8-2017

Lemonade, gin, and juice: the performance and deconstruction of black masculinity from n**gers to negus

Robert A. Barry
DePaul University, barry_r1@denison.edu

Lemonade, Gin, and Juice

The Performance and Deconstruction of Black Masculinity from N**ger to Negus

DePaul University

6/4/2017

Critical Ethnic Studies Master Candidate Thesis

Advisor

Bill Johnson Gonzalez, Assistant Professor English

Committee members:

Dr. Francesca Royster, Professor and Chair English;
Dr. Lisa Calvente, Assistant Professor College of Communication

Table of Contents

Lemonade, Gin, and Juice is dedicated to the ancestors who guided me and the loved ones who supported me who will never get a chance to read this:

Illene Barry (Green)
Sibylla E. O'Neil
Josie Barry
Lawrence Douglass O'Neil
Tiffany L. Barry

Abstract

This project examines the effects of Black masculinity: its performance, the identity politics that materialize in the discovery of Black "maleness," and its manifestation through male intrasexual competition to analyze how Black men learn and perform traditional patriarchal masculinity. Existing literature provides evidence regarding patriarchal masculinity as the "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 2004, 1) Critical media literacy through a Black feminist framework serves as the theoretical lens for conducting a critical analysis of film, music, television, and literature to explore four questions: First, how does patriarchal masculinity act as an anti-Black divisive tool within diasporic spaces? Second, how does the manifestation of patriarchal masculinity, through performative measures, insinuate white supremacist thought into the Black male psyche? Third, by what method does transgenerational trauma situate heteronormativity in the lives of Black men silencing Black joy and liberation? Lastly, how do we reimagine Black masculinity in a non-patriarchal gaze? This historical counter-storytelling[1] project hypothesizes that Black masculinity is first acquired in diasporic spaces (i.e. the 'Hood) by familial figures and reproduces itself transgenerationally. Utilizing three media texts *Fences*, *Moonlight*, and *Empire,* I analyze the trajectory of Black male performance through the gaze of fatherhood to examine the parallels of historical and contemporary gendered performativity as symptomatic results of white supremacy and internalized racism.

---

[1] Solorzano & Yosso (2002) define counter-storytelling as "a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told" (p. 26).

[4]

Pray you catch me: Introduction and Theoretical Framework

<u>Why Black masculinity?</u>
You can taste the dishonesty
It's all over your breath as you pass it off so cavalier
But even that's a test
Constantly aware of it all
My lonely ear pressed against the walls of your world- Beyoncé

In the Oscar award winning film *Titanic*, audiences observed the development of a fictional love affair amidst the real-life disastrous sinking in 1912. (Barczewski, 2006) The narrative of Jack Dawson (Leonardo DiCaprio) and Rose DeWitt Bukater (Kate Winslet) is a peculiar one, asking for consumers to bear witness to discriminatory class divisions amongst same-race groups. Dawson, a hero and Third-Class ticket holder on the ship, interacts with Rose as she attempts to commit suicide. After talking her off the ledge, he is afforded the opportunity to dine with Titanic's elite. "The First- Class Dinner" scene depicts Dawson, in his new found glory, performing to the gentlemanly standards of the first class.[2] While he awaits his company, he watches, profusely mimicking the men around him- observing their physical response to the formal space they are entering. Dawson understood that he was entering a new world, a world where money and power dictated your access to masculinity. His introduction into the First-Class, by Rose and Molly Brown, began with his performance as an heir to a railroad fortune.[3] His last name inherited from his father, verbalized his status in society and male spaces. Observing *Titanic*, I began to question how men measure masculinity through economic status. The ability to lead a household is entrenched in ideologies surrounding gender performance.[4]

---

[2] In "The First-Class Dinner" we bear witness to the transformation of DiCaprio's character from third-class painter to first- class royalty. He borrows Brown son's suit in order to fit the stereotypical white gentleman image in first class.

[3] Molly Brown was an American human-rights activist, philanthropist and actress who survived the sinking of the RMS Titanic. See Iverson, *Molly Brown: Unraveling the Myth*.

[4] See Mumby, *Organizing Men: Power, Discourse, and the Social Construction of Masculinity(s) in the Workplace*.

While Jack had to navigate class discrimination in his performance of masculinity and vice versa, how do Black men navigate performativity in spaces where race, class, and sexuality are forces of marginalization?

This project navigates the trajectory of Black male identity within the United States. Advancing the work of scholars before me, I wish to not only theorize on the issues that plague the African Diaspora (i.e. Black masculinity) but offer concrete solutions to systemic, historical, and internal evils that hinders the bodies and the spirits of young boys who do not conform to the constructs of gender. From Dr. E. Patrick Johnson's employment of oral history and performance in *Sweet Tea* to theorize on Black bodies, identities, gender, sexuality, and power to Dr. Dwight A. McBride's *Why I Hate Abercrombie & Fitch: Essays on Race and Sexuality*, scholars within diasporic disciplines are developing scholarship that incorporates all Black people- cisgender, Trans, gay, lesbian, and differently abled folks. Such incorporation of all Black folks, regardless of multiple identities, is a necessity in fortifying methodology and analysis of gender and sexuality in a global and urban perspective.

For my 20th birthday, I received *The Black Male Handbook: A Blueprint for Life* (Male Handbook), a collection of essays edited by Kevin Powell for Black brothers on persisting, evolving, and winning in this world. The *Black Male Handbook* ripostes a collective yearning for innovative methods to raising young boys in the Hip-Hop era. A focus on diverse forms of dialogues—male-to-male, attracted me to text. The collection of writing served as a literary mentor as I navigated my first years away from my undergraduate institution (Denison University). It wasn't until I entered DePaul, which I began to critique the encoded messages that Powell and other contributors implanted within this handbook. The *Male Handbook* meet concerns of Black males interrelated with educational, socio-emotional, spiritual, and political

[6]

subjects. By definition, a handbook is "a book giving information such as facts on a particular topic or instructions for operating a machine." (Webster) This book is a reference, a snapshot of sorts, of the common necessities that Black men must follow to substantiate full emancipation from the shackles of America's racial past. While receptive to its intention, this book fails to interrogate systems of oppression that we as men also benefit-capitalism, sexism, and patriarchy. Kevin Powell's contribution to the text does align with Black feminist thought as he speaks on ending violence against women and girls, but what else is needed for a reconstructed Black male? Powell's work projects him as is a leading male voice in the conversation of Black masculinity and its reconstruction, but he as many other scholars situates themselves within the lane of "calling out" problematic tendencies that Black men project. Without thoroughly interrogating factors that influence the behavior or offering practical resolutions to the problematic behaviors of Black men, the "calling out" does nothing for the dismantlement of undergirding issues of performative masculinities.

Furthermore, this project examines the effects of Black masculinity: its performance, the identity politics that materialize in the discovery of Black "maleness," and its manifestation through male intrasexual competition to analyze how Black men learn and perform traditional patriarchal masculinity. Existing literature provides evidence regarding patriarchal masculinity as the "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 2004, 1) Critical media literacy through a Black feminist framework serves as the theoretical lens for conducting a critical analysis of film, music, television, and literature to explore four questions: First, how does patriarchal masculinity act as

an anti-Black divisive tool within diasporic spaces? Second, how does the manifestation of patriarchal masculinity, through performative measures, insinuate white supremacist thought into the Black male psyche? Third, by what method does transgenerational trauma situate heteronormativity in the lives of Black men, silencing Black joy and liberation? Lastly, how do we reimagine Black masculinity in a non-patriarchal gaze? This historical counter-storytelling piece examines the histories of Black men in the United States to conceptualize a productive reimagining of Black manhood and boyhood. Before I cultivate a tangible deconstruction, I consider how Black men learn and then perform traditional patriarchal masculinity in Black neighborhoods or the 'Hood.

Considering the 'Hood as a diasporic space, I posit that masculinity is first determined through familial interactions and later enforced through the focus of Black male performance via the internalization of patriarchal masculinity. Such internalization is emphasized through my theorization of Gin and Lemonade. Employing the work of *Fences, Moonlight,* and *Empire*, I explore the Hood' as an interactive diasporic space to uncover the entrenched collective memories that standardize the experiences of Black boys who grow into Black men. I hypothesize that existing Black masculinity is reactionary to the years of deprivation of darker bodies and their experiences in white spaces. Cultural theorist and scholar bell hooks supports my argument through her constant interrogation of whiteness. Examining white supremacy as an undergirding factor in various forms of oppression, hooks speaks to patriarchy as an investment in supremacist ideologies and how it lends itself to symptomatic reproductions of white supremacy.

In her book, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* (2004), hooks scripts the histories of gendered apprehensions that subsist within diasporic spaces. hooks' concept of

[8]

"plantation patriarchy" marks the starting point of the indoctrination of Black male bodies into the world of patriarchal masculinity. hooks hypothesizes that "plantation patriarchy" represents the school of thought that indoctrinates Black men into gender politics that construct male-dominated hierarchy. She articulates:

> Black men "had to be taught to equate their higher status as men with the right to dominate women; they had to be taught patriarchal masculinity…and it was this notion of patriarchy that educated Black men coming from slavery into freedom sought to mimic. However, a large majority of Black men took as their standard the dominator model set by white masters. When slavery ended, these Black men often used violence to dominate Black women, which was a repetition of the strategies of control slave-masters used. (4)

The plantation is an element of terror in African American history. The body of land, occupying space and time, served as a constant reminder of Black folks' membership in a poor class. hooks' writings inform my project as she contextualizes the plantation as the birthplace of the kind of Black masculinity that I seek to critique. How do Black men learn how to be men? hooks' work is quintessential in examining that question. bell hooks interrogates not only white supremacy and its benefactors, but also cross-examines Black men's complacent ideologies which linger from the days on the plantation. This text, amongst others written by bell hooks, shapes my familiarity with patriarchy though a Black feminist gaze and helps me to question my position.

Although hooks' text functions as an excellent resource for my research, hooks' observation of Black masculinity, at least in this book, focuses directly on its impact on Black women, and rightfully so. The toxic performance of masculinity claims the lives of Black women daily. [5] While extracting the roots of masculine performance, my analysis utilizes hooks' arguments to focus directly on male-to-male relationships. An interrogation of male-to-male interactions, which remain undertheorized, within Black spaces and across generations, progresses gender performativity discourses into a new realm, calling into question the role of

---

[5] See Mire, *Korryn Gaines and the Erasure of Violence Against Black Women*

space and time in the performance of the gendered construct. With the 'Hood, I focus on representations of specific father/son relationships in film and television. *Fences*, *Moonlight*, and *Empire* depict three different 'Hoods through three distinct generations that highlight the toxicity that emerges through gendered normativity.[6] Expectations of gendered success constitute normalized ideologies through emphasizing adequate male behavior- the appropriate dress, tone, and speech that solidify dominance and the performance of maleness. Examining the father/son relationships of Troy and Cory Maxson (*Fences*), Chiron and Juan/Hood' (*Moonlight*), and Lucious and Andre Lyon (*Empire*), I argue that Black masculinity reproduces itself transgenerationally and the only way to emancipate ourselves from the toxic manhood is to abandon white supremacist patriarchy. This project is a letter to my old self, the young man afraid of expressing the joys of life. My story begins and ends with my first love, music! Music (in all its forms) serves as the soundtrack for this manuscript and the respiring of a reconstructed Black masculinity.

Theoretical Frameworks: Lemonade, Gin, and Juice through the Body

Contextualizing Blackness and masculinities as one conception allows for an analyzation of how Black masculinity situate itself outside universal definitions of masculinity. This form of masculinity operates differently due in part to entrenched anti-Blackness within the inner workings of institutions globally and domestically. Black masculinity encompasses three interconnected categories: perception, expectation, and representation that work collectively to construct a definition of Black masculinity. (Jones 2016) The ways in which Black men are perceived through embellished representations of Black maleness in film, television, and everyday experiences posit expectations of Black masculinity in the hands of others to define for

---

[6] I discuss each media text in generational order *Fences* (1950's), *Moonlight* (1980's), and *Empire* (2000's) to contribute to the chronological retelling of manhood.

us. For this project, I operate with the concept of Black masculinity serving as a gendered-construct developed as a "perceptual and cosmological category in flux composed and validated by culturally particular behavioral tendencies that are consonant with personal, social, and communal expectations." (Jackson II & Dangerfield) Understanding that masculinity, Black masculinity, in particular, encompasses many aspects of individual and systemic expectations is important when naming the gendered construct and the reasoning why it needs to be deconstructed.

Herbert Sussman's (2012) research suggests that maleness, even through various forms and cultures, is self-evident. Through its self-evident nature, "manliness" operates as an unmarked classification that produces gender- based value systems that men absorb and from which they benefit. The critical question now is if manliness is irrefutable, how is it learned? Gender performativity theory provides a framework to explore this question. Judith Butler (2011) posits:

> When we say that gender is performed, we usually mean that we've taken on a role; we're acting in some way…. To say that gender is performative is a little different…. For something to be performative means that it produces a series of effects. We act and walk and speak and talk in ways that consolidate an impression of being a man or being a woman…we act as if that being of a man or that being of a woman is actually an internal reality or simply something that is true about us. Actually, it is a phenomenon that is being produced all the time and reproduced all the time that represents a stage of identification that starts with a feeling of closeness to others who identify.

According to Butler's theory, gender is performative and is rehearsed historically. We as actors internalize scripts, animating them through repetition. Actors (everyday people) operate in spaces with "scripts" that inform themselves and the world around them of their gendered performativity. Butler perceives gender not as an expression but as a gendered stylization of the body, which demonstrates the stresses of being considered an outsider or other that motivate men into conforming and accepting the indoctrination of dominant gendered performativity.

(Sussman, 8)

The basis for the application of Gender Performativity theory is an index formed by the concepts of birth and the body. Your entrance into this world substantiates purity- a clean machine that requires further assistance in downloading the needed material to work in diasporic spaces. Similar to the work of Julie Mallozi (2010), this theory conceptualizes that lived experiences incise one's body – further than the observable scars we encounter through our journeys. I consider the body a collection of records: our experiences engrave themselves on our person as we mature in age, and "our bodies in turn imprint the world with immigration papers, medical records, photographs, and other documents." (Online source) Gender performativity theory sets up the expectation that histories inform the body of the ways in which gendered individuals are "supposed" to behave. Through the scope of Black feminist thought, I begin to shape theory that not only focuses on gender, but also emphasizes race as a large component in performativity.

While the work of Butler, Sussman, and Mallozi formulate the gender aspect of this project, I foreground Black feminist thought in my research. Black feminist thought comprises concepts manufactured by Black women to illuminate perspectives of and for Black women. Moreover, Black Feminism is a "school of thought which argues that sexism, class oppression, gender identity and racism are inextricably bound together." (Collins 1990) This research, in particular, employs intersectionality theory. Intersectionality as a Black feminist theoretical framework, first devised by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, activates Black feminist discourse by arguing that social characteristics- gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion, and mental disability interconnect in different systems of oppression distinct from the component identities. Mutually, Gender performativity theory and intersectional Black feminist

thought support my research as points of entry and operate as theoretical guides for my own theoretical contextualization of *Lemonade, Gin, and Juice*.

I theorize *Lemonade, Gin, and Juice* through performativity to substantiate how Black Masculinity subsists through the body through internalization. Performance transforms into performativity when lasting effects occur and this project tracks the lasting effects that result in the current projection of Black masculinity via diverse mediums. *Lemonade, Gin, and Juice* is the response to performative discourses that argue that gender constructs are read then rehearsed on the body. I theorize that yes, rehearsal of gendered normativity is a part of the performance, but masculinity must be consumed before it can be rehearsed and fully performed.

While *Gin* does not come first in the title, I posit that it is the first stride in the consumption of traditional masculinity and results in Black masculine performativity. *Gin* is a spirit with its earliest origins in the Middle Ages; gin has developed over the course of a millennium from a medicine to an object of commerce in the liquor industry. Alcohol navigates through male spaces as a source of celebration and self-medication. Men cross-culturally and generationally unite, detailing their trials and tribulations over libations. Contextually, age requirements separate the men from the boys with respect to the legality and access to alcohol. In this project, I posit that the ingestion of Gin is a boy's introduction into traditional patriarchal masculinity.[7] Furthermore, I situate *Gin* as the dual oppression of racial and gender inequalities. *Gin* is manufactured in the world to propagandize white supremacist thought. The beverage's invisibility (clear) masks toxins for an effortless ingestion of racism, sexism, misogyny, classism, and patriarchy by marginalized men.

Lemonade is different than *Gin*, while sharing the same side effects. *Lemonade*, which is

---

[7] Ingestion of these liquids are figurative.

the title of Beyoncé's (2016) visual album, is a sweet, all-American beverage made for all to enjoy. Lemonade is two-fold, sour then sweet. The process in which a lemon transforms into lemonade is how Black men perform and consume hegemonic masculinity- the lemons serving as the bitterness of our past and the juice serving as our ideologies of masculinity. Instead of ignoring the past, we utilize learned traditions indoctrinated into our psyches via white supremacy and synthesize them with rigid hope and dreams, resulting in Lemonade. Moreover, the ingestion of the lemonade creates the unwritten laws of Black masculinity that are rooted in white patriarchal norms. This project is a process of healing similar to Beyoncé's musical hit. Each chapter is named after a song on the album (*Pray you catch me, Daddy Lessons, Don't Hurt Yourself, Formation, and Freedom*) and her influence on my life helps me reconfigure a pioneering form of Black masculinity free from traditional patriarchal and hegemonic masculinity which I categorize as the *Juice.*

Juice is my method of deconstructing Black masculinity. I conceptualize juice as the homegrown coolness and sweetness that is at the core of Black male identity. In my conclusion, I offer tangible recommendations that Black men can participate in to bring the *Juice* to fruition. Juice is the acknowledging of undergirding root causes and perpetual portrayals of stereotypical archetypes that Black men consumed over centuries. Black male identity is couched in racist stereotypical archetypes that portray Black men as hypersexual, inhumane, lazy ingrates to society. The 19th and 20th centuries supported negative representations of Black male identity in music, news, and film. Dominant stereotypes are related to the objectivity of Black bodies via institutions of oppression. Through the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and American chattel slavery, Black captivity birthed political, social, economic, religious and cultural dehumanization of Blackness with the projection of public and private violence against Black bodies. (Cooper 2008)

Further explored in Kathrine McKittrick's work *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle,* the ramifications of African enslavement is a continuum of traumatic experiences that Black folks are left to negotiate. She projects "it is important to highlight first the understanding that racial domination and human injustices are spatially propped up by racial-sexual codes, particularly bodily codes, such as phenotype and sex. That is, racism and sexism produce attendant geographies that are bound up in human disempowerment and dispossession." (2006, 3)Comprehending the trajectory of Black maleness in the American context allows for an appropriate contextualization of the Juice and how it operates as form of deconstruction and healing. Juice will aid in the #Blackboyjoy[8] movement in naming projects, artists, writers, and curators who are shifting the paradigm of Blackness and maleness. The Juice will be for ALL Black men by ALL Black men- cisgender, gay, Trans, and heterosexual.

Before I can reach the utopian world filled with Juice, I examine my own ingestion and digestion of Gin and Lemonade. Utilizing personal narratives (similar to Beyoncé's *Lemonade*), I anthologize my fears and traumatic experiences of performing masculinity. Beyoncé is essential to my deconstruction of Black masculinity. Through a close reading of her music, visuals, and cultural icon status, I track the ways in which I came to understand traditional masculinity and further develop a reimagined Black male.

Beyoncé: Cultural Icon & Feminist, and the Media

It was April 23, 2016, when millions of devoted members of the *Beyhive* generated virtual communities to rejoice in the visual, musical, and cultural masterpiece entitled

---

[8] The #BlackBoyJoy movement jump started via Black social media as a means to juxtapose representations and tropes of Black men domestically and internationally. With the motive of liberating Black men from hypermasculinity, misogyny, and internalized hatred, #Blackboyjoy attempts to disrupt white supremacy projections of what Black men and masculinity is supposed to look like.

Lemonade. The opening scene of the HBO film shows Beyoncé walking through fields in all black, a symbol of mourning. "Pray you catch me," the opening track on the album and HBO film, details the heartache and denial of a woman's intuition as she combats the realization of her partner's infidelity. She cries in suspense, "I pray I catch you whispering, I pray you catch me listening," for material confirmation and an opportunity to confront her lover. As Beyoncé is fully aware of the infidelity, her partner veils his betrayal through performance. Both Beyoncé and her partner carry on the charade through their kisses. The flavor of the deception lingers on his lips for his wife to taste. Those kisses, cavalier at the core, expound on the disdain her body endures in the performance of heteronormativity. The captivity that erodes from the horror of this fictional marriage asphyxiates the body, leaving the remains of fictitious bliss on the exterior and septic dismemberment on the interior, due to the toxicity of this relationship. "Pray you catch me" ends with Beyoncé, dressed in all black, springing off a building ledge and diving into a body of water. What audiences perceived as a live suicide transformed into a path to personal transformation and rebirth. The HBO film takes onlookers on a journey of love, injustice, empowerment, and deceit repositioning Black women's voices from the margins to the center of popular culture.

Through prevailing visuals, spoken word, and music, Beyoncé's work aids in the celebration and repatriation of the rich legacy of Black women. Loosely constructed on Kübler-Ross's five stages of grief model, the project is "divided into 11 chapters with title cards describing Beyoncé's reactions to her husband's apparent infidelity: "Intuition," "Denial," "Anger," "Apathy," "Emptiness," "Accountability," "Reformation," "Forgiveness," "Resurrection," "Hope," and "Redemption." (Dam 2016) Audiences chart the trajectory of one woman's understanding of her body and the pain it has endured as it manifests through shared

experiences of Black women across the diaspora. The work of Beyoncé helps shape Black femininity through a cultural lens, prompting audiences alike to reflect on their personal accounts. Watching *Lemonade (*film) and seeing the album come to life at the Formation tour was a rewarding experience. I reflect on my history and how Beyoncé, the embodiment of femininity, inspired this project and assisted me in my research in comprehending Black masculinity and its politics.

First, you may ask, in what manner do Beyoncé and her work influence my writings on the topic of Black masculinity? Beyoncé and I share a bond that other folks would not imagine. My love for Beyoncé travels way back to my boyhood. The year was 2003 and Beyoncé entered the pop sector as a solo artist with her first solo album *Dangerously in Love*. Since her entrance into the popular sector, Beyoncé has dominated an industry constructed and controlled by white conglomerates. Her beauty, grace, and talent are the embodiment of femininity and power to the lengths that her brand transcends racial and gender boundaries across markets. Today, I project my allegiance to the greatest artist of the 21st century, but that was not always the circumstance. My amazement for "the Queen" was practiced in solitary confinement due to society's inability to address its issues with gender and sexuality. At the tender age of 6, young boys in my community are in performance rehearsal- pretending to be the broken men we want to become. Day in and day out, we had to project such toughness on our frail bodies, and Beyoncé could not exist in our boy/male circles. My suppression of my love for Beyoncé came to fruition when I heard one of my friends belittle another for singing one of Beyoncé's songs off her debut album. His sexuality was up for debate, a single debate. The year was 2003. I state the date for context because, in 2003, I was 12! And at 12, a young boy's sexuality was in question. "You gay for that bro" and all the others laughed. My love for Beyoncé became a hidden secret because I feared I

too would be marked as "other."

My fears halted my public declaration of loving the music of Beyoncé. But this was bigger than Beyoncé! Once I buried that love in the private sphere, I correspondingly shut away dancing, singing, and other activities that were deemed feminine. I threw myself into football and hockey to project the male body that would keep me safe. Enjoying Beyoncé in my adolescence was fostered in sequestered spaces because Black men are not supposed to enjoy and benefit from femininity. "Enjoying femininity" refers to enjoying aspects that go against gender norms- anything that is categorized as feminine or masculine. bell hooks (2004) makes a compelling argument in *We Real Cool* in which she proclaims that Black men's inability to deconstruct hypermasculinity results in our (Black males') ongoing repression and denial of our emotions. She pronounces:

> Repression is one of the ways to cope with the pain of abandonment. If black boys and black men do not allow themselves to feel, then they are not able to take responsibility for nurturing their emotional growth; they cannot access the healthy parts of themselves that could empower them to resist…But this can only happen if a child's imagination and creativity are not destroyed. (93)

Hyper-masculine façades performed by many Black males are a response to the lack of emotional support, violence in the communities, and monolithic media representations of men. For example, Hip-Hop (a point of reference in many Black masculinity think pieces) birthed itself out of the deprivation and benign neglect in South Bronx neighborhoods. Tony Parker theorizes that hyper-masculine mentality in Black-curated music is a response to the emasculation and devastation many men sensed for being dispossessed of stability after their neighborhoods were destroyed.

While Beyoncé is a source of inspiration in my everyday life, she serves as a point of departure and reference for this particular project. In an effort similar to that of the HBO film *Lemonade;* my project concentrate on media and everyday representations of Black identity

(male). Representation is essential when measuring precisely how particular groups of people value themselves through the media's lens. Media's negation of positive portrayals of Black men in films and television demonstrates an active, continued distortion of Black masculinity. With few exceptions, men of color are traditionally painted as deviant-thuggish characters. The traditional archetypes of Blackness in media/film -- the Tom, the Coon, the Sambo, and the brutal Black buck -- all illustrate stereotypical ideologies of Black male identity; subservient to whiteness, hypersexualized, lost-cause, and angry. (Bogle 1994) Centuries of appalling conditions coupled with negative media representations of Black men alter how survivors of such oppression view themselves and operate within the world. Such deprivation further explains "the internalization of stereotypes [compelling] a large sector of Diaspora Africans to reject their image and attempt to replicate European standards." (Lake 2003, xii) With an interrogation of the representations of Black male familial relationships in *Fences, Moonlight,* and *Empire,* I begin to connect the fragments of performativity, everyday experiences, and media representations of masculinity and their effects on the body.

Daddy Lessons: *Fences* and the construction of heteronormative ideologies in diasporic spaces

With his gun, with his head held high
He told me not to cry
Oh, my daddy said shoot
Oh, my daddy said shoot
With his right hand on his rifle
He swore it on the bible
My daddy said shoot
Oh, my daddy said shoot- Beyoncé

This section will begin to extract the roots of Black masculinity and investigate the contextual histories that inform diasporic spaces with the heteronormative practices of patriarchal masculinity. Examining *Fences*, I argue that boyhood and manhood are intrinsically linked to what bell hooks (2004) refers to as "plantation patriarchy." Frameworks of Black masculinity are passed down transgenerationally, highlighting the trajectory of the darker male and his entrance into manhood in the United States. Thoroughly, I examine the relationships between father figures and their off-spring to gender, its construction, and normativity are first learned and later performed to sustain soci-cultural practices within diasporic spaces such as the 'Hood.

Black neighborhoods, or colloquial speaking, 'Hoods, are terrains of cultural conclaves established in cities throughout the African Diaspora. Brooklyn, Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit -- all have Hoods packed away within their inner cities that host some of the most talented and traumatized folks in this country. The Hood' is the cornerstone of many lessons learned for Black youth. We learn how to ride bikes, how to jump fences (a skill I never mastered) and find out how to survive. The story of Troy Maxson is a narrative of trauma and how trauma manifests within familial relationships. Originally written as a play by August Wilson and now an Academy Award-winning film starring and directed by Denzel Washington, *Fences* employs Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania as the neighborhood of choice. An enthralling depiction of manhood through the

father/son gazes of Troy and Corey Maxson, the film provides audiences with a front seat as Wilson conceptualizes just how patriarchal masculinity manifests in everyday experiences.

To comprehend how men act and perform, one must integrate space, time, and positionality. The historical context of *Fences* centers Troy in the middle of climatic race relations within the United States. Set in 1957, the exact year Hank Aaron and the Milwaukee Braves championed the New York Yankees to win the World Series, audiences navigate the trajectory of Troy's problematic performance as a man, husband, and father. (Anon 2013) Emphasizing his problematic tendencies is a point of entry to the analysis of how Troy is simply a product of his diasporic space (i.e. the Hood).

Troy Maxson grew up in the Deep South surrounded by racial terrorism while suffering neglect from his absent yet present father. Parents operate as primary educators for their male off-spring. Young boys navigate the world aspiring to follow in their father's footsteps or the complete opposite. Estranged father and son relationships aren't unique to African-American discourse, but the topic remains prevalent in the conversation of learning and internalizing traditional masculinity. Troy and his teenage son Corey serve as instruments for onlookers to begin the deconstruction of Black masculinity. Both men navigate unjust societies, attempting to solidify their dwellings in this world. In that process, apparent conflict emerges between the father and son. Born in two separate worlds- Troy in the Jim Crow South and Corey in the dream-filled North- the two can't seem to be in the same book, let alone the same page as it relates to life and responsibilities. Life and responsibilities are intensely woven into the construction of traditional masculinity as men are supposed to perform certain tasks to signify their maleness. (Jackson II 2006) I was always warned a man takes care of his responsibilities as the provider and protector of his loved ones. Troy masters manliness as his job to provide for his wife and son. While he

gives up on his dreams, he remains steadfast in working his sanitation job to provide food for the table and a roof over the Maxson's home.

In order to analyze Troy's relationship with his sons, we must begin by examining his relationship with his father. Troy is extremely hard on his youngest son Corey and his oldest Lyons. His perspective on manhood guides his interactions with his children. Troy's consciousness surrounding masculinity is directly connected to his father. Grandfather Maxson was a hardworking man in the Deep South navigating as a sharecropper. Despite surviving abandonment and an eleven sibling household, Troy speaks highly of his father's ability to remain faithful to his responsibility and provide for his children. That sense of liability acquired in Troy's knowledge production of manliness is rooted in performativity and imitation. As he retells his upbringing, I notice a form or repetitive reproduction in Troy's male behavior in comparison to his father. Through a close reading of Andrew Meltzoff's (1999) work on child development and performance, the author notes:

> That special form of learning is "imitation," the ability to learn behavior from observing the actions of others. Imitation is so commonplace among adults and children that it is often overlooked in infancy, but infants make good use of imitation. Understanding imitation in infancy changes the way we look at infants. (2)

Troy's infant and adolescent imitation of his father expound on my argument on masculinity being learned through familial relationships. Troy's masculinity is an imaginative construction of how he viewed his father- positively and adversely. How he sees the world all comes back to his father. Before Troy left the confines of his father's home, he was a student, and his father was the teacher with the objective of survival. As an adult, we see the effects of Grandpa Maxson's performance of masculinity on the body of Troy. Like father, like son: both men are emotionally inaccessible to their family. While Troy is physically affectionate with his wife Rose when intoxicated, Wilson

later reveals Troy's infidelity, which signifies his inheritance of the exact toxicity that engulfed his father's body.

Troy entered the reigns of manhood at the age of 14. When I was 14, my world consisted of honors classes, WWE wrestling, and masking my enjoyment of Beyoncé. I was a high school freshman bidding to win best dressed and wanting to experience life; I did not consider myself a man. While Troy marks 14 years old as the year of his admission into manhood, his admission is involuntary. After discovering his hormonal impulses with Joe Canewell's daughter, he is punitively beaten by his father. The violation of Troy's body and spirit later reveals the cruel intentions of Grandfather Maxson. Wilson (1980) writes:

> She about thirteen and we done figured we was grown anyway . . . so we down there enjoying ourselves . . . ain't thinking about nothing. We didn't know Greyboy had got loose and wandered back to the house and my daddy was looking for me. We down there by the creek enjoying ourselves when my daddy come up on us. Surprised us. He had them leather straps off the mule and commenced to whupping me like there was no tomorrow. I jumped up, mad and embarrassed. I was scared of my daddy. When he commenced to whupping on me . . . quite naturally I run to get out of the way. Now I thought he was mad cause I ain't done my work. But I see where he was chasing me off so he could have the gal for himself. When I see what the matter of it was, I lost all fear of my daddy. Right there is where I become a man . . . at fourteen years of age. (52)

Troy's introduction into manhood emerged through the performative act of violence (fighting). Violence in the 'Hood situates thoughts on the value of Black bodies and life. Grandfather Maxson did not value the bodies of his son nor the young girl he violated. The violent description of Troy's "coming to manhood" story is horrifically reminiscent of life on the American plantations. Subjugation through malicious intent and action served on plantations to sustain ideological control over Black folks. From public humiliation to bodily dismemberment, those invested in whiteness and white supremacy generated systems of oppression to construct social hierarchies in which the value of Black life and bodies was obsolete. Troy received a good ol' beating from the individual who owned his body and experiences, his father. The 'Hood is the diasporic space in

which discipline is distributed profusely. I recall my dad and uncles joking about how they would receive whooping's from every person on the block before Big Mama got to them. Whuppings, i.e. corporal punishment, within diasporic spaces intrinsically connects to the plantation. I've had my fair share of whuppings in my day, and today I still hear folks lament that children aren't disciplined in the same fashion.

Grandfather Maxson's dual violation is the contextualization of *Gin.* Previously cited, Gin is the twofold oppression of gender and racial inequalities. The embodiment of massa', Grandfather Maxson has no concern for his son's or the young girl's personhood. His galvanized entitlement over their bodies places us right back on the plantation where the commodification of Black bodies situated devaluing tactics (i.e. rape) as normalized occurrences. Grandfather Maxson took his cue, figuratively from massa' to sustain control over his young son. Before Europeans stole and enslaved six million of my ancestors, whuppings were not a disciplinary practice employed in diasporic spaces. In fact, children were noted as sacred and could host the souls of reincarnated ancestors. (Patton 2017) Corporal punishment is directly related to investment in whiteness and a belief in correcting children's behavior with brutality. Such brutality ruptured through the American South to institutionalize violence against the minds and bodies of stolen Africans. Analyzing this scene, we see the effects of whiteness and patriarchal masculinity through Gin.

Gin serves as a configuration of ancient systems of oppression that sustain whiteness and white supremacy. Europeans set sail, encountered the new world, and the rest is history! The "discovery" of land occupied by natives grew Europeans' speculation surrounding these occupants' physical, communal, and cultural differences. The emergent aspiration to

categorize and govern the experiences of "others" is an element of Gin. This is noted in the performance of Grandfather Maxson.

Moreover, Grandfather Maxson did not come out of the womb performing heteronormativity- it was learned. Where did he learn such toxicity? The older men in Wilson's and Washington's work all engage in alcoholism. Figuratively and literally, ingesting liquor (Gin) is the first step in performing patriarchal masculinity. As Troy relives his violent encounter, he is actively drinking the spirit. Gin incapacitates the body of any emotions that would prevent the man from performing traditional masculinity- being strong, confident, and in control. In modern television shows, men engage in alcohol before they enter spaces where potential mates may be present. Your boy will hype you up before you talk to the girl that's in the corner minding her business. The act of ingesting liquor initiates the removal of inhibitions for the projection of maleness. While Gin is the construction of whiteness, similar to racism, Black men take the bait and ingest the toxins. Through the gazes of Troy and Grandfather Maxson, masculinity operates as an apparatus for the continuation of the control of Black male experiences. Generationally, Black men raise their boys to be men, better men than them. (Gregory 2016) Through my educational matriculation, my parents repeatedly lectured me on the opportunities I may have if I furthered my schooling continued through with my schooling. Their long nights and earlier mornings working in food service and domestic cleaning was an investment. The individual desire to want your children to struggle less is what I acquired from my parents' lecture. My mother's tiring night shifts were easier because she believed in the idea that her children will pick up the torch and progress the narrative of opportunity.

The constant struggle for opportunity and uplift sits and the epicenter of the conversation of familial relationships as it pertains to *Fences*. As mentioned earlier, corporal punishment

possesses control over Black children to fulfill their parent's pre-destined dreams. Dreams steeped in social mobility, respectability politics, and sometimes internalized racism, manifest in toxic relationships that instruct boys that weakness is not an option if they want to make it in this world. While Grandfather Maxson's performance of masculinity differs from Troy's, the transgenerational trauma that remains in Troy's psyche projects itself into the relationship he has with his sons.

Troy's relationship with his sons, Lyons and Corey, reminds me of the legendary father and son relationships I see in everyday experiences. Troy wants nothing but the best for his children; the issue that arises is that he obsessively controls what is "best." Corey and Troy's relationship reflects potential downfalls within Black father/son relationships through the involvement of traditional patriarchal masculinity. The performance of Troy as the hardworking yet emotional, inconstant parent is connected to the devastation he experienced in a journey through manhood. After losing his mother, father, and his first wife, experiencing homelessness, imprisonment, and missing the chance to play in the Big Leagues, Troy cannot experience another piece of heartache. Corey wanting to play football is a deal breaker for Troy, because he knows what the sports industry will do to his impressionable son. Troy was kept out of Major League baseball due in part to racism. When baseball integrated in 1947 (Dreier, 2013), Troy was an elder. Racism castrated his chances of baseball stardom, and he will not allow for that hurt to reach his youngest son. Racism operates as a metaphorical serial killer that hunts Troy past, present, and future. Racism engenders a certain kind of response that lends itself to Troy's overcompensation to his narcissistic wound – which heals through his emphasis on being harder, more endurant, stronger, aggressive, and impenetrable. Racist ideologies used to justify American enslavement repackaged themselves and sat at the center of American institutions, including the sports industry. Regardless of talent,

Black folks needed to remain in their destitute social class to maintain white patriarchal order in American spaces. In baseball, African Americans were barred from participation in the National Association of Baseball Players due in part to political bigotry and color bans dating back to the 1890s. (Negro League History, 2012) Instead of handling his fear with care, he rises to patriarchal expectations and controls Corey's experiences.

Troy is a pessimist, a realist of some sort. He navigates his 'Hood with his experiences engraved in his body. Those experiences shape his performance, as a man is supposed to accept the hand that he is dealt. His past troubles obviously alter Troy's life, but he chooses to continue to accept his fate. The childlike optimism Corey exhibits is a sign of weakness and triggers his father's performance of patriarchal masculinity. Once a dreamer, Troy learns the effects of optimism in the space and time in which lives. Black bodies who dared to dream were murdered-serving as deposits in the American Bank of white supremacy. To save his son from the same depressive experiences, he employs manliness. Instead of football, Troy articulates that a good work ethic is the route for success for a Black man. Reminiscent of his father, he argues that "the white man ain't gonna let you nowhere with that football no way. You go on and get your book learning so you can work yourself up that A&P or learn how to fix cars or build houses or something, get you a trade. That way you have something no one can take from you." (Wilson 1986, 35) The trauma experienced by his father coupled with the unrelenting heartache of his lack of career opportunities leave Troy emotionally unavailable. Similar to the effects of ingesting Gin, Troy must perform in these problematic tropes out of fear. He means well, but his projection of the "best" for his son aids in the manifestation and normalization of gender roles. Eliminating hopes and dreams is Troy's method of protecting his offspring from whiteness. Corey must make something out of himself by participating in physical labor. Alluding to Booker T. Washington's

Atlanta Compromise Speech of 1895, Wilson situates Troy in the belief that primary education and physical jobs guaranteed Black folks' safety in their unjust societies. The 1950's wasn't the greatest time to explore your dreams.

I empathize with Troy's having to navigate the rigid expectations of being both Black and male. The positionality of having an oppressed and privileged identity lends itself to the performativity of masculinity. Through Troy's problematic antics, he is an empty vessel. His projection of masculinity is a result of decades of degradation. The absence of love during his developmental years is a factor in his performance, but it isn't exclusively responsible. Love does not necessarily alter the performance of masculinity; our societies are significant components in our production of gendered expressions. I know many brothers who come from loving households with both parents and who still perform patriarchal masculinity. Everyday viewership of masculinity encodes itself into our bodies, and we then decode necessary information to survive in spaces. Black brothers, in particular, historically navigate areas unprotected. To render unprotectivess, a form of figurative nakedness, we protect our bodies with clothes.

Garments, a kind of gender expression, serve as protective shields from the external world, armoring our personhood – emotional, physical, and psychological. When free of our protective armor, we then become exposed to substantial damage. The unprotected nakedness, historical and contemporary, situates the feeling of unsafeness that Black men undergo. Black bodies navigate dangerous territories exposed- bearing the fate of unjustified institutional, state, mental, and corporal violence. Indoctrinating nakedness Black bodies "inherit" through birth, protectors of whiteness call upon terrorism to maintain oppressive racial hierarchies. Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015) posits unprotected nakedness as "the correct and intended result of policy, the predictable upshot of people forced for centuries to live in fear. The law did not protect us." (17) The state, the human

form of protection, systematically deprives folks of the color of well-being and affluence. The law is an apparatus of tyranny, extracting the haves from the have-nots, the protected from the unshielded. The unshielded body cohabitates in constant distress, not knowing its life's expiration date. Such fear deflates real humanity to preserve Black bodies and their experiences at second-class statuses. Performing masculinity, for Black boys and men, aids in the sense of protectiveness. If I can be a fully performing man, I can survive in this world- no! Black brothers ingested the Gin, not knowing it would aid in the continued deprivation of all Black bodies. A fully functioning Black male engaging in patriarchal masculinity limits the possibilities of Black men free of the toxins of the Gin. I speak freely on this topic as it pertains to me, but when examining Troy, Grandfather Maxson, and Corey, we cannot only explore the surface of their relationships. Systems of oppressions distribute long-term effects to their targets transgenerationally. Through each generation in the film, we see the lasting effect of the idea of responsibility as it emerges as a fundamental tenant in masculinity. Grandfather Maxson was a horrific individual, but he was responsible. Troy controlled his son's everyday experiences, but he kept a roof over his head, making him responsible. Responsibility is measured by the survival of your family as seen in *Fences* specifically and in diasporic spaces more generally. Investment in the material serves as a transgenerational supplement for love for men in this film. Fatherhood is an occupation for Troy. We work to survive; although some folks love their career paths, others do not. Troy conceiving his fatherhood as another job is alarming. In the pivotal scene in which Corey asks his father "how come you never liked me," Troy articulates just how he feel about fatherhood and masculinity:

> It's my job, it's my responsibility! You understand that? A man got to take care of his family. You live in my house, sleep on my bedclothes, and fill your belly up on my food… cause you my son. You my flesh and blood. Not cause I like you! Cause it's my duty to take care of you. I owe a responsibility to you! Let's get this straight here, before it go along any further… I ain't got to like you. Mr. Rand don't give me my money come payday 'cause he likes me. He gives me 'cause he owes me. I done given you everything

I had to give you. I gave you your life! Me and your mama worked that out between us. And liking your black ass wasn't part of the bargain. Don't you try and go through life worrying about if somebody like you or not. You best be making sure they doing right by you. You understand what I'm saying boy? (37)

Troy's ingestion of traditional patriarchal masculinity results in his son questioning if his father loves him. Although Troy loves his family, his trajectory of manhood has left him shattered. Working tirelessly into his 50's, the responsibility he holds near to his heart is now a burden too heavy to carry. In many diasporic spaces, responsibility is manliness. Such liability results in Troy's bitterness towards life and specifically toward his son. Troy's conversation of responsibility later reveals itself as a mask for his incapacity to emotionally care for his son. His inability to love is a product of traditional patriarchal masculinity. Ideologies surrounding hypermasculine patriarchal assertiveness have a tendency to focus heavily on physicality however emotional restraint also serve as an act of patriarchal performativity. Self-inflicted emotional policing lends itself to repressive behaviors to avoid gendered emotions such as compassion. (Ben-Zeev, Scharnetzki, Chan and Dennehy, 2012)Grandfather Maxson, Troy, and Corey are vessels to ignite conversations on how masculinity and its toxicity stifle healthy male relationships. *Fences* begins the conversation, as it deals with the historical roots of Black masculinity (*The Gin*), while *Moonlight* progresses the conversation into a new dimension to show the effects of the gendered construct in the 'Hood in a different space and time period.

Chapter 3

Don't Hurt Yourself: *Moonlight*, Lemonade, and Consuming Masculinity in the 'Hood

I am the dragon breathing fire
Beautiful mane I'm the lion
Beautiful man I know you're lying
I am not broken, I'm not crying, I'm not crying- Beyoncé

In the Grammy nominated track "Don't Hurt Yourself", Beyoncé furiously has to remind her lover, friends, and the rest of the world that she is not to be played with! Beyoncé declares "Who the f**k do you think I is? You ain't married to no average b****h, boy…bad mothaf****a, God complex, motivate yo A** call me Malcolm X." In the epigraph above, Beyoncé positions herself as some of the strongest creatures known to man. Similar to folks reclaiming her as the King (rather than a Queen), Beyoncé characterizes herself as the lion and dragon to situate power through masculinity in her personal love struggle. The personification of both powerful creatures is a performative action to repress emotions- the hurt and pain discovered in her partner's infidelity. She proclaims, she isn't broken nor is she crying- to shed a tear is to embody weakness and for a King (or Queen), that isn't an option. Unexpectedly, Beyoncé serves as a point of entry to discuss the performance of Black masculinity in the Hood, specifically the ways the confinements of the practice force men to follow certain etiquettes.

The confinements of masculinity, patriarchal masculinity to be exact, are examined in the Oscar-award-winning film *Moonlight*. Barry Jenkins' film tackles a Black coming-of-age narrative with the intersections of class, race, and gender. We follow the experiences of Chiron, the protagonist, as he perseveres in the streets of Miami. The film is divided into three segments and personas of the protagonist's life: First, as a child nicknamed Little who is subjected to forced observations of drug addiction and physical abuse, then as a teenage survivor of emasculating bullying, and lastly as a successful drug dealer by the name of Black. Through

Chiron's trajectory, audiences tap into the world of exploring one's sexuality and gender expression in unsafe environments.

Set in Miami, *Moonlight* depicts the effects of the national drug epidemic of the 1980s and the War on Drugs. Watching this movie for the first time, I had several questions. First, why has every coming-of-age story aimed at Black men I've seen involved brutality or drugs? Next, why is there so much silence? Coming-of-age narratives have the hard job of depicting reality, and for Black American spaces, brutality and drugs were a part of that reality. Now Blackness isn't a monolith- we all do not grow up in poverty-stricken environments scratchin' and survivin'. However, it is imperative to acknowledge the plight of Black folks in the 1970's and 1980's. In the South Bronx, the birthplace of Hip-Hop (Batey 2011), Black and Brown citizens experienced extreme poverty conditions in housing projects, unemployment, and arson. Such conditions were not individual; they were institutionally rendered policies, constructed to maintain social order and hierarchies within this country. In Jeff Chang's (2005) *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation,* he argues

> South Bronx had lost 600,000 manufacturing jobs; 40 percent of the sector disappeared. By the mid-seventies, average per capita income dropped to $2,430, just half of the New York City average and 40 percent of the nationwide average. The official youth unemployment rate hit 60 percent…if blues culture had developed under the conditions of oppressive, forced labor, hip-hop culture arose from the conditions of no work. (13)

White flight and benign neglect left Black and Brown folks fighting for survival. The trauma that exudes within the 'Hood is reactionary towards white supremacy. Whiteness operates as the Grim Reaper, seizing life and opportunities from people of color. With Chang's reporting of unemployment reaching 60 percent, we are left to make the connection as to why so many Black and Brown youth resorted to desperate measures. The suffocating effects of whiteness, more specifically white supremacy left folks of color without an income to support them. Young

children were handed a double-edged sword (i.e. poverty) then criticized for their utilization of that sword. Hunger, policy brutality, and miseducation all had an impact on young Black boys growing up in diasporic spaces. This is related to the emergence of gangs and drugs in the 70's and 80's.(Dunlap, Golub, & Johnson 2006) It is important to not separate *Moonlight* and Liberty City (Miami) as an isolated depiction of the Hood; they are expressions of collective memories that sit within the psyches of Black folks. The South Bronx, K-Town (Chicago), Compton, and Detroit all suffered similar fates in the period in which *Moonlight* is set. Comprehending the linked fate of Black folks is essential in understanding how Chiron ingested masculinity and how they are interconnected with other brothers across the Diaspora.

In contrast to *Fences*, beyond space and time, Chiron ingests masculinity inversely. While Troy and Corey acquire knowledge of masculinity from their biological fathers, Chiron is fatherless. His knowledge of manliness is developed through his journey through Liberty City and the character Juan. As the neighborhood drug dealer, Juan acts as a mentor and father for the young boy. At first glance, Juan is the traditional symbol of a drug dealer- du rag, gold fronts, and baggy clothing. Juan resembles many great rappers from the 90's and the 2000's, such as 50 Cent and Ja-Rule. Informed by the period, Hip-hop remains a great influence in the performance of heteronormativity in Black spaces. (Hopkins and Moore 2006) While Juan projects the imagery of a hardened criminal, he transcends the social construction of Black maleness through his subtle gentleness. Juan's interactions with his employees, customers, and young Chiron are relatively warm. He discovers the young child in an abandoned building where he seeks refuge from the terror of the other fatherless boys. Here we encounter Little performing masculinity as a young child through silence.

The young boy is mute throughout his first encounter with Juan and for much of the

movie. Silence operates as protection in this fictional narrative, but it is a reality for Black folks in American spaces. The fear of institutionalized sectors causing further harm to your brother, sister, and or cousin is why the "Code of Ethics" was established. Utilized heavily in the Hip-Hop world, rappers coined the term "Don't Snitch" in the 2000's to promote the hood politic of silence. Related to the Italian mob era and *Omertà,* "Don't Snitch" is a "code of honor that places importance on silence, non-cooperation with authorities, and non-interference in the illegal actions of others." (Mack 2009) Little's first encounter with Juan is spent in absolute silence. Little's entire world is chaotic- the violence that results in chaos through drugs and physical abuse enhances unwanted noise in his life and silence protects him from such chaos. While it serves as a form of protection, his silence is his performative notion of patriarchal masculinity. A man's ability to manipulate his surroundings in his favor is related to social privilege and patriarchy. It is entirely normal for Little to operate in silence since the Hood wants him to remain silent about his pain. Silence across diasporic spaces is a virtue. As children, we are reprimanded for talking extensively or telling our business to outsiders. Silence harms Black men and diasporic spaces more than we think. Communication is obsolete so young boys are left with toxic images of what they presume to be masculine. While it is unclear where Little learned the performative action of silence, I configure that Little acquired this knowledge from his figurative father, the 'Hood.

I argue that patriarchal masculinity is first learned through the familial relationships that must be performed. What happens when the child is fatherless, much like the character Little? I posit that the Hood is the father figure that constructs masculinity for young boys to internalize. Space and the people that exist within that space are how the Hood operates as a projection of masculinity and a father figure. My parents were never married, and I spent my developmental

years with my mother and step-father. While my dad was in my life, Raymond defiantly operated

as a father figure. Even though I had a father and a stepfather, the Hood served as a more

impactful mentor, as it pertains to performing masculinity, than both men could. I didn't spend

every waking moment with my father or step-father; I spent time outside with the other boys and

men on the block. This is where I first learned the notion of protection being essential to

manhood. My next-door neighbor, Larry, would always tell us young brothers about his

upbringing and his relationships with women. He had five children of his own, so many of us

always wondered why he was invested in our development. The investment fostered through us

learning how to ride bikes, learning how to play tackle football without any protection, and

learning how to fight. One particular summer, he told the boys on the block that we needed to

man up and to do so we were going to learn the art of boxing. Blood and tears were shed, but the

neighborhood rallied behind Larry attempting to nourish us into men. Larry was doing the best

he could, but his teachings were rooted in hypermasculine heteronormativity.

As noted earlier, protection is essential in the learning of traditional masculinity. If you

strengthen the exterior, our interior will be shielded from the outside world. For the construction

of a man to begin, young boys must enter spaces of vulnerability where performance is a

requirement. This is understood in the scene where Little and Kevin (childhood friend) converse

about toughness. Kevin proclaims "you gotta show them you not soft." Kevin eludes that

Chiron's outward expression of dancing and not wanting to engage in hypermasculine

physicality results in his torture by the other boys. In the same scene, Little then engages in a

wrestling match with Kevin to prove that he isn't soft. Liberty Hill and other diasporic spaces

continue to teach young boys that the performance of masculinity is crucial to our survival and

safety. The Hood offers an appendix, similar to a father, of the appropriate mannerisms, speech,

and attire for the perfect performance of masculinity. All function as aspects of gender

expression that Black boys cannot afford to alter. These strict guidelines are related to our fears

and the internalization of those fears through the creation of *Lemonade*. As noted in the

introduction, Lemonade is the process in which Black men ingest and digest patriarchy. Different

from *Gin*, Lemonade makes use of the bitterness of traditional patriarchal masculinity and the

sweetness of our imaginations to create this new beverage to consume. The lemonade creates

communal laws of Black masculinity that are rooted in white patriarchal norms. bell hooks

makes a compelling argument in her book in which she critiques the fragile state of Black

masculinity:

> Black males in the culture of imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy are
> feared but they are not loved. Of course part of the brainwashing that takes place in a
> culture of domination is the confusion of the two. Thriving on sadomasochist bonds,
> cultures of domination make desire   for that which is despised take on the appearance of
> care, of love. If black males were loved they could hope for more than a life locked
> down, caged, confined; they could imagine themselves beyond containment. (21)

Confinements of Black Masculinity illustrated through hook's writing are seen through

Moonlight and everyday lived experiences. Through the culture of domination, we take notice to

the ways in which the Black boys and men in the film yearned for acceptance and access to

gendered normativity. The brothers needed to not only to control other objects, but they furthered

their desire for domination through the physical deprivation of boys and men who did not

encompass heteronormativity.   Ingesting toxins (Gin and Lemonade) results in performativity

that resembles Euronomativity. This notion relates right back to hooks' argument of "plantation

patriarchy" and the ways in which Black men first learned masculinity, through whiteness. Little

is placed inside of a box because his weakness will not measure up to whiteness. Folks in

diasporic spaces are conditioned to believe homosexuality hinders a man's real purpose in life- to

serve, protect, and reproduce. These detrimental ideologies operate in Black spaces as law, and

little boys similar to Little must measure up or suffer secondary marginalization[9] by elders and peers. Audience members begin to track Little's ingestion of *Lemonade* as he transitions from Little to Chiron.

In this particular narrative, Chiron and his father figure (the 'Hood) embark on a violent trajectory until Little fully internalizes masculinity. Chiron works to reject maladaptive social norms, but his Hood' rejects his authentic self, forcing him to perform toughness. With every encounter in Liberty City, besides his encounters with Juan, teenage Chiron is subjected to mental and physical violence. He tries to hold on to the words of Juan when he tells him, "at some point you got to decide for yourself who you are going to be. Can't let no one decide that for you." With Juan's absence in chapter 2, Chiron is forced to internalize what other folks project onto his body as truth. At the moment when his body is fully violated by Kevin and other young men, we see Chiron's full internalization realized. His response to the violent attack first breeds silence, a nod to the Hip-Hop code of ethics "Don't Snitch", then retaliation through violence. The terror in this young man's eyes as he ices down his bloody wounds expounds upon the intrinsic value, or lack thereof, in American institutions for racialized others. The lack of protection provided by American institutions results in subjugated violence against Black bodies. His attack did not occur on a street corner, this act of terror occurred on school property. Educational institutions in diasporic spaces mean well, but through the gaze of Chiron, audiences take notice of just how vurnerable life can be for a Black boy who opts out of traditional masculine performance. In a rage, Chiron walks into his classroom and attacks the young man who initiated the violation of his body. He takes control and positions himself as no longer a boy, but as a man. In the scene in which Chiron takes back his body and fights back, he lays to rest his

---

[9] See Armstrong, "Today's Boundaries of Blackness: Is Secondary Marginalization Still Applicable to the AIDS Crisis in 2008?"

[37]

older personas. We then see a rebirth of the young man as the thuggish Black, the stereotypical hypermasculine male.

In the last chapter of *Moonlight*, the manifestation of Lemonade is seen through Black (Chiron) as a fully functioning performative male. Following in the footsteps of his mentor Juan, Black operates as a drug dealer in a new Hood' in Atlanta. His performance is strictly on the exterior- his clothes resemble the same clothes that Juan wore in chapter one, and now he is physically stronger than his old self. Black has studied men in his neighborhood to internalize the proper formality of masculinity- to be physically muscular to go to war in the jungle (the Hood). Black is indestructible like a 1966 automobile- all muscle, built to last, but is not human. Black's nonexistent interpersonal skills result in his inability to communicate due in part to his years spent in silence. Black/Chiron was conditioned to protect himself with either silence or violence. It is when Chiron "studies" the patriarchal masculine politics, how to be a real man, that he is safe from any physical damage while the emotional scars remain.

Societal norms aid in the double marginalization of young queer kids of color as seen with Chiron in *Moonlight*. Kim Surkon (2005) argues, "we live in a society in which men are male, women are female, and everyone is presumed to be heterosexual based on those definitions- yet none of these truths are self-evident, and they drastically limit the possibilities for conceptualizing and articulating desire. " (391) Pervasive conversations surrounding Black masculinity are steeped in binary philosophies of racial and gender expression. Chiron's sexual exploration is stifled due to the binary thinking of his nuclear and ethnic community. He, similar to other Black men, feels the constraints of the performance of identities. I am a survivor of the performance of masculinity in which I felt the need to play up my "manliness" to remain safe. The collective memory that Black men share in diasporic spaces such as the hood is reminiscent

of trophies in glass cases. Fully perfected Black bodies symbolize trophies, a commodification of white supremacy, indicating we do not own our bodies nor our experiences. In the glass case, we are ridiculed, fought over, and consumed for the world's viewing pleasure. Our bodies are placed on figurative auction blocks, and we are left to pick up the pieces. Chiron's first negation of performing traditional masculinity, patriarchal masculinity, left him unshielded in the unblemished trophy case. In the last chapter of the film, Black's hypermasculine exterior only protects him in the outside world. The projection of his body progresses him to Alpha male status in his drug career. What is special about Black, even though his hardened exterior, he is still the young Little at heart. Two different encounters with people from his past, his mother and childhood friend Kevin, Black's true self is revealed. When he visit his mother in rehab, both share points of vulnerability. Black cries with his mother through the hurt and pain experienced in his childhood. Jenkins' ability to showcase different forms manliness suggests new modes of masculinity and performance. Vulnerability is not a norm for men, Black men specifically. It is important to see the tough version of Chiron exhibit emotions as it shows audiences regardless of exterior, Black men are entitled to their feelings- negative or positive.

Moonlight is informed by the collective memories of Black boys growing up in the Hip-Hop era, and we visualize such impact through father and son relationships on the television show *Empire*.

Formation: Plantation Patriarchy and Respectability Politics on Empire

I might get your song played on the radio station, cause I slay
I might get your song played on the radio station, cause I slay
You just might be a black Bill Gates in the making, cause I slay
I just might be a black Bill Gates in the making- Beyoncé

The employment of *Empire* in this project progresses my research on the Hood',

masculinity, and father/son relationships into the new millennium. The Lee Daniels and Daniel

Strong created musical-drama entered homes in 2015, and for three seasons, it remains a staple

in homes across the country. Terrance Howard stars as Lucious Lyon; an extravagant rapper

turned music mogul and CEO of the fictitious Empire Entertainment. We enter the world of

Lyon at the peak of his professional career. He and his eldest son, Andre, construct a plan to

transform Empire Entertainment from the private sector into a publicly traded company. All

seems well until Lyon's ex-wife and the mother of his children emerges. Cookie Lyon, portrayed

by Golden Globe winner Taraji P. Henson, serves as the vessel of truth for the Lyon family

dispelling the myths surrounding the development of the company. Cookie appears in the

narrative right after her release from prison.[10] Serving 17 years for illegal drug distribution,

Cookie returns to Empire looking for the fruits of her labor. What is revealed throughout the first

season, Cookie interest in drug dealing developed as a survival techinique to finance Lucious'

career. Once imprisoned, Lucious left Cookie to rot in jail. The dynamics between Lucious and

Cookie is essential in contextualizing their relationships with their three sons Andre, Jamal, and

Hakeem.

Pertaining to father/son relationships on the show, prior criticism of *Empire* has focused

heavily on the relationship between Jamal (second born son) and Lucious. The conversation

---

[10] See Lowery, "Is Empire's IPO at All Realistic?"

surrounding their father/son relationship centers the effects of homophobia within Hip-Hop and the larger Black community. While Jamal Lyon, a closeted homosexual, works to release his first studio album, his father rejects his gender and sexuality expressions. Lucious usage of intimidation in the workplace forces his son to repress his identity to appease hyper-masculine ideologies situated in the Hip-Hop industry. However, Lee Daniels' assertion of homophobia through Lucious Lyon enhances existing certainty that Black folks are the utmost homophobic creatures of them all. Daniels, a gay man, speaks from his experiences and positionality to project a shared experience amongst gay Black males within the diaspora. While creditable, "It is critical to pay attention to positionality, reflexivity, the production of knowledge and the power relations that are inherent in research processes in order to undertake ethical research."(Sultana 2007, 380) Daniels' entitlement to Black narratives, as a Black male, lends itself to the problematic representation of Black folks on television. It's not enough for producers of content to share similar ethnic backgrounds of their characters and audiences; one must acknowledge their positionality within their own ethnic group to ensure negative representations will not sustain. Daniels and Strong interpretation of Lyon as a homophobic father further situate white supremacist ideologies onto Black lives and bodies. Through religious cultures, homophobia operates as an apparatus of anti-homosexual traditions amplifying impulsive points of inconsistency as it pertains to gender and sexuality. Homophobic ideologies do impact Black folks, the 'Hood, and other diasporic spaces but one must acknowledge its roots in Christianity and how such indoctrination impacts performativity of Black men such as Lucious. (Dyson 2011)

Church remains a pillar within diasporic spaces serving as centers of hope for Black folks generationally. During enslavement, stolen Africans congregated in their Sunday's best to listen

to the word of God. [11] There on the plantation, ideologies such as respectability politics began to operate as constitutions for Black people to navigate the white world. Furthermore, the politics of Black respectability discusses to efforts by marginalized groups to police their group affiliates through proving their social morals are compatible with those of white mainstream. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham (1993) and her work *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* posits respectability politics as a body of politic that smother Black cultural articulation. Respectability politics articulate to young Black Americans to pull up their pants, straighten your hair, remain in school, go to church, pay your taxes, etc., and we will be safe from the terror of whiteness. Within the church, homophobia grew out of desperation of perfection. The desire to be equal, in the eyes of whiteness, situated anti-other rhetoric in our spaces to mirror our personhood to whiteness. Respectability politics does not disassemble whiteness or white supremacy; it functions as a placeholder that appeases white America. Respectability politics supports heteronormativity regarding sexual and gender identification through a close reading of media texts such as *Empire*.

Homophobic Black familial members in *Empire* suggest to lager consumers that all Black families are unaccepting of their LGBTQ children. Commentary around the show suggests that Daniels pathologizes Black pain, similar to the likings of white creators. Curtis Bunn from the Atlanta Black Star further argues that *Empire* and its creators limit progressive imagery of Black folks:

> "The show does nothing to advance the perception of Blacks or alter how Blacks are viewed by non-Blacks across the world. Every show does not and cannot project the true image of working-class Blacks who are law-abiding, hard-working, and committed to family. That's a more accurate reality of Black life." (2015)

Noticeably, animosity concerning LGBTQ folks of color isn't limited to a particular ethic group

---

[11] Sunday's best is a colloquial term pertaining to formal attire suitable for church service.

or culture. While I understand Bunn's critique on Daniels' intent on Black representation, both men posit Black folks as monolithic. Bunn calls for respectable symbols of Blackness, which is also is problematic. As seen with the elevation of the Cosby Show in the 1980's and 1990's, acceptable "safe" representations of Black folks in film and television create similar dichotomies as seen on the slave plantation.[12] It's not enough to build safe representations to vilify representations similar to *Empire*. I argue that Daniels' reliance on the homophobic troupe is problematic and castrates opprotunities questioning of the performance of masculinity through all father/ relationships.

Daniels and Strong apply flashbacks to their production of *Empire* to contextualize how the past always impact the present and future. In the current season (2016-2017), audiences are acquiring more information surrounding Lucious' upbringing and traumas that remain in his psyche and body. Lucious advanced in a community in which his mother suffered from mental illnesses which affected her emotional availability to her young son Dwight (Lucious). His introduction into manhood was actualized through his experiences on the streets of Philadelphia. Young Lucious encounters his first love of music on the streets as a drug dealer. Chapter 3 acknowledges the formation of Hip-Hop derives from the struggle of combating white supremacy but theorists and Black feminist bell hooks see's the culture and art form differently. She argues that:

> "Misogynist rap music and the white dominated patriarchal infrastructure that produces it encourage male contempt and disregard for females. It is the plantation economy, where Black makes labor in the field of gender and come out ready to defend their patriarchal manhood by all manner of violence against women and men whom they perceive to be weak and like women." (62)

Connecting performativity and its effects to the plantation, comprehension emerges on how

---

[12] See Gray, *Watching Race*

traditional patriarchy is detrimental to all involved- the willing participants, the forced participants, and the people they engage with. Lucious, similar to Troy in *Fences*, learns masculinity through his experiences away from their father. Here, the interconnections between Black men, in two different diasporic spaces and time periods, highlight specifically how men learn to cope with neglect from the parents who are supposed to show them love. The absence of love lends itself to the vivid projection of toxic masculine behavior in throughout the show. To sustain dominance in the music industry ran and controlled by white conglomerates,   Lucious performs supreme patriarchal masculinity. Through his everyday speech or how he dresses, Lucious wants the world to know that he is a man with power.

His performance is so impactful due in part to his ability to master both worlds, the Hood' and Corporate America. The hood smarts he acquired years ago benefits him through his navigation of different spaces. Such power contributes to his Alpha male persona. In one scene he is meeting in an alley to handle business and the next he is a private jet. His accessibility between both worlds is associated with life on the plantation. Brother Malcolm X (1963) argued "The house Negro usually lived close to his master. He dressed like his master. He wore his master's second-hand clothes. He ate food that his master left on the table. And he lived in his master's house--probably in the basement or the attic--but he still lived in the master's house." While Lucious holds on to his rough rap persona, one would be remised if we didn't acknowledge Lucious' conformation to corporate America. From his tamed hair to his well-tailored suits, Lucious comprehends that his survival as a musical company owner depends on his performance through the gaze of whiteness. Research on gender expressions, specifically tailored suits, argue that clothing is an essential aspect of gender performativity. In "Making the Man: 'Suiting' Masculinity in Performance Art" by Alicia Cornwell, the author posits:

[44]

"We can perceive fashion as contributing to the ways we perform our gender identities. Interestingly, fashion is a viable tool for contemporary performance artists, many of whom tend to treat the body as an object and so regard the body as the primary material of their work…The suit communicates very particular messages about masculine gender identity and its relationship to the male body. For example, the boxy shape regularizes the natural curves and contours of the male body, disguising its explicit form and the individuality of its wearer. In addition, Hollander argues that the suit functions to unify the male body's "visibly separate parts", serving to communicate masculinity as a visually singular, cohesive entity. Therefore, in its regularized form, the suit unifies the body as masculine authority and power while suppressing individuality.'" (Cornwell 2004, 8)

Pants are socially accepted as male attire. Philosophies on pants operating as men's clothing suggest superiority complexes through maleness. The mantra of "wearing the pants" situate men as dominant figures in patriarchal societies. Rooted in Western cultures, pants, and suits articulate formality. They signal the correct performance of boy and manhood. When boys opt out of traditional male clothing, their identity is questioned. Currently, pants and suits signal professionalism. In the workplace, men are restricted to shirts, ties, and pants to adhere to many HR professional attire codes. In office environments, criteria of professionalism are the upheld similar to the Ten Commandments while further reinforcing cis-heteronormative hierarchies that posit white able-bodied, cisgender maleness above all. The surrounding symbology on suits and other professional attire calls into question access. If you are not afforded the capital to obtain professional attire, you remain in lower social classes. Clothing, as mention prior as a form of gender expression, assists in the accumulation of power. We are told that we must dress for success and in the eyes of whiteness that attire aids in our performativity of maleness. Lucious understands the politics of corporate America, and he performs traditional patriarchal masculinity with an iron fist, similar to suit wearing slave masters in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Indicative of plantation order, Lucious performance of masculinity is largely based on control of everyone under the Empire umbrella. Through emotional abuse, Lucious manages his employees and artists with fear. Lyon runs a strong institution, similar to his days as a drug

dealer. Any weaknesses in the 'Hood, specifically in the drug business, costs participants money and sometimes their livelihood. Lucious does not stand for any deficiencies in Empire especially from his sons. The CEO believes that manhood and fatherhood are natually associated with respect, not emotion. His articulation of love for his family is publicized through his "by any means" protection- even though he is the source of most pain for his family. His emotional detachment is directly related to witnessing his father's death when he was a young boy. The assassination of his father is the date in which Lucious marks his entrance into manhood. Even as the parental roles are set, where the parent protects the child, Lucious believes that he failed to protect his father. His guilt guided his internalization of masculinity through the Hood via violence. In a recent episode, Lucious mother proclaims "if he didn't die, things would have been different for you. Violence made you who you are!" (Empire 2017, Ep. 16) Similar in his adult life, Lucious cope with guilt by performing masculinity. The effects of witnessing his father's death remain in his body. To protect his family, he must never exhibit the weak tendencies shown in the presence of the death of his father. During the intense conversation with his mother, he proclaims "I should've done something to save him that day…it's like Jamal when he was in the same situation, he didn't hesitate to jump in front of the bullet." (Empire 2017, Ep. 16) Lucious contextualizes his failures to protect his father from an inability to be a true man. To be male is to be a protector regardless of age. You protect the people that you love! Lucious works tremendously to protect everyone he loves- his ex-wife, his career, and his children. That fear in which he first internalized masculinity still exists within him. Repetitive cycles of fear and learning how to perform masculinity has found its way into the psyche of his children, specifically his older son Andre.

Traditional patriarchal masculinity is personified through the projection of Lucious and

Andre Lyon. Both men emanate power and control as the CEO and CFO of the fictional record company. Their "by any means necessary' mentality fixates domination in every space they encounter. Andre utilizes his hypermasculine physique to maintain power as he will kill, fight, and proposition sexual favors to position him in the capsules of heteronormative power. Andre projects himself as a carbon copy of his father even though his complexities cause great turmoil them both.

The father and son relationship between Andre and Lucious is extremely toxic. Rooted in social mobility, toxicity shows substantially whenever their positionality of power is in question. Lucious embarrasses his son when he can not close a deal with his stakeholders or when he makes a simple mistake. On the surface, we can assume that Lucious mistreatment of his son is related to his job performance, but I argue that Lucious' abuse toward Andre is deeper. Andre masters the script of traditional patriarchal masculinity on a different level than his father. Though envious of his son performance, he maintains power by reminding his family that Empire is his baby that he birth, developed, and nurtured. Lucious argues that manliness is connected to your ability to survive in this world constructed for Black male deprivation. His sentiments are shared with theorist Herbert Sussman (2012) when he argues "the ability of a man [being] self-made…he fashion himself, he makes himself. The self-made man became for industrial society an epitome of manliness." (91) The embodiment self-madness, Lucious Lyon was born out of fear. Similar to Black in *Moonlight*, the rebranding Dwight Walker as Lucious Lyon was an act of power. There is a sense of privilege that arises from naming and renaming subjects. Associated with European colonialism, "it was the privileged and powerful that controlled the labels." (Gooda 2011) Lucious maintains his constructed image of masculinity by maintaining power his life. The conflict that arises between Andre and Lucious is related to

Lucious fixed mindset of how a man performs.

Lucious, like many older Black folks, view millennials as selfish and entitled. Andre status as an Ivy League graduate coupled with his hypermasculine physique positions him further in the white-controlled music industry than his father. Lucious isn't ready to give up Empire power for the relinquishing Empire would be relinquishing a portion of his manhood. To prevent Andre reaching his full potential and taking over the company, he consistently puts him in his "place." This is achieved through public humiliation and exile from the family business. Again, exhibiting slave master mechanics, Lucious employ mental control over his son for personal gain. What is at the center of their toxicity is how they learned their masculinity. Andre acquired his knowledge on the gender construct through his father, but as I noted earlier, Lucious is a construction of false masculine imaginations. Andre and Lucious will always be at odds because Lucious' hasn't come to terms with his masculinity. He projects his insecurities on to his son and the effects of that projection are harmful, at times suicidal.

Andre's conflict in negotiating his masculinity, well his father's idea of masculinity, results in his inability to live a healthy lifestyle. The character diagnoses of bipolar disorder in college and struggles to perform from the manliness scripts passed down from his father. The insertion of Andre in this section is essential to the conversation of destructing Black masculinity. Mental health issues associated with weakness and the fictional character is bombarded with a false consciousness that conveys to him that he isn't man due to his disorder. bell hooks (2004) talks about boys dealing with mental health issues when she writes:

> "Frustrated in their quest for father bonding, boys often feel tremendous sorrow and depression. They can mask these feelings because they are allowed to isolate themselves, to turn away from the world and escape into music, television, video games, etc. There is no emotional outlet for the grief of the disappointment teenage boy" (49)

In adulthood, both father and son have not found their emotional outlet that allows them to live

freely without patriarchal masculinity. Andre does seek out the church, but the patriarchy that exists in religious institutions does nothing for the healing that is needed for Lucious and Andre. It is imperative to talk about this particular father and son relationship because it highlights the severities of the effect of performing masculinity. Andre's desire to control Empire and be just like his father alters his perception of himself. Such altered perception of self-lends itself to a feeling of captivity. Andre's life inside of the perfectly constructed masculinity box doesn't allow him to explore his maleness outside the shadow of his father. Such detention triggers his disorder, and we take a front seat to his breakdowns on national television. The power of masculinity almost claimed Andre's life when he realized that he would never be great in his father's eyes. Andre took to Lucious' place of joy, the music studio, and put a gun to his head. Andre desire to make his father proud nearly killed him in this fictitious portrayal, but what boy is feeling the same pressures of Corey, Chiron, and Andre? Masculinity and its performance are hindering kids from growing into full functioning humans. Regardless of depiction, Black men need to begin to deconstruct masculinity for ourselves and our future sons, cousins, and nephews.

Chapter 5

Freedom: The Juice and Reimagining of Black Masculinity

Lord forgive me, I've been running
Running blind in truth
I'ma rain, I'ma rain on this bitter love
Tell the sweet I'm new

I'm telling these tears, "Go and fall away, fall away"
May the last one burn into flames

Freedom! Freedom! I can't move
Freedom cut me loose!
Freedom! Freedom! Where are you?-Beyoncé

"The fight from closeness is most intense in the lives of adolescent boys because in that liminal zone between childhood and young adulthood they are experiencing a range of emotions that leave them feeling out of control, fearful that they will not measure up to the standards of patriarchal masculinity. Suppressed rage is the perfect hiding place for all these fears" – bell hooks

Robert Gosbey is a man that I consider to be the greatest leader in Chicago. Mr. Gosbey exudes excellence from the echoes of his voice to power in his actions. Mr. Gosbey is an ordinary man with an extraordinary legacy, paving the way for young men like me. Putting pen to paper, I was once asked: "Who is your role model?" The imagery that sits in my psyche as a "great man" and an astounding role model is my grandfather Robert Gosbey. The embodiment of fortitude, my grandfather escaped Jim Crow Mississippi to restart his life here in Chicago. As he continues to grow older in age and combat illnesses, he remains a pillar in our family, offering sound counsel per life choices and his expertise in taxes. To be a man of substance, humility, and affection is the kind of man I aspire to be, and my grandfather's will to nurture his family has inspired me throughout this project.

Through adolescence, I treasured the holy union amongst him and my step-grandmother and the positive relationship he shares with my dad (Robert Sr.) and my uncles Kevin, Reggie,

and Brian. A husband, father, and a grandfather, Mr. Gosbey is an old-fashioned working man who purchased his Chicago South-Side home in the 1960's when heinous racist housing policies introduced by the Federal Housing Administration placed limitations on Black home buyers. Through diligence and grit, he occupied a system sensationalized for making homeownership inaccessible to Black folks though loan blockings and restrictive housing covenants. (Madrigal 2014) The inclusion of my grandfather in the conclusion of this project serves as an imperative retelling of how I learned masculinity. Realizing the power of counter- storytelling understands your truth! My truth is that I, at 26 years of age, battle every day with performance and upholding Black masculinity. My masculinity, rooted in gendered misperceptions, is shattered and I cautiously write to pick up the pieces of my gendered identity.

Masculinities, manliness, and other false consciousness[13] that Black men struggle to maintain prevent a fully realized deconstruction of Black Masculinity. Immortalizing the plight of my grandfather aids in the projection of the traditional Black male through a patriarchal gaze. Through my research, I discovered that the admiration I have for my grandfather was rooted in his ability to perform heteronormativity. I studied my Papa (grandfather) - to be Mr. Gosbey you must be resilient, distinguished, and relinquish physical intimacy amongst men! In my 26 years of living, I have no recollection of embracing my grandfather with a hug, in the traditional sense- full arms, two bodies joining often followed with a trap on the back. There is never any doubt that crosses my mind about the love that my grandfather has for his family, but I would be remiss if I didn't investigate the lack of platonic intimacy between Black men.

Survival sits at the core of melaninated folks and diasporic spaces- the ability to withstand 398 years of mental, physical, and emotional trauma comes with the employment of

---

[13] See Eyerman, *False Consciousness and Ideology in Marxist Theory*

survival techniques. Folks of African descent continue to survive, but it is now time to heal.

Healing involves naming the source of pain and ridding yourself of any adaptations of said pain.

This requires Black men soul searching, collectively, how we've learned toxic patriarchy.

Throughout this paper, I link the traumas Black men experience performing masculinity to the

enslavement of our ancestors. Scholars interested in collective healing within diasporic spaces

are beginning to relate the injuries Black people endure to PTSD.[14] Traumatic experiences of

abduction, family destruction, body dismemberment, rape, lynching, Jim Crow, War on Poverty,

War on Drugs, and police brutality situate fear and anxiety within survivors as well their

descendants. Such fear drives the creation of anti-Black methodologies of survival- colorism,

respectability politics, toxic patriarchy, homophobia, transphobia, and classism. Internalizing the

creations of whiteness, as a formula for survival, continues the cycle of miseducation of Black

folks. My grandfather, Troy Maxson, and many other elders of their generation did not move

north to experience all the glories of this racially enchanted place; a forced migration via

government rendered poverty and racial terrorism prompted the mass movement from the South.

In examining the role of racial terrorism on the Great Migration, I previously wrote:

> During the years of the Great Migration, the possibility of your body becoming "Strange
> Fruit," intensified white supremacy's choke hold on Black life in the South. Historians
> write about the Great Migration, but the severity in which Black Americans escaped the
> Deep South is not examined with a critical eye. Yes, Black men and women left the
> South for better economic advantages- for the South did not afford darker bodies' access
> to the American Dream. My paternal grandparents migrated North in the 1940's from
> Mississippi because their livelihood depended on their removal from the space of
> constant fear. (Barry 2017, 7)

Fear manifested following emancipation due in part to white supremacist stakeholders

repackaging philosophies of their colonial lineages. To maintain full gender, capital, and social

---

[14] See Love, *Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome and Intergenerational Trauma: Slavery is Like a Curse Passing Through the DNA of Black People*

order, executioners conducted mass murders of Black folks who did not know their place as second class citizens. Through social intimidation and legalities, civil liberties promised to my ancestors in the Reconstruction Amendments severed hope and full healing from the institution of slavery. Comprehending the downtrodden historical positioning of Black men and women in this country is essential in reckoning the effects of white supremacy on the Black psyche. In the Pan-African tradition, you must first go back before you can move.[15] Examining histories of darker bodies, we begin to realize that the repeated cycles of oppression exist in part due to fear instilled by white supremacy. I argue that transgenerationally, Black men, in particular, continue to perform traditional masculinity for we dread the conditions of the plantation. Generations removed from chattel slavery, bodies are also impacted whom did not experience the horrors. Performativity allows for Black men to protect their body, but who has access to such performativity? I contend that performing traditional patriarchal masculinity does nothing but repackage similar social hierarchies established on the plantation.[16]

The concern in deconstructing Black masculinity, similar to racism, results in part due to Black male consumers investing in the patriarchal bank. Dr. Andrae L. Brown considers us "as Black men, and Black Boys must engage in intense dialogues about how we use unearned privileges to oppress others. Like it or not, we enjoy certain underserved benefits from being male." (2008, 142) Capitalizing on our male prerogatives, we as Black men produce social hierarchies that minimize diverse expressions of maleness and Blackness. Our continuous participation in toxic gendered performances serves as a divisive tool within diasporic spaces as

---

[15] This is in reference of the Ghanaian word Sankofa, which means to "go back and get." The ideology is used throughout Pan-African spaces as a configuration of spiritual and educational awakening. See Abegunde, *Sankofa in Action: Creating a Plan That Works: Healing the Causes of Violence to Stop the Violence*

[16] See Durant, *Plantation Society and Race Relations: The Origins of Inequality*

seen in the new age of "wokeness" and Hoteps'.[17] The "woke" community alienates individuals who aren't aware of the world around them. Performing masculinity has evolved from the physical to intellectual. "Woke" leaders such as Dr. Umar Johnson and Tariq Nasheed publically name white supremacy for the detriments of the community, but turn around and fault Black women and LGBTQ folks of color for the current issues in our diasporic spaces. Men who align with these one-tier intellectual philosophies perform traditional patriarchal masculinity because their teachings contribute to sustaining male dominance. The intellectual war is not new, intellectual leaders of the 19th and 20th century set the stage for the continued "woke" version of Black patriarchy.

Relaying the conversation back to enslavement, David Walker's *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* is a quintessential piece that names whiteness and white supremacy as the source of pain and trauma for Black inhabitants globally. David Walker supplied his country with a warrant pronouncing that freedom will ring for Black folks or the blood of our oppressors will be shed. Employing self-help ideologies, Walker appeals to Black folks in the South to assist in their freedom rather than waiting for white abolitionists. He argues, "we can help ourselves; for if we lay aside abject servility, and be determined to act like men, and not like brutes-the murderers among the whites would be afraid to show their cruel heads." (Walker 1829, 81) Walker's interpretation of self-help is couched in Black respectability politics. He has drafted intraracial dichotomy- men vs. brutes, which reads as free vs. enslaved. His elitist perspective is rooted in patriarchy. For Blacks to fully be elevated to male status, our ancestors employed operational power. Utilizing executive power painted the image to the world that we, Black men, are fully capable of holding and maintaining power. Black male devotion to patriarchy is steeped

---

[17] See Jouelzy, *Are We Misappropriating the Term 'Hotep'?*

in Black respectability politics. Walker's articulation of self-help constructed an ideal revolution that accompanied God, manhood, and violence. Walker is critical of the racial hierarchies that exist but doesn't offer an analysis of gender, similar to woke communities of today. As mentioned formerly, if Black men do not heal the wounds of our past we will make the deadly mistakes of our ancestors and remain under the gaze and subjectivity of whiteness. Public victimization lends itself to the suppressing of full healing. Trauma is immediately politicized, not giving space to the survivor to entirely process their agony and suffering. Black men suffer from this form of victimization through our internalization and performance of masculinity. Our body, through public and private forms of captivity, continues to mark the global investment in patriarchal masculinity. Black women, boys, and girls suffer at the hands of toxic masculinity through Black male subjectivity. Since the emancipation of our ancestors, Black men have worked profusely to erase the memories of slavery from our psyche. In the process, we have constructed a form of oppression upon ourselves and the people we love. Current masculinity is claiming the lives of Black sisters and brothers because we haven't found ways to deal with the horrors of our past. For Black folks to achieve liberation, we must be free of patriarchal masculinity.

To be free of patriarchal masculinity Black men must consume the *Juice* and detox from *Gin* and *Lemonade.* There are a variety of Juices in the world, and I argue that we as Black men should examine our masculinity in the same light. We are not monolithic, so our masculinity shouldn't have to be. Throughout my thesis, I maintain that the learning of masculinity occurs in diasporic spaces through familial interactions. Through the work of *Fences*, *Moonlight*, and *Empire*, we see the dual effects of masculinity on Black male bodies and interactions with one another. Father/son relationships operated as examples that highlight the toxicity that occurs in

[55]

male-to-male relationships. Judith Butler argues that gender is produced and reproduced transgenerationally. (2011) The reproduction of gender constructs dictate how boys should behave, and girls should act. Learning appropriate behavior establishes normative ideologies within diasporic spaces. For Black men, our indoctrination into masculinity occurs right when we are assigned male. Once gender is designated, the community works together to build the infant into a fully performing male. From little league to boy scouts, young boys are learning traditional attributes of manhood- physically dominance, athleticism, and use of one's hands.

Performance is different across ethnic and class backgrounds. As highlighted in Chapter 4, access to various resources such as education gives way to a different performance of patriarchal masculinity. Andre's ability to navigate white spaces was due in part to his ability to code-switch. Using proper tone, voice, and English, "respectable" Black men become safer in white areas. While the performance differs, the objective remains where power and privilege go to the strongest male. I argue that this notion of authority and privilege needs to end in diasporic spaces! The fight for power and privilege is rooted in European colonialism. Male-to-male relationships suffer because the competition is always at the root. Who can"bag" the most girls? Who can win the most pick-up games? Who can earn the promotion? The constant battle for power situates toxicity in male spaces that later hurts the people we love. Men need to learn to accept that life isn't always a competition. Furthermore, men need to learn how to love each other and love ourselves. I was 23 when I first said I love myself. How long do men exist in this world without loving ourselves? Love is a virtue that can cause the severe toxicity that exists through performing masculinity.

Pulling on the traditions of our ancestors, children have the greatest capacity to develop into healthy adults when the whole community takes an active role in their development. From

my experience, in the absence of role models, young children resort to media models for methodologies of manhood or womanhood. Several young male celebrities are breaking the cannon of gendered performativity- From the #BlackBoyJoy of Chance the Rapper to Young Thug's androgynous everyday attire, Black men are taking cues on how to perform manliness. While turning to rappers may be a start, we need more intervention in constructing a new non-"one size fits all" masculinity. As an educator, I work endless hours teaching my students about constructs I learned as an adult. The Education curriculum, created by white males, continues to perpetuate western dogma and male dominance. Educational practices within 'Hood spaces are essential in unlearning patriarchal masculinity. For example, in educating my students on Ancient Egypt, I correspondingly created a unit on gender and gender expression. Observing my students, I witnessed the exact behavior that my friends and I exhibited when we were 12. The labeling of other students as "gay" still operates as a form of disrespect in Hoods'. I correct their behavior for educational purposes, but who is altering behavior when students leave the perimeters of my classroom? Parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins can all serve in educator capacities. When we collectively work in dismantling systems of oppression, meaningful change will occur.

While I'm actively deconstructing my masculinity, I am hopeful. The *Juice* is a lifelong venture, and Black men will be able to define the juice for themselves. The Juice will smooth out the bitterness of the lemon residue and the harsh aftertaste of the Gin. The work of deconstructing masculinity is never complete for we will always have men who are invested in their power. Understanding such investment, I am hopeful!. I am hopeful that Black men and boys will begin to learn from one another and understand that our shared experiences connect rather than divide. Through collective work of educating in workshops and the home, boys and

[57]

men will work together to reach freedom! I am hopeful that my nephew will not have to wait until he is 23 to love himself. If we, protectors of the Hood', cannot offer multi-dimensional aspects of masculinity the oppressive cycle of patriarchal masculinity persists. The Hood' will teach boys that it is okay to cry, boys can wear pink, boys can sing along to Beyonce, boys can dance, boys can sing, boys can learn! I look forward to the collective healing that Black boys and men will engage in to break the cycle of performing and start living.

References

Alexander, L. Malik. 2017. "On Black Masculinity, the Mental Well-Being of Black Men and 'Fences.'"
https://blavity.com/black-masculinity-depression-and-fences

Barczewski, Stephanie .2006. *Titanic: A Night Remembered*. London: Hambledon Continuum.

Batey, Angus. 2011. "Hip-Hop stars owe DJ Kool Herc. *The Gurardian*.

Barry, Robert. 2016. "I'm Building me a Home: Racial terrorism, the formation of Black Greek-lettered
Organizations, and its effect on Racial Uplift during the Great Migration. DePaul University.

Bunn, Curtis. "5 Reasons Why 'Empire' Is Winning TV Ratings But Failing Black People." Atlanta Black
Star. January 28, 2015. http://atlantablackstar.com/2015/01/28/5-reasons-why-empire-is-winning-
tv-ratings-but-failing-black-people/ (accessed May 20, 2017).

Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.

Beyoncé. 2016. *Lemonade*.

Bogle, Donald. 1994. Toms, coons, mulattoes, mammies, and bucks: an interpretive history of Blacks in
American films. New York: Continuum.

Chang, Jeff. 2005. *Can't stop, won't stop: a history of the hip-hop generation*. New York: St. Martin's
Press.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2015. *Between the world and me*. New York : Spiegel & Grau.

Cooper, Iman. 2008. "Commodification of the Black Body, Sexual Objectification and Social Hierarchies
during Slavery." The Earlham Historical Journal: 21-44.

Dam, Freja. 2016. "Beyoncé's 'Lemonade': A Visual Tale of Grief, Resurrection, and Black Female
Empowerment." Spin. http://www.spin.com/2016/04/beyonce-lemonade-hbo-album-film-
analysis/

Daniels, Lee, Danny Strong, Timbaland, Terrence Howard, Taraji P. Henson, Jussie Smollett, Yazz, et al.
2015. *Empire: The complete first season the complete first season*.

Dunlap, Eloise. Golub, A., & Johnson, B. D. 2006. The Severely-Distressed African American Family in
the Crack Era: Empowerment is not enough. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, *33*(1),
115–139.

Dyson, Michael Eric. 2004. "The Culture of Hip-Hip" in *That's My Joint: the hip-hop studies reader,*
edited by Marc Anthony Neal and Murray Forman, 61-68. New York: Routledge.

Eyerman, Ron. 1981. "False Consciousness and Ideology in Marxist Theory." Acta Sociologica 24, no.
1/2 : 43-56. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4194332.

Gray, Herman. 2004. *Watching race: television and the struggle for blackness*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Gregory, Ted. 2016. *African-American fathers, sons to strengthen bonds in Washington Park project*. February 15. Accessed June 25, 2017. http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/.

Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. 1994. *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hill Collins, Patricia. 1990. *Black feminist thought: knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

hooks, bell. 2004. *The will to change: men, masculinity, and love*. New York: Atria Books.

hooks, bell. 2004. *We real cool: black men and masculinity*. New York : Routledge.

Iversen, Kristen. 1999. *Molly Brown: unraveling the myth*. Boulder, Colo: Johnson Books. http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=951 5.

Jackson, Ronald L., & Dangerfield, Celnisha. 2002. Defining Black masculinity as cultural property: An identity negotiation paradigm. In L. Samovar & R. Porter (Eds.), Intercultural communication: r (pp.120-130). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Jackson, Ronald L. 2006. *Scripting the Black masculine body: identity, discourse, and racial politics in popular media*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Jones, Matthew. 2016. "Defining Black Masculinity: Defining Ourselves by Ourselves." Black Masculinity, What does it mean: The Odyssey Online. https://www.theodysseyonline.com/defining-black-masculinity

Jenkins, Barry, Adele Romanski, Dede Gardner, Jeremy Kleiner, Trevante Rhodes, André Holland, Janelle Monáe, et al. 2016. *Moonlight*.

McKittrick, Katherine. 2006. *Demonic grounds: Black women and the cartographies of struggle*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Mack, Kristen.2009. "Stigma of 'snitching creates a street code of silence that hampers Chicago cops." Chicago Tribune. December 15, 2009.

Love, David. "Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome and Intergenerational Trauma: Slavery is Like a Curse Passing Through the DNA of Black People." Atlanta Black Star. 5 2016, June. http://atlantablackstar.com/2016/06/05/post-traumatic-slave-syndrome-and-intergenerational-trauma-slavery-is-like-a-curse-passing-through-the-dna-of-black-people/ (accessed May 19, 2017).

Lowery, Annie. 2015. "Is Empire's IPO at All Realistic." *Vulture*. February 19. Accessed May 19, 2017. http://www.vulture.com/2015/02/empire-ipo.html.

Mallozi, Julie. 2010. "The Body as an Archive of Experience" http://valleyadvocate.com/2010/03/19/the-body-as-an-archive-of-experience/

Meltzoff, Andrew N. 1999. "Born to Learn: What Infants Learn from Watching Us." Department of Psychology, University of Washington.

Gooda, Mick. "The Power of Identity: Naming Oneself, Reclaiming Community ." Australian Humans Rights Commission . November 2, 2011. https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/speeches/power-identity-naming-oneself-reclaiming-community-2011 (accessed April 16, 2017).

Mire, Muna. 2016. *Korryn Gaines and the Erasure of Violence against Black Women*. www.GQ.com

Mumby, Dennis K. 1998. "Organizing Men: Power, Discourse, and the Social Construction of Masculinity(s) in the Workplace". Communication Theory. 8 (2): 164-183

Negro League History. n.d. https://www.nlbm.com/s/history.htm (accessed May 28, 2017).

Patton, Stacy. 2017. "Stop Beating Black Children." New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/10/opinion/sunday/stop-beating-black-children.html?mcubz=1&_r=0

Porter, Tony. "A Call to Men: Ted Talk." December 2010. https://www.ted.com/talks/tony_porter_a_call_to_men

Powell, Kevin. 2008. *The Black male handbook: a blueprint for life*. New York: Atria Books.

Surkan, Kim. 2005. "More Gender, Less presumption: Cybersex as an Alternative to a Culture of violent sexuality." *In Transforming Rape Culture*. Edited by Emilie Buchwald

Sussman, Herbert L. 2012. *Masculine identities: the history and meanings of manliness*. Santa Barbara, Calif: Praeger.

Sultana, F. 2007."Reflexivity, Positionality and Participatory Ethics; Negotiating Fieldwork Dilemmas in International Research."ACME: An International ERJournal for Critical Geographies 6(3): 374R385.

Wilson, August, and Lloyd Richards. 1986. *Fences: a play*. New York: Plume/Penguin.

X, Malcom (1990) [1963]. George Breitman, ed. Malcolm X Speaks. New York: Grove Weidenfeld. pp. 10–12.