an overall Black joblessness rate of 16.2 percent and a general population rate of 9.1 percent. Stressful economic conditions also sever the physically and emotionally-nurturing components of the black male gender role (as cited by Lawrence-Webb, Littlefield and Okundaye, 2004). Thus, economic issues have the propensity to spill over into the relationships of the men who are battling them. Nonetheless, such literature that communicates the immensity of social inequality as a factor in black masculine identity construction without making provisions for potential buffers to these factors is consistent with

Ryan's paradigm of resistance. Scholars and those who seek to reify the concept of masculinity must be careful not to cite one's societal milieu as a primary influence to the extent that other viable possibilities become overlooked.

Aside from societal constraints and the pressures imposed by them, scholars conjecture about the process by which male socialization occurs and those involved in said process. Spraggins (1999) posits that socialization occurs through four specific groups: movies and popular culture, peers, the family and the military (p. 47). He also contends that masculinities are a hierarchically-ordered set of connections among and between men. Inherent in Spraggins' contentions is a dismissal of any role that black women may exercise in the construction of black masculine identities. Spraggins denies that masculinities can be hierarchically valued – and thus reinforced – by women and his use of the term "family" as a one of the groups credited for socializing males does nothing to underline women's role in the process.

Wallace (2007) also implicates family in the socialization of young black boys and girls. She delineates the system of values imbibed by children that portrays womanhood as a process but manhood as natural and which encourages the provider role in women while spurning any nurturance from men. Fathers have also been cited as integral to the development of sexual behaviors both consistent with and divergent from patriarchal mandates (Willis and Clark, 2007). The main weakness with the work of these scholars is that they frame masculinity as merely the internalization of ideas about masculinity that are readily available. They thereby fail to consider that constructing and arriving at conceptions of masculinity can very well be a continual process, which demands the evolution of attitudes and ideas and may be as complex as the interpersonal relationships in which men are engaged.

Generally, only in the past two decades have scholars begun to address the dearth of literature regarding how black men define their own manhood. Much of the scholarship executed in the name of masculinity studies has served to depict black men as victims who are incapable of defining themselves in the face of difficult situations (Hunter and Davis, 1994). On the contrary, McClure (2006), found that the participants in her study enacted a masculinity that appeared to be "a fluid, creative, and undogmatic response to their circumstances, a response that simultaneously resists, reaffirms, and alters existing information on how to be who they are" (p. 69). McClure discusses the idea of amalgamation masculinity, in which performances of masculinity among black men reflect both patriarchal, hegemonic norms and communal, afrocentric values. She maintains that the accounts of hybrid masculinity garnered from her study remain to be incorporated into a model of black masculinity. Empirical studies of other scholars (Hunter and Davis, 1994; Chaney, 2009) who sought to involve black men in the discourse of black masculinity have similar implications to those found by McClure. Predilections for patriarchy and afrocentric principles were present in the data that explored black masculinity from a broad spectrum of class, age and sexual orientation.

Subsequently, different studies cite contrasting constructions of masculinity. Hunter and Davis (1992; 1994) were among the first to acknowledge the absence of black men's voices from studies about black men. Employing said voices, they found themes of self-determinism and accountability, family, pride and spirituality and humanism as being important to the subjects in their study. They also found issues of power to be a family matter, suggesting the challenge of negotiating traditional gender roles with the more egalitarian model existing in the homes of many black families. In his examination of black men, power and expression, Spraggins (1999) indicated that being in control was a central component of a sense of power in some of his

participants. Those who pined for control, in a society where control is not granted them, were led to consider alternative means of attaining it. In the case of his study, it was through gun use. Adams (2007) contrasted the masculinity of respect with the masculinity of reputation among poor black men. Adams discovered that the two masculinities entailed a compromise in that both could not be simultaneously pursued. Men concerned with the masculinity of respect were intent upon refraining from criminal or otherwise detrimental activity that would hinder them from garnering respect in society. The price for such a masculinity was self-denial in the degree to which the faculties of self-assertion and expression were suppressed. The masculinity of reputation called for a sense of autonomy that could only be found in the streets. Men in alignment with this expression of masculinity sacrificed opportunities to ameliorate their conditions due to their entanglement with illegal pursuits.

In keeping with the pattern, Hammond and Mattis (2005) and Chaney (2009) conducted studies in which, when compared to one another, amalgamations of masculinities can be found. Three of the major themes that arose from the study conducted by Hammond and Mattis were definitions of manhood as a proactive course, manhood as a redemptive process and manhood as a state of interconnected being. These findings are in keeping with afrocentric codes of behavior, since patriarchy rewards and reinforces the alienation of men from others. The major themes that arose from the men in Chaney's study were responsibility for family, maturity, the provider role and self-awareness. That there is a distinction between responsibility for family and the provider role speaks to the idea that patriarchal gender norms about the role of a man to his family are not implicit in one's sense of responsibly toward the family. However, Chaney goes on to explain how black manhood may also be based on a man's perceived position of power to those who are observing him. In a sense, these studies of how black men delineate masculinity are the

endgames of the process by which black men internalize the racist societal standards, constraints and socialization that scholars have cited as central aspects of masculine identity construction.

But if socialization and internalization are the impetus and these definitions of manhood are the endgames, then certainly there is a missing element to research on black masculinity. It cannot be assumed that constructing masculinity is a static process. Instead, masculinity must be thought of as an ongoing, fluid process that takes place over the span of one's lifetime (Hammond and Mattis, 2005; Marbley, 2003; McClure, 2006). While scholars carry out these studies as a means to debunk the depiction of black men as victims or inept in the development of their essential selves, they largely fail to recognize the position of a vital population in regard to this process: women. Though there is a necessity for men to define their own masculinity, there also stands a need for women to be accounted for in the matter. Few empirical studies explicitly mention how women may influence perceptions of masculinity, but instead they employ the all-encompassing term "family" to account for their presence in the process. As long as this remains the tradition, a maximal understanding of the intricacies of black masculinity cannot be reached.

Black Masculinity in the Context of Romantic Relationships

Scholars attribute a preponderance of the conflict in black male-female relationships to the contradictory gender roles that are prescribed to particular cultural groups (Aborampah, 1989; Franklin, 1984; Marbley, 2003; Wallace, 2007). The incongruous messages received by black males are that manhood requires responsibility, dominance, decisiveness and aggression while simultaneously learning that they cannot embody any one of these characteristics in the extent to which white men feel threatened (Franklin, 1984; Wallace 2007). Adams (2007) hinted at this conflict in a study where adherents of the masculinity of respect expressed hesitance in

asserting themselves in some situations; they feared being perceived as overpowering black men. These messages and those given to black females about their gender roles create contradictory gender norms by which blacks are said to organize themselves (Aborampah, 1989; Wallace, 2007). If this is so, then understanding black masculinity within the context of a romantic relationship is a function of recognizing societal constraints and their implications for actions toward others.

Accordingly, it seems that the climate of the dating sphere as perceived by black men and women affects what is deemed as admissible behavior. Black women purportedly give way to fears that a sex-ratio imbalance is responsible for a shortage in marriageable black men; as a result, they are inclined to acquiesce in what is acceptable treatment from men (Aborampah, 1989; King and Allen, 2009; Marbley, 2003). There also exists a black male double standard, which allows for men to take their sexual liberties while demanding that women of quality spurn doing so themselves (Aborampah, 1989). Denied the privileges of patriarchal masculinity reserved only for white males, sex became not only an assertion of manhood, but entitled pleasure for black men (hooks, 2004b) Burgest (1990) reveals how sexual beliefs manifest as sexual games between black men and women. Many of the games played are done so under the patriarchal assumption that men are given to uncontrollable sexual urges and thus want sex more.

Hence, black women play games that hinge upon their sexual objectivity. Burgest suggests that, “in the rhetoric of romance in black society, love has become a four-letter word which means SEX” (p. 110). Utley (2010) would agree, stating, “traditional ambiguities surrounding the definition and pursuit of love are further impoverished by a popular cultural environment that over-emphasizes the production and consumption of black sex” (p. 292). The relationship scripts reported by Bowleg, Lucas and Tschann (2004) were consistent with black

female fear and the black male double standard. Women in this study conveyed that men control relationships, women sustain relationships and infidelity from their partner is normative. Proceeding from black women's subscription to the black male double standard and anxiety engendered by a sex-ratio imbalance comes affirmation of black male behaviors that can be ascribed to patriarchal ideology.

How blacks view gender roles may very well be an expression of the worldview to which they accede (Dade and Sloan, 2000). To this end, blacks high in Afrocentric cultural consciousness were found to prioritize in their partners qualities such as intellectual and emotional stimulation, a communal sense of responsibility for family and the black community, respect and sharing, and unconditional love. Those with low Afrocentric cultural consciousness prioritized professional and financial status, competition and control, independence, and sexual conquests (Bell, Bouie and Baldwin, 1990). Lawrence-Webb et al. (2004) claim, "the philosophical aspects of patriarchy affect African American couples by virtue of their socialization and the clearly defined role of gender within society" (p. 626). Many relationship issues spring from acceptance of negative attitudes and stereotypes being held among and between blacks; suitably, those most pessimistic about love relationships have been found to espouse more traditional gender role perceptions (Cazenave, 1983). External stressors have also been implicated in making black relationships vulnerable to trust issues (Kelly and Floyd, 2001).

Additionally, the powerlessness felt by men and the resulting power struggle that may ensue within a love relationship sometimes means that women bear the brunt of male frustration (Bell, 1989; Cowdery, et. al., 2009). Black women in relationships that are abusive, exploitative or that represent an unequal balance of power report lower levels of sexual satisfaction than those in healthier relationships with open communication (Wyatt and Lyons-Rowe, 1990). The

ample empirical literature concerned with the internalization and enactment of injurious gender role concepts and stereotypes evidences the dangers associated with patriarchal and hegemonic alignment.

A modest amount of literature has been devoted to exploring the performance of romance-based masculinity. Redman (2001) found that romance might aid adolescents in the construction of a new, more adult configuration of masculinity. Consistent with others who criticize Connell's presentation of hegemonic masculinity, Allen (2007) asserts that romantic masculinity may very well be an acceptable component of hegemonic masculinity. In fact, Allen found that romantic masculinity often reinscribed the hegemonic tendencies it appeared to challenge. No participant in Allen's study occupied a purely nonhegemonic space while enacting romantic masculinity; indeed, being seen as romantic had its benefits for participants. Chu, Porche and Tolman (2005) developed the Adolescent Masculinity Ideology in Relationship Scale (AMIRS) to measure the degree to which adolescents allied themselves with hegemonic masculinity in relationships. These acknowledgements of the idea that performances of masculinity can vary by context are a necessary stride for masculinity studies; however, they all share the same fundamental error. In exploring performances of romantic masculinity, they are derelict in portraying the potential power that females wield in masculine identity formation. Furthermore, these studies do not account for the unique cultural milieu that is a reality for many blacks. Thereby, it cannot be taken for granted that these depictions are representative of black male-female relationships.

There is a pressing need for the presence of female voices in masculinity research. Talbot and Quayle (2010) maintain that women "actively and passively coproduce, normalize and even fetishize masculinities," which mandates their inclusion in masculinity studies (p. 256). In their

exploration of female constructions of masculinity, they found that women shaped said constructions around identities preferred for themselves. Goddard (2000) asserts that people play the roles that others would like for them to play. He stresses the necessity to examine the female gaze in the perpetuation of patriarchy and states that women may adopt a patriarchal gaze just as men may. But if women can preserve patriarchy, they can certainly reject it as well. In some studies, black women have communicated their preference for partners who did not assume society's prescribed form of masculinity but instead practiced their own (Bell, 1989; King and Allen, 2009). Even female friends of black men hold a stake in masculine identity formation. Feminist friends challenge notions of manhood and provide needed affirmation for men who query traditional gender norms (White, 2006). Given these assertions, acceptance of masculinity studies largely devoid of female voice is to accept deficient understandings of masculine identity performances.

Patriarchy and Black Male-Female Romantic Relationships

Patriarchy is toxic to black male-female relationships. Lawrence-Webb et al. (2004) states: "Patriarchy is a sociological structure that has become globally imbedded in all of our institutions in society. It has its greatest effect in the private lives of men and women" (p. 627). The power of patriarchy over black male-female relationships lies in its ability to cause dissension while remaining unchallenged or even unacknowledged. hooks (2004) asserts:

> "Although critics of black male-female relationships like to talk about the continued existence of a gender war in black life, as though conflict between the two groups is fueled by feminist revolution, in actuality the cause of most battles is failure to conform adequately to the sexist norms" (p. 119).

Thus, within the context of black love relationships problems often arise when patriarchal standards are not met or patriarchal roles go unfulfilled. The belief system that undergirds these standards and roles is rarely called into question. Instead, fault remains with individuals as opposed to the system they subscribe to, which works to oppress both involved. In the end, black couples no longer need help from the dominant, white society in marginalization; they create their own tangle of pathology amongst one another by upholding standards that were never meant for them to meet.

Indulgence in patriarchy requires careful negotiation that many black relationships cannot withstand. Lawrence-Webb et al. (2004) contends:

> "the livelihood of African American men and women is dependent on the arbitrary access to resources controlled by the dominant group encapsulated in institutionalized patriarchal systems. This results in a situation where access to resources necessary for healthy functioning becomes a high-stakes process where couples have to trade off aspects of their relationships for material/emotional comforts or gains" (p. 628).

What hangs in the balance of this negotiation becomes the health of the relationship or the spoils of patriarchy; surely individuals do not possess sufficient time, energy or even will power for both to exist simultaneously within their relationships. The effort exerted toward patriarchal pursuits drains that much more from practices that may foster stronger bonds between black men and women. For instance, hooks (2004b) states: "the reality remains that the desire to have a man who assumes a conventional patriarchal role of manly protector and provider is still the norm" (p. 119). But, as many scholars have cited, opportunities for success that would make the provider role attainable are not as readily available to black men. The pressure to fulfill this patriarchal role engenders stress and conflict for both the man who falls short and for the woman

who remains rigid in her demand. Hence, the truth persists that, “unlike White males, black males receive no societal rewards for their efforts; instead, the result is black male-black female disharmony” (Franklin, 1984, p. 152).

Patriarchy promotes characteristics that are counterintuitive to the fortification of healthy relationships. hooks (2004b) suggests, “black men, like other groups of men in patriarchal culture, have found that lying and withholding truth is a form of power. Dominators use it to exploit and oppress others. Far too many black men are addicted to lying” (p. 128). Though power in the larger society is not accessible to most black men, they still may exercise a certain degree of power within their relationships. This is where behaviors such as lying gain their importance. Perhaps lying is so effective a form of control for black men due to a condition cited by Franklin (1984): “While black women have retained empathy in their male-female relationships to a greater degree than black men have, black men have become increasingly nonexpressive and nonempathetic in their male-female relationships” (p. 153). Lack of expression and empathy allows for the unapologetic use of tactics purposed for dominion over women. But by using these tactics unapologetically, black men are more than just withholding truths from women. Detached and unfeeling, these men are merely remnants of the human beings they were before they pledged their patriarchal allegiance. Their lies become who they are.

Black men and women too often contribute to the disintegration of relationships in their own communities. hooks (2004b) argues: “In many African American communities the black man who womanizes, whose whole life is based on lies, secrets and silences, is often seen as the epitome of desirable manhood” (p. 128). Deeming desirable those who womanize and lie about it reinforces and perpetuates patriarchy. However, while black men revel in their philandering ways, they concurrently push away any prospect of intimacy that may have existed. “Addictive

sexual behavior is a barrier to intimacy. When black males and females are exploiting one another, intimacy is not possible" (hooks, 2004b, p. 129). The damage wreaked by accepting patriarchy into one's set of values has ruinous effects upon the level of closeness that can be achieved in relationships. Reconciling this is no easy feat, as "black men do not seem to have a problem exercising assertiveness in their relationships with black women, they do, however, have a problem functioning in healthy ways in emotional relationships" (Wallace, 2007, p. 19). Subsequently, patriarchy is given far too little credit when scholars and cultural critics cite reasons behind failing black romantic relationships. For, where patriarchy exists, almost certainly a healthy, loving relationship does not.

It is important to note that historically, Black male/female relationships have not been rooted in such conflict-raising principles. How far back these relations can be traced is a matter of debate. Oyewumi (1997) makes the case that in ancient African cultures, particularly ancient Yorùbá culture, there was no concept of gender and thus distinctions between biologically male bodies and biologically female bodies were not made. Without these distinctions patriarchy was nonexistent. She asserts that men and women did not interact with one another on the basis of gender and that instead, age was the basis by which caste systems were created. Patriarchal understandings of gender and gender roles were not implemented until Europeans brought them from their own countries and imposed them upon African societies. According to Oyewumi, this was the historical moment from which came the invention of women and their eventual subjugation to men.

Davis (1981) locates the advent of these conflictual relations between Black women and men in a relatively recent time period. She has argued that the myth of the matriarchal Black woman resulted from slavery, when Black women were accused of assuming the White slave owner's

agenda and consequently being treated less brutally than their Black male counterparts. From this arose the idea of the emasculating Black woman who is responsible for the social condition of all Black people. Wallace (1999) also discussed how this myth was used to perpetuate the patriarchal culture of the Black Power movement. Perhaps it is not possible to ascertain precisely when patriarchy infiltrated Black male/female interactions; but nonetheless, it should be born in mind that these hegemonic constructions have not always provided the foundation on which Black men and women have built relationships.

Summary

This chapter included a discussion of the literature regarding hegemonic patriarchal masculinity, the construction of black masculinity and black masculinity within the context of intimate partner relationships. The formation of black masculinity is largely contributed to socially imposed structures and constraints (Aborampah, 1989, Chaney, 2009; Franklin, 1984; Pierre, Mahalik & Woodland, 2001; Spraggins, 1999; Wallace, 2007; Wester, Vogel, Wei & McLain, 2006; Wise, 2001). Masculinity research is remiss not to consider other elements of black masculine identity construction, namely intimate relationships. The following chapter addresses the methods used in conducting this exploration of relationships in the perpetuation of certain patriarchal masculine performances.

CHAPTER 3

The general purpose of this study was to obtain a further understanding of interpretations of patriarchal masculine performances within romantic relationships. In doing so, Steve Harvey's book *Act Like A Lady, Think Like A Man* was used as a point of reference. This chapter includes a discussion of the research design and method appropriateness. Also included in this chapter is an explanation of the population, sampling, data collection procedures and rationale. Finally, the validity and type of data analysis that was performed is presented.

Research Method and Design Appropriateness

I employed a qualitative research method through the use of focus groups in this study for a number of reasons. Creswell (2007) cites common characteristics of qualitative research as follows:

1. Natural setting (field focused), a source of data for close interaction;
2. Researcher as key instrument of data collection;
3. Multiple data sources in words or images;
4. Analysis of data inductively, recursively, interactively;
5. Focus on participants' perspectives, their meanings, their subjective views;
6. Framing of human behavior and belief within a social-political/historical context or through a cultural lens;
7. Emergent rather than tightly prefigured design;
8. Fundamentally interpretive inquiry – researcher reflects on her or his role, the role of the reader, and the role of the participants in shaping the study;
9. Holistic view of social phenomena.

This study encompassed several of these characteristics. I was the primary instrument of data collection. There was no use of questionnaires or other instruments developed by other researchers. The data analysis required reductive, recursive and interactive measures in that themes were established and participant validation of said themes were encouraged.

Of chief importance were the perspectives and meanings provided by the subjects that choose to participate in this study. Their participation aided in the framing of human behavior from a particular cultural lens, as opposed to a lens that may otherwise be insufficient for an accurate depiction of the behavior. An emergent design allowed a shift in the planned research process. This allowed for questions to change and data collection to shift so that I could continue to learn about the problem as it was truly experienced by the participant. Lastly, the study sought to provide a holistic account that considered factors in patriarchal masculinity that lend to its complexity.

Qualitative research is consistent with the tenets of a Black Feminist theoretical framework. “In feminist research approaches, the goals are to establish collaborative and nonexploitative relationships, to place the researcher within the study so as to avoid objectification, and to conduct research that is transformative” (Creswell, 2007, p. 26). Black Feminist Theory places importance on the lived experiences of people as a means of producing knowledge. This indicates that knowledge production does not lie solely in the hands of intellectuals but that everyone has a basis from which to create meaning. Taking into account these differences in lived experiences provided a medium for the exploration of a plurality of realities that may exist. These realities, exposed by the legitimization of personal voices, could not be expounded upon through the use of quantitative methods.

Similarly, quantitative methods have proven to be detrimental to an authentic study of African Americans. Statistical analysis, founded by one who also developed a theory of white supremacy, continues to reflect the racist ideologies from which it arose (Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008). Quantitative methods tell the *what* of a situation but neglect to communicate the *why* or the *how*. Without comprehensive information to describe a phenomenon, no authentic interpretation of the data can be made or conclusions drawn about the subjects that provided it. Quantitative measures for the performance of patriarchal masculinity within black male-female relationships may have given light to how common of an occurrence it is, but they would not reveal how these performances were negotiated, challenged or accepted. For these reasons, a qualitative approach was employed in this study.

An exploratory approach to this study was necessary. Creswell (2007) states that qualitative research is used "to follow up quantitative research and help explain the mechanisms or linkages in causal theories or models" (p. 40). The cause and effect structure implicit in quantitative experimental research designs was not adequate for what was desired here. I sought to understand the negotiation of patriarchal masculine performances. These processes occur without any intervention from a researcher. An exploration of these processes as they happen in everyday life experiences provided an unaffected view of these negotiations and was thus more valuable to this study than any intervention or experimental design.

Population, Sampling and Data Collection Procedures and Rationale

Purposeful sampling was used in this study. Creswell (2007) states: "The concept of purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research. This means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (p. 125). Accordingly, the sample

consisted of students recruited from classes taught within the African American Studies Department at Georgia State University. Students from this department were used because oftentimes those enrolled in introductory African American Studies courses come from an assortment of majors and thus possessed an array of differing interests and opinions. Additionally, college students were chosen for this study because being educated is, in larger society, a quality that makes one marriageable.

Criterion sampling is a type of purposeful sampling in qualitative research. This type of sampling occurs when "all cases meet some criterion" and is "useful for quality assurance" (Creswell, 2007, p. 127). The participants chosen for this study met the following criteria:

- Identify as black, non-Hispanic;
- Are 18 years of age or older;
- Have been or currently are in a relationship with a black partner;
- Are willing to speak freely on experiences in romantic relationships;
- Speak English clearly;
- Are able to provide transportation for themselves to focus group location; and
- Are available for contact when clarification is needed regarding data collection.

There were 28 participants. This number was a product of the six focus groups that were conducted, each consisting of between 3-8 participants. There are multiple benefits derived from using focus groups:

1. "Focus groups are an economical, fast, and efficient method for obtaining data from multiple participants, thereby potentially increasing the overall number of participants in a given qualitative study"
2. They provide a socially-oriented environment

3. "The sense of belonging to a group can increase the participants' sense of cohesiveness and help them to feel safe to share information"
4. "The interactions that occur among the participants can yield important data, can create the possibility for more spontaneous responses, and can provide a setting where the participants can discuss personal problems and provide possible solutions" (As cited by Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech and Zoran, 2009, p. 2).

The use of focus groups was important to participant comfort. One-on-one interviews were not used in this study because male subjects may have been hesitant in providing genuine answers with a female research investigator. The focus group atmosphere and the company of other males who were sharing their ideas about relationships may have served to ease any discomfort resulting from the presence of a female. Also, hearing other men speak about their experiences had the potential to stimulate discussion that may not have arisen in an interview.

Focus groups have been an effective tool in exploring gender-related issues. Landstedt, Asplund, and Gillander (2009) conducted a focus group study in which they sought to understand gendered power relations, social factors, and the construction of masculinities and femininities as they pertain to adolescent mental health. This study found that negotiating cultural norms of femininity was more challenging for girls than negotiating masculinity was for boys. My research was similar in that it sought to examine the cultural norms of masculinity – as presented in a popular book – and how they were negotiated. Subsequently, the issue of gendered power relations was also of interest. My study differed in that it was specifically geared toward those that happen in black male-female romantic relationships.

Settles, Pratt-Hyatt and Buchanan (2008) conducted a focus group study that examined black and white women's perceptions of gender. Their goal was to explore how the intersection

of race and gender had differing implications for the work, home and social lives of these women. The study found that the theme of "Inner Strength" emerged only for black women (p. 463). The results of their study were discussed within the context of socio-historical factors, gender role norms, gender discrimination and stereotypes. Similarly, I examined Black women and men's perception of a specific type of masculine performance. Through the literature, I have detailed socio-historical factors, gender role norms and stereotypes that reflected in the responses provided by the subjects in my study. These two studies are indicative of the utility of focus groups in obtaining pertinent information in racial and gendered experiences.

Participation in this study was completely voluntary and subjects were informed of such. Should they have decided at any point that they no longer wished to participate, they may have chosen not to without incurring penalty. Students who did choose to participate were compensated extra credit points allotted toward their quiz grade in the class from which they were recruited. All records obtained in the execution of this study were kept private and those involved in the focus groups were asked not to repeat anything said or heard during participation.

Students who agreed to participate completed a demographic information form. Subjects met at the Georgia State University library in a specified conference room for a focus group. Subjects were provided and asked to read a chapter from *Act Like A Lady, Think Like A Man*. The chapters used were from the sections of the book that profess to convey the mind-set of men and why they "do what they do." While reading they were asked to highlight the ideas and actions presented in the chapter that they felt were like their own experiences or that they completely disagreed with. Once everyone finished, participants were asked a series of questions regarding these ideas and how they related to their own experiences within past or present

romantic relationships. These focus groups were audio recorded and the records were then transcribed.

Validity

In qualitative research, the primary instrument is the researcher. Thus, I took measures to ensure the highest possible internal validity. Each audiotape from the focus groups was transcribed before the next focus group took place so that certain nuances of each group were not forgotten and could be properly recorded. Member checking was also useful in ensuring validity. "In member checking, the researcher solicits participants' views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations This approach…involves taking data, analyses, interpretations and conclusions back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account" (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). Subjects who asked were given transcripts of the focus group they were a part of and were given the opportunity to correct any imprecisely recorded statements.

With respect to external validity, the findings in this study cannot be used to generalize about the attitudes of the larger population in the same way that would be done with quantitative research. There was a way, however, to achieve the highest possible external validity. Creswell (2007) states:

> "Rich, thick description allows readers to make decisions regarding transferability because the writer describes in detail the participants or setting under study. With such detailed description, the researcher enables readers to transfer information to other settings and to determine whether the findings can be transferred due to similar characteristics" (p. 209).

Precise portrayal of the participants' experiences through rich description allows one to determine for him or herself the potential for generalizability. This potential necessitates the use of thorough measures to ensure internal validity. Through accurate, detailed descriptions of the men and women's interpretation of patriarchal masculinity, others may assess for themselves how the data collected from this study may be relevant in other settings.

Data Analysis

I conducted an autoethnographic content analysis of Harvey's book. According to Atheide (1987):

> "Ethnographic content analysis is used to document and understand the communication of meaning, as well as to verify theoretical relationships. Its distinctive characteristic is the reflexive and highly interactive nature of the investigator, concepts, data collection and analysis" (p. 68).

This was done to highlight patterns of patriarchal thinking that were apparent in the text and to examine the meaning assigned to masculinity as it relates to male/female relationships. It was autoethnographic because these were my reflections of the text as I understood them to be patriarchal in nature.

Qualitative analysis was used for the data collected in this study. About the process of qualitative analysis, Creswell (2007) states:

> "Qualitative researchers build their patterns categories, and themes from the 'bottom-up,' by organizing the data into increasingly more abstract units of information. This inductive process involves researchers working back and forth between the themes and the database until they establish a comprehensive set of themes. It may also involve collaborating with the

> participants interactively, so that they have a chance to shape the themes or abstractions that emerge from the process" (Creswell, 2007, p. 38-39).

Qualitative analysis is essentially a cycle. The transcripts were read once before any analysis took place in order to consider the data as a whole. The transcripts were then reread and coded. According to Saldaña (2009), "A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p. 3).

Creswell's suggested strategies incorporate the processes of first and second cycle coding. About these cycles Saldaña (2009) claims:

> "The portion of data to be coded during First Cycle coding processes can range in magnitude from a single word to a full sentence to an entire page of text to a stream of moving images. In Second Cycle coding processes, the portions coded can be the exact same units, longer passages of text, and even a reconfiguration of the codes themselves developed thus far" (p. 3)

Major themes were developed from the codes that were common throughout the transcripts. These themes were used to describe how ideas about black masculine identity performances were negotiated within relationships.

Summary

This chapter consisted of a discussion of the population, sample, data collection procedures and research method and design rationale. Data analysis and validity were also considered. The next chapter will provide the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore masculine constructions as they occur in Black male/female relationships and what role women may occupy in legitimating particularly patriarchal masculine performances. The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

- Using *Act Like A Lady, Think Like a Man* as a point of reference:

  How do Black men and women understand masculine performances within the context of romantic relationships?

  a) In what ways does their understanding reflect patriarchal constructions of masculinity?

  b) How do women perpetuate or challenge these masculine performances?

This study utilized a qualitative design and was conducted during the months of January and February 2012. During this time Black men and women were recruited from courses taught in the African American Studies department. Students were introduced to the topic of the study and informed of the criteria before recruitment lists were passed around the classroom. From the lists, students were contacted via email and assigned to the focus group in which their participation was requested.

Six focus groups were conducted in a private study room in Georgia State University's library. Three of the focus groups consisted of three participants, one of them included four participants, one included seven and one included eight, for a total of 28 participants. All who participated in the focus groups received extra credit upon completion. All six focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed.

This chapter has four sections. The first section is a presentation of the autoethnographic content analysis that was conducted using Harvey's book. The second section presents demographic information and descriptions of the six focus groups in the order in which they were conducted. Pseudonyms were used in order to keep the true identity of the participants confidential. The third section presents the major themes and subthemes that emerged from the focus groups during the coding process. The final section provides a summary of the chapter.

Autoethnographic Content Analysis

In order to further legitimate my decision to conduct this study around Harvey's book, I conducted an analysis of the depictions of masculinity and relationships found within it. In doing so, I sought to find instances where hegemonic patriarchal rhetoric was used. The book is laden with ideas that are consistent with the mandates of hegemonic patriarchal masculinity, those mandates being that men: not be womanlike, not be boy-like, have control over their own emotions as well as women, be in possession of property and/or power and have a sense of entitlement to sexual gratification. The book, in effect, sets a patriarchal standard for men and tells women how they can maneuver within this framework.

Not womanlike

The system of patriarchy thrives on this basic assumption: that women and men are essentially different. Without the creation and reification of differences between men and women, it is impossible to justify their subordination or oppression. This works in much the same way as the distinctions between races drawn upon by racist ideology. Differences become the basis of discrimination. This was an idea communicated consistently throughout Harvey's book. For example, Harvey states:

> "Please understand that our love is wholly different from a woman's love. A woman's love is emotional, nurturing, heart-felt – sweet and kind and all-encompassing. You can slice a knife through it, it's so thick. And when she's in love with you, she is loyal to you – she can't see herself with someone else, because for her, no one else will do. That's a woman's love. But for men, love is loyalty…The kind of love you require is beautiful, but our love isn't like your love. It's different, though it's still love" (p. 42).

This depiction of men's versus women's love is tremendously problematic. It assumes that women are naturally nurturing, emotional beings that love until the ends of the earth. It also conveys some level of dependency that women supposedly have on the men whom they have fixated their "loyalty." This reinforces the taken for granted idea that women are better at the act of loving than men and that men are not capable of the same type of love. Following this notion, it then becomes acceptable for men not to practice acts of love as freely as they would be able to sans the guise of "loving differently." Within this framework, women who do not fall under the category of sweet and heartfelt, or men who do, are acting outside of prescribed gender scripts and can potentially be criticized for these illegitimate performances.

Harvey makes a similar point when he discusses the differences in the ways that men and women communicate. He states:

> "No man wants to sit around gabbing with you like we're one of your girlfriends. Ever. It's just not in our DNA to lounge around, sip coffee, and dab at our eyes with tissue as if we're in an AA meeting or on some psychologists couch trying to get things off our chest. When men are talking, and especially when they're listening, it's with purpose" (p. 50).

Indicating that conversing "like girlfriends" is not in a man's genetic makeup is the most fundamental way that Harvey can express the differences between men and women. He makes this statement with a certain finality, demonstrated clearly by his use of the definitive declaration, "Ever." This is evidence of the tenacity with which patriarchal men cling to the idea that being womanlike is anathema. He also implies that when women are talking and listening, it is without purpose. Harvey unequivocally differentiates between typical communication styles for women and those for men.

Continuing the legacy of patriarchal gender differentiation, Harvey advises women to do the following: "In sum, ladies, you have to stop heaping your own definitions of love on men and recognize that men love differently. A man's love fits only into three categories. As I've explained, I call them 'The Three Ps of Love – Profess, Provide, and Protect'" (p. 36). When a man has committed "The Three Ps of Love," he has laid claim to a woman so that others know that the two are an item; he has positioned himself as the sole financial supplier for his woman and his family; and he is willing to defend and keep safe his woman by any means necessary. If women follow this advice, this will ensure that men will not open up to other ways of expressing love. This can preclude romantic relationships between men and women from reaching levels of intimacy only possible when two people interact on the basis of being human rather than on the basis of being man and woman.

Not boy-like

Throughout the book there is also constant reference to "real men." When Harvey provides characteristics and actions of men in relationships, he makes sure to indicate that it is only the case for "real men." This relates back to the hegemonic imperative that men not be like

boys, meaning that they not be dependent or immature; that they take care of their responsibilities. The following statement exemplifies this:

> "But remember what drives a man; real men do what they have to do to make sure their people are taken care of, clothed, housed, and reasonably satisfied, and if they're doing anything less than that, they're not men – or shall we say, he's not your man, because he will eventually do this for someone's daughter, maybe not you" (p. 26).

Harvey stresses the importance that a man takes care of other people and leaves no room for the possibility that men may, themselves, need to be taken care of in some capacity or may even want to be. By saying that one who does not do these things is not a man, the only other options are that he is a woman or he is a boy, two things deemed weak in patriarchal culture.

Harvey even has a chapter in his book about mama's boys. He problematizes men that he feels have unusual connections with their mothers. His advice to women regarding what to do when faced with the challenge of a mama's boy is interesting. He tells them: "If you don't have any standards or requirements, guess whose rules he's going to follow? That's right, his mother's. She was the first woman to tell him what she would and wouldn't accept" (p. 89). Harvey almost pits mothers and female partners against one another, making their relationships oppositional and implying that it is either one or the other in the lives of the men involved. Also implicit in this is the message that men only reach manhood upon entrance into a relationship, because until then they are under the instruction of their mothers, devoid of opportunity to fill the provider role reserved for men.

Sex

Harvey makes an emphatic case for the necessity of sex to the "normal" male. He states: "No-brainer. Men. Need. Sex. We love it. Ain't nothin' on this planet like it, nothing else we

want that bad on a continuous basis, nothing else we simply cannot live without" (p. 43). This is a manifestation of the patriarchal notion that there is something about the very maleness of being men that makes sex vital to the masculine experience. Nowhere in the book does Harvey express that women may possess an equally desirous appetite for sex. It is made to be specifically a male yearning. This is oftentimes the kind of thinking that fuels the "A man will be a man" rationalization for sexual indiscretions. Men are sometimes forgiven their infidelities because it is taken for granted that they just cannot help themselves, being that sex is something that they "simply cannot live without." Women are not necessarily afforded such liberties, as evidenced by the lack of an equivalent rationalization that "A woman will be a woman."

Subsequently, this continuous want for sex frames all initial dealings between men and women, according to Harvey. He contends:

> "If we don't want anything from you, we're not coming over there. Period. Please highlight this part right here so you can always remind yourself the next time a man steps to you: a man always wants something. *Always*. And when it comes to women, that plan is always to find out two things: (1) if you're willing to sleep with him, and (2) if you are, how much it will cost to get you to sleep with him" (p. 64).

If one subscribes to Harvey's understanding of male/female interactions, it is impossible for men and women to participate in genuine interactions with one another because they are overshadowed by the ultimate goal of obtaining sexual gratification. Further, he commodifies sex when he describes it in terms of how much it will cost. Here, women are nothing more vaginas with price tags attached to them, to be sold to whomever has the means to afford them.

Harvey communicated this sexual imperative beyond merely first-time encounters between men and women. He also made a place for it in "committed relationships." He suggests:

> "Oh, he'll work with you if you have an off week – if he loves you, that is. If he didn't care, he wouldn't bother to try to get your cookie – he'd just go on and get it from somewhere else. But if he's into you, and you're cutting back, rationing it out, you're not doing what you did when you all first started dating, he's going to line up someone who will" (p. 44).

Harvey reserves the right for men to go outside of their relationship if they feel that their sexual needs are not being met. Women are afforded "an off week" but this is said to be the case only if the man "loves" her. This means that in no situation, whether it be a well-established relationship or a new one, is a woman allowed to regulate the use of her body without the threat of her significant other violating established boundaries. This is a sort of emotional coercion and can taint sexual relations between men and women, causing women to succumb to pressure even when it is completely against their wishes. Worse, Harvey locates a man's "care" in his attempt to obtain sex from his partner; this makes sexual advances against the wishes of the woman seem like they should somehow be appreciated and taken for an expression of genuine affection. In return, if women spurn these advances it is they who are said to be the cause of the issue rather than the issue being with the man's pseudo-sentimental expression of care.

Control Over Women

Harvey stated the aspect of control over women a bit more implicitly throughout the book. Take the following passage for instance:

> "So when we walk back in our house, we want to be able to let our guard down. All we want, really, is to hear you say, 'Baby, how was your day? Thank you for making it happen for us. This family needs you and wants you and is happy to have you.' We've

> got to feel like we're king, even if we don't act kingly. Trust me, the more you make us feel like we're special, the more we'll give in return" (p. 40).

According to Harvey, a man simply wishes to feel like he is in control, even when that isn't necessarily the case. Women can do this by relinquishing claims to any influence they may have in the household and thanking her man for making it all possible. This is a benevolent form of control since no emotional or physical abuse is taking place, but it is a desire for control nonetheless. Never mind the contributions that women make to the household, as long as men are made to feel that they are king and through them all things are achieved.

In a chapter entitled "Strong, Independent – and Lonely – Women" Harvey indicts women that refuse to surrender the self-assuredness that can come along with being able to provide for oneself. He argues:

> "But if the man who is pursuing your affection is never allowed by you to exhibit his ability to provide or protect, then how can he possibly see himself professing his love to a woman who has not allowed him to feel like a man? The things you've acquired and gained financially and educationally can never be bigger than the relationship with the man. His DNA will not allow for that. Translation: we appreciate it when women treat us like men, when you let us know that you *need* us. The need to feel needed is way bigger to us than we've let on; we have to feel needed by you in order to fulfill our destiny as a man" (p. 182).

Harvey expresses the urgency with which men seek to feel needed. He claims that their very manhood is contingent upon it. Fundamentally, this is equivalent to saying that men gain their manhood through exercising their control over women. When women act in ways that undermine this control, men no longer have access to masculinity. Operating from this construction, there is

no other way for men fully exude manhood than for them to be on the controlling end of a dominate-subordinate framework for a relationship. Women who do not allow men this type of control are then threatened with loneliness and characterized as emasculating.

Harvey provides a noteworthy example of how deception factors into the control over women. He speaks of his conversations with other men about why they tended to be unfaithful, relaying:

> "And each time I asked them what could have been different for the women they were with, almost down to the letter, each one of those men said the same thing: if a woman came to me and quizzed me up front about my intentions, they would have known from the beginning that I'm not looking for anything serious. They don't ask, each one said, because they think they're going to run me off, so I get to just string them along" (p. 131).

Though these men are not telling outright lies to women, their failure to be open about their intentions without being questioned is a display of dishonesty. They seem to be acknowledging that if women knew their intentions, they would not continue whatever relationship or understanding that was established; however, these men take advantage of the fact that these questions go unasked and use it to control the situation. What is problematic about this section of the book is that Harvey in no way places blame on these men for leading women on by omission of information. Instead he blames women for not being proactive in the situation and asking the necessary questions. While there may be some validity to the assertion that women should ask more questions, it is certainly problematic for Harvey not to take issue with the men who practice deceit in this way. This also communicates a level of entitlement to the control of women.

Control Over Emotions

If one adheres to arguments made in the book, emotions are things to be had by women and women only. Harvey makes no qualms about his belief that men do not participate in emotional activity of their own volition. He states: "The emotional stuff – the talking, the cuddling, the holding hands, and bonding, that's y'all's thing. We'll do those things because we know it's important to you. But please understand: the way we men connect is by having sex. Period" (p. 43). Patriarchal notions of both emotionality and sexuality are communicated here. Men apparently have no desire or need to express themselves emotionally, unless it is done through sex. But even then, sex is not always a platform for emotional expression. This is made clear when he says:

> "By contrast, when it comes to men and sex, neither emotions nor meaning necessarily enter the equation. It's easy – very easy – for a man to have sex, go home, wash it off with soap and water, and act like what he just did never happened. Sex can be a purely physical act for us – love has absolutely nothing to do with it" (p. 97).

So if men express their emotions through neither talking, bonding or other interactions that draw partners closer, nor sex, they are left with no outlet whatsoever. More, sex as a strictly physical, emotionless and meaningless act rids it of its power to create a certain level of intimacy between two individuals, even if they are not in a relationship where the man wishes to make that connection with a woman. This lack of emotionality in relationships can be crippling and can show up in other unhealthy ways.

True to form, Harvey charges women with the perpetration of a fundamental error. He describes what this error is when he explains: "Women have different moods, and ideas in their head, and you all expect us to fall in line, and if we don't, it's a problem – you're telling your

girlfriends, 'He won't talk to me,' and 'I can't get him to open up.' But opening up is not what we do" (p. 53). Definitively, it is women's fault for attempting to get men to open up and express themselves. Reiterating that men and women are not the same and should not be treated as such, Harvey denounces any longing for the freedom to be expressive and, as some feminist scholars would say, fully human. He says: "We know that sitting and listening and even participating in a long conversation about your feelings is necessary and inevitable. But don't be surprised if those conversations are few and far between" (p. 56).

Possession/Property

There is a strong emphasis on this aspect throughout the book. Everything that a man is said to do regarding relationships springs from what it is that a man possesses. Harvey demonstrates this by saying:

> "The pursuit of manhood doesn't change once a boy is grown. In fact, it's only magnified. His focus has always been on, and will remain on, who he is, what he does, and how much he makes until he feels like he's achieved his mission. And until a man does these things, women only fit into the cracks of his life" (p. 12)

Depicted in this way, women come second to a man and his worldly accomplishments and possessions. For men that never achieve prescribed status levels or gain significant material wealth, having a relationship with a woman can never be their focal point. Harvey goes on to say: "Encoded in the DNA of the male species is that we are to be the provider and the protector of the family, and everything we do is geared toward ensuring we can make this happen" (p. 15). This is consistent with the patriarchal notion that men must be protectors and providers. Outside of those roles, males cannot truly claim the status of men. In sections of the book where this is emphasized, Harvey also notes that it is the right of women to demand that men pay for

everything. He relates this back to the idea that "real men" do these things for women without protest, suggesting that men who do not – or cannot – will never truly be able to claim manhood.

The language of the book signified that women are an extension of men's possessions as well. Harvey asserts: "A man who professes you as his own is also saying in not so many words that he's claiming you – that you are his. Now he's put everyone on notice" (p. 22). As described, men are essentially "marking their territory" so that other men know not to bother with you. Later in the book Harvey says:

> "You're the driving force behind why we wake up every day. Men go out and get jobs and hustle to make money because of women. We drive fancy cars because of women. We dress nice, put on cologne, get haircuts and try to look all shiny and new for you. We do all of this because the more our game is stepped up, the more of you we get. You're the ultimate prize to us" (p. 181).

In this excerpt, he employs the meaning of possessions in both senses. He again emphasizes material possessions but claims that these are obtained to appeal to women, the ultimate possessions. Following from this, women are things to be had amongst a list of other items or achievements: success, money, car, clothes, woman. They no longer maintain their status as human.

Demographics

The age of the participants in this study ranged from 19-60. There were a total of 15 females and 13 males. The birthplace of these participants represented an array of regions across the United States as well as other countries like Ghana, Zambia, France and Germany. The average age of the participants overall was 27.5, meaning that most individuals in this study were

older than the traditional college student. Tables 4.1 – 4.6 contain demographic information for each participant.

Table 4.1 Focus Group One: Chapter 6 - "Sports Fish vs. Keepers"

Name	Age	Birthplace	Gender	Mother's Education	Father's Education	Parents' Marital Status
April	22	Atlanta, GA	Female	High School Diploma	Associate's Degree	Divorced
Anna	23	Ansbach, Germany	Female	Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Divorced
Ava	23	Atlanta, GA	Female	Master's Degree or Higher	No answer given	Married

Table 4.2 Focus Group Two: Chapter 6 - "Sports Fish vs. Keepers"

Name	Age	Birthplace	Gender	Mother's Education	Father's Education	Parents' Marital Status
Ben	30	Regensburg, Germany	Male	Some College	High School Diploma	Separated
Blake	20	Cuthbert, GA	Male	Bachelor's Degree	Some College	Never Married
Bobby	43	Indianapolis, IN	Male	Some College	No Diploma	Divorced

Table 4.3 Focus Group 3: Chapter 2 - "Our Love Isn't Like Your Love"

Name	Age	Birthplace	Gender	Mother's Education	Father's Education	Parents' Marital Status
Catherine	35	Los Angeles	Female	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree or higher	Never Married
Camille	26	Decatur, GA	Female	Master's Degree or higher	Some College	Both deceased but married for 20 years prior
Carmen	26	Atlanta, GA	Female	Bachelor's Degree	Some College	Divorced
Candice	60	Oakland, CA	Female	No Diploma	High School Diploma	Never Married
Carrie	36	Philadelphia, PA	Female	High School Diploma	High School Diploma	Divorced
Carinne	30	College Park, GA	Female	Associate's Degree	Unsure	Both deceased but married for 20 years prior
Cora	21	Los Angeles, CA	Female	Some College	Bachelor's Degree	Never Married

Carly	26	Atlanta, GA	Female	Some College	No Diploma	Never Married

Table 4.4 Focus Group 4: Chapter 2 – "Our Love Isn't Like Your Love"

Name	Age	Birthplace	Gender	Mother's Education	Father's Education	Parents' Marital Status
Derek	23	Los Angeles, CA	Male	Some College	Some College	Married
David	23	Willimantic, CT	Male	Some College	Master's Degree or higher	Never married
Derrance	25	Hampton, VA	Male	Bachelor's Degree	High School Diploma	Never Married

Table 4.5 Focus Group 5: Chapter 3 – "The Three Things Every Man Needs"

Name	Age	Birthplace	Gender	Mother's Education	Father's Education	Parents' Marital Status
Eric	31	Hawaii	Male	Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Divorced
Eugene	25	Sumter, SC	Male	High School Diploma	High School Diploma	Married
Eddie	25	Denver, CO	Male	Some College	Bachelor's Degree	Never Married
Eli	34	Paris, France	Male	Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Married
Emmanuel	25	Seattle, WA	Male	No Diploma	High School Diploma	Married
Ellis	23	Brooklyn, NY	Male	Associate's Degree	Some College	Never Married
Emmett	26	Atlanta, GA	Male	Some College	High School Diploma	Divorced

Table 4.6 Focus Group 6: Chapter 3 – "The Three Things Every Man Needs"

Name	Age	Birthplace	Gender	Mother's Education	Father's Education	Parents' Marital Status
Faith	19	Zambia	Female	Some College	Unsure	Divorced
Farrah	21	Valley Stream, NY	Female	Some College	Some College	Divorced
Felicia	29	Erie, PA	Female	Some College	High School Diploma	Divorced
Flo	22	Accra, Ghana	Female	Some College	Master's Degree or higher	Married

Data Analysis

First and second cycle coding methods described by Saldaña (2009) were used in the data analysis process for these focus groups. During the first cycle, Process Coding and Values Coding were used to begin analysis. Values Coding "is the application of codes onto qualitative data that reflect a participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs representing his or her perspectives or worldview" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 89). This allowed for the examination of patriarchal ideas held by participants. Process Coding uses gerunds and is appropriate for "ongoing action/interaction/emotion taken in response to situations, or problems, often with the purpose of reaching a goal or handling a problem" (As cited by Saldaña, 2009, p. 77). This coding method highlighted the ways in which women perpetuated or challenged masculine performances. During the second cycle, Pattern Coding was used. Pattern Codes are "explanatory or inferential codes, ones that identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation. They pull together a lot of material into a more meaningful and parsimonious unit of analysis" (As cited by Saldaña, 2009, p. 152).

Data analysis revealed three major themes in regards to participants' understanding of masculine performances within the context of romantic relationships. Table 4.7 below displays these themes and subthemes. Their understandings reflected that masculinity is dynamic, reciprocal and oftentimes in opposition with impactful societal expectations. Concerning the ways in which their understanding reflects patriarchal constructions, participants reported ideas that were consistent with hegemonic masculinity as well as constructions that were not completely informed by hegemonic structures for masculinity and relationships. Analysis also revealed that there were "him-centric" and "her-centric" ways of challenging masculine performances and general ways of perpetuating them as well. Table 4.8 below shows themes as they emerged by focus group.

Table 4.7 Major Themes and Sub-Themes

Research Questions	**Major Themes and Subthemes**
How do Black men and women understand masculine performances within the context of romantic relationships?	MASCULINITY IS DYNAMIC MASCULINITY IS RECIPROCAL SOCIETY IS IMPACTFUL
In what ways does their understanding reflect patriarchal constructions of masculinity?	HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY • No emotions • Control over women • Sex as an entitlement • Property/Power • Not womanlike OUTSIDE CONSTRUCTIONS • Values • Amalgamation
How do Black women perpetuate or challenge these masculine performances?	CHALLENGE • Him-centric • Her-centric PERPETUATE • Communication • Disingenuous emotions/behavior

Table 4.8 Themes by Focus Group

Focus Group	**Themes**	**Focus Group**	**Themes**
Group 1	MASCULINITY IS RECIPROCAL SOCIETY IS IMPACTFUL HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY • Not womanlike • Property/Power • Sex as an entitlement OUTSIDE CONSTRUCTIONS • Values CHALLENGE • Him-centric • Her-centric	Group 4	MASCULINITY IS DYNAMIC MASCULINITY IS RECIPROCAL HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY • Not womanlike • Property/Power • No emotions • Control over women OTHER CONSTRUCTIONS • Values • Amalgamation CHALLENGE

			• Him-centric • Her-centric PERPETUATE • Communication
Group 2	MASCULINITY IS DYNAMIC MASCULINITY IS RECIPROCAL SOCIETY IS IMPACTFUL HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY • No emotions • Control over women • Sex as an entitlement • Not womanlike OUTSIDE CONSTRUCTIONS • Values • Amalgamation CHALLENEGE • Him-centric • Her-centric PERPETUATE • Communication • Disingenuous emotions/behavior	Group 5	MASCULINITY IS DYNAMIC MASCULINITY IS RECIPROCAL SOCIETY IS IMPACTFUL HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY • Control over women • Not womanlike • Sex as an entitlement OTHER CONSTRUCTIONS • Values • Amalgamation CHALLENGE • Him-centric • Her-centric PERPETUATE • Communication • Disingenuous emotions/behavior
Group 3	MASCULINITY IS DYNAMIC MASCULINITY IS RECIPROCAL SOCIETY IS IMPACTFUL HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY • No emotions • Control over women • Not womanlike • Property/Power OUTSIDE CONSTRUCTIONS • Values • Amalgamation CHALLENGE • Him-centric • Her-centric	Group 6	MASCULINITY IS DYNAMIC SOCIETY IS IMPACTFUL HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY • Sex as an entitlement OTHER CONSTRUCTIONS • Values CHALLENGE • Her-centric

Understanding of Masculine Performances

In order to investigate how participants understand masculinity within the context of romantic relationships, I asked a number of questions regarding how representative they believed

Steve Harvey's ideas about Black men and relationships to be of their own experiences. Participants' responses centered around three distinct themes: masculinity is dynamic, masculinity is reciprocal and society is impactful.

Masculinity is Dynamic

This theme emerged in all focus groups with the exception of the first one. Participants were reluctant to subscribe to the belief that masculinity was a monolithic construction that showed little variance from person to person and even within themselves. Many of the participants expressed concern about the premise of Harvey's book. Blake, a 20-year-old from rural Georgia, reflected this sentiment when he stated:

> …so it's confusing because you can't write a book, like a full book on how all men think or the principles, every woman should know this man is gonna think this way about you. Or try to use this game on you. So I just don't, I wouldn't write a book about how men think because you have different dynamics…

Catherine, a 35-year-old divorcee, also captured the attitude of most participants:

> While I was reading this, I felt like it was so much emphasis being put on what a man was supposed to look like. And act like. And although we know, yes a man is supposed to protect us and we want that, I think men come in different sizes and ways and voice themselves in different avenues. And to say that if this man ain't doing this then he don't wanna be bothered with you –

Other participants communicated that the book did not account for the possibility of growth within the man himself. Farrah, a 21-year-old from New York, expressed this by saying, "With that, the simplicity of like, the way he represented a man was like, you're making him seem like he's stagnant. Like he can't change. When he says 'what we need never weakens or

wavers,' people change all the time." Eli, 34-year-old that is currently in a relationship, offered the following advice rather than simply taking the book at its word: "So my advice to women is just that every man, you have to evaluate every man on a case-by-case basis." Participants made clear that a book purporting to convey the intentions and motivation for all men must be approached with caution.

Participants also conveyed that masculinity is dynamic in terms of its progression from the time they are young men until they have had the opportunity to grow and mature. Eli, speaking about another young man in his same focus group that held values that contrasted with his own, stated:

> I'm sitting next to him thinking like wow, I ain't never really had nobody around me like that. But, me being like when I was younger, 18, I probably would've been like yo, I can't hang with you. [Laughter] I wouldn't even be around him. And I'm just being honest. This is something that's just really coming to me. I just came back to school. I'm probably older than everybody in here. But it's certain things I couldn't deal with when I was 18. Like when I was 18, I couldn't deal with people being gay. I couldn't deal with any of that stuff. A man like this being chivalrous or he really knows what he wants in life or a relationship, he ain't just tryna get the booty, I couldn't deal with that. So my upbringing and as I got older, those two things are battling.

Eli's statement underscores the idea that masculinity is not innate within men. His upbringing and life experiences are two opposing factors in how he views himself and serve as testament to the fact that masculinity is in no way static. Derek, a 22-year-old from Los Angeles, addresses this process pertaining to the involvement of women:

> They don't really give you the opportunity for growth. It takes time. Like he [Indicating Derrance] was saying earlier about things being a process as far as not going to the club or things of that sort. Growth takes time. Just like it took 18 years for most of us to reach the height that we are, it takes that equal amount of time to grow into who you're supposed to be mentally. It's not a overnight process.

Thus, it is essential to regard masculinity as gradual rather than definite or fixed.

An aspect of dynamic masculinity that was less often expressed was the understanding that masculinity is not specifically a property of biologically male bodies nor is femininity reserved for only biologically female bodies. Ellis, a 23-year-old from Brooklyn, NY, claimed:

> I kinda like disagree with him [indicating Eddie] a little bit about what he said about how you – what'd you say? You call the guy, you ask the guy what time you want him to be there, 5:00, he gon' say ok, the female will give further detail. I think that's more like it's a personal, like some females, you know, are masculine, too. That's just like a masculine and a femme. That's just the way they are, you know what I'm saying. Like some females would be like okay, same thing. I'm gonna be here at 5:00 and like, cut it short like that. So that's just more of a masculine speaker or a femme speaker. Some guys are more femme, you know. Some females are masculine, you know.

Twenty-nine-year-old Felicia who is currently in a seven-year relationship made a similar comment in response to the book. In chapter three Harvey made the following assertion about women: "I've always said over and over again jokingly that the only way a woman can be truly satisfied is to get herself four different men – an old one, an ugly one, a Mandingo, and a gay guy. Now the four of them combined? They got you covered." Regarding this, Felicia said:

> All these things happen throughout the month with my partner. So this you have to have four different types of guys is, just seems like a comedy skit here. You can find that in one person because women are that. Women have all these different feelings and stuff just like men.

Felicia's comment alludes to the humanity of all people rather than any particular performances or scripts to be followed. Though not as widely held a belief among participants, these two individuals highlight the idea that masculinity and femininity are indeed constructs that can be enacted or debunked in the name of simply being authentic to oneself.

Masculinity is Reciprocal

Participants shared the ideas that formed this theme in all focus groups except the last. These ideas indicated that masculine performances are based upon reciprocity; meaning that what is deemed acceptable or desirable behavior is largely dependent upon and derived from feminine performances. Carmen, a 26-year-old from Atlanta, expressed this in the following statement:

> So if you set that standard for yourself, men can sit around and joke and talk nasty all the time but when a lady enters the room or whatever, what they deem a lady in their mind or whatever, certain things are gon' change. And I think that if you set that standard for yourself and the way you carry yourself – and I think guys will also, you know what I'm saying, they'll adjust to your standard.

Carmen relayed what she felt is the reaction from men when they are pleased with a particular feminine performance, while April, a 22-year-old also from Atlanta, relayed their reaction when they are not:

> I feel like if a person sees potential in you and also if you see potential in them, both of you all will be willing to kinda come to a happy medium on whatever it is. But I feel like if a guy is just kinda like, you not worth it then he's just gonna be like, [Mocking male voice] 'Well…I'ma keep doing what I'm doing so you're either gonna deal with it or you're gonna keep it moving.'

In both of these statements, masculine performances relied heavily upon the type of women that men perceived them to be, implying that a "good man" follows from a "good woman."

Bobby, a 42-year-old writer from Indiana, communicated the significance of the relationship between reciprocity and his choice of masculine performances. He stated:

> But now I'm at the age and understanding where okay, I can't really expect this person to do right if I ain't doing right, you know what I'm saying. Right and wrong, societies constructs made that player/ho thing. But at the end of the day, I know what's right and I know what's wrong, you know.

It seems to have taken Bobby some time to arrive at an understanding of reciprocity but he further demonstrated his experiences with the concept when he said:

> We are simple creatures. We are not complex. It's pretty simple, you know. We don't want a whole lotta things but we want what we want. And a lotta times there are women they know – bottom line, we want one thing: we want to feel good. Either mentally or physically, we want to feel good. So if this woman put that extra feel good on us and we can get what she want, we gon' give in. I gotta go to the got dang Babyface concert next week because of that bullshit. [Laughter]

This idea that men simply like to "feel good" was something that came up in all of the male focus groups and continued to reemerge throughout the analysis. As it pertains to reciprocity,

Bobby's comment is representative of many of the male participants in that producing this feeling or state in a relationship was often conducive to eliciting a masculine performance that was pleasing to the partner involved.

Carmen displayed a clear grasp of this dynamic within relationships when she offered the following comment:

> Guys like to know that they're doing something good and they also like to know that what they're doing is being appreciated or whatever. So it becomes like a breath of fresh air when –they like to do stuff like that. Like if a guy just brings home flowers or brings you a gift or whatever and you make him think like that is the best gift in the world, then he's gonna continue to do that or whatever. Or if the small things that he does, you know what I'm saying, you make it that small thing something really huge to him, I think it becomes a breath of fresh air and he wants to do more. Whatever's gonna make you happy and in return you make him happy or whatever just by that small appreciation, I think they enjoy doing that.

Eli recounted a specific incident that exemplified precisely what Carmen had communicated in her focus group:

> I had never really changed a tire on a car. And my girl's car, something happened with the tire. And she was like, "My tire is messed up," and looked at me and I was like [Mouths "Oh shit"]. [Laughter] It was cold outside, and I went out there and did my best and got it fixed. And honestly, I was back, I was back inside the house like, feeling like the man. Like, I was there for her. [Laughter] I was the man, you know what I mean?

Eli derived a tremendous amount of pleasure from being able to provide for his girlfriend, so much so that it impacted his sense of manhood. Carmen and Eli's comments show the reciprocal

relationship between masculine performances and feminine performances. Each were predicated on the basic value of making the other happy or fulfilling some need for the other and, in turn, having a need of their own met.

Society Is Impactful

When asked questions about the role that society plays in relationships, many of the participants expressed stark discontentment with the standards that society imposed upon them and their relationships. April stated: "I think that is kind of what's expected of women. Like, to do house chores, to be subservient to your man. I feel like those are all things that are naturally taught into us in society." Twenty-three-year-old Anna made a comment along the same lines when she remarked: "that's definitely something that society teaches, too, I think. That women are just like sex objects and that is highly expected of females." Though these comments are in terms of societal expectations placed upon females, they also have meaning for those placed upon males. The complement to the gender roles expressed by these young women is domineering men that value women for the extent to which they can or choose to be sexually gratifying.

Bobby described the state of Black male/female relationships, which he felt is a product of societal constructs that inform interactions between men and women:

> A ho/trick mentality whereas you got women – a lotta women, especially young women, they based on "Damn, that nigga ballin'. I want him." Or he got money or whatever, you know what I'm saying. But at the same time they tell their girlfriends that all niggas ain't shit, niggas are dogs. They want one thing. So you got this thing that – okay, now it's like a competition. Okay, I know this mutha fucka wanna get this money so I'ma see if – I'm tryna race to get in her pants and see how much game I can run on her to get in her pants

> without spending, without – the minimum damage of money I'm gon' spend. She's tryna figure out how much money can I get out of this nigga before I got to give him the draws, you know what I'm saying. And I think that's a construct, that's a messed up construct, you know, by society.

Within the "ho/trick" framework, interactions between Black men and women are based principally upon patriarchal incentives. Women value men for the monetary gains they may provide; to men, women become disposable objects for which sex is their own use. It is impossible to build a genuine relationship if these are the underlying intentions of both parties involved.

Eugene, a 25-year-old from South Carolina, expressed his dismay with societal standards that were not intended for Black people to obtain:

> And being that we are Black people and we're confused, you know, in that sense and lost, we don't know how to react because it's like – it's something that's probably within all of us to say hey, that doesn't quite fit me. And it's a reason why, because it wasn't supposed to fit us. We aren't supposed to conform and mold to what mainstream society want us to do. And that's the trouble.

Ben, a 30-year-old graduate student, also noted the trouble with mainstream society:

> [It is about] the stereotypes that's placed on our race as people, as a people. And then as being Black men in there, which we feed into the stereotypes from the TV, the visual images, the visual cues that they keep programming, they keep pushing into the minds of our young girls and of our women. And then that refers, comes back to a degradation of the men in society, then that means as soon as we come to you we've already seen on a lesser scale than any other race of men that's out there.

Perhaps without even realizing, these men are problematizing patriarchal notions that work in tandem with white supremacist, racist notions of masculinity. These notions would have Black men and women believing that there is an ideal masculinity that is essentially beyond the reach of Black men and simultaneously produces stereotypical depictions of Black males that are often internalized and reproduced in Black male/female relationships.

Several of the male participants offered comments about the effects of these harmful societal constructs and how it impacts the choices they make regarding women. Derrance, a 25-year-old from Virginia, stated: "Women and society make it very difficult for you to have self-confidence. That's why I need a woman that's encouraging because society is kind of against us." Emmett, a 26-year-old from Atlanta, made a very similar comment when he said:

> So it's almost like – and then there's a lot of male bashing, you know, in society. That man ain't nothing. He ain't nothing, you know. That nigga ain't – so it becomes all of that. So it almost creates this atmosphere where you ain't doing nothing, even if you are. So it's encouraging and strengthening to know you have someone who has your back.

Here it is clear that society has the potential to place unsolicited stress on Black male/female relationships. Black women who possess an impractical idea of manhood may actually be stifling Black men to the point where they feel ineffectual. Society's standard for what it means to be a man weighs heavily enough upon Black men that it influences their decisions concerning the types of women with whom they choose to be in relationships.

However, if participants conveyed their frustration with being ensnared by societal blueprints for relationships and gender scripts, they also conveyed the value of defying these same constructs. Carinne, a 30-year-old from College Park, remarked:

> It's the choice of me and the person I'm in a relationship with and what we're happy with. I'm more of a trailblazer. I like to make my own path rather than conform to society because society is already messed up.

Derrance displayed a similar sentiment about himself and the woman that he would hope to be with when he shared:

> I hate these generalized expectations of men and women because all men and women aren't the same. So if I expect my woman to dress in nice dresses and not look like a hoochie and society is saying look like a hoochie, then we gon' have a problem because I know the woman I want doesn't want that, hopefully. So the woman I expect, the woman I want, I don't want her to like everything that's going on in the world.

And finally, Eric, a 31-year-old currently in a relationship, had this to say about society:

> We don't give a fuck, really. We gon' do our thing. We gon' make ourself happy. You know, we're supposed to be kings. But you know, Cleopatra, Queen of Sheba, so them were strong, too, in Africa, too. So over here we're like, this is bullshit. So we just do our thing, whatever we do to make ourself happy.

Participants in five out of six of the focus groups reported in one way or another the significance of treating their relationships in ways that were not necessarily consistent with what was expected of them from a societal standpoint.

Several of the male participants expressed the struggles that they faced when they attempted to act outside of predetermined scripts. Blake stated:

> And with me, with affection, some women find that as a weakness or being soft. But I'm, I'm not a pushover. But the love I have for my woman is the way that my grandmother

> and my aunts raised me to be. And that's the way that I've always known so if she's not receptive to that then she's not for me.

Derek also relayed an issue that he felt he unjustly encounters in relationships due to the imposition of society:

> I feel like it's unrealistic because as men, we do have emotions but society pretty much trains us not to show it because showing any emotion is really a sign of weakness, which gives somebody power to exhibit some kind of control over you. And with your woman, that's the person that you want to be comfortable with. And if she did something that did hurt you and it really hurt you and you wanna tell her about it, you shouldn't have to worry about being ridiculed when you express that to her.

Blake and Derek are examples of how societal norms for men in relationships can conflict with the persons that they actually would like to be. Participant responses were laden with situations in which a societal expectation called for actions or reactions that were not congruent with those that the individuals in these relationships would have thought to enact without the influence of society.

In summary, participants generally viewed masculinity as ever changing and growing. Very few of them described it as being fixed or one-dimensional. They also described it in terms of the reciprocal relationship to women, which is fitting since masculinity and femininity are defined in relation to one another. Lastly, most communicated that society was more so a hindrance to their relationships and concepts of masculinity than anything else. In the next section of data analysis, I explore how these men and women's ideas of masculinity may be more in sync with societal conceptions than they would have liked to believe and also the ways in which they are incongruent.

Hegemonic and Outside Constructions

In order to ascertain how these participants' understanding of masculine performances reflected patriarchy, I asked them to report some of the expectations that they held for their partners and that their partners held for them. Their responses revealed that both men and women's understanding of masculine performances reflected hegemonic constructions in some ways, although in some instances it was conveyed either almost entirely by men or almost entirely by women. Interestingly enough, though patriarchal values surfaced in every focus group, a desire for egalitarian value systems and traits would be expressed by a number of those same individuals.

Hegemonic Masculinity

The theme "hegemonic masculinity" has five dimensions, which include sex, emotions, control over women, not womanlike, and property/power. These dimensions are discussed below.

Sex. Many of the male participants demonstrated a clear sense of entitlement to sex and women's bodies. An excerpt from the book stated: "A woman who won't let you feel all over her body while you're dancing is a keeper; a woman who drops it like it's hot and puts on a dance floor performance that would make video vixen Karrine Steffans blush is a throwback." In response, Ben stated: "Like, you know, one, that's kind of degrading to men, you know, because we tryna feel all over your body while we dancing." Eugene's statement, regarding the actual act of sex, was not unlike the one given above when he said:

> I just think that, going back to what you said about the 90 days, I disagree with that. You shouldn't wait 90 days if you know it's right, you're protecting yourself, that's fine. And

> you shouldn't value yourself based on what you put out and what you don't put out. It just happens."

Here Eugene seems to be arguing for the relinquishment of autonomous female bodies to men simply because "you know it's right." He downplays the decision about whether or not to engage in sex by claiming that "it just happens," which essentially creates a sexual caste system by which females then become judged and treated accordingly.

This sense of entitlement did not go unreported by the female participants. When asked what had been some of the expectations that men had had of her, Anna remarked: "Sex. They demand – not demand, but you know, they expect that from the female. They expect, you know, they want that like, a certain amount of times a week, you know." Though Anna interrupted and corrected herself, it is very telling that her first choice to describe her experiences was to say, "they demand." April mirrored Anna's comment when she said: "I totally agree with that. Like, I really feel like a lotta guys expect you to be like, a sex machine. Like, you can't be tired, it can't be too early in the morning, it can't be too late at night." Sex has the potential to be a point of contention for these young women trying to navigate relationships.

Faith, a 19-year-old originally from Zambia, offered her ideas about how sex in relationships generally works:

> The thing that he said about sex, if you're getting sex from one person, you're gonna stay with that one person. I don't think that's true. That's not true at all. Just because you get it from that one person doesn't mean you're gonna stay with them. They could go get it from anybody else. It doesn't matter. That's not something that keeps you around.

In his own focus group, Ellis made a comment that demonstrated clearly the thoughts Faith had regarding sex:

> I believe that even though women they do give up the cookie like, sometimes the male still will see another attractive woman and still want to go after her. Even though the cookie may be good with his female, it's just the chase of going to the other girl, getting something new that's exciting for the male. Especially I think that's for me, too. All my girlfriends I just cheat on them and find a new girl, you know, to sleep with. Even when the cookie is good with my females I just like more cookies.

Reflecting patriarchy, sex is just a matter of conquest for this participant. The connection between two individuals and the commitment they may have to one another becomes inconsequential in the face of an opportunity to expand the male sexual repertoire.

In their statements, Eli and Bobby communicate the repercussions for women who choose not to share their bodies. Eli claimed:

> I know everybody in here has probably heard that but you know, only thing better than pussy is new pussy. That just goes without saying. I guess that's why it took so long for us to talk about it because it goes without saying. You're not giving it up; you can be replaced. Or you know, the girl you meet that wants to make you wait two, three months?
>
> So then I'ma get it from somebody else while you make up your mind what you want.

Along those same lines, Bobby said of his own experiences: "Now I've been in some relationships where they tried to hold back the p and I'm not in those relationships no more. But you know, but you do have women who will be like 'Oh okay, you can't get some, huh?' Okay, I'll go get some from somewhere, ain't no problem." The deliberate treatment of women's bodies as commodities that can be used and replaced was prevalent throughout the focus groups. Men viewed sex with very little value beyond the physical, extinguishing the possibility for it to be a truly intimate experience for both parties. Even when these men spoke of sex with a person

to whom they were committed, the underlying assumption that sex was an entitlement of manhood framed these intimate relations.

Emotions. Catherine summed up the beliefs of majority of the eight women in her focus group when she said: "We're very emotional people. They [men] tend to not be. So it's just a different type of thing. But I think it's the same overall concept." This was the general perception of the emotional differences between men and women held by most of the participants. With the exception of three or four people, they felt that men were incapable of the same level of emotional competence as women. Derek exemplified this when as he talked about struggling to deal with the emotions of a significant other:

> It's like, if you do come to me with that problem, I might console you for a minute but after that I have to try and pick you up. It's not really part of the male psyche to be nurturing like that. And you are completely uncomfortable in that type of situation.

Derek's statement shows the belief that there are natural differences between the ways in which men and women display and process emotions. This was one of the ideas from the book to which participants held strongly.

In this excerpt from one of the focus groups, Derrance explained the risk involved with showing emotions. He commented that relationships are difficult because neither of the people involved wish to show their true emotions. He stated: "If a girl is really feeling you and she doesn't know if you're feeling her, she's not going to say nothing. But you can see it, you know. And I feel like you have to, sometimes you have to talk about it." When asked why he felt that people were so hesitant to show their true emotions, he responded:

> Because nobody likes to feel played. It's all a lot of pride, you know. I tried it for the first time. It was a girl, you know, she's beautiful and I'm digging her and I told her that

> and she was like, "Uh…too much." Pineapples. [Laughter] Pineapples? Pineapples? You try to be honest and tell a girl, express your emotions and she call pineapples.

"Pineapples" became popular when comedian Kevin Hart suggested using it as a safe word during sexual activity, indicating that one of the two people involved had done something to upset the comfort level of the other person. In Derrance's case, this woman to whom he had expressed his feelings became uncomfortable when he did so. Situations such as this one only serve to reinforce notions of lack of emotionality in men because they are discouraged from expressing emotions, even when they have them.

Not womanlike. As was the case for beliefs pertaining men and emotions, most of the participants also believed that men and women are fundamentally different to a degree in which there may be irreconcilable differences. These beliefs surfaced after reading sections of the book similar to the following:

> Ask any woman what kind of love she wants from a man, and it will sound something like this: I want him to be humble, and smart, fun and romantic, sensitive and gentle, and above all, supportive…Well, I'm here to tell you that expecting that kind of love – that perfection – from a man is unrealistic. That's right, I said it – it's not gonna happen, no way, no how. Because a man's love isn't like a woman's love.

Emmanuel, a 25-year-old from Seattle, stated: "I definitely think it was a great point how he said that women love in this way and men love in this way and when they expect the opposite from each other it doesn't necessarily work out." Initially it seemed as if Catherine was going to disagree with the book's portrayal of the different ways that men and women love but ultimately she was in agreement when she said:

> We wanna protect our household, too. We wanna provide. I mean, we may not financially provide if that's the agreement that we've come upon or, but we wanna provide for our children, you know. We wanna give those same type of things. It's just different because women and men are two totally different species. There's no way that we can truly compare.

Both men and women believed in this naturally occurring difference between them.

David and Carmen further exemplify how ideas about the difference between men and women work to propel patriarchy. David provided his standpoint on how a man loves:

> A man's love is like much more simple. I really thought that the way he explained it was pretty correct, that we aren't as nurturing. Like how he was talking about we won't exactly, maybe nurse our woman and rub her head with a cold compress when she has a cold but there are other things that we would do that are more direct to just let you know that we do love you.

Carmen recounted an interesting conversation she had about love and the distinction between men and women:

> I think that I agree that there is both intense styles of love. But I was having this conversation with this dude the other day and he was like, what is love to you?…So I was going on this tangent and he was like, why do women say that all the time? He was like, women associate love with a high that you get off of a drug or whatever. He goes, where love is simple. It's a decision. And I was like, what do you mean? He goes, it's a decision that if I'm in love with you, I'ma decide to put you before everything. He was like, I'ma decide that I'ma put you um, put making you happy before making myself happy. I'ma decide that even though something you're doing is getting on my nerves, it doesn't

> matter. I love you. I'm gonna put up with it. He was like, it's just a decision to put all your needs, your wants and desires before mine.

Carmen's conversation with that young man conveys how patriarchal ideas surface in relationships in seemingly benign ways. Following from the above statement, one might assume that men are more logical in their understanding of love while women are more flighty and fantastical. Love undoubtedly varies from person to person in how it is shown and received but patriarchy creates the differentiation between men and women rather than between mere individuals. These ostensibly small distinctions made between men and women are the foundations upon which the larger system of male dominance is based.

Control over women. This theme is comprised mostly of comments and remarks from male participants. Only one female participant communicated that she felt men in relationships were attempting to exercise any particular control over her. Camille, a 26-year-old from Decatur, stated:

> There's been times where they expect me not to have opinions about things or a perspective on something. And, or maybe we're discussing something and rather than having like an actual discussion where they share their point of view and I share my point of view, they expect to be the only one with a point of view and that my point of view shouldn't be different from theirs. So I've had issues with that. Like I should be more, I don't know what the word for that is but – [Catherine: Docile] Yes.

This was the only report by a female participant that reflected an explicit instance of trying to maintain control. Interestingly, men's reports of seeking control in relationships were more implicitly stated. For example, Blake commented about marriage as follows:

> I'm 100% with him about the partnership. And when you're, especially when you're in a marriage, it's all about working together. Yes I am the head, and it's understood. I don't have to make it known that I'm the head so I tell you what to do. That's not the way that a marriage should go.

Though Blake starts out by saying that a marriage is all about partnership, in the very next sentence he stated that he is the head and it is understood. This is a classic example of a benevolent patriarch, one who is not violent or tyrannical but still operates under the assumption that the man is the head of the household. Often in these cases, patriarchy is not problematized because benevolent patriarchy passes as an acceptable masculine performance.

In chapter two of the book, Harvey states: "When a man truly love you, anybody who says, does, suggests, or even think about doing something offensive to you stands the risk of being obliterated." David offered his own view of this less problematized masculine performance when he said:

> The risk of being obliterated is real. And because I know I didn't have my dad around so it was just me and my sister and my mom. And I was still the youngest. My sister, my older sister is 8 years older than me. And no matter where we went, I felt like I had to protect her; I had to protect my mom. And I look at my relationship the same way. If any dude come at her sideways, any person, animal, whatever, anybody comes at her sideways, I'm only 150 lbs but you're coming through this 150 lbs. It's gonna be a problem.

Larger society rewards this particular masculine performance, which is based upon violence and aggression. None the women that read the same chapter in their focus group expressed concern at the depiction of this masculine performance.

Women's bodies are yet another site where men attempt to exercise control and are oftentimes successful. After stating previously in the focus group that he had had his share of sexual indiscretions, Bobby said:

> I could never imagine the woman who I'm really like, who this is my number one, I could never imagine another dick going up in my number one. Now if she's my number two, number three, number four or whatever, you know what I'm saying. But if she's my number one, if I'm pushing for this person to be my queen – I'm like, right now what I'm doing is I'm practicing for marriage right now. She's my W.I.T. She's my wife-in-training. So if she's my wife in training, got dammit, she can't step outside. She gon' get pushed down, you know, if she done messed around on me or whatever.

It is unclear exactly what Bobby meant when he said that his significant other would get "pushed down" if she stepped out on him but what is not unclear is that he feels a certain degree of possessiveness over her body. Even though he admitted to being dishonest and unfaithful in relationships before, he unequivocally stated that his partner does not have the right to do the same without facing repercussions.

Bobby's remarks also revealed other ways that control over women may happen without their even knowing. In chapter six of Harvey's book, he states: "If he laughs off your requirements and standards, then he's sport fishing; if he seems willing to abide by your rules, and actually follows through on them, then he's looking for a keeper." Bobby disputed Harvey when he argued:

> Because think about it, if I'm just tryna hit and I laugh it off and shit, I'm not gon' hit. But if I'm sport fishing, then I'm going to act like I'm interested in what the hell she's saying. [In high pitch voice] "Oh yeah, baby, yeah. What you want, the sky, baby?"

> [Back in his own voice] Let me pull that mutha fucka down tomorrow morning after we go to bed, you know what I'm saying. So that's stupid. He ain't gon' catch no sports fish like that.

Bobby's comment indicates how men sometimes use deception in order to gain access to or control over women's bodies. The underlying principle here is to appear to be interested in observing a woman's standards so that ultimately she will give sex in return. Derrance made a related comment about the use of deception in relationships:

> I stated at the beginning of the discussion that as far as the text goes, we do learn. And it's usually a sacrifice in doing something that we don't want to do. Like tell our homie, "Yo, this is my girl." "Oh baby, I do love you." Because you said to me, you fussed at me last time I said I didn't love you back. So what you do is you, you lie.

Here Derrance essentially argues that learning what your partner expects of you encourages deception. When this happens, men gain control because the women involved in these situations do not have an accurate understanding of the state of their relationship or the intentions of their partner.

Property/Power. Interestingly, women commented on this aspect more so than men. I chose to correlate this aspect with the power that money and/or property earns in the perceptions of others. Most of the men communicated ideas opposite of the ones that are discussed below. Derrance was an exception of sorts when he stated the following:

> I don't give you money to make you feel good. I give you money so I feel good that these fools understand that you being taken care of because they might [have pity for a woman]. You know, men always want to be that provider so if you see a girl, she's

> struggling, she got issues, you go for that girl because you can be her knight in shining armor. But it's a protection thing at the same time.

Most of the men in these focus groups placed little emphasis on the power that possessing and wielding money could bring them. Derrance, on the other hand, articulated that any pleasure a woman may derive from his provision is of no consequence to the sense of power he invokes by letting it be known to other men that she is provided for. In this situation, the woman becomes an extension of his possessions.

Women in these focus groups appeared much more enthralled by the perks of having a man with money. They expressed this in response to statements made by Harvey such as the following: "*Know this: It is your right to expect that a man will pay for your dinner, your movie ticket, your club entry fee, or whatever else he has to pay for in exchange for your time*" [Emphasis in original]. The three statements below are demonstrative of just how much significance is placed on power and possessions. Carmen claimed:

> I read this and I'm so glad we talked about it, is this epidemic that men, I'm not gonna say men started, but men have put out there are that women need to pay half or women need to expect to give something in order to receive. Or if I'ma pay for this date then you need to pay for that date. Or if I'm gonna pay for dinner, you need to pay for the tip or whatever. And I tell my friends all the time, that's ludicrous or whatever. I refuse and I will never go out with a man if I have to bring a wallet along. Because to me I think that's ridiculous. You're negating the whole purpose of taking me out or us dating because that's not my job.

April expressed the same sentiment and shared her reaction if her wishes were to go unmet:

> I expect for any guy that I'm dating or talking to pay for…any time we go out, you gotta pay for everything. Like, you don't pay for something, I'm finna flip out. I ain't gon' lie. I have a attitude problem, too, I ain't gon' lie. And if you don't pay for everything, I'ma be like, "Oh, you can take me home!"

And lastly, Candice shared her experiences with men and money:

> I was married 27 years so I had a good life. I didn't buy groceries. I didn't do grocery shopping. I didn't do any of that stuff. But after I got my divorce, I got shell-shocked because I had to pay my own bills. So I didn't think that that was cute. But I met a guy and he drove a hummer. Made long money. We went out and after we got ready to leave, same thing. He asked me to pay for some of the stuff that we had for dinner. And I'm like wait a minute, you driving a hummer.

There is a certain power gained from bearing the one who bears the brunt of financial obligations in relationships. It became evident in these focus groups that women very much so associate masculinity with this particular type of power and willingly relinquish control for their own perceived benefit. Carmen described this as a man's job, April threatened to "flip out" and Candice was perplexed at the idea of paying for her own meal. That women had these reactions even though men generally declined to associate this particular masculine performance with themselves is telling of the ways in which women may contribute to the propagation of patriarchal identities.

Outside Constructions

Participants made comments that reflected constructions of masculinity and relationships that did not fit neatly inside the hegemonic frameworks, which merits reporting as well. Two subthemes emerged from participant responses. They expressed values that could promote an

atmosphere antithetical to patriarchy and also ideas that showed some mix of female agency or egalitarianism with traditional hegemonic notions.

Values. One of the aspects of relationships that was consistently valued throughout the focus groups was communication. Ava, a 23-year-old from Atlanta, said: "People don't understand if you don't talk to your other mate, you're gon' mess up everything 'cause communication is everything for your whole relationship. It builds the trust, the loyalty like you say. Everything." David described how he would prefer or communication in his current to work when he stated:

> In all seriousness, I would just like you to come at me when the issue presents itself. Don't sit there and let it fester and boil over and make a stew of all your problems. Just come bring me each ingredient. [Laughter] In all seriousness, even if you have to designate a certain time like, between six and seven this is gonna be our airing of grievances time.

Lastly, Camille shared her perspective on communication:

> I think communication is important. Whoever you're involved with you should be able to, I guess, communicate with them. And I think she touched on it earlier when she was talking about having a listening ear. And both sides should be able to communicate how you feel about different things and I guess your expectations of each other.

Environments where open communication is valued and executed have the potential to combat oppressive patriarchal dynamics in relationships. A relationship where one cannot communicate freely seems as though it would be tyrannical in nature and stifling to the emotional health of those involved.

Blake made a comment that perfectly exemplified what a relationship with open communication can blossom into. He argued:

> You have to hook a fish before you can clean it. And if you can get with her and go through these issues or whatever she can turn out to be the best woman that you could have, the one that you needed to marry. So I feel like that's, like he said, it's too boxed with disrespecting because you don't know the whole dynamic of what she's been through.

Though Blake did not explicitly state it, communication is an integral part of the process that he described above. Without it, it would be impossible to get through the issues that he alluded to and to have a better relationship for it. Hence, communication is vital to building a strong foundation based on mutual respect.

There were those few participants that expressed values that differed from most of the others. Eddie, a 25-year-old from Denver, was one of those participants. When I asked questions pertaining to the expectations that he and the other men in his focus group had of their partners, Eddie was always the participant to counter patriarchal sentiments with progressive ones. At a moment when one of the other men was discussing his response to scantily clad women, he offered:

> I think for me it's really different. For me it's just more about your spirit. At the end of the day there's no tangible evidence that can make me want you or not want you less or more. I think more so for me, if she – we just have this connection. That's it. Like, she might say hello and the way she said hello, that was it. That's all I needed. And I knew who you were. I don't care what you were dressing, how you wearing or what you're wearing at this point. Because that's all stuff that can be made.

Eddie's understanding of masculinity as far as it being dynamic and reciprocal was generally the same as most of the other participants but when it came to patriarchy, he was in stark opposition. Though he did not expressly state that he was anti-patriarchal, it was clear in his rebuttals to the patriarchal comments made by other men in his group and also by Harvey in the book.

One other male outlier was Emmett. Emmett did not speak very often during his focus group but when he did, his answers were unlike those given by most others. In particular, his comment about how his perception of sex stood in contrast with most of the views expressed. On this topic he stated:

> I think emotional attachment is much more important than sex, or pussy. Now I think it's – there is something more. There's definitely something more than that. I think that there's supposed to be a commitment, you know. Something more. I don't even know what else to say right now. I don't understand that concept. It doesn't matter to me the amount of time I have to wait because I ain't just trying to, you know, get in them guts. It's much more important than that. There's a commitment, you know, if we're both going to it with that mindset. If we ain't coming into it with that mindset, then that's all you tryna do.

Comments such as this one are what elicited the remark from Eli quoted in the section about the dynamism of masculinity. Eli stated that men when he was younger, he wouldn't have been able to associate with men like Emmett. Others in the focus group laughed at the candidness of his statement and there was a clear message that Emmett's choice of masculine performance in this case was not an approved one.

Amalgamation. This subtheme emerged from the tendency for participants to express, either at another point during the focus group or in the very same comment, both hegemonic

ideas about gender and ideas that reflected female agency or egalitarianism. Earlier in his focus group, Ben made clear that he felt entitled to have access to women's bodies and went so far as to say it was disrespectful for a woman not to grant such. Conversely, he had this to say about the roles of men and women in relationships:

> My whole thing is, I believe in a duality. I believe that we're equal on equal footing. There's no one higher than the other because that gets into things of um, grouping, you know what I'm saying. It's like putting other people in certain categories and I think that categories shouldn't exist because I think categories are useless. So you know, I'm confident that she can do anything that I can do and she's confident that I can do anything that she can do. You know, based on our physical characteristics I might be able to lift more or run faster or something, you know, that's dealing with athleticism but as opposed to anything else, you know, we're all on one accord. So there is no like, real roles that I see.

Ben's understanding of the nature of relationships is divergent from his views of women's right to regulate the treatment of their own bodies. This suggests that patriarchal norms are enticing based on the perceived benefit to adherents. Perhaps Ben finds no value in exercising complete dominion over women in his relationships; however, he is certainly unwilling to remove female bodies from the category of "sexual objects."

Eric also demonstrated participants' inclination to contradict themselves. Throughout his focus groups, Eric made statements that indicated his expectation for women to fit traditional roles. He expressed how he valued a woman who could cook and blurted a vociferous "Hell yeah!" when asked if three months was too long for women to make men wait before engaging in sex. Yet he claimed the following:

> I like a girl that can tell me to shut up sometimes. I need a little that, what you call it, that Black woman. Whatever that stereotype is. I need that, you know what I'm saying. I can't be, I'm an imposing force already but I need – like my girl, she's like 5'2 but she like, "Nigga shut the fuck up." I be like aight. [Laughter] So that's sexy to me. I like that. I be like, I'ma tear yo ass up later. [Laughter] That's what I need, though. I need that…you know, I give you this and you give me something back. I need interaction.

Like Ben, complete control is not an aspect of hegemonic masculinity that Eric values. Interaction and pushback are actually welcomed elements in his relationships. But the control that he readily gives up in some situations he implements in other areas of the relationship, namely the sexual arena, as indicated by his declaration that he would "tear that ass up later."

Women were not an exception to these types of occurrences. Carmen conveyed patriarchal understandings of masculine performances but placed value on her agency as a woman all within the same comment. The particular quote from the book that she was found offensive was: "Once we've claimed you, and you've returned the honor, we're going to start bring home the bacon." She asserted:

> I want to – something that was in my head is when on page 24, it starts of with "Once we claim you…" I just had to highlight that one little part once we've claimed you and then he goes into saying that once we've claimed you, then we don't mind providing for you. Then we don't mind paying for things. Then we don't mind doing – and I think that's where a lot of the confusion comes along in the whole dating game with males and females is that he, the way he makes it seem is that females need to wait for him to decide when everything is gon' start. And then from that point on then he takes control over everything. But I think it's kind of, I think like, before – that word claim really bothers

> me or whatever. Before all of that takes place, I think that the dating part is supposed to take, you know, happened before then. And that's when you are supposed to be wooing her. That's when you are supposed to be paying for things. That's when you are supposed to be doing everything you can to increase the amount of time, amount of her time that she allots to you or whatever. And then from that point, then she decides where, oh okay well you know what? He's done such a great job. I don't mind giving him more time. I don't mind saying, I don't mind saying okay, I'll be your girl. I'll be your lady. We can be in a relationship together. But he's flipping it and saying that like basically, a guy is supposed to make up whatever day he decides that after he's been like juggling her along, okay, she's gon' be my lady.

In the same way that Ben and Eric wished to exercise control only in certain domains of relationships, Carmen chose to cling to the agency that would allow her to make important decisions about relationships. She did this while still reserving the right to enjoy the supposed benefits of hegemonic frameworks for dating, i.e. being wooed and never having to pay for things.

In summary, participants' understanding of masculine performances reflected five different aspects of hegemonic patriarchal constructions. Sex and women's bodies were very important commodities to which men felt entitled. Also, emotions were the possessions of women and women only, while women valued the men they were involved with based on their possession of money and their willingness to spend it. Ultimately, all of these conceptions were undergirded by the belief that men and women are innately different, but their understanding of masculinity was not strictly patriarchal in nature. There were participants who communicated outlier responses that were antithetical to the patriarchal utterances of others. Many of the

participants also voiced ideas that were in opposition to hegemonic frameworks for relationships but refused to give up those parts of patriarchy that they found of personal importance.

Black Women and Masculine Performances

In order to examine the ways in which Black women perpetuate and/or challenge certain masculine performances in relationships, I asked women to provide examples of times when they attempted to initiate or discourage particular actions or traits in their partners. Men were asked to describe instances in which their partners had attempted to do so. Responses revealed that there were two approaches to challenging masculine performances: him-centric and her-centric. Responses also revealed that masculine performances were perpetuated on occasions when time was not committed to showing men what was deemed acceptable in the relationship.

Challenge

Him-centric. These approaches to challenging masculine performances were centered on a concept aptly described by one of the participants when he said that men just like to feel good, whether it be mentally or physically. Women who enacted these approaches focused their attention on making their partner feel good in order to affect change. Derek told of a surefire way to see to it that desired changes occur in a relationship. He stated:

> I'm gonna try to tie it all back together with what Steve Harvey said initially. If you have a problem, address it. Don't nag about it. And if I love you and we know that trust is part of love, trust me to not have us back in this situation again. You don't have to remind me that we had this conversation a month ago, especially if I'm still working on it. So I would say that it's really all gonna boil down to trust. That's probably the only realistic solution in a non-utopian society. There are no stenographers or mediators to help us.

In Derek's case, feeling trusted is the mental satiation necessary to bring about change. Thus, it seems less of a question about the action, attitude or trait that his partner is dissatisfied with and more about knowing that his partner trusts, i.e. loves, him enough to believe that he can and will indeed change. This appears to be the kind gratification men seek, which in turn has the capacity to foster healthy relationships devoid of patriarchal influence.

Eric and Eli both told similar stories about their girlfriends and how they provided the mental fortification necessary to bring about change. Eric described an instance when he sincerely appreciated the initiative of his girlfriend. She firmly believed that he had the ability to cook fish that could be marketed and sold; so in turn, she went around to beauty salons spreading the word about his fish and advised Eric to get on the corner himself to sell it. She provided an entrepreneurial push that Eric otherwise would not have had. Several of the men in the focus groups talked about the significance of a woman that has the ability to identify positive attributes or potential in their partner that they cannot see for themselves. Eli described the feeling that men get when they are involved with women who are able interact with them on the basis of their potential:

> And once you see that, it makes it harder to be that guy that they don't want you to be. It makes you wanna be that guy that they want you to be. And that's just being honest. Even if all your, and you know, pardon me for saying this, but even if all your natural male instincts that you've acquired through the years make you wanna go left, it kinda makes you wanna stay middle or go towards the way that would make you guys work.

Again, it is very important to note that there is no emphasis placed on the particular masculine performance that women seek to invoke when they challenge behaviors in these relationships. One might assume that the "natural male instincts" Eli is referring to are more in line with

patriarchal constructions of masculinity since there should essentially be no such differentiation between male instinct and human instinct. Accordingly, one way that women may challenge patriarchy is by challenging men to see that they are capable of operating outside of it and in essence become fully human.

Candice beautifully depicted how pouring into a man mentally, a phrase of her own contrivance, can blossom into a fulfilling partnership. She recounted:

> After my divorce I met a guy who didn't have much. Didn't have a lot of financials going on. But I know coming from where I was in my marriage, we started out with nothing and we built a lot. This gentleman here had a great character. Aww, looka here, looka here. Okay, he had a great character. He knew how to take care of me. Okay, he had a job but he knew how to take care of me. And that's because I took the time to take care of him mentally. And so through that, we used to go shopping, we'd grocery shop, we'd go back home, he told me go in the house, I got the groceries. We would go out, gimme your purse. We were going down the street, he got my purse. Okay? Or we would be out and about and he would express that relationship. He didn't have to physically say or verbally say he claimed me. He could tell, everyone could tell my relationship with him. It was so much as so, we were on a cruise and everyone on the cruise ship knew us of 3000 people because of something he did on the cruise. So once again, that mental thing transformed our relationship because I poured into him, building him up verbally. And he in turn built me up in expressing a relationship. And that's one thing that I find that even though, to me, it's not really displayed in the itself, that's one piece that I thought that Steve Harvey really misses out on is expressing about those good men that are out there and how, how they are about expressing. Because there are a lot of good men out there who came from

> good mothers and they know how to express. They are out there. [Carrie: You gotta search for 'em] [Laughter] Right. You gotta look for them. But there's great relationships and in all relationships you have to build each other up with kind words and the little things that we do.

Her-centric. These approaches to affecting change are focused on female agency in relationships rather than the mental state of their male counterparts. One of the ways that this agency is exercised is in the regulation of their bodies. When Ben was asked to talk about ways that women attempted to disrupt or change behavior, he stated: "Um, no pussy, you know what I'm saying. Um, no head. Head is my thing [Bobby: Oh hell, that's a sin. You got to go!] Yes, that's just horrible." Though Bobby interjected with an expression of his disapproval of such methods, he also added: "They may use the power of the pussy to get me out there, you know what I'm saying. And that's a big one. A lotta sisters that's what they do. And it works. It works because, you know, men are, we really are, at the end of the day we really are simple."
By denying men access to their bodies, women are simultaneously challenging whatever behavior spurred that response as well as the patriarchal notion that they are readily available sexual objects to be used at their partner's discretion.

Another way that women challenge masculine performances is to model the attribute or actions that they desire from their significant other. Participants reported this to happen in several ways. Derek stated:

> I will say that my most recent feminine endeavor is pretty tactful about her encouragement. Instead of saying, "This is what I want," what she does is then create a scenario where her dad did a certain thing and from that, at least I know from knowing her, what I'm supposed to get from that is, this is what I'm used to because this is how

> my dad did it. So I feel like that is much more tactful than some of the other approaches that are taken these days. It's not saying this is what I want from you but it's like I'm putting the blueprint in front of you. You can either use it or lose it.

Derek's comment suggests that the way in which a woman goes about expressing her wishes is paramount to having them met. Cora, a 21-year-old from L.A., provided an example of how she modeled behavior for her boyfriend:

> With the person that I was dating, he had basically explained to me that his birthday the previous year sucked. He didn't get to do anything he wanted to do, he didn't get to hang out with any of his friends or anything of that nature. And so I took it upon myself to make a big deal out of his birthday because he didn't want to…And so in turn, he listened to the things that I was telling him that I wanted to do in life and when my birthday came around – I'm a big fan of Morris Chestnut. And there was a play that he did here in Atlanta and him knowing that I was a big fan, he was like okay, I'ma take you to an event next weekend for your birthday…So at the end, I got to meet Morris Chestnut and he signed my program. And to me that was the best birthday present ever of life. And I feel like me showing him, you know, how I treated his birthday it was just kinda like a reciprocation.

Derek and Cora's situations are a means of challenging masculine performances not by calling attention to the things men may be doing wrong in relationships, but by showing them what they can do that is right. This may be effective because it is not approaching the relationship from a deficit model.

Expressing genuine emotion or concern is also conducive to the consideration of appeals for change. Emmanuel shared his reaction in instances where genuine emotions are involved:

> I really can't stand this because I feel like it's my kryptonite but if a female really cares and she start crying, I'm like fuck. [Laughter] You're like damn man, she crying. And it's just sort of, the fact that it would make her that emotional just sort of shows a lot to me and it almost, I wanna be better for her because I don't want her to do that, you know what I'm saying. So I guess I was trying to answer your question. I mean but no, a female start crying, I be like ugh, don't do that.

Emmanuel's response is illustrative of what can happen in a partnership where authentic emotions are at play. Not being preoccupied with the risk that many associate with showing emotions can turn into an experience that builds and strengthens a relationship. Eli offered his own account of how his girlfriend expressed concern:

> On that same note what I said about school, it was a little battle before I came back to school. And we were laying down and she was, she just brought it up. And I'm not a easy person to talk to, especially when I know, you know, maybe I haven't done everything I should've done. And, but she just kept her ground. And I saw how serious she was about it and how committed she was to it, and being that I love her, it made me want to get my stuff together. But she just had to stand her ground and let me know, okay you can have your little tantrum, but after you have your tantrum, we still gon' discuss this.

Being committed to seeing change in Eli is what ultimately led him to execute the change that his girlfriend sought. The experiences of these two men imply that there is a relationship between conveyances of genuine care and the masculine performances that they chose to enact.

Ava and Candice proposed that the way you start is the way you finish. Candice stressed this when she said:

> …you set the tone for everything. The world itself is nothing but a world of psychology and communication. And so whatever you begin out as, you're gonna always set that tone. It's like running a race. If you at least start out with a decent pace, and you set the tone for what you wanna run the race in, then that tone will be set and everybody around you will be able to see it.

This is an exercise of agency because, in effect, women have the opportunity to teach the men with whom they are in relationships how they want to be treated. Ava also made a point to demonstrate how this is necessary for a strong foundation:

> If you let a man talk to you any kinda way, and even if you try like, with physical violence, it's not gon' help the situation because down the line it's gon' get worser and worser. So, I'm just saying, you – I don't know, I just feel like if you stop a man from disrespecting you at the get-go, then you won't have no problems with them.

This is an approach to challenging patriarchal masculine performances because it informs male partners of exactly what will not be tolerated between the two of them. Men then have the opportunity assess whether they believe the woman is worth adjusting their idea what masculinity looks like in the context of a relationship or whether they want to continue as they are and risk losing her.

Perpetuate

Women and men were asked the same questions, except framed for their particular gender. Interestingly, it was the male answers that were the most telling. Women's answers revealed more about how they successfully challenged or shaped men they were involved with than they did about how their efforts might have failed or how they might contribute to these

performances. This might be because women preferred to protect their sense of agency in their relationships or a number of other reasons.

Communication. One of the main problem areas that men reported was that of communication. Derrance stated: "well my experience is that when a woman has approached me with an issue, it's usually like he said, they let it boil over. So it's not just an issue, it's a list of issues." David's experience represents a different aspect of ineffectual communication. When asked how women he has been involved with go about addressing grievances, he complained:

> You'll never hear the end of it. Women will never let you hear the end of any form of mistake which you've ever made. It's like failing the worst test of your life but you failed it in second grade. And you're still hearing about it for the rest of eternity. No matter what you did wrong, you'll hear about it forever.

Finally, Ben shared what he has encountered when asked the same question:

> …lack of attention, quietness and then also half-heartedness. Then, you know, some women pout, some women whine. It's becoming like little kiddy stages. That's why like what he was saying, communication is key, you know. That keeps you in the door because if you're pouting, you're whining, hell – pouting, whining, crying, yelling, screaming, all those traits are babies. But that's all that's given to you if you don't meet those expectations, along with avoidance.

These three men all share different experiences with the same basic issue of communication. This leads to the perpetuation of masculine performances because it has the potential to create a tension-filled environment. In the previous section I discussed how men felt that a supportive, encouraging woman provided them with the most incentive to change. In tension-filled situations like the ones described above, it is likely that the behaviors or attitudes that elicited these

responses from women will not be approached openly and collaboratively because of the initial tone of the interaction.

Women also perpetuate certain masculine performances when they are not open to ones that are not congruent with their conceptions of masculinity. Derek described a situation where he felt this often occurred:

> When he was talking about their expectations of love he said that, "I want a man who is vulnerable enough to cry when he's hurting." There's a huge double standard with that. It's like, if you're hurting about something else that doesn't involve your woman, then maybe you can cry about it. But if it's something she did to you that hurts you and it genuinely hurt you and you come up even speaking in a soft tone you get that, "Why you acting like a bitch? Why you simpin'?" You know, so I feel like there's a double standard with that. I want a man who's vulnerable enough to cry when he's hurting.

Women who observe patriarchal understandings of masculinity and thus hold their significant others to that standard only help to reinforce those ideas. Even though it was a widely held belief amongst many of the participants, male and female, that men generally don't have or don't show the same emotion, men made it clear that there have been times when they wanted to and were criticized for doing so. In this way, women propagate masculine performances by letting it be known that they are open to constructions of masculinity outside of their own conceptions.

Disingenuous emotions/behavior. Disingenuous behavior can be a means of perpetuation as well. This idea emerged in two forms during the focus group. Emmanuel's comment reflected remarks also made by several other men:

> And I mean, it's crazy to me because we can sit here and talk about how females are emotional and all that but, and men are dogs and all this other stuff, but they play the

> game, too. So essentially that's what it is. It's not like, oh well I need a guy to do this and I need a guy to do that. They're playing the game just like we do.

"Playing the game" was something that came up in two of the three male focus groups. Men were hesitant to trust women for fear that mal-intent was the impetus for their actions. This in turn made men more cautious and more likely, as Emmanuel has shown, to continue to "play the game." Hence, what has essentially been created is a semblance of a relationship because neither party is interacting authentically with one another. April provided her own perspective on how women sometimes act in ways that don't represent their true interests or who they really are when she said: "I feel like a lot of times women pretend to be shy or pretend to be like, this little meek and mild person because that's what you think is expected of you." This is slightly different from Emmanuel's point but is disingenuous and perpetuates masculine performances just the same. Women who do not articulate their objections to the actions of the men they are involved with do nothing to challenge conceptions of masculinity. Without their conception of acceptable masculinity being challenged or addressed in any manner whatsoever, men have license to show continue their representation of masculinity in ways they see fit.

Finally, one of the most regrettable means of perpetuation of masculine performances is the failure to recognize that they can be reconsidered, reconstructed and adjusted. Derek had the following to say about women who have expectations that are not met by their partner: "Normally they don't encourage you. They either accept it or they reject it. It's either you are, or you aren't. It's like, almost as a man, you have no potential. It's either this is what you is – this is what you are and this is what you're always going to be." The men and women in these focus groups have more than demonstrated through the conveyance of their beliefs and experiences

that masculinity can be mutable. Not believing that one has the potential to grow and evolve is a definite way to stifle their will to do so.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore Black men and women's understanding of masculinity in romantic relationships, how their understanding reflected patriarchy and how masculine performances were perpetuated or challenged by Black women in these relationships. During the process of focus groups, participants revealed that they believed masculinity to be dynamic and reciprocal. To them, masculinity was not something that could be defined alike for each and every person alike. In many cases it was contingent upon how women portrayed themselves to be and how men perceived them to be. Participants also believed that society had harmful implications for masculine performances in romantic relationships but placed value on defying societal standards.

Participant understanding of masculinity within relationships reflected five aspects of hegemonic patriarchal masculinity: sex as an entitlement of manhood, control over women, control over emotions, not womanlike and property/power. However, they also expressed ideas that were a mix of hegemonic frameworks for relationships and egalitarian. Women challenged masculine performances in ways that exercised their own agency as well as ways that focused on creating a supportive, encouraging environment for the mental gratification of their partner. Women perpetuated masculine performances in various ways including failing to communicate effectively or believe in the potential for change. The following chapter will offer a discussion of these findings as they relate to the literature, implications for the current research and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

The general purpose of this study was to explore Black men and women's understanding of masculine performances in relationships and how they are perpetuated or challenged. The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

- Using *Act Like A Lady, Think Like A Man* as a point of reference:

  How do black men and women understand masculine performances within the context of romantic relationships?

  a) In what ways does their understanding reflect patriarchal constructions of masculinity?

  b) How do women perpetuate or challenge masculine performances?

Fifteen Black women and thirteen Black men between the ages of 19 and 60 were recruited for participation in focus groups. These focus groups served as the sole source of data for this study. A qualitative research design was used to explore masculine performances within romantic relationships and data were analyzed using Values and Process Coding (Saldaña, 2009). Semi-structured focus groups were conducted. Participants were recruited from courses offered in the African American Studies Department.

An analysis of the data revealed three categories related to participants' understanding of Black masculine performances: masculinity is dynamic, masculinity is reciprocal and society is impactful. Two categories of findings emerged from data analysis concerning how participant understanding of these performances reflected patriarchal constructions. They communicated hegemonic conceptions of masculinity as well as conceptions that were antithetical to patriarchy. Analysis revealed that women challenged masculine performances in him-centric and her-centric

ways while they perpetuated them by generally being ineffectual at addressing them or even enacting them themselves. This chapter includes detailed discussion regarding the general conclusions of the study, implications of this research and recommendations for future research.

Discussion

Based on the analysis of the data, three general conclusions were drawn from the findings. The conclusions are:

1. Black masculinity within the context of romantic relationships is a not merely a product of societal norms.
2. Black men and women adhere to aspects of patriarchy in relationships that they feel benefit them the most while eschewing others that they believe limit their agency.
3. Relationships can provide an arena in which Black masculine performances are assessed and modified.

Black masculinity within the context of romantic relationships is a not merely a product of societal norms

Much of the literature surrounding Black masculinity assigns a significant role to societal constraints and pressures in the lives of Black men. They have been said to flounder under the weight of inconsistent gender norms, attempting to subscribe to dominant gender roles and incurring undue stress when failing to do so (Wester et al., 2006; Copenhaver et al., 2000; Wise, 2001). Scholars especially cite the inability of these men to be the main source of provision in their relationships and families as an implicit threat to their conception of manhood (Aborampah, 1989; Franklin, 1984; Smith, 2008; Spraggins, 1999). This threat to manhood is said to create a power struggle within relationships, causing Black men to compensate for their powerlessness in other arenas by exercising it in their relationships (Cowdery et al. 2009; Bell, 1989; Bell et al.

1990). According to participants in this study, larger society is indeed a significant stressor of relationships. Emmett captured this idea when he said:

> So it's almost like – and then there's a lot of male bashing, you know, in society. That man ain't nothing. He ain't nothing, you know. That nigga ain't – so it becomes all of that. So it almost creates this atmosphere where you ain't doing nothing, even if you are. So it's encouraging and strengthening to know you have someone who has your back.

However, by depicting Black masculinity in relationships as strictly a product of societal constraints, the literature propagates the idea that masculinity is monolithic and static in nature, rarely manifesting itself in ways that are not directly affected by these factors. It also suggests that Black men and women do not critically engage the messages that they receive from society and what it might mean for their relationships. This is not at all consistent with reports about masculinity given by participants.

Participants were fully aware of the potential impact that society could have on their relationships. Women recognized scripts that would have them as subservient and confined to the domestic sphere in relationships and men recognized ones that predicated the interactions between men and women on the desire for sexual conquests and monetary gain. Both male and female participants directly cited the trouble with subscribing to European standards of relationship frameworks. Eugene articulated this sentiment well with the following comment:

> And being that we are Black people and we're confused, you know, in that sense and lost, we don't know how to react because it's like – it's something that probably within all of us to say hey, that doesn't quite fit me. And it's a reason why, because it wasn't supposed to fit us. We aren't supposed to conform and mold to what mainstream society want us to do. And that's the trouble.

Participants reported that societal influence sometimes induced conflict between Black men and women, but they also unequivocally stated the importance of spurning standards imposed by society. This is also evidenced by comments such as male participants' longing to be emotionally expressive despite a culture that deems such behavior unacceptable. Demonstrating this, David remarked: "I feel like it's unrealistic because as men, we do have emotions but society pretty much trains us not to show it because showing any emotion is really a sign of weakness, which gives somebody power to exhibit some kind of control over you." Thus, the handful of scholars that problematized the body of literature regarding Black masculinity were correct to criticize its limited and oppressive scope (Wise, 2001; Hammond, Mattis, 2005; Bush, 1999). Society proved to be a significant factor in the minds of Black men and women but certainly did not go unchallenged. Participants in this study were anything but incognizant of the dangers that come with uncritically espousing ideas disseminated in popular culture and society.

Participants also negated the static portrayal of Black masculinity presented by the literature. Their responses reflected the literature that instead positioned Black masculinity as an ongoing, fluid process (McClure, 2006; Hammond and Mattis, 2005; Marbley, 2003). Men alluded to the fact that their own conceptions of masculinity changed over the course of their lives while women acknowledged that there was no set standard from which men they encountered operated. Neither of these would be the case if the blocked opportunity model that some scholars advance for understanding masculinity were accurate. On the contrary, masculinity was described as both dynamic and reciprocal. Participants reported instances in which masculine performances were adjusted in response to feminine performances that were enacted. Ultimately, respondents necessarily debunked commonly sanctioned assumptions about

Black masculinity and its resiliency, or presumed lack thereof, in the face of less than optimal social conditions.

The testaments of these participants demonstrate how Black men and women can be engage in the knowledge production process, an important aspect of Black feminism. Though the knowledge being considered here is not traditional academic material, widely held ideas about Black masculinity are exactly what is used to justify and continue the subordination of Black men and Black women. Respondents in this study have rightly called into question ideas propagated in Harvey's book and society that negatively impact themselves and the larger Black community. They have also adhered to the contention that lived experience should be a criterion for meaning. They found it necessary to define masculinity and the forms in which it manifests based upon how it had done so in their own lives. This is the groundwork for combating oppressive societal forces that work against the formation of strong Black love relationships.

Black men and women adhere to aspects of patriarchy in relationships that they feel benefit them the most while eschewing others that they believe limit their agency

McClure (2006) conducted a study with Black men in which she discovered what she named amalgamation masculinity. This type of masculinity came from the tendency for the men to express hegemonic, individualistic ideas about masculinity as well as afrocentric, communal ideas. The participants in this study reported amalgamated beliefs of sorts about Black masculine performances in romantic relationships in much the same way. With the exception of the outliers, most of the participants communicated ideas that were in alignment with aspects of hegemonic patriarchal masculinity as well as constructions outside of hegemonic frameworks. Some of these aspects were expressed by men more than women, others by women more than men.

Men particularly clung to hegemonic sexual scripts and some forms of control over women. Burgest (1990) and Bowleg et al. (2004) discussed the ideas that there is an underlying principal of power in sexual decision-making and that men control sexual activity within relationships. Men in this study openly articulated their sense of entitlement to sex and their lack of understanding upon not being granted it. They made apparent their ability and willingness to go elsewhere for sexual gratification should it go unfulfilled by their women of choice and even sometimes when it was fulfilled. Ellis proved this when he commented: "Like, all my girlfriends I just cheat on them and find a new girl, you know, to sleep with. Even when the cookie is good with my females I just like more cookies." Even Ellis' language indicates possession, as he refers to the women he is involved with as "my females."

Men demonstrated control over women in ways that reached beyond ownership of female bodies and sexual decisions. hooks (2004b) asserted that control over women also takes the form of deception in Black male/female relationship. Answers of some of the male participants reflected exactly this. Men lied to gain access to female bodies but also to maintain control of a situation that they felt would be unpleasant were they honest about their feelings. Derrance provided an example of exactly this:

> I stated at the beginning of the discussion that as far as the text goes, we do learn. And it's usually a sacrifice in doing something that we don't want to do. Like tell our homie, "Yo, this is my girl." "Oh baby, I do love you." Because you said to me, you fussed at me last time I said I didn't love you back. So what you do is you, you lie.

They practiced deception with a clear nonempathetic assurance described in the literature, even when their lie meant professing inauthentic affection for their partner (Franklin, 1984). These

were the same men who, in the next breath, would that they believed a relationship to be a team effort between those involved.

Women subscribed to patriarchy in other ways. Most of the female participants conveyed their belief that provision was more so an element of masculinity than it was femininity. They were adamant that a man who would even suggest that they pull out their wallets was not one that even warranted consideration. Carmen spoke for several women when she expressed: "I refuse and I will never go out with a man if I have to bring a wallet along. Because to me I think that's ridiculous. That's the – you're negating the whole purpose of taking me out or us dating because that's not my job." Men did not share the same inclination to act as a sponsor for their partners and stressed the importance that a woman should pull her own financial weight in relationships. Conversely, women had a marked sense of agency within relationships regarding what they allowed to transpire how they expected men to treat them. This is important to note because emphasized in the literature is the idea that fears about shortages of Black men and other factors lead women to passively accept masculine performances that they do not particularly find pleasing (Cowdery et al., 2009; Marbley, 2003; King and Allen, 2009; Aborampah, 1989). Women in this study had no issue with taking the license to teach men how to treat them or to leave the relationship if they felt men could not observe their standards. Ava communicated this idea by saying: "I don't know, I just feel like if you stop a man from disrespecting you at the get-go, then you won't have no problems with them." This in no way corroborates claims about the fear of solitude advanced by many scholars and mainstream depictions of Black male/female relationship dynamics.

Additionally, by subscribing to the belief that men and women are essentially different, these participants are reifying the idea of masculinity and femininity. This is precisely the

foundation needed for patriarchy to take root in the minds of its adherents. When people believe that there are natural differences between men and women outside of reproductive functions, risk for the dissemination of patriarchal ideas increases. The concept of love is one that should be applicable to all human beings. David would not agree with this concept of love, as evidenced by the following:

> A man's love is like much more simple. I really thought that the way he explained it was pretty correct, that we aren't as nurturing. Like how he was talking about we won't exactly, maybe nurse our woman and rub her head with a cold compress when she has a cold but there are other things that we would do that are like, more direct to just let you know that we do love you.

David's understanding of love is based on the idea that men and women are naturally different and because of this difference, they address love in more or less simplistic ways. This line of thinking has made him susceptible to believing that being nurturing is not an acceptable masculine performance, even though at another point in his focus group he communicated the desire to be more emotionally free. This is problem with patriarchy; people allow themselves to be governed by these arbitrary rules about masculinity and femininity, even when it precludes them from being their complete selves.

Respondent answers are indicative of the ways in which Black men and women are actively align themselves with the same systems that work to oppress them. Many of the women expressed patriarchal ideas about masculinity and manhood. On a fundamental level, it is not at all possible to endorse one aspect of patriarchy while spurning another. Thus, they are essentially active sexists. The same can be said for the men in this study that communicated hegemonic ideas about masculinity and relationships. Hegemonic masculinity cannot, by definition, truly be

enacted by Black men simply by their very blackness. Hegemonic Black men then become active racists. When these racists and sexists form relationships with one another, it creates literally and figuratively an intersection of oppressions.

Relationships can provide an arena in which Black masculine performances are assessed and modified

Literature that addresses women's role in masculine identity construction is sparse. Even more scant is the literature that specifically approaches Black masculinity in a way that is inclusive of women. Goddard (2000) and Talbot and Quayle (2010) are some of the few that aptly highlight the fact that people play the roles that others would like for them to play, be they patriarchal or otherwise, and women are thus coproducers of masculinity as well. However, this is the extent of their analysis. The current study extended their contentions by taking a closer look at how this actually manifests in Black male/female romantic relationships in particular. It also stands in stark opposition to other research that objectifies Black masculinity at the hands of larger society. This study proved that patriarchal constructions can certainly be adopted by women but it also served to establish the significance of women in the process of creating, perpetuating, challenging and shaping conceptions of masculinity. Eli stated precisely this in his own words:

> And once you see that, it makes it harder to be that guy that they don't want you to be. It makes you wanna be that guy that they want you to be. And that's just being honest. Like, even if all your, and you know, pardon me for saying this, but even if all your natural male instincts that you've acquired through the years make you wanna go left, it kinda makes you wanna stay middle or go towards the way that, you know, that would make you guys work.

Some of the women and significant others of the men in this study were active innovators of masculinity in the lives of men.

Implications

This study has implications for the academic community, which can ultimately affect how literature that attempts to describe Black communities is framed. It establishes the ideas that gender is not static, nor is it monolithic. This opens a line of inquiry in the literature regarding society as the only means by which Black men and women legitimate their ideas about masculinity and femininity. It is no longer acceptable to attribute Black masculine and feminine identities and performances to the blocked opportunity models that are pervasive in the literature. These deficit models fail to ascribe the proper agency to Black men and women.

Another implication of this study is that it illustrates the continued validity of Black feminist theory as a tool for making knowledge claims and dismantling oppressions. Black Studies and Gender Studies can build upon their theoretical approaches to racial identity and gender identity through a deeper understanding of the interplay between marginalized identities and significant relationships in the lives of these people. From these theoretical developments, praxis can come in the community. Ideally, this knowledge can be used to create and propose a framework for Black male/female relationships that exists outside of hegemonic societal values and that fortifies the Black community. This study is the first of many toward achieving these goals.

Recommendations for Future Research

A qualitative methodology was implemented to facilitate exploration of the research topic. Based on the research findings, the following recommendations have been proposed for future research:

1) Conduct studies with populations other than heterosexual college students.
2) Use a different source of popular culture media.
3) Further explore the relationship between societal standards of masculinity versus partner expectations and masculine performances that are actually enacted.
4) Use other qualitative methods to further explore the themes that arose.
5) Repeat this study with homosexual Black men.
6) Conduct a similar study focusing on hegemonic femininity.
7) Explore how masculinity has changed in relation to how it was defined in previous generations or time periods.

Conduct Studies with Populations Other than College Students

Using college students in this study had implications for the class status as well as the degree of liberality of the population. Individuals who comprise a lower class demographic do not necessarily have equal access to higher education. College students are presumably more likely to have been exposed to concepts and people that differ from ones they have encountered in their own upbringing. Those who have not attended and institution for higher education often operate from different knowledge bases. For these reasons, using a population other than college students may yield highly divergent results.

Use a Different Source of Popular Culture Media

A media source that communicates other ideas about masculinity, gender roles and relationships might elicit different responses from participants. Harvey's book was full of patriarchal rhetoric, which may have a significant impact on the types of ideas that were reported. Another media source might reveal still more information about egalitarian roles or anti-patriarchal understandings of masculinity.

Further Explore the Relationship Between Societal Standards of Masculinity versus Partner Expectations and the Masculine Performances that are Actually Enacted.

Since the findings of this study revealed that participants purported to value the defiance of societal standards, further research would do well to study in depth the ways that these standards are challenged and eschewed. This can be done as a function of the role that relationships play in this process or as a standalone exploration of how Black men and women choose to operate outside of these standards. This would further combat the penchant to describe Black male/female relations strictly in terms of how they are acted upon by society.

Use Other Qualitative Methods to Further Explore the Themes that Arose

Focus groups were an effective tool for initiating a conversation about Black masculinity and Black women's role in its construction. Other qualitative methods such as ethnography or case study may be useful to provide comparative results. Observation of the dynamics of Black romantic relationships will surely contribute yet more to the dearth of literature about women, masculinity and patriarchy.

Repeat This Study With Homosexual Black Men

Confining this study to heterosexual relationships limits its ability to speak comprehensively to the production and perpetuation of masculine performances. Black gay male relationships are an important site for exploration as well. Their experiences can serve to provide information pertaining to the complex nature of intersectional oppressive forces in society.

Conduct a Similar Study Focusing on Hegemonic Femininity

Since masculinity and femininity are relationally defined, no study is complete without the consideration of both of these concepts. This study focuses on hegemonic masculinity and how it may be perpetuated or challenged by women. A similar study that problematizes

hegemonic femininity and the ways in which men may perpetuate or challenge it would be instrumental in understanding how these constructs work together to reinforce each other.

Explore How Masculinity Has Changed in Relation to How it was Defined in Previous Generations or Time Periods

The participants in this study stated emphatically that masculinity is dynamic and an ever changing. Hence, how masculinity was defined in this research is probably not how it has been defined in different eras. Exploring how these definitions have changed over time will provide useful information about gender constructs and their contextual meanings across time and space.

Summary

This study adds to the expanding body of literature regarding Black masculinity and its manifestations. It investigated Black men and women's understanding of masculine performances within the context of romantic relationships. Three general conclusions were derived based on the analysis of the focus group interviews of 28 Black men and women. They included: (1) Black masculinity within the context of romantic relationships is a not merely a product of societal norms; (2) Black men and women adhere to aspects of patriarchy in relationships that they feel benefit them the most while eschewing others that they believe limit their agency; and (3) Relationships can provide an arena in which Black masculine performances are assessed and modified. These conclusions, along with implications and recommendations for future research were provided.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Informed Consent

Georgia State University
Department of African American Studies
Informed Consent

Title: Act Like A Lady, Think Like A Patriarch? An Exploration of Black Masculine Identity Construction Within Romantic Relationships

Principal Investigator: Jonathan Gayles
Student Investigator: Kayla Charleston

I. Purpose

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to investigate how ideas about gender roles are negotiated within Black male-female relationships. Popular ideas presented in Steve Harvey's book *Act Like A Lady, Think Like A Man* will be used as a tool to begin discussion of patriarchal masculinity. You are invited to participate because you are a Black male or female over the age of 18 that is or has been in a monogamous relationship. A total of 48 participants will be recruited for this study. Participation will require 2 hours of your time over a one-day period.

II. Procedure

If you decide to participate, you will

- Fill out a form requiring demographic information.
- Take part in one 2-hour focus group session between the student investigator and 7 other Black males or females, respectively.
- Be asked to read a short chapter from Steve Harvey's book *Act Like A Lady, Think Like A Man*.
- Be audio taped and asked personal open-ended questions regarding your past or current romantic relationship/s, how you identify with ideas expressed in the book, and any ways in which you or your significant other challenges themes introduced in the book.
- Need to meet on the campus of Georgia State University for the focus group sessions. Focus groups will take place during the Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 semesters and will be scheduled at the convenience of the participants. Participants are only asked to volunteer for one focus group.
- Finally, twenty quiz bonus points will be awarded to those students that participate. An alternate assignment for extra credit will be offered to students that are not eligible for inclusion in the study or do not desire to participate in the study. This assignment will be a brief essay describing the influence of patriarchy on African-American male-female relationships. Twenty quiz bonus points will be awarded for submitting the alternate assignment as well. The PI and student PI will collect the alternate assignments and provide participating professors with a list of participating students for proper credit.

III. Risks

In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life.

IV. Benefits

Participation in this study may benefit you personally. The researcher hopes that participation in the study will empower subjects through self-reflection concerning their thoughts and actions regarding masculine identity. Overall, we hope to gain information about women's agency in affecting masculine identity formation.

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

Participation in research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, your grades and how you are treated in the classroom will not be affected.

VI. Confidentiality

We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. Jonathan Gayles and Kayla Charleston will have access to the information you provide. Information may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly (GSU Institutional Review Board and the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP). We will use pseudonyms rather than your name on study records. The information you provide will be stored in a locked desk at the home where the student investigator lives by herself. This includes the audiotapes from the focus groups. The code sheet used to identify the research participant will be stored separately from the data to protect privacy. The audiotapes and code sheet will be kept until May 2012 and destroyed after said date. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. You will not be identified personally. We ask you not to reveal what is discussed in the focus groups but the researchers do not have complete control of the confidentiality of the data.

VII. Contact Persons

Contact Jonathan Gayles at 404-413-5142, jgayles@gsu.edu or Kayla Charleston at 502-819-5904, kcharleston1@student.gsu.edu if you have questions about this study. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Susan Vogtner in the Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513 or svogtner1@gsu.edu.

VIII. Copy of Consent Form to Subject

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research, please sign below. If you are willing to volunteer for this research and be audio recorded, please sign below.

_____ _____
Participant Date

_____ _____
Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent Date

Appendix B: Focus Group Protocol

Men's Focus Group Guide

1. **While reading, highlight the ideas that you connect with, disagree with and/or find interesting.**
2. **After reading, what ideas did you feel were representative of experiences you've had in your relationships?**
    a. How were they alike?
    b. Did/do the women from your relationships appear to act in accordance with the ideas presented in the book about the proper actions for a "lady?"
3. **What ideas differed from what you've experienced in your relationships? How so?**
4. **Did you find that the motives and behaviors of men posited by Harvey were representative of your own motives and behaviors?**
    a. If so, in what way?
5. **What role did/do the women you have been in relationships with play in perpetuating the behaviors that Harvey says are common of men?**
    a. What role do they play in challenging them?
    b. Do women accept them?
    c. Do they ask more or different of you?
    d. If so, how do you respond?
6. **Define the roles you expect of your significant other in a relationship. Provide examples.**
7. **Describe societal expectations of a man's role in a relationship.**
    a. How might these expectations influence your relationship?

8. **Describe the expectations your significant other has had for you in your relationship.**
    a. How do these expectations differ from the expectations of larger society?
9. **In what ways do you feel oppressed by these expectations and roles?**

Appendix C: Focus Group Protocol

Women's Focus Group Guide

1. **While reading, highlight the ideas that you connect with, disagree with and/or find interesting.**
2. **After reading, what ideas did you feel were representative of experiences you've had in your relationships?**
    a. How were they alike?
    b. Did/do you believe you act in accordance with the ideas presented in the book about the proper actions for a "lady?"
3. **What ideas differed from what you've experienced in your relationships? How so?**
4. **Did you find that Harvey's portrayal of women was an accurate depiction of yourself and what you seek in a relationship?**
    a. How so or how not?
5. **When you encounter behavior that is undesirable from your partner, in what ways do you resist or disrupt such behavior?**
    a. Give an example of a time when your partner behaved in a way you thought was unacceptable. What was your reaction? How do you two resolve the conflict?
6. **Define the roles you expect of your significant other in a relationship. Provide examples.**
7. **Describe societal expectations of a man's role in a relationship.**
    a. How might these expectations influence your relationship?

8. **Describe the expectations your significant other has had for you in your relationship.**
    b. How do these expectations differ from the expectations of larger society?
9. **In what ways do you feel oppressed by these expectations and roles?**

Appendix D: Demographic Sheet

Participant Demographic Information

1. What year were you born? _____

2. Where were you born? _____

3. What is your gender? _____

4. What is your highest level of education completed? (check one)
   - ○ High School Diploma
   - ○ Associate's degree
   - ○ Bachelor's degree
   - ○ Master's degree
   - ○ Other: _____

5. Please indicate your parents' highest educational level.

Mother or guardian (check one)	**Father or guardian** (check one)
○ No Diploma	○ No Diploma
○ High School or GED	○ High School or GED
○ Some College	○ Some College
○ Associate's Degree	○ Associate's Degree
○ Bachelor's Degree	○ Bachelor's Degree
○ Master's Degree or Higher	○ Master's Degree or Higher
○ I Don't Know	○ I Don't Know

6. Please indicate your parents' marital status: (circle one)

   (1) Married, (2) Divorced, (3) Never Married, (4) Separated

   7a. If never married, what was/is the length of their relationship? _____

Thank You For Your Time