

Faith and Masculinity in the Black community

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Abstract

Christianity, one of three monotheistic traditions that constitute the Abrahamic Religions continues to have a major impact on the lives of African Americans. However, a major critique against these religions is its sustaining masculinity that invites sexism, misogyny and homophobia (Neal, 2011).

A dilemma of the black male is his desire to exhibit masculinity; he is too often grounded in masking strategies that require him to deny and suppress his feelings (Gause, 2008). Employing Bourdieu's theory of Habitus and a transcendental phenomenology approach, this study looks to elucidate the life experiences of three African-American Christian men in the their native black communities.

Purpose

Begin to explore African American men's perceptions of their masculinity as a function of their professed faith.

Research Question

How do African American men's faith impact their masculinity in the black community?

Sub 1: What impact does role model or mentors have on faith?

Sub 2: What role does church fellowship have in faith?

Literature Review

Over the years, a considerable amount of research has been devoted to conceptualizing masculinity. Generally accepted, there are three streams of research framing masculinity: (1) hegemonic masculinity is the most socially endorsed and represents an ideal set of prescriptive norms, (2) inclusive masculinity is characterized by terms such as bromance that embrace emotional and physical intimacy and (3) hybrid masculinities focuses on the ways in which certain men discursively distance themselves from hegemonic masculinity and selectively adopt elements or marginalized identities (Gruys and Munsch, 2018). Ironically where the previous streams of research were observed of white heterosexual men, the historic construction of black masculinity has often resided in the popular imagination as the logical and legitimate object of surveillance, policing, containment, and punishment (Gause 2008; Gruys and Munsch 2018).

Prevalent research of male role performance in the area of masculinity and manhood among Black men has been less than flattering. Using a unidimensional and universal definition of manhood defined as the economic provider and head of household, Davis and Hunter (1994), opines that the black man struggles and is defined as psychologically and interpersonally impotent. The notion that a false but widely-believed prediction could come true highlighted is here as the quintessential self-fulfilling prophecy. Briefly stated, if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences.

Method

Participants:

- Three Christian African-American men currently attending church (Ages: 40 – 73)

Face-to-Face Interviews

Interview Questions

How do African American men's faith impact their masculinity in the Black community?

1. How do you define faith?
2. How do you define religion?
3. What is the role of faith and religion in your life?
4. Why did you become a Christian?
5. What has been your experience expressing your faith in your community?
6. What has been your experience expressing your faith to loved ones?
7. How do you describe God's will or plan for your life?
8. How does your faith or religion inform your masculinity?
9. What biblical figure best describes or encourages you as a man? Please explain why.
10. As a Christian, please describe any experiences you have had with stereotyping?
11. As a Christian, what experiences have you had with discrimination?
12. What does your personal faith tell you about offending people with your words and action?
13. Describe your role male model or mentor and his impact on your life.
14. How do you describe the Black community's outlook on Christian men?

Data Analysis

Transcendental phenomenological approach:

- Textural descriptions
- Structural descriptions

Colaizzi phenomenological method of analyzing participants' transcripts: read and reread transcript details and formulate meaning and themes:

- Horizontalization
- Clusters of meaning

Preliminary Findings

- Emerging Themes
 - Familial relations are more judgmental than strangers.
 - The African American community has changed.
 - Believe in God at any cost.
 - Strength and integrity comes from Faith in God.
 - Be an example of Christ to the world.

References

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