What Does it Mean to be a Black Man in the United States of America?

Nerissa L.R. Snyder, LPC, LCPC, NCC

Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

in

Counselor Education

Laura Welfare, Chair
Nancy Bodenhorn
Gerard Lawson
Ashley Preston

December 10, 2018
Falls Church, VA

Keywords: African-American, Black man, lived experiences, respect
What Does it Mean to be a Black Man in the United States of America?

Nerissa L.R. Snyder, NCC, LPC, LCPC

ABSTRACT

Scarce is the research on the effects of the social and political climates of the Civil Rights era on children of that time. Comparisons are made throughout these writings between that era and the social and political climates that exist today in the United States of America. Specifically, the effects of these climates on Black males are examined across contexts. To better understand the Black male perspective, this body of research contributes to filling the gap of scarce research about older Black men, exploring lived experiences of eight African-American and Black men, 66-78 years of age, through first person interviews. A phenomenological research design and first person interviews allowed the researcher to find themes in the lived experiences of these men. Some of their life experiences (e.g., experiencing racism and disrespect related to being Black men), parallel the research findings throughout the literature review about the life experiences of generations of younger Black males that are coming behind them. Six themes were drawn, from the lived experiences of these men, to answer two research questions that guided the study. Those themes are: 1) personal experience with discrimination, racism or prejudice, 2) the need for strong familial support, 3) the importance of being aware of differences, 4) learning about yourself, 5) giving back to family and community and, 6) views about the need for counseling. From this research, implications are made for counselors, counselor educators and community advocates.
What Does it Mean to be a Black Man in the United States of America?

Nerissa L.R. Snyder, NCC, LPC, LCPC

GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

There are not a lot of research articles that follow the lives of children that lived through the Civil Rights Era, specifically young Black boys of that time. That era was full of social and political climates that the researcher compares to the social and political climates that exist as recently as the time of these writings in 2018. In this research study, the researcher interviewed eight African-American and Black men, ages 66-78, about their experiences living as men in the United States of America. Their life experiences are filled with lessons about racism, building positive family support, learning about yourself, taking care of responsibilities and community advocacy, to name a few. One of many potential benefits of these experiences is the impact it can have on young Black boys today who are living through social and political climates like those that the men interviewed lived through. The men interviewed were able to look back on their lives as young men and offer words of wisdom and advice to young Black men today. These words of wisdom and research have the potential to benefit the way mental health clinicians provide care for their clients, the way community members advocate for their young Black male citizens and the way police interact with citizens, specifically young Black men. For the purpose of this research, African-American is the term used to describe an American of African and especially of black African descent. Black is the term used to describe a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. The men interviewed were also asked about their view of respect which, for this research, is defined as: high or special regard: the quality or state of being esteemed.
Dedication

I dedicate this culmination of years of hard work and determination to my parents,

Nerie Snyder and Woodrow Snyder Sr.

*Mommy:* Since I was in elementary school, you have told me, “You can do anything you want Love, as long as you finish your education.” Your example as a First generation immigrant from the Philippines, to this country, has taught me the value of hard work and independence. You chased your dreams, travelled from country to country, through wars and tribulations, learning language after language, determined to reach your American dream. I cannot thank you enough for showing me that I can and will do anything I dream of. Nothing and no one will ever get in my way because of the fight I have in me, from you. We will never agree on everything 😊 but I will always be proudly guided by my faith that you instilled in me, and your words of wisdom. You’ve done well my dear, and your “Junior” did it girl!!!

*Daddy:* On my worst days, you have always offered a listening ear and advice (and still do); even when I tell you that I do not want to hear it. Since I was a small child, you have shared stories of what it was like growing up as a Black boy in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, during the Civil Rights era. You recited cautionary tales of social and political climates that impacted your early years, and strengthened your ambition. You never used racism, prejudice or disrespect as an excuse, but always encouraged me to work twice as hard despite it, just as you have done. As a child, it was difficult for me to believe that young children could be hosed down by authorities in the street because of the color of their skin. As an adult, I understand and appreciate why you shared those life experiences with me. As a researcher, I cherish those pieces of history you entrusted to me. I am forever indebted to you for telling me the first stories that ever struck my heart, about what it is like, and what it means to be a Black man in America.
Acknowledgements

I could not have completed this body of work without the contribution of the eight participants in my study. Thank you for taking the time to sit and answer my interview questions with fascinating life experiences and a commitment to excellence. To my committee members Dr. Welfare, Dr. Bodenhorn, Dr. Glenn and Dr. Preston: I am so thankful for your honest critiques and encouragement. For the VT members, thank you for showing me excellence in Counseling Education. You have each captivated my attention and admiration as your student.

MFR family: Thank you for embracing me and giving me the opportunity to finish school and work without hating it all. Dr.O’Bryant: thank you for seeing a spark in me and showing me just how fun and fabulous the field of Counseling can be. Dr Brott: you taught me how to love research and organize it, I am forever grateful for how that benefitted me during my writing process. Odis, Caitlin, Dana and Dr. Patrick Rowley.: Your smiles, jokes and hard work made my long commutes worth it on the tough days. I am honored to be associated with you all and cannot wait until we are all finished! Dr.Glenn: thank you for holding me accountable. Dr. Shepler and Amina: You believed that I was capable of things I never considered, and it opened up new doors for me. Thank you for believing in me and giving me opportunities when I was trying to focus on school. Dr. Preston: Through your great example, you have inspired me to successfully finish this dissertation. Thank you for your mentorship and friendship through this process and life.

Angel: You are literally everything a best friend and sister should be; annoying, goofy, smart-mouthed, honest, loving and sacrificing. During this arduous process when I was trying to get rid of stress in my life, you waddled down to a court house (8 months pregnant) to support me after I sternly told you that I didn’t need anyone. When I thought school would get in the way
of a promotion, you refused to hear it and cheered me all the way to that promotion. When I decided to quit my full-time job to pursue my own business and school, you found me the job I needed to get me through. I love every ounce of your soul. I look forward to calling you Doctor. Latrill and Jescine: I would not have survived 2017 without your unwavering support and commitment to me and my success. You are two of the most outspoken, ambitious and caring businesswomen that could have graced my life. Thank you for inspiring me to be the best I can be and for listening to my ideas, even when I was slow on execution. You remind me that there is always work to be done in our field and with the right village, anything is possible.

Nairobi, Pernell and Nicole: You have been the source of many laughs over the last few years. I am so happy that we have remained friends over these last 6+ years. I look forward to more milestones in your lives and more reasons to celebrate. Endia and Mychelle: thank you for cheering for me and giving me so many reasons to be proud of you. Delencia: You have perfect timing for sending me inspirational messages about my goals. Dekisha: Your continuous support does not go unnoticed.

Angie & Juanzie: You were the biggest help on some of the hardest days. Angie, living close to you gave me the breaks I needed at the beginning of this journey, thank you! Lanada: You inspired me to take on a Doctoral program and guided me through the process, I appreciate your mentorship. Dawn: thank you for relentless encouragement, ink and paper for my printer. You gave me all three at times that I needed them the most. Danielle: thank you for all the help you gave me to get through the last few chapters of writing, you provided me resources when I felt lost! Thanks!

Sholanda, Stephen, Zion, Mahkenzie: I look forward to spending more time with you all now that this journey is over. Kendra: thank you providing me with a sanctuary when I needed it.
Suite 200: You’re the longest running cheer squad ever created. Rochelle: thank you for lending me your ear, you kept me focused when I needed it. My siblings: Thank you for a lifetime of love and support and for donating in your own ways to the work that I do. Nia: Eherme, I draw strength from your energy. Taylor: Thank you for being a homework and reading buddy these last few years. I love you and it is an honor to see you understanding some of the life lessons I have learned through this process. Finally, thank you to my partner LaRawnn for staying up late at night to keep me company while I was studying, researching and writing. You are the only person who consistently saw the work, stress and tears that went into balancing school, work and home. Thank you for cheering me on and reminding me of how capable I am. I love you and appreciate you learning the ebbs and flows of my dissertation life. Best of all, thank you for helping me to keep a happy home.
Table of Contents

Abstract

General Audience Abstract

Dedication

Acknowledgments

Table of contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction

Context for the study

How the Black man is viewed by others.

How the Black man is viewed by the general public.

How the Black man is viewed by the police.

How the Black man is viewed in education.

How the Black man is viewed in sports images.

Statement of the Problem

Social Crisis.

The Black man playing by the rules.

The Need for research

Purpose of the Study

Definition of terms

Overview of the Method

Limitations

Delimitations
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Context for the study

Civil rights era.

View of the Black man by others.

View of the Black man in mental health settings.

View of the Black man in the United States of America.

View of the Black man in police and community relations.

View of the Black man in education.

View of the Black man in sports.

Statement of the Problem

Social crisis.

Racism.

The feeling of disrespect.

The impact of racism.

The impact of disrespect.

Summary

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Study Oversight

The researcher.

The coding team.

Research design
Qualitative research approach. 51
Data analysis. 52
Bracketing and the researcher’s Epoche. 53
Transcendental phenomenological reduction. 54
Imaginative variation. 54
Synthesize. 55
Rigor and credibility 55
Avoidance of potential inquirer bias. 55
Strategies for establishing rigor and credibility. 56
Participants 57
Recruitment. 57
Eight participants. 58
Interview format 59
Interview questions. 60
Interview guide 62
Summary 64

**Chapter 4: Results**

Participants 65
The phenomenon 66
Researchers responsibilities. 67
Themes. 67
Research question 1 68
Theme 1: Personal experiences with discrimination, racism or prejudice. 68

Work 68
School 69
Community 71

Movies and Fountains. 71
White strangers. 72
Signs and restrooms. 73

Theme 2: Need for strong familial support. 74

Theme 3: The importance of being aware of differences. 76

Research question 2: 77

Theme 1: Learning about yourself 77

Control your destiny, know yourself and understand your history 78
God. 79

Draw strength and motivation from your past. 79

Theme 2: Giving back to family and community. 80

Theme 3: Views about the need for counseling. 81

Summary 83

Chapter 5: Discussion ....................................................................................................................... 85

Introduction 85

Research question one 86

Research question two 90

Implications 92

Counselors. 92
Counselor educators. 94
Community advocates. 95
Limitations 95
Delimitation 96
Future research 97
Conclusions 98

References .........................................................................................................................100

Appendices .......................................................................................................................109

A: Interview Questions 110
B: Demographic Questionnaire 111
C: Recruitment Flyer 112
D: Informed Consent for participants 113
E: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval 115
F: First responses: What is it like to be a Black man in America? 117
List of tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Research questions and corresponding interview questions and prompts</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Demographic summary of participants</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Themes by research question</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Introduction

Throughout the history of The United States of America, social and political climates have promoted the inferiority of Black citizens. Although many examples of this can be highlighted, these writings focus on the Civil Rights Era, (See Civil Rights Era, chapter 2), from the 1940’s to 1960’s, when impactful events and legislature (Morris, 1986) highlight The United States of America’s unequal treatment of Black men. Similar social and political climates exist today and Black males of all ages, are impacted in a staggering way. This study explored the ways that The United States of America’s climates uniquely effect the Black male and will find themes in their experiences as men. This exploration utilized data gathered through first person interviews with Black men, 65 years of age and older, to find themes in their perspectives and experiences on their journeys to manhood. The goal for this research is that experiences of these Black men, will give counselors another lens with which to view the Black male and use that lens to preventively treat younger black males by drawing commonalities through experiences in research and first-person interviews. A review of the literature will allow an examination of the Black man; the way he is viewed by others in various contexts, and the way some Black men interpret their experiences across contexts.

Context for the study

How the Black man is viewed by others.

Taking into consideration the climate of The United States of America, clinicians are able to honor their Black male clients by using cultural competency, individualized treatment plans, and continuing education to be more effective in clinical treatment and avoid pitfalls such as clinician biases (Adebimpe, 2004). Though it is impossible to expel all clinician bias, it is imperative to recognize it (Baker, 2001). Coleman and Baker (1994) sought to understand diagnoses
given to African-Americans in the context of the Civil Rights era. Unfortunately, the state of the country at that time was not considered in the diagnoses. Of note was the “clinicians’ diagnostic bias with African Americans more likely to be diagnosed as schizophrenic than depressed” (Baker, 2001, p.32).

Findings such as those in Coleman and Baker’s 1994 pilot study, show what can happen in treatment and diagnosis when clinician bias is not addressed and collective life experiences of the client are not considered. Their pilot study was created, in part, in reaction to Adebimpe and Cohen’s assertions in the 1980’s that there was “widespread misdiagnosis of blacks because of psychiatric practices based on white norms” (Adebimpe, 2004, p. 543). Considering different populations and areas in many different studies, Adebimpe and Cohen sought to find explanations for the misdiagnoses, specifically a higher diagnosis of schizophrenia versus depressive disorders (Adebimpe & Cohen, 1989). Their goal was to decrease the incidences of these misdiagnoses.

Coleman and Baker’s study also sought to examine possible misdiagnoses of Black males. They did this by identifying patients in Maryland at the Perry Point Veterans Administration Medical Center who “were judged to be at increased risk for misdiagnosis because of the diagnostic bias existing at the time of their initial diagnosis and the presence of racial bias” (Coleman & Baker, 1994, p. 527). At the time of the pilot study (1994), all participants, were in their 60’s, with existing diagnoses of Schizophrenia. They were initially diagnosed in their 20’s, during the Civil Rights Movement. Remarkably, after conducting individual interviews and reviewing medical and psychiatric records from initial diagnoses to the time of the pilot study, Coleman and Baker found that, “88% of...patients had their diagnoses changed from schizophrenia to an affective disorder” (Coleman & Baker, 1994, p.527).
In application to treatment today, these studies highlight the importance of effective treatment, consideration of clinician bias, consideration of the nation’s climate in diagnoses and individualized treatment plans with clients. More specifically for this qualitative study, consideration of these is important to honor and respect Black male clients in clinical treatment. As a clinician shows honor and respect for clients through treatment, they should consider the implications of today’s social and political climates to accurately diagnose and treat clients. Consideration must be given to the individual ways that clients feel honored and respected, so that this may be included in treatment. In order to do that, an examination must be made of the Black male perspective through his life experiences. By paying rapt attention to the Black male experience through the eyes of Black men, information can be gathered, and themes can be drawn from their experiences.

**How the Black man is viewed by the general public.**

Throughout the Civil Rights era, state and federal legislation emerged, attempting to promote equality for Blacks amongst Whites, with basic civil liberties such as voting, public education and public dining (e.g., The Civil Rights Acts of 1960, 1965, and 1968). There was immense resistance in the South to the national and federal steps towards equality (e.g., Brown v. Board of Education, 1954). Violence, discrimination, and racism continued to be a common experience for Black citizens, especially Black males. Though “citizens” by label, many Black Americans were unable to enjoy the freedoms of American citizenship. They found themselves subjected to discriminatory, often violent, resistance against equality, long after the laws were created for equality.

Such inequalities, reflected in the polluted social and political climate of The United States of America during that time, led to the creation of movements such as the Civil Rights
Movement, known for a series of social and political efforts to promote equality across races. Similarly, The Black Lives Matter Movement, created in 2012, is a more recent example of a response to the nation’s social and political climate. The women who started the Black Lives Matter movement were inspired by the killing of Treyvon Martin, an unarmed 17-year-old Black boy, and the acquittal of the White-Hispanic man who admitted to killing him (State of Florida v. George Zimmerman, 2013). These examples highlight the public reaction to the mistreatment of Black citizens.

**How the Black man is viewed by the police.**

In 2015, the Washington Post created a database by year, “based on news reports, public records, social media and other sources” cataloging “every fatal shooting nationwide by a police officer in the line of duty” (The Washington Post, 2015). The Washington Post (2015) reported the documented findings for 2015:

990 fatal shootings by police, 93 of which involved people who were unarmed. Black men …were seven times as likely as unarmed White men to die from police gunfire…the only thing that was significant in predicting whether someone shot and killed by police was unarmed was whether or not they were Black.

The journey to manhood in The United States of America has a unique effect on the Black man. While the effects will surely differ from one man to the next, research shows that the Black male experience in The United States of America is one laden with recurring experiences of disrespect in a variety of settings, spanning across social classes (Staggers-Hakim, 2016; Baker, 2001). The theme of disrespect can be found across many contexts in historical and current treatment of the black man; contexts include police-community relations, education, sports and even mental health treatment.
Warren (2011) sought to build on existing research about differences in perceptions of police based on race. Her research in the 2011 qualitative study focused on understanding the influence of other factors in the perceptions of police and satisfaction with police encounters held by North Carolina licensed drivers. Factors included race, class, neighborhood context, personal experience, vicarious experience and trust in social institutions. Warren found that the drivers that previously heard negative vicarious experiences of family or friends with police, reported more dissatisfaction with police encounters across races and experiences.

These findings take a critical look at the influence of factors on satisfaction with police encounters. This type of critical examination by Warren, though, should not minimize the prevalence of publicized police violence on unarmed Black men that is prominent in modern times. This violence has an impact on the health and development of Black boys (Staggers-Hakim, 2016). Legal cynicism (Desmond, Papachristos & Kirk, 2016) results from this violence, perpetuating the notion amongst this group of citizens that the police are less likely to respond in a fair and just manner if called. As recently as 2016, researchers Desmond, Papachristos and Kirk, used surveys and interviews to examine the police violence and citizen crime reporting in neighborhoods of Milwaukee, WI after highly publicized police violence. They found that after publicized incidents of police violence, citizens, particularly in Black communities, were less likely to call the police to respond to crimes, for at least one year after the incident occurred (Desmond, Papachristos & Kirk, 2016).

**How the Black man is viewed in education.**

Hotchkins and Dancy (2015) are just some of the researchers whose findings concur that many Black males have had the experience of someone expressing surprise, confusion, or respect when they found out that an initial assumption or stereotype based on skin color was not true. In
other words, some Black men reported that based on their skin color, they were stereotyped first, then pseudo-respected based on prestige in occupation or education. These scenarios illustrate how the black man is viewed in some education settings.

Hotchkins and Dancy (2015) were able to capture sentiments of African-American males attending a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Charles, who was 20 years old at the time of the interview shared, “I wonder how they [White people] see me prior to knowing I am a nerd… I’m 6’03”, yet not an athlete, they pile all the Black stereotypes on me …Guess I’ll spend the rest of my life showing otherwise” (p.86) Eugene, who is 22, shared that, “if White people at SCU could separate my nerd from my Black they would do it in a hot minute. The first [my nerd] makes their grades better, but the second [my Blackness] makes some of them nervous” (p.87)

Participants in the same study by Hotchkins and Dancy (2015) also shared their motivation to complete their degrees in honor of their ancestors who did not have the same educational opportunities. Still, that motivation did not erase the common theme in sentiment, “I get that look like, “you’re Black; how are you a Gates Millennial Scholar?” (p.86) Despite their accomplishments, participants felt like “White folks are White folks no matter whether I’m on campus or having lunch in the city; they act like I’m under suspicion until they understand I go do [sic] SCU, then it’s all good. Well, partially good.” (p.87) Reflecting on the experiences of education of the Black men within Hotchkins and Dancy’s study, even with more educational freedom than the participants of this qualitative study, there are still experiences of discrimination described in 2015.

Porter (1997) reported that public education in the United States of America often stigmatizes Black males as disabled, having diagnoses such as ADHD and bipolar disorder. He wrote that racism influences the educational system and miseducates the black boy and man. He
provides perspective as an educator on the processes that perpetuate the misconception that Black boys are unable to perform appropriately in school without medication or special assistance supports.

**How the Black man is viewed in sports images.**

Casual attitudes towards racism are often found in discussions of athleticism. Many Black athletes experience racism and disrespect (Hutchinson, 1997). Harrison (1998) asserted that large salaries often overshadow issues of racism that are rampant in the professional sports community. Hutchinson (1997), explained that “racism is subtle in sports, covertly and overtly apparent at times, but problematic to the critical eye” (Harrison, 1998, p. 46). The success of some black athletes is regularly used “as an argument to the effect that there is no real discrimination against blacks…” (Pieterse, 1995, p.132), often minimizing the acts that account for even subtle racism.

The overt racism is seen in examples like famous sports commentator Jimmy “The Greek” Snyder’s in 1988 that “blacks enjoyed a race-based, genetic advantage over whites rooted in slave-breeding practices” (Oates, 2016, p.163). Hutchinson (1997) argues that Jimmy “The Greek” Snyder was only saying “what many of the men who make the decisions in the sports profession really think about black athletes” (p.46). Comparisons are drawn between modern athletics and slavery, both Hutchinson and Harrison provide insight into a feeling popular among some sports observers that Black athletes, “still black performers employed for the amusement and entertainment”, similar to the Black male slaves, known as Black Bucks, used for entertainment of slave masters while literally fighting each other for their lives (Harrison, 1998).

Discrepancies in the equal treatment of the Black male in The United States of America can be found throughout American history. American institutions and norms continue to fight the
battle of equality for the Black man. Within the context for this study, Black men are: misdiagnosed in clinical care (Adebimpe, 2004), statistically more likely to die from police gunfire (The Washington Post, 2015), stereotyped in education settings (Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015) and experiencing racism as sports players (Harrison, 1998). More examples of modern racism in professional sports will be examined in the literature review in chapter 2.

**Statement of the problem**

**Social crisis.**

Black boys are in a social crisis. Over a decade ago, Noguera (2003) wrote about the crisis black boys were facing at that time:

African-American males are in deep trouble… have the fastest growing rate for suicide…have the highest probability of dying in the 1st year of life…are least likely to be hired and in many cities, the most likely to be unemployed…. (p. 431, 432)

The social crisis continues in 2018, “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot” and “I Can’t Breathe” are phrases that have become direct links to the stories that emphasize the injustices suffered by black males and the social crises in The United States of America that continue.

**The Black man playing by the rules.**

The way the black man views himself is important to consider to understand the importance of the development of future research and clinical practices geared toward Black men. Bryant, Ro, & Rowe (2003) show the impact of society’s view on some black men and show the frustration in not receiving respect. Black and Rubenstein (2009) highlight the theme of experiences of prejudice and discrimination in the lives of Black men. Finally, Fitzpatrick and Boldizar (1993) discuss the effects of racism, prejudice and disrespect on the black male’s perception of lived experiences.
In 2003, the Black Mental Health Alliance conducted qualitative interviews with Black men about their experiences seeking assistance for improving their mental health, and highlight their perceptions of how society views them. One such example is found in a poignant interview where one man shared, “Even when we do everything right and play by all the rules, we still don’t get the respect we deserve, and that is very, very stressful” (Bryant, Ro, & Rowe, 2003, p.2).

Merriam-Webster’s collegiate dictionary (2004) defines Respect as: “high or special regard: the quality or state of being esteemed.” Counselors can ensure that they are showing respect for their Black male clients by understanding their individual worldviews; this will encourage individualized treatment and consideration of personal history and experiences (Adebimpe, 2004). This is similar to the concept of Carl Roger’s unconditional positive regard that promotes the possibility “to enhance client self-acceptance leading to greater authentic experiencing” (Murphy, Joseph, Demetriou, et al, 2017). This awareness should be coupled with an individualized understanding of the impact of environmental, political, and social climates on Black males.

The need for research.

Qualitative research about Black men, born in or before 1953, is scarce. Researchers, Black and Rubinstein (2009), delivered accounts of suffering and generativity amongst Black men who were at least 80 years of age through first person interviews. This research examined the connection of suffering experiences throughout their lives with what they find important or how they find fulfillment in life. Of the Black men interviewed, generativity was “linked to how they internalized cultural standards of their day” (p.296).
While each man was able to relate how they were finding meaning in life through service, caretaking, and volunteerism, they all recounted that prejudice and acts of discrimination permeated their lives and shaped their actions, decisions, and views of the world. They relayed having to physically and figuratively fight for respect that was not given to them “because of this (points to skin on arm). People look at you like you’re dirt” (Black and Rubinstein, 2009). The effects of this discrimination and prejudice through the eyes of these participants is salient and cannot be ignored.

Another effect of repeated exposure to discrimination and prejudice is depression. For example, Fitzpatrick and Boldizar (1993) found rising rates of anger, stress and depression in young Black males. Similarly, in Black and Rubenstein’s research of Black men 80 years of age and older, Fitzpatrick and Boldizar found the men experiencing “suffering, depression and sadness…came together through experiences of discrimination” (p.301). The young men experienced recurrent traumas and Rich and Grey (2005) sought to pinpoint what helped them to continue living; for most it was adapted survival. Their research reinforces the importance of understanding the individual aspects of a client instead of solely focusing on symptoms, and highlight the necessity to examine themes in the Black man’s journey to manhood through lived experiences told in first person interviews.

**Purpose of the study**

The researcher’s professional background has focused on children and adolescents. Through work with this age group in the community and mental health settings, the researcher was able to see the impact that the home environment and social climates had on children, youth and their families. Research about the effects of homicide on siblings of Black male murder victims, heightened the researcher’s awareness of the lack of research-based theories designed for
Black boys and men. Simultaneously, the researcher observed more young Black males, diagnosed with Conduct and Bipolar disorder in practice. Symptoms of depression and reports of behavior concerns were observed across age groups of men 18 and younger. The researcher began wondering about the future of these young men and searching for strategies in research to illuminate a path for success for them. The hope of this study was that the life experiences of failure and success in older Black men, would give younger Black men the opportunity to use their path to guide their own. Given the importance of the similarities in mental health symptoms of Black males across age groups, it is essential that we understand the Black male perspective through his life experiences. The goal for this research is that experiences of Black men in America, 65 years of age and older, may give Counselors another lens with which to view Black males. This study explored the lived experiences of eight Black males, ages 66-78, detailed in first person interviews. Themes were found throughout their accounts. This qualitative study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How would a Black man born in or before 1953 describe what it means to be a Black man in The United States of America?

2. What is one piece of advice on manhood that a Black man, born in or before 1953, would give to a young man Black man growing up in The United States of America?

Definition of terms

The following terms are defined to assist the reader in accurately understanding them in the context of this body of research:

**African-American:** an American of African and especially of black African descent

(Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary, 2004)
**Black:** a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (U.S. Census Bureau, C2010BR-06)

**Respect:** high or special regard: the quality or state of being esteemed

**Overview of the method**

The study utilized a qualitative research methodology, based on a phenomenological research approach, searching for themes in the lived experiences of Black men, 65 years of age and older. Purposeful criterion sampling was used to recruit participants that fit the study criteria; eight men were selected to participate in first-person interviews. The phenomenological research approach does not create nor test a hypothesis, instead it allows researchers to grasp the meaning “and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for a person or group of people” (Patton, 2015, p.573). The phenomenon, is the experience of being a black man who grew up in the United States of America. The first-person interviews were transcribed by the researcher and the coding team arrived at a consensus regarding the most prominent themes. Themes reveal commonalities in the participants’ experiences and reveal what life is like for these Black men in the United States of America.

**Limitations**

The first limitation of this study was that the researcher, who is the inquirer for the study, has personal interest in the mental health of black men born in or before 1953. The researcher had to be cautious about preconceived themes, in hopes of limiting the impact of researcher bias while coding for themes. To protect against the influence of researcher biases, the methodological strategies, including the use of a coding team, will be described to strengthen rigor and credibility. The second limitation of this study was that the data collected was self-reported data; the
accuracy of events relayed cannot be validated and the researcher had to rely on information as recounted and provided.

**Delimitations**

This research focused on finding themes in the experiences of eight Black men in The United States of America, born in or before 1953. It is equally as imperative to examine the experiences of younger Black men, but that was beyond the scope of this study. The purposeful sample of men for this study, were selected in hopes that their lived experiences would include personal experiences around the Civil Rights Era. The age range chosen ensures that each participant was in early adolescence through early 20's during the 1960’s. Since most of the research in the literature review will focus on black adolescent males, the researcher focused the study on an age group that was able to give advice to younger generations of Black males from lessons learned through their lived experiences.

**Document organization**

This body of research will be organized into 5 chapters as follows:

**Chapter 1** is an introduction of the research to include the context for the study of the experiences of Black men on their journey to manhood. The problem is clearly stated within this study. The purpose of this research study is explained, definitions are given for terms within the context of research, and research questions are asked. An overview of the method is given along with the limitations and delimitations of the research study.

**Chapter 2** includes a critical review of the literature on the Black man’s journey to manhood. Within this critical literature review, the context for the study and statement of the problem are expounded on in more detail than described in Chapter 1. Gaps in research will be examined and future implications for research and counseling will be explained.
Chapter 3: reviews methodology to include the research design for this study, an interview guide, data analysis plan and strategies used for establishing rigor and credibility.

Chapter 4 details the results of this study. An in-depth analysis of the participants’ stories is provided. Themes drawn from the first-person interviews of Black men 65 and over are reported within this chapter.

Chapter 5 includes an integration of the researcher’s ideas and observations post study. This chapter includes a discussion and implications for each research question. The limitations of the study are explained in greater detail. Future research proposals and the conclusion of the research study are reported in this chapter.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This phenomenological qualitative study explored ideas about manhood held by Black men in The United States of America. These ideas were found within first person interviews with eight Black men, ages 66-78, to find themes in their perspectives and experiences on their journeys to manhood. Scarce is the research on this age group of Black males, and reports of the effects of childhood social and political climates on their decision making and life are limited. This literature review will include a plethora of information about adolescent, teenage and college aged black boys and men. The research study executed from the ideas sparked in this literature review focused more on the lived experiences of Black and African-American men 65 years of age and older.

Context for the study

Civil rights era.

On May 18, 1896, in the Plessy v Ferguson Supreme Court case, it was ruled that facilities that were racially separated, if equal, did not violate the constitution of the United States of America (Plessy v Ferguson, 2017). The Civil Rights Era, spanned across decades, most notably from the 1940’s to 1960’s in the United States of America and challenged those “separate but equal” laws that permeated the country. Several events of that time propelled citizens of the era to choose between sides of true citizen equality despite race, or continuing with “separate but equal” laws. The eight men interviewed for this body of research vividly remembered stories of local and national news that highlighted the unequal treatment of Black citizens and marked the Civil Rights Era. (Harris, 2006)

On July 26, 1948, President Truman ended segregation in the armed forces. However, public facilities in the South remained segregated. Education was one main target for civil rights
activists, and in 1954, the monumental Brown v Board of Education of Topeka case ruled that the “separate but equal” ruling of 1896 was unconstitutional (Morris, 1986). Federal law mandated that public schools become integrated, a mandate that took years for all states to abide by. The citizens protesting against “separate but equal” laws were pursuing equal employment and education for Black citizens and advocating for their equal rights. In August 1955, the murder of a Black 14-year-old boy, Emmett Till, and the subsequent published confession (Huie, 1956) of his two White murderers sparked national attention and outrage as pictures of his mutilated body, in his open casket, were shown in newspapers and magazines across the country (Harold & DeLuca, 2005). Four months later in December 1955, a Black woman, Rosa Parks became known for refusing to give up her seat on a public bus for a white man. Three Days later, the Montgomery Bus Boycott began wherein citizens in Montgomery, Alabama refused to ride city buses in protest of the buses being segregated (Morris, 1986).

The Civil Rights Act of 1957, in part, purported that Black citizens be given voter rights. State and local legislature made it difficult for this right to be exercised by many Blacks, leading to the Voting Rights Act of 1965. This act was an effort to overcome legal barriers at the state and local levels that prevented Black citizens from exercising their right to vote (Bullard, 1993). Previously President Kennedy signed the Civil Rights Bill of 1963, proposing that Black citizens have the same rights as White citizens. He was assassinated in December of that same year. Carrying out President Kennedy’s advocacy, President Johnson passed from law to bill, the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This legislation was aimed to end divisions amongst races in the United States (Bullard, 1993), while each perceived victory for equality sparked violence and protests as the country struggled to make equality a national standard.
These events represent just a snapshot of catalyst events that occurred throughout the Civil Rights era as advocates pushed for laws to protect the basic Constitutional rights of Black citizens in the United States of America. Throughout this Civil Rights Era, each of the eight men interviewed for this qualitative research study were impacted, across several contexts that will be explored herein. Their lived experiences create a landscape with which we are able to view some of the perspectives of what it was like to grow up during that Era and seeing its effects on education, occupation, community and family.

**View of the Black man by others.**

Black males are experiencing a social, political and educational system crisis, highlighting the cyclical injustice in American society towards Black males. This research expounds on climates that exist today which are reminiscent of the climates that bred the injustices experienced in the early parts of the 20th century; there are Black males of all ages who are impacted in a staggering way. Counselors may consider the research herein to determine how they can promote solutions for injustice, even within the context of their research and clinical practice.

The effects of the aforementioned crises span across several life contexts; mental health treatment, political climates and affiliation, interactions with the police, community relationships and educational settings (Coleman & Baker, 1994; Adebimpe, 2004; Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015; Harrison, 1998). While the effects will not impact each man in the same manner, this chapter explores some research on Black males, details various effects that the nation’s climate has on them and explores the problems from this context.

**View of the Black man in mental health settings.**
The world view of a clinician impacts their treatment delivery (Adebimpe, 2004). Research shows examples of the mental health treatment of Black males being impacted by the world view of their mental health provider (DuBois, 2015). Researchers like Dr. Victor R. Adebimpe began advocating for Black males in the 1980’s when he saw patterns “regarding the widespread misdiagnosis of blacks because of psychiatric practices based on white norms” (Adebimpe, 2004, p.543). He and Dr. Eric Cohen sought to find explanations for the misdiagnoses. They noticed a higher diagnosis of schizophrenia versus depressive disorders (Adebimpe & Cohen, 1989) and sought to decrease the incidences of them. In response to “many published reports of higher rates of schizophrenia and lower rates of affective disorder among blacks” (Adebimpe & Cohen, 1989), Adebimpe and Cohen analyzed data gathered from 1968 through 1987 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania at Charles R. Drew Mental Health Center, a psychiatric clinic whose clients were predominantly black.

The location for their study was a key factor, as research showed “examination of predominantly black patient populations offers the best chance of reliable observations in making black-white comparisons” (Adebimpe & Cohen, 1989, p.762). The researchers hoped that choosing a mental health center serving mostly black patients would decrease the negative impact of factors such as pathology stereotypes and symptom misinterpretation. They found that “these factors are less likely to exert a significant effect on the diagnostic process in a predominantly black patient population than they are in clinical facilities where most patients are white” (Adebimpe & Cohen, 1989, p.762).

To increase the reliability of observations in comparing results of black patients versus white patients, Adebimpe and Cohen analyzed the data with three suggestions, based on previous
research articles, in mind. The first suggestion was to correct for socioeconomic status. Both racial groups in the analysis had pervasive low socioeconomic status, resulting in this variable being used as a constant. The second research suggestion Adebimpe and Cohen considered in the structure of their data analysis was to collect and analyze data retrospectively rather than prospectively. The third suggestion considered in the structure of their data analysis was an aforementioned key factor of location; examining data collected from “predominantly black patient populations” (Adebimpe & Cohen, 1989, p.762).

The data analysis was of 5,493 patient profiles and their age, sex, race and primary diagnoses upon admission to the center. The diagnoses relevant to the analysis made up almost half of the diagnoses of the patient profiles examined. These diagnoses were schizophrenia, affective psychosis and depressive neuroses. Of the patient profiles examined, 20% were ages 0-17, 48% were 18-64 years of age and 32% were 65 years of age and older. Among these patients, data for sex of patients were 47% male and 53% female. Data for race were 71% black, 23% white and 6% Hispanic; black and white were compared in the analysis. (Adebimpe & Cohen, 1989, p.762). To address the factor of low socioeconomic status, the researchers examined the categories of financial billing and found that “80% to 95% of the patients were on ”medical assistance” or had ”zero liability,” indicating a predominantly indigent population” (Adebimpe & Cohen, 1989, p.762).

The first data results are from an analysis of diagnosis by race, and race controlling for sex. The three relevant diagnoses to the study were: 1) schizophrenia; including all subtypes, 2) affective psychoses; including major depression and manic depressive illness and 3) depressive neuroses; including “nonmajor depression categories” (Adebimpe & Cohen, 1989, p.763) such as adjustment disorders with depressive symptoms. Of those diagnosed with schizophrenic
psychoses, 74% were black compared to 26% white. Of those diagnosed with affective disorders, 64% were black compared to 36% white. Of those diagnosed with depressive reactions, 79% were black compared to 21% white. With race (black compared to white only) controlling for sex, researchers found that 73% of those diagnosed with schizophrenic psychoses, 60% of those diagnosed with affective disorders and 79% of those diagnosed with depressive reactions were black males compared to white males. Analyzing the statistics for sex within diagnoses, 54% of those diagnosed with schizophrenic psychoses were male compared to 46% female; 39% male compared to 61% female were diagnosed with affective disorders; and 45% of males compared to 55% of females were diagnosed with depressive reactions (Adebimpe & Cohen, 1989, p.762).

The third set of results were of diagnoses by race (black and white compared only) controlling for sex and age. For the 0-17 year age range, of patients diagnosed with schizophrenic psychoses, 75% of males diagnosed were black, 74% of females diagnosed were black. Of patients diagnosed with affective disorders, 47% of males diagnosed were black, 72% of females diagnosed were black. Of patients diagnosed with depressive reactions, 85% of males diagnosed were black, 83% of females diagnosed were black. For the 18-35 year age range, of patients diagnosed with schizophrenic psychoses, 71% of males diagnosed were black, 76% of females diagnosed were black. Of patients diagnosed with affective disorders, 68% of males diagnosed were black, 73% of females diagnosed were black. Of patients diagnosed with depressive reactions, 77% of males diagnosed were black, 75% of females diagnosed were black. For the 33-64 year age range, of patients diagnosed with schizophrenic psychoses, 71% of males diagnosed were black, 75% of females diagnosed were black. Of patients diagnosed with affective disorders, 57% of males diagnosed were black, 59% of females diagnosed were black. Of patients di-
agnosed with depressive reactions, 77% of males diagnosed were black, 77% of females diagnosed were black. For the 65 years and older age range, of patients diagnosed with schizophrenic psychoses, 75% of males diagnosed were black, 78% of females diagnosed were black. Of patients diagnosed with affective disorders, 66% of males diagnosed were black, 68% of females diagnosed were black. Of patients diagnosed with depressive reactions, 78% of males diagnosed were black, 79% of females diagnosed were black (Adebimpe & Cohen, 1989, p.763).

Researchers found that the impact of “race in biasing diagnostic affiliation appears more significant than the sex effect” (Adebimpe & Cohen, 1989, p.764).

From the analyzation of this data collected over ten years, researchers found significant statistical differences between black and white patients, noting that blacks were more frequently diagnosed with a depressive reaction. Adebimpe and Cohen’s 1989 data analysis results showed that race effected diagnostic bias more than sex but contrary to punished literature, “schizophrenia was diagnosed more frequently among whites in this patient population” (Adebimpe & Cohen, 1989, p.764).

The significance of Adebimpe and Cohen’s study to this qualitative study is found in the disparities within two age subpopulations of interest, particularly black males compared to white males in each diagnosis category, for black males 0-17 years old and black males 65 and older. Similarities in the prevalence of depressive symptoms between these age groups are found. For the age group 0-17 years, there was no significant difference in black males compared to white males for affective disorders, the same is true for the age group of 65 years and older. On the other hand, moderate significance was found in the same age groups for diagnoses of schizophrenic psychoses and depressive reactions. Patient profiles showed that of the 473 males, those ages 0-17 who were diagnosed with schizophrenic psychoses, 75% were black compared to 25%
white. Of the 793 males, those ages 65 years and older, diagnosed with schizophrenic psychoses, 75% were black compared to 25% white. Of the 473 males, those ages 0-17 who were diagnosed with depressive reactions, 85% were black compared to 15% white. Of the 793 males, those ages 65 years and older, diagnosed with depressive reactions, 78% were black compared to 22% white.

The similarities in the diagnoses between these two age groups is significant as the “disparities are most poignant for males in the youngest age group, who were assessed as severely affectively impaired. Racial disparities point to gross under- and overrepresentation in this subgroup” (Adebimpe & Cohen, 1989, p.764). The prevalence of depressive reactions and schizophrenic psychoses among black males of both age groups (0-17 years and 65 years and older), within the setting of a mental health center serving predominantly black patients, peaked the Adebimpe and Cohen’s interest; they decided to study the cases to find similarities in the cause of those depressive symptoms and diagnoses of affective disorders.

Adebimpe and Cohen recognized the importance of highlighting the higher prevalence of diagnoses of schizophrenia versus depressive disorders in Black patients when compared to white patients. The importance of their research was derived from observations that stereotypes about “black pathology (derived mainly from professional folklore) have been implicated in diagnostic errors with individual patients, resulting in inappropriate, ineffective, and biased treatment” (Adebimpe & Cohen, 1989, p.761). These studies found that some medical professionals and mental health professionals were actively practicing medicine or treating persons with mental health disorders when they were surveyed for the research. Other studies will be discussed herein that show misdiagnoses of black men; clinician bias is one recurring theme in those stud-
On the other hand, if clinician bias did not significantly contribute to the disproportionate diagnoses of depressive reactions and schizophrenic psychoses, other studies will look at what factors, in the lives of black boys and men within those age groups, which cause the symptoms that lead to a high rate of affective diagnoses. The researcher of this study sought to find themes in the experiences of men, 65 years of age and older, as they recounted aspects of their journey to manhood in The United States of America. Implications discussed in future chapters may lead to future research to implement interventions geared towards decreasing the diagnoses of schizophrenic psychoses and depressive reactions in black males ages 0-17 and 65 and older.

The need for this study can be seen in the findings of many studies of the past, highlighting the need for counselors and mental health professionals working with black males to continue trying to recognize and address clinician bias within themselves. In 2004, more than 20 years after his 1989 writings and research with Cohen, Adebimpe summarized the importance of accurate diagnoses and treatment of black males when he wrote, “If blacks are at a higher risk of being inadvertently misdiagnosed than whites, they are just as likely to be mistreated for the same reason” (Adebimpe, 2004, p.544). Taking into consideration the climate of The United States of America, clinicians are able to honor their Black male clients by using cultural competency, individualized treatment plans, and continuing education to be more effective in clinical treatment and avoid pitfalls such as clinician biases. Though it is impossible to expel all clinician bias, it is imperative to recognize it. Recognizing it will increase the chance of accurate diagnosis, leading to accurate and more effective treatment.

Adebimpe and Cohen cited some research ideas that contribute to more accurate diagnoses. As an example, Simon et al (1973) purported that “routine hospital diagnosis yielded a
higher rate of schizophrenia and a lower rate of depression among black patients… these differences vanished when a structured mental status examination was used” (Adebimpe & Cohen, 1989, p.761). Such methods were used to re-evaluate men at one medical center in Maryland who “were judged to be at increased risk for misdiagnosis because of the diagnostic bias existing at the time of their initial diagnosis and the presence of racial bias…” (Coleman & Baker, 1994, p. 527). This was initiated by researcher T.M. Baker who sought to understand diagnoses given to black men in the context of the Civil Rights era. Researchers found that the state of the country at the time of initial evaluations was not considered in the diagnoses and of note was the “clinicians’ diagnostic bias with African Americans more likely to be diagnosed as schizophrenic than depressed” (Baker, 2001, p.32).

Throughout his research, Baker sought to find and address factors that contributed to the misdiagnosis of schizophrenia among black patients. Some of these factors, in addition to clinician bias, included, “consistent assignment of psychotic symptoms in African Americans to schizophrenia rather than the possible presence of an affective disorder or substance abuse disorders…failure to recognize the greater prevalence of psychotic symptoms in depressed black patients” (Baker, 2001, p. 32-33). Findings such as those in Coleman and Baker’s 1994 pilot study, show what can happen in treatment and diagnosis when clinician bias is not addressed and collective experiences are not considered. The pilot study was created, in part, in reaction to Adebimpe and Cohen’s 1989 writings and assertions that there was “widespread misdiagnosis of blacks because of psychiatric practices based on white norms” (Adebimpe, 2004, p. 543).

Coleman and Baker identified patients in Maryland at the Perry Point Veterans Administration Medical Center who “were judged to be at increased risk for misdiagnosis because of the diagnostic bias existing at the time of their initial diagnosis and the presence of racial bias…”
(Coleman & Baker, 1994, p. 527). The medical center, at the time of evaluation, was an inpatient psychiatric facility with 600 beds, including a 30-bed geriatric unit specializing in the rehabilitation of older veterans with multiple illnesses and a long-term care unit with medical and psychiatric diagnoses. All participants at the time of the pilot study in 1994, were in their 60’s. They were all diagnosed with Schizophrenia, when they were in their 20’s, in the 1950’s during the Civil Rights Movement.

To establish interrater reliability, Coleman and Baker each separately reviewed 20 patient medical records and interviewed those 20 patients, they found a 95% agreement on diagnosis based on chart review and a 90% agreement on interview…” (Coleman & Baker, 1994, p.527) As aforementioned, Coleman has purported in research that a structured tool for diagnoses of black male patients, would decrease the likelihood of clinican bias. In response to this proposal, Coleman and Baker used a symptom checklist for the DSM III (Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders – Third Edition) to determine if the patient met criteria for “schizophrenic disorder of any type or were consistent with another diagnostic category, i.e., affective illness” (Coleman & Baker, 1994, p.527). Among many other things, Coleman and Baker found that at the time of initial diagnosis of schizophrenia, some medical records were completely void of symptomology or other “documentation of depressive symptoms and no symptoms were noted at the time of the clinical interview.” (Coleman & Baker, 1994, p.527)

After conducting individual interviews and reviewing medical and psychiatric records from initial diagnoses to the time of the pilot study, Coleman and Baker found that, “88% of…patients had their diagnoses changed from schizophrenia to an affective disorder” (Coleman and Baker, 1994, p.527). Consideration of the national events that occurred around the time of
initial diagnosis, coupled with lack of symptom documentation, raises questions of environmental, social and political influences and consideration of these for diagnoses. This supports the hypothesis of Coleman, one that stirs the interest for the qualitative study herein, that “the misdiagnosis of schizophrenia among older, African American veterans is of concern” (Coleman & Baker, 1994, p.527). These studies highlight the importance of effective treatment, consideration of clinician bias, the nation’s climate and individualized treatment plans with clients.

For this qualitative study, consideration of these is important to honor and respect Black male clients in treatment and consider the implications of today’s social and political climates to accurately diagnose and treat clients. It is equally important to consider the stigma of mental health services held by many in the African-American community. Broman (2012) investigated race differences in the receipt of mental health treatment and found that Blacks were less like to receive mental health treatment. Broman’s study found the reasons to be similar to Alvidrez, Snowden and Kaiser’s (2008) study which found themes from interviews with 34 Black mental health consumers regarding stigma concerns, experiences, and coping strategies in mental health treatment. Many participants interviewed in that study avoided treatment because of stigma and others experience disparaging comments from their friends, family or acquaintances. Researchers identified numerous strategies to cope with the stigma of mental health treatment which included searching for supportive friends and family and prioritizing their own mental health over the reactions from others.

An examination must be made of the Black male perspective through his life experiences. In this case, and in relation to this study, it is useful to hear experiences of Black men who grew up during the Civil Rights Movement. Possible themes could be drawn about the influence of so-
cial and political climates on their life experiences. This can be accomplished by paying rapt attention to the Black male experience through the eyes of a Black man born in or before 1953, information can be gathered and themes can be drawn from their experiences. This may give insight into their current functioning and their experiences as young men that could lead to future research to develop and implement interventions geared towards decreasing the diagnoses of schizophrenic psychoses and depressive reactions in black males ages 0-17 and 65 and older by incorporating their life experiences specifically.

**View of the Black man in the United States of America.**

Especially throughout the 1950’s and 60’s, state and federal legislation promoted equality for Blacks amongst Whites with the allowance of civil liberties such as voting, public education and public dining (e.g., The Civil Rights Acts of 1960, 1965, and 1968). There was immense resistance in the South to the national and federal steps towards equality (e.g., Brown v. Board of Education, 1954). Violence, discrimination and racism continued to be a common experience for Black citizens, especially Black males. Though “citizens” by label, many Black Americans were unable to enjoy the freedoms of American citizenship, subjected to discriminatory, often violent enforcement of resistance against equality, long after the laws were created to promote equal treatment of them. Alexander (2012) asserts that though many white citizens believed they were kind hearted, many were “believing they were doing blacks a favor or believing time was not yet ‘right’ for equality” within the Jim Crow system of segregation.

Such inequalities, reflect the polluted social and political climate of The United States of America during that time and led to the creation of things such as the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Panther Party. Similarly, The Black Lives Matter Movement, created in 2012, is an example of a response to the nation’s social and political climate (Staggers-Hakim, 2016).
The women who started the Black Lives Matter movement were inspired by the killing of Trey-von Martin, an unarmed 17-year-old Black boy, and the acquittal of White-Hispanic man who admitted to killing him (State of Florida v. George Zimmerman, 2013).


documented 990 fatal shootings by police, 93 of which involved people who were unarmed. Black men accounted for about 40 percent of the unarmed people fatally shot by police and…were seven times as likely as unarmed White men to die from police gunfire…the only thing that was significant in predicting whether someone shot and killed by police was unarmed was whether or not they were Black….

(The Washington Post, 2015)

The journey to manhood in The United States of America has a unique effect on the Black man. While the effects will surely differ from one man to the next, the Black male experience in The United States of America is laden with recurring experiences of disrespect in a variety of settings, spanning across social classes. The experiences of disrespect of black adolescent males and those 65 years of age and older, can be seen across contexts, including police-community relations, education and sports.

View of the Black man in police and community relations.

Warren (2011) sought to build on existing research about differences in perceptions of police based on race. Her research in the 2011 qualitative study focused on understanding the influence of other factors in perceptions of police and satisfaction with police encounters. Factors include race, class, neighborhood context, personal experience, vicarious experience and trust in social institutions. Warren defined vicarious experiences as “indirect contacts with police that citizens hear about from their friends, family, and the media that can be internalized and used as
information about how police will interact with citizens in the future” (Warren, 2011, p.359). Warren found that the negative vicarious experiences of family or friends with police, influenced reports of dissatisfaction with police encounters across races and experiences examined.

Warren set out to examine the findings of prior research results that pointed to race as one of the prominent predictors of attitudes towards the police, with blacks reporting more dissatisfaction than whites. Warren gathered data from previous research and found that some of the reasons that blacks expressed more dissatisfaction with police than whites included that “they are frequently subjected to aggressive police patrols, excessive use of force…racially biased policing…along with a history of degradation…led to tenuous relations between many Black citizens and the police such that even in the absence of bias, police fairness is brought into question” (Warren, 2011, p.357). Warren examined the relationship between vicarious experiences and trust in social institutions on perceptions of police encounters by Black citizens compared to white citizens. Warren theorized that black citizens were more likely to report negative stories regarding the police from their personal family or social circle. “In fact, many minority families instruct their children on how to conduct themselves when interacting with the police. These instructions often pass on negative attitudes and as a result, accentuate the race gap in perceptions of police” (Warren, 2011, p.360). Warren also theorized that white citizens who had knowledge of similar stories would interpret their own police interactions just as negatively.

Data was gathered from telephone surveys conducted between June 2000 and March 2001 of 2,920 black and white licensed drivers in North Carolina selected using the Division of Motor Vehicles registration records. The telephone survey gathered information about driving habits, perceptions of police profiling, contact with police and perceptions of law enforcement and other government bodies. To improve the reliability of the results, Warren accounted for lack
of cooperation. While the response rates varied across race and gender groups, “the final sample closely matches the race-gender population of North Carolina licensed drivers.” (Warren, 2011, p.362). Also in an effort to improve reliability of the sample and to account for the limitation of underreporting, Warren noted 600 drivers specifically that that had speeding stops on record in the 12 months prior to the survey. Of the 600 drivers with known speeding stops from the sample of 2,920, 74.8% of Whites and 66.8% of Blacks within the subsample admitted that they were stopped in the past year by police (Warren, 2011, p.362) The final sample size for data collection was 630.

The dependent variable in this study is the perception of their police encounters in the past year. The licensed drivers surveyed responded with 0=“treated with respect” or 1=“not treated with respect”. Previous literature suggests that black citizens are more likely than whites to believe they were treated disrespectfully after a traffic stop by police. Warren theorized, though, that the reported experience would be similar, despite race, if vicarious experiences and history had similarities in reporting of police interactions. Warren also theorized that distrust of police or a perception of disrespect “are tied to both police behavior and a larger culture of distrust of societal institutions” (Warren, 2011, p.363). To this point, Warren found that, based on their last encounter with police, 21% of blacks surveyed and 15% of whites surveyed reported being treated disrespectfully by police.

The independent variables were measured with similar rating scales as the dependent variable. Licensed drivers surveyed were asked about vicarious experiences; if they heard of interactions with the police that were negative or disrespectful, experienced by family They were asked the same question about friends. Their responses were coded with 0=have not heard stories and 1=have heard at least one negative story. These experiences were asked of the past year since
time of survey. Licensed drivers were also asked about their trust in social institutions, specifically trust of being treated fairly by “teachers, judges, county commissioners, and congresspersons” (Warren, 2011, p.363). Their responses for each social institution were measured on a likert scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being total distrust and 5 being total trust. The responses were combined and divided by 5. This variable was used to put into perspective, the level of trust or distrust in institutions based on “racial variation in historical experiences…” (Warren, 2011, p.363).

The control variables for this study were race, age, educational attainment, speeding, reason given for a stop, number of prior stops and trust in police. Race was coded 0=white and 1=African-American. The United States of America. Age was measured by year, gender was coded 0=male and 1=female. To measure social class, Warren coded responses with 1=some high school 2=high school 3=some technical school or community college 4=some college 5=associates degree 6=bachelors or college degree and 7=graduate school or graduate degree.

Speeding was measured in an effort to “capture respondents who engage in risky driving, which makes them more susceptible to a police stop and more likely to report more negative encounters” (Warren, 2011, p.365). Responses were coded as 0=no and 1=yes when asked if the driver drives 10 or more miles above the speed limit. The reason given for the stop was coded into two categories, 0=reason given for stop and 1=no reason given by officer for the police stop. The number of prior stops was self-reported and used as a control measure for “unobserved race differences in law violation” (Warren, 2011, p.365). The last variable measured was the respondents trust in police, an effort to find out the participants expectations for police fairness. In response to the question, “In general, do you trust the police to treat you fairly?”, participant responses were coded as 1=total distrust 2 = mostly distrust 3 = neutral 4 = mostly trust and 5 =
total trust. (Warren, 2011, p.365). This variable also serves as a control variable for expectations about police interactions and behavior.

To run the data gathered of licensed North Caroline drivers from telephone surveys, Warren used logistic regression to show the influence of vicarious experience and trust in social institutions on the “race gap” (Warren, 2011, p.366). Some of Warren’s findings are as follows: 1) blacks reported 1.1 fewer stops in previous years than whites 2) blacks reported hearing two times the number of negative interactions with police from family and friends 3) On average, black drivers reported a more neutral experience when compared to white drivers who were found, on average, to “trust that the police will treat them fairly…” (Warren, 2011, p.368).

Vicarious experience and the participants trust in social institutions, both show moderate to strong correlation with perceptions of disrespect or unfair treatment by police. Also of note are the data showing moderately strong relationships between variables. For example, the correlation between perceptions of disrespect and vicarious experience for black participants was .238 compared to the correlation for white participants that was .195. The relationship between perceptions of unfair treatment or disrespect and trust in social institutions for black participants surveyed was -.271 compared to the relationship for white participants that was -.206. (Warren, 2011, p.368,369). Regardless of sex, Warren found that being African American, an older driver, driving above the speed limit, and having more prior stops, were all factors that increase the likelihood of perceiving disrespect by the police.

These findings take a critical look at the influence of various factors on satisfaction with police encounters. Warren found that those who heard stories about negative experiences with the police were four times more likely to report a negative experience with police after a personal
interaction with police, regardless of race. (Warren, 2011, p.369). This type of critical examination by Warren, should not minimize the prevalence of police violence on unarmed Black men that is prominent in modern times and has an impact on the health and development of African-American boys (Staggers-Hakim, 2016).

Desmond, Papachristos & Kirk (2016) examined the police violence and citizen crime reporting in Milwaukee, WI after highly publicized police violence. They reviewed data from over 1,104,369 911 calls. Controlling for factors such as prior call patterns and crime, while comparing predominantly Black versus White neighborhood blocks, the researchers found that after a highly publicized incident of police violence, black citizens in particular were less likely to contact the police for assistance after experiencing a crime. The decrease in calls to 911, continues for at least one year after the violent incident. Results indicate that a decrease of about 22,000 calls over a year or more was experienced. Accentuating Warren’s research regarding perceptions of police, Brunson (2007) found themes in the interviews of 40 African-American men about their direct and vicarious experiences with the police. They found an overall distrust in the police.

Movements such as the Black Lives Matter movement, were created from the prevalence of such police violence on unarmed Black males. An implication from these data results for future research is that by “building collaborative relationships with citizens to rebuild trust and confidence,” police may be able to partner with citizens to begin changing the perception of them, and reinforce their commitment to help citizens, no matter their race. (Warren, 2011, p.361). Vicarious experience and degree of trust in social institutions influenced responses of participants in this study.
View of the Black man in education.

Hotchkins and Dancy (2015) used a qualitative case study approach to capture similar sentiments of African-American males, who experienced being stereotyped while attending a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Charles, who was 20 years old at the time of the interview shared, “I wonder how they [White people] see me prior to knowing I am a nerd… I’m 6’03”, yet not an athlete, they pile all the Black stereotypes on me …Guess I’ll spend the rest of my life showing otherwise” (p.86) Eugene, who is 22, shared that, “if White people at SCU could separate my nerd from my Black they would do it in a hot minute. The first makes their grades better, but the second makes some of them nervous” (p.87)

Hotchkins and Dancy asserted that, based on their own literature reviews, supports for African American males in higher education is imperative, particularly “in Predominantly White Institution (PWI) environments where racism is overwhelmingly present.” (Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015, p.74) The effects of this racism include “marginalized presence in White institutions… cumulative affects of racial battle fatigue… enduring racial microaggressions (sic)…and confronting race-related color-blind racism.” (Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015, p.74)

Other participants in this study discussed the motivation to complete their degrees in honor of their ancestors who did not have the same educational opportunities. Still, that motivation does not erase the common sentiment expressed by the participants, “I get that look like, “you’re Black; how are you a Gates Millennial Scholar?” (p.87) Despite their accomplishments, participants felt like “White folks are White folks no matter whether I’m on campus or having lunch in the city; they act like I’m under suspicion until they understand I go do (sic) SCU, then it’s all good. Well, partially good.” Hotchkins and Dancy’s qualitative study sought to focus on
students like the aforementioned who were academically successful at a PWI and a black male. To do this, their research question was “how do high-achieving African American male collegians embody and perform excellence while attending a predominantly White Institution (PWI)?” (Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015, p.75)

Hotchkins and Darby wondered if they would find sentiments similar to those of Allen (1992) which purported that HBCU’s had environments more conducive to achievement for black student outcomes. Their qualitative study was conducted at Southern Christian University (SCU). In 2014, of the 11,650 undergraduate students enrolled at SCU, 357 were black males, accounting for about 3% of the student population. Of those 357, seven participants were selected for the qualitative study, accounting for 1% of the black male student population. (Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015, p.81). Purposeful criterion sampling was used to recruit participants that fit the participant criteria, 1) identify as African American by self-report 2) existing leader in a student organization at the time of the study 3) be enrolled at SCU. The seven selected held leadership positions in both predominantly White, as well as historically Black organizations.

Data was collected from each participant over the course of 6 weeks from the time of first interview. Three in depth, face-to-face interviews were conducted with each of the seven participants. Each semi-structured interview was 60-90 minutes. A 30-60 minute follow-up interview was conducted in person within six weeks of the first interview for each participant. The participants were also observed in three settings; their organization, study group and in-class. This provided context for the data gathered in the in-depth interviews. Participants were asked questions regarding, “leadership styles, organizational climates, and interactions with White peers, faculty, and administrators to investigate key moments that shaped their perspectives” (Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015, p.81).
From their qualitative interviews, Hotchkins and Dancy settled on three prominent themes coded as, “1) major focus as the “major focus,” 2) Black + male + nerd = academic anomaly, and 3) intergenerational fulfillment.” (Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015, p.83). The researchers were able to use the first person interviews to understand that for the first theme, participants were committed to completing school because school was viewed by them overall as a privilege, as opposed to a given right. For the second theme, Hotchkins and Dancy defined the theme “as a student’s ability to self-actualize and compare self-perceptions to environmental assumptions about what it means to be Black, male, and intellectual” (Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015, p.86). Participants revealed that overall, they all noticed some differences in their identities as Black, nerd (by self-label) and male.

The third theme stems from a consistent desire throughout participant interviews to use their educational attainment to achieve Black equality. They shared that education was an integral part of their ability to improve the lives of older leaders in the family and community. All participants, who were high achieving academically, shared feelings of exclusion because of race from professors and students alike, while expressing a conscious need to compete with white counterparts, all while trying to navigate and “choose when to be authentically Black…” (Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015, p.88). Notably, across participant interviews, this desire for high academic achievement and the promotion and improvement of communities from the opportunities that are assumed to come from higher education, stem from “desires to meet elders’ and parents’ expectations of being “excellent for the betterment of their communities both locally and globally” (Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015, p.88). Many of the participants viewed their involvement in organi-
zations and institutions on campus, particularly those they held office in, as opportunities to promote use of resources on campus by black students, as well as a way to improve black student retention.

These experiences in educational prestige show the importance of education through the eyes of young black men who have already followed a path of educational pursuits and attainment. While the educational success is noteworthy, the pressures experienced by these young men, directly related to race relations and stereotypes because of race, create symptoms of self-doubt, depression, isolation and anxiety, symptoms that are recurrently discussed in these writings as symptoms seen in both young and old generations of black men.

Sinanan (2012) found Black male college students felt isolated, possibly leading to a lack of esteem or respect, in predominantly white settings of education. This isolation is often attributed to skin color. This was a theme found in the qualitative research study that interviewed 13 Black males 18 – 25 years of age “to examine African-American male students’ social and academic experiences at a small, predominantly White, liberal arts college in southern New Jersey” (Sinanan, 2012) in a focus group that lasted 1.5 hours. The purpose of this study was to analyze the participants’ perceptions of the acceptance of Black men on campus and the effects of that perception on their college experience at a predominantly white college. Responses were taped and transcribed by the researcher. While 13 participants were interviewed during the focus group for this study, similar research should be conducted at more institutions to cast a wider net on the feelings of Black males attending PWI’s.

The participants were administered an open ended questionnaire. Researchers covered topics that included, but were not limited to “expectations of the college experience … previous experience with a diverse faculty and student population…”(p.3). The interview responses were
analyzed with constant comparative methods, allowing for important themes to emerge based on student perceptions. The researcher paid careful attention to the methods employed in order to provide participants with as much comfort as possible in a nonthreatening setting, being cautious not to make them feel more isolated or uncomfortable than expressed in the study.

The main themes found were: 1. Level of Preparation for College Life at a PWI 2. Lack of Belonging in a New Social Environment 3. Feelings of Social and Personal Isolation 4. Feelings of Negativity Toward the Faculty. Participants shared that they felt ill-prepared for daily life in a predominantly White setting and that their colleagues or peers appeared just as ill-prepared as they used the Black males as the experts and spokespersons for the whole race of Blacks, making the participants uncomfortable in their educational setting, feeling singled out because of their skin color. Ten of the participants expressed feelings of underrepresentation and most participants agreed that the number of Black males on the college campus was so small that they knew all of the Black males, by name, on campus, creating a sense of wonder as to whether or not a PWI was appropriate for them to attend. More extensively than feeling underrepresented, is the reality that some participants felt “invisible” (p.4) and “treated differently by White faculty” (p.5). While issues of confidentiality may have been a concern with such a small Black male population on campus, some in the group reported being able to use one another as a support system.

The study shows a lack of attention at predominantly white institutions to the integration and inclusion of Black males. The college experience for the young Black males in this study was dampened by the “unexpected burden” (p.4) of experiences of isolation, exclusion and perceived campus racism with little, if any, support from school administration or campus organizations. After excelling to an institution of high learning, a young black man should not feel
“trapped in a socially isolated environment” (p.4) with no support from the institution that declared to desire his attendance, complete with skin color, when they issued him an acceptance letter. Some of the participants in this study were able to connect the aforementioned to feelings of worthlessness, and therefore, feeling a lack of esteem or respect from the institution when they theorized, based on treatment by the college, that they were “only being seen as ‘EOF’ (Educational Opportunity Fund) students.” (p.4) In the 21st century, Black males at PWI’s report a lack of respect for their presence, based on skin color. An examination should be conducted for themes in accounts of Black males that lived through the Civil Rights Movement.

**View of the Black man in sports.**

Another area that Black men experience stereotypes and disrespect, is in the context of professional sports. Harrison (1998) asserted that large salaries often overshadow racist and prejudicial issues that are rampant in the sports community. Hutchinson (1997), explained that “racism is subtle in sports, covertly and overtly apparent at times, but problematic to the critical eye” (Harrison, 1998, p. 46). The success of some black athletes is regularly used “as an argument to the effect that there is no real discrimination against blacks…” (Pieterse, 1995, p.132). However, discrimination is found in sports, even at the collegiate level. Often “the black athlete is exploited when he is denied access to a substantive education” (Sailes, 1985, p. 439). Rhoden (2010) relayed an experience when he spoke with Michael Jordan in person “about the racism that most of us take for granted as part of life in the United States” and found that he was certainly “aware of the double standards even at his level” (p.210).

Evidence of racism can be found in famous quotes giving evidence of the racism from sports commentators like Jimmy “The Greek” Snyder’s in 1988 that “blacks enjoyed a race-based, genetic advantage over whites rooted in slave-breeding practices” (Oates, 2016, p.163).
Hutchinson (1997) argues that Jimmy “The Greek” Snyder was only saying “what many of the men who make the decisions in the sports profession really think about black athletes” (p.46). Black athletes are predominantly “still black performers employed for the amusement and entertainment”, similar to the Black male slaves, known as Black Bucks, used for entertainment of slave masters while literally fighting for their lives (Harrison, 1998). While mainstream media may consider professional sports “an exception to patterns of racism in employment,” black athletes, especially on collegiate and professional levels, are often introduced to the professional level of the sport through a process, often referred to, as “the Auction block” (Dufur & Feinberg, 2008, p.56) in reference to the black athletes participating in it. In 1987, the Vice President of Major League Baseball’s LA Dodgers team, Al Campanis interviewed on a night time nationally syndicated show called “Nightline”. When asked about the lack of Black leadership in MLB, including management, he denied that it had anything to do with racism or prejudice and asserted, “I truly believe they may not have some of the necessities to be, let’s say, a field manager or perhaps a general manager” (Bass, 2005).

In 2016, several high profile cases of police violence against unarmed Black men were making headlines. One was the case of Eric Garner, who died after excessive police force used outside of a convenience store. Garner was held on the ground by police and was heard on video telling them, “I can’t breathe” repeatedly before he died (Copeland, 2017). A case like this is among those that the San Francisco 49ers former quarterback, Colin Kaepernick, began publicly protesting on August 14, 2016 by sitting during the National Anthem at the start of a nationally televised National Football League (NFL) game. A week later, on August 20, 2016, he knelt during the anthem. Athletes before him have protested injustice in countless ways at televised
games but Kaepernick’s kneel became a nationwide discussion when he told the media afterwards, “I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color…” and added, “To me this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way” (Hauser, 2016). Kaepernick’s kneel, rather than the injustice he was protesting, became the focus of media attention, even drawing comments from Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader who said that his actions were “dumb and disrespectful” (Copeland, 2017). While some concur with her, others continue to be inspired by the message behind the protest, the same message that was being protested in 1968 when Olympic competitors Tommie Smith and John Carlos protested for equality and against poverty on the victory podium, without shoes (symbolizing poverty) and with a raised fist donned in a black glove, in a “Black Power” salute that was seen around the world.

The Black male experience in The United States of America is one laden with recurring experiences of disrespect in a variety of settings, spanning across social classes and contexts. The experiences of disrespect form a parallel when the experiences of black adolescent males and those 65 years of age and older are compared. These experiences within various contexts contribute to the rising incidents and statistics of depression, low sense of self-worth, stress and anger. This study found themes in the worldview of older Black men that may be similar or dissimilar to the sentiments expressed in the aforementioned research. Do all Black men have knowledge of, or an experience with discrimination or disrespect in a social, political or educational context? Answers to that question are answered in this qualitative study that explores the experiences of Black men born between 1940 and 1952 that shaped their view of the world throughout their journey to manhood.
Statement of the problem

This qualitative study captured the experiences and world views of Black men, ages 66-78 and found themes in their experiences as they journeyed to manhood in The United States of America through first person interviews. The following research questions were answered:

1. How would a Black man born in or before 1953 describe what it means to be a Black man in The United States of America?

2. What is one piece of advice on manhood that a Black man, born in or before 1953, would give to a young man Black man growing up in The United States of America?

Social crisis.

Black boys are in a social crisis. Over a decade ago, Noguera (2003) wrote about the crisis black boys were in at that time, “African-American males are in deep trouble… have the fastest growing rate for suicide… have the highest probability of dying in the 1st year of life… are least likely to be hired and in many cities, the most likely to be unemployed….” (p. 431, 432). Fifteen years later in 2018, “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot” and “I Can’t Breathe” have become memorable phrases that are direct links to the stories that emphasize the injustices suffered by black males and the social crisis that continues to exist, though created long before Noguera’s writings.

Within the social crisis that Black boys are in, grows a crisis of a rise in young black males with “low self-esteem, learned helplessness, anger… grief, stress, and depression” (Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993, p.425), hopelessness (Nyborg & Curry, 2003, p.262), aggression, trouble with the legal system or making decisions that would put them at risk for negative legal consequences such as illegal weapon possession and drug use. (Rich & Grey, 2005, p.822).
Researchers have asserted that these behaviors and symptoms are the outcomes that result from enduring long term social injustices. (Noguera, 2003) Yet the behaviors and symptoms are so prominently displayed in the media as stereotypical behaviors of Black males, that society often loses sight of or minimizes the national climate and environmental realities that negatively impact them.

Racism.

Older Black males may have experienced the effects of the nation’s current climate in different forms; one of those is in the form of racism. Scarce is the research that highlights the impact of The United States of America’s similar historical social climates (e.g., Civil Rights Movement) on Black men who would be at least 65 years old today. While there are records of youth participation in the organization of movements and boycotts during the Civil Rights era, little, if any, research shows the long term effects on Black boys growing up during that time, witnessing covert racism, experiencing acts of racism and discrimination, while witnessing or being privy to violent acts that were made acceptable by the community in the form of events such as lynchings (Wendt, 2007). Black and Rubinstein (2009) added to the scarce research on elderly Black men. Black male participants 80+ years old were interviewed and they all recounted that prejudice and acts of discrimination permeated their lives and shaped their actions, decisions, and views of the world. One man made a direct comparison between skin color and “people look at you like you’re dirt” (Black and Rubinstein, 2009) The effects of this discrimination and prejudice through the eyes of these participants is salient and cannot be ignored.
The aforementioned gaps in research created the need to examine the older Black man’s views of respect or lack thereof in The United States of America then and now. This study contributes to filling that gap, and research through the first person interviews of older Black men and examined their views and perspectives of being Black men in the United States of America.

To explore the experiences of Black males 65 years of age and older, the research answered the following questions: 1. How would a Black man born in or before 1953 describe what it means to be a Black man in The United States of America? 2. What is one piece of advice on manhood that a Black man, born in or before 1953, would give to a young man Black man growing up in The United States of America?

The feeling of disrespect.

Several factors lead to feelings of disrespect, experienced by Black men; their responses to this perceived disrespect are one reason that Clinicians are encouraged to foster respect in their therapeutic relationships with these men. Franklin and Boyd-Franklin (2000) used case examples to show how racial slights lead to “psychological invisibility” and “a feeling of not being seen as a person of worth” (Franklin and Boyd-Franklin, 2000, p. 33). Of note from their case studies and research is the importance of examining the feelings of disrespect and low self-worth held by Black men as a result of the “perceived connection between their experiences of racism and their inordinately high social and health risk factors.” The researchers offer some possible ways to manage the impact of racial slights including; encouraging self-empowerment, sharing stories of racism and how to handle them differently, and developing their own racial identity.

Rich and Grey (2005) conducted qualitative interviews with black men to understand their experiences of violence. The responses of these men, to the violence they experienced, varied based on their perceived need for, or lack of safety after violence. These men were between
the ages of 18 to 30 years old. The researchers assessed for PTSD symptoms post injury and used semi structured interviews to ask open-ended questions about past trauma, trust in the justice system, safety and other factors. Among other themes found by researchers through this qualitative study, were 1) a feeling of loss of respect and 2) symptoms of trauma (Rich & Grey, 2005). The limitations in this study are that the data was gathered in a personal home or in the hospital in Boston; researchers should be cautious in using the results to generalize.

Nyborg and Curry (2003) highlighted the impact of perceived racism on psychological symptoms and well being of 84 African-American boys. To examine this, they administered several assessments to the child including PTSD symptoms scales. Nyborg and Curry’s research accentuates the importance of understanding respect through the eyes of clients. The results of their study showed, among many other things, that perceived racism had an effect on participants. The effects were observed in “lower self concept, and higher levels of hopelessness” (Nyborg & Curry, 2003, p.264). This section will detail how these three studies carry the theme of, the impact of racism on Black boys and men.

The impact of racism.

Franklin and Boyd-Franklin (2000, p. 33) highlighted, just as Rich and Grey did, the impact of violence on African-American men, showing that they “have one of the lowest life expectancies in the general population due to homicide.” Franklin and Boyd-Franklin (2000) explored the feeling of disrespect leading to the outcome of low self esteem and a feeling of invisibility. Even while African American men fight to defeat stereotypes, they’re fighting the “implicit societal expectations about gender-role fulfillment”. The disrespect felt by the African-American men in this study because of societies perpetuation of violence and discrimination, leads to low self-esteem, only off set as “close family acted as a buffer against role strain…helped them gain
acknowledgment, satisfaction, and validation as individuals” (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000, p. 38). Ladson-Billings (2009) details the impact of the racially motivated killing of 14-year-old Emmett Till who was visiting his family in Mississippi from Chicago when he was kidnapped from their home and brutally murdered by a group of White men. This killing, and pictures of his mutilated body in his casket made national news in 1955 and his murderers were all found not guilty.

Nyborg and Curry (2003) also highlight the influence of the stressors of racism and discrimination on young African-American males, which lead to the feeling of disrespect by revisiting the research of the negative effects of racism on adults. With this research in mind, they wondered if they would see “similar psychological symptoms related to racism found in adult studies, such as anger and frustration….” Nyborg and Curry performed quantitative research in a Southeastern city with a sample of “84 African-American boys ages 10 to 15 years and their primary caregiver” (Nyborg & Curry, 2003, p.260). Their study found that experiences of the stressors of racism and discrimination, self-reported by the boys and caregivers through a series of researcher administered questionnaires, resulted in symptoms of “feelings of inadequacy…low self-esteem…depressive symptoms” (Nyborg & Curry, 2003, p. 264).

**The impact of disrespect**

Rich and Grey (2005) performed a qualitative study that found themes in the consequences of recurrent trauma among young black men based on previous research of Elijah Anderson and his “code of the street” thesis. Their research reinforces the importance of understanding the individual aspects of a client instead of solely focusing on symptoms. While homicide stats across the country during the time of the study were declining, violent injury was increasing across the United States (Rich & Grey, 2005, p. 816). Rich and Grey explore those rates
of violent injury and interviewed African-American men who sustained a violent injury. Themes were found through the qualitative study and for the purpose of this research, the theme “‘Being a Sucker”: Loss of Respect” is explored. This feeling of disrespect resulting from the stressor of violence is one of the most dangerous of the explored herein. It leads to anger and aggression as a result of recurrent trauma from a pattern of retaliation. This retaliation is from Anderson’s and a “Code of the Street” which mandates that when you feel disrespected “whether physically, emotionally, or materially, you must respond aggressively to regain your respect.” (p. 817) The most disrespectful act according to that “Code of the Street” is an act of violence and unless the victim wants to be “vulnerable to repeated victimization”, they will do anything needed so that they will not “have the reputation of ‘sucker’ or ‘punk,’” including perpetuating the violence.

Rich and Grey (2005) describe the plight of young African-American boys “in the inner city” (p.816). As such, these young men are constantly faced with stressors which range in severity as the authors poignantly explain the paths that these factors carve for recurrent trauma. These stressors include violence which is used to reinforce respect in the community examined. In particular, this qualitative study by Rich and Grey (2005) highlights the stories of 35 African-American men who were interviewed immediately and two weeks after an act of violence was inflicted on them. The interviews conducted reveal the feelings carried by the victims, of which, “Loss of Respect” (Rich & Grey, 2005, p. 817) implies that a victim “must respond aggressively to regain your respect” (Rich & Grey, 2005, p. 817).

Rich and Grey (2005) describe the outcomes of low self-concept, aggression, illegal weapon possession and drug use. Participants shared feelings of disrespect and the need to gain and maintain respect. Through their experiences of injustice and disrespect, these Black men de-
veloped coping mechanisms as they navigated through the world. The coping mechanisms included “an acute perception about others’ intentions” (Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993, p.301), their “anger was necessary for maintaining vigilance against future oppression” (Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993, p.302). These sentiments are similar to the ones expressed by young Black men in Rich and Grey’s 2005 study that showed the ways young men adjusted to discrimination and racism as a survival skill. This dynamic is described in Rich and Grey’s (2005) study and referred to as the “Code of the Street” (Rich & Grey, 2005, p. 816). The need for respect is a feeling directly related to the stressor of “how young Black men protect themselves in the inner cities” (Rich & Grey, 2005, p. 816). That stressor is directly linked to environmental factors, of which an individual usually has little, if any, control, including socio-economic status, neighborhood, gender and race.

Despite the factors that lead to this point, Clinicians, the police and other outsiders often see the negative behaviors of Black males first, including risking legal involvement, aggression and anger (Rich & Grey, 2005). By focusing on the external behaviors alone, trying to solely squelch symptoms, Clinicians often miss the story, from the Black male’s perspective, that led him to seek assistance for his mental health. This leads to a cycle of re-occurring behaviors, such as re-offending behaviors.

Rich and Grey (2005) highlight the outcome of aggression and anger, rooted in the need to protect oneself in an environment not of one’s own choosing. Often times, despite the desire to escape the stressors that lead to violence, victims of violence “return to communities where violence is all around them and where they feel especially vulnerable.” One area highlighted as a need for research is “how risk factors work together to precipitate victimization” (816). For older Black men who lived through the Civil Rights Movement, the stress and threat of violence was
high, particularly for those in the South (Steve, Schreck, et al, 2006). While this literature review does not answer that specific call for research, the aforementioned shows that respect is earned, and taken, in different ways. A counselor with an African American male client who has been a victim of violence would be wise to delve into the clients view of respect, how to earn it, how to lose it and the importance of it. It is important to understand what the client’s expectation is for what happens after victimization, and how those risk factors may lead to stressors that elicit feelings of disrespect that result in outcomes such as aggression and anger.

**Summary**

History repeats itself. This literature review has attempted to show the numerous contexts where it is evident that Black males of all ages continue to experience a lack of respect and a sense of devaluation in The United States of America. This is seen in the way that the Black Man is viewed by others, how he is viewed in mental health settings, how he is viewed in police and community relations, in education and in sports. More research is needed 1) examining the impact of the Black man’s views of their experiences in the United States of America and 2) detailing their views of respect. In light of the gap in the literature, the following study was conducted to allow the reader to understand current context of respect in the literature, the Black male experience within it, the importance of giving and receiving it, and follow the experiences in rare qualitative interviews, of older Black males. This review of relevant studies highlights the need for more research to be conducted among this population of Black males, to allow the opportunity for their experiences to be heard by generations that follow them, generations that are living in social and political climates similar to that of the Civil Rights Movement.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methodology for this research study, “What does it mean to be a Black man in America?” The study utilized a qualitative research methodology, based on a phenomenological research approach, searching for themes in the lived experiences of Black men, 65 years of age and older. Through first person interviews, themes reveal commonalities in the participants’ experiences and reveal what life is like for these Black men in the United States of America. The goal for this research is that lived experiences of Black men in America, 65 years of age and older, may give counselors another lens with which to view Black males. More details on the research design and data analysis plan are provided in this chapter.

Study oversight

This study was supervised by the members of this researcher’s dissertation committee, three of whom are licensed mental health clinicians and professors teaching at Virginia Tech. The fourth committee member is a Lecturer of African American Studies at the University of Florida. These committee members were able to the review and critique the interview protocol, and contribute to the format and ideas behind the research and interview questions created. They, along with the two colleagues selected to review interview transcriptions (See coding team below) have been able to provide regular feedback and critiques of “the unfolding process of interpreting the phenomena” (Kenny & Fourie, 2015, p.1279).

The researcher.

The researcher served as the inquirer for this study. She is a doctoral student at Virginia Tech, studying Counseling Education and Supervision. She has worked in the human services field, mainly in outpatient mental health centers for the last nine years. She has completed
coursework in Research and Evaluation, Research Methods and has experience in practical application of these.

**The coding team.**

The coding team was made up of three researchers; the researcher of this study, along with two other Master’s level clinicians who are completing their doctoral degrees at Virginia Tech. These two coding team members have completed graduate coursework in qualitative research and are both licensed clinicians. More details on the research design and data analysis plan are provided below.

**Research design**

The study was guided by the following research questions: 1) How would a Black man, born in or before 1953, describe what it is means to be a Black man in America? And 2) What is one piece of advice on manhood that a Black man born in or before 1953 would give to a young Black man growing up in the United States of America?

**Qualitative research approach.**

A phenomenological research approach was used for this study. In qualitative research, “there are no absolute rights and wrongs…but different ways of looking at things that can and must be justified without compromising the essence of the research….” (Walls, Parahoo & Fleming, 2010, p.12). The phenomenological research approach does not create nor test a hypothesis, instead it allows researchers to grasp the meaning “and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for a person or group of people” (Patton, 2015, p.573). In this study, the situation of interest, or the phenomenon, is the experience of being a black man who grew up in the United States of America.
For this study, a phenomenological approach allowed the researcher to focus attention on exploring how eight Black men, born in or before 1953, have transformed their experiences growing up and living in the United States of America “into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning” (Patton, 2015, p.115). Patton (2015), highlights that in order to find the essence in these lived experiences, the researcher “must undertake in-depth interviews with people who have directly experienced the phenomena of interest…as opposed to secondhand experience” (p.115).

Common characteristics of phenomenological research studies include open-ended interview questions, open-minded examination of experiences and small sample sizes, usually less than 10 participants (Patton, 2015). The researcher was able to accomplish these through first-person interviews with eight men, born between the years 1940 and 1952. These interviews were transcribed, and transcriptions were repeatedly checked for accuracy through meticulous repetitious listening of the audio recordings by the researcher. After transcription, the researcher used open coding to gather individual themes for each interview, organizing themes by each research question. The themes discovered through multiple reviews of the transcript content, were reviewed again to narrow the focus of the themes discussion. This refocused coding allowed for the researcher to develop themes that were discussed, compared and analyzed with the coding team. Themes and subthemes will be explored in Chapter 4.

**Data analysis.**

In a phenomenological research study, using the methodology of transcendental phenomenology, specific processes are followed for data analysis. The data analysis processes required
the researcher to immerse herself in the transcriptions and audio recordings of the first person interviews collected for the study. The Modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method, detailed herein, was used to implement the processes for data analysis.

**Bracketing and the researcher’s Epoche.**

Bracketing, explained by Elo and Kyngäs (2008), identifies preconceived beliefs about the phenomenon in order to avoid clinician bias. Using Moustakas’ (1994) explanation of the Modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method, the researcher implemented bracketing through “researcher’s Epoche” and “transcendental-phenomenological reduction” (p.33). Moustakas explains that “Epoche is a greek word meaning to refrain from judgment, to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things.” To fulfill this first process in the aforementioned method by Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen, this researcher completed one journal entry of her feelings and thoughts on the phenomenon, prior to posting the flyers advertising the study. Before and after each first-person interview, the researcher completed similar journal entries, focusing on any counterproductive feelings that could be identified, in an effort to dispel them and reveal preconceived notions that may have existed prior to the interview. This journaling, was organized chronologically to analyze and include in reflections. It also provided a “map for the researcher to articulate the journey of conceptualizing data, wrestling with complications…” (Kenny & Fourie, 2015, p.1272).

Moustakas emphasizes that the Epoche is an essential first process to complete in phenomenological research. In the Epoche, a method of bracketing, the world being examined is placed in a figurative bracket by the researcher. The occurrences in this separated world must be “cleared of ordinary thought and is present before us as a phenomenon to be gazed upon, to be known naively and freshly through a ‘purified’ consciousness” (Moustakas, 1994, p.85).
**Transcendental phenomenological reduction.**

Transcendental phenomenological reduction benefits from bracketing and is the next step in the process of analyzing data according to the Modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. Patton (2015) described that this process assumes “there is an essence or essences to shared experience” (p.116); in this study it is the essence of being a Black man in the United States of America. The researcher was able to use transcendental phenomenological reduction to consider each man’s experience separately, through verbatim transcription of each of their lived experiences, shared through their responses to the nine questions asked in the first-person interviews. The researcher reviewed the transcriptions and audio recordings, attempting to hear the experiences in a way that “everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time” (Moustakas, 1994, p.34), noting important themes and approaching each of those themes with equal value.

**Imaginative variation.**

After the transcendental phenomenological reduction process was completed, examining each participant’s interview individually and separate from the others, imaginative variation was used to grasp the prominent and common themes among the participant’s experiences (Moustakas, 1994). This required the researcher to examine the themes found in each individual’s experience, then find commonalities among them, noting those that were found in the majority of experiences. During the transcendental phenomenological reduction and imaginative variation processes, the coding team was used to increase the rigor of the analysis. They were asked to: 1) review the transcriptions 2) generate their own themes 3) review the researcher’s themes drawn from those transcriptions and 4) provide feedback on areas where their independently discovered themes aligned or did not align with the researcher’s themes. The themes detailed in chapter 4 emerged from this discussion and consensus.
Synthesize.

The use of these two processes to “form a textual structural essence of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994) is specifically referred to as the process of “synthesizing” in the Modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. From the phenomenological approach used to analyze the data gathered in the first person interviews with Black men born between 1940 and 1952, the researcher was able to create composite descriptions representing the essence of what it means for each of these men to be a Black man in the United States of America.

Rigor and credibility

Avoidance of potential inquirer bias.

By establishing credibility in this study, the researcher has been able to generate “confidence in the truth value of the findings of qualitative research” (Barusch, Gringeri & George, 2011). Reflexivity is one strategy used that gives the researcher the opportunity to go beyond the data and research and truly examine the basis of her knowledge and the source of it. It is “concerned with the researcher being aware of how their knowledge and clinical experience can influence data gathering and analysis” (Walls, Parahoo & Fleming, 2010, p.11). A plethora of research and reading by the researcher, prior to the start of this study, has focused on Black adolescent boys, including but not limited to their development, interpersonal relationships, their view of the world and their view of authority. The researcher often wonders what life will be like for those young men if they make it to adulthood. Curiosity also looms around how their view of the world changes, or if it remains constant, as they get older. That curiosity sparked the basis for this study from the first-person accounts of these African-American and Black men.

The increase in coverage of violence against young Black boys motivated this researcher to examine how those young men were perceived from different sources, whether it be in writing
and research or media coverage. At the same time, the interest in this research was sparked by the personal observations by the researcher of a prevalence in ADHD, conduct disorder and bipolar disorder diagnoses for Black boys and adolescents in outpatient mental health centers. The misdiagnosis of Black boys remains a focus of research conducted, and of presentations given by the researcher.

**Strategies for establishing rigor and credibility.**

Barusch, Gringeri, and George (2011) emphasized the importance of researchers being accountable for their work by sharing the strategies used to establish rigor and credibility in a study. They asserted “without accountability, the work simply cannot be judged” (Barusch, Gringeri, & George, 2011, p.13). Creswell (2007) recommended that researchers use at least two of the following eight key strategies: prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation, peer review or debriefing, negative case analysis, reflexivity (clarification of researcher bias), member-checking, thick descriptions, and external audits. Journaling before and after interviews was one method used as evidence of reflexivity in this study. The other strategies used were:

1) The researcher and advisor reviewed the interview questions in advance of the participant interviews to screen out any bias in the way that the interview questions were asked.

2) Peer debriefing, which was detailed above in the collaboration with the coding team and “supports researchers in exploring their perspectives, reactions and analyses” (Barusch, Gringeri, & George, 2011 p.12)

3) Prolonged engagement is a strategy used to identify and question the data, “and essentially come to see and understand a setting as insiders see and understand it” (Barusch, Gringeri, & George, 2011, p.12). This strategy uses “bracketing”, a strategy detailed in the data analysis.
section of this chapter, through exploration of the researcher’s Epoche and through the process of transcendental phenomenological reduction.

4) Critiques and feedback from the dissertation committee and coding team also added to the credibility of the study.

These strategies used in the study for establishing rigor “are important in helping researchers strengthen the quality of their work” (Barusch, Gringeri, & George, 2011; Creswell, 2007).

Participants

Recruitment.

The researcher posted flyers (refer to Appendix C), approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Virginia Tech, on community bulletin boards in the Washington, DC Metro area. The flyer advertising the study included a phone number to contact the researcher and the inclusion criteria. While recruitment occurred in the DC metropolitan area, men from anywhere in the United States were eligible. Participants were expected to:

1. Contact the researcher to participate in the study via telephone call or text message from flyer advertisements

2. Provide an email or mailing address where they could receive the informed consent for advanced review.

3. Agree to a 1-hour (interview duration will vary) audio-recorded interview at South Bowie Public library in a private meeting room where no one would be able to hear the interview. The researcher used an electronic recording device, only accessible to the researcher to record each interview.
4. Share experiences, prompted by interview questions, as black men growing up in the United States of America (see Table 1) and provide basic demographic information on a written survey (see Appendix B for details).

Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant to identify their interview. Audio recordings include the participant’s voices and are not labeled with their name or contact information. Identifying information such as name and contact information were obtained to send the informed consent for advance review. Written responses to the demographic questionnaire have been stored in a locked file. After analyses are complete, the recordings will be erased in accordance with the IRB protocol.

**Eight participants.**

Based on responses, the researcher was able to communicate with interested individuals by telephone and eight interviews were scheduled. Some participants appeared to see the flyer from community postings and others appeared to have heard of the study through word of mouth from other people who saw the community postings. Three to seven days prior to the scheduled interviews, as determined by participant’s preferences, the researcher sent the consent form via electronic mail to each participant for review. The researcher was able to answer participant questions about the study prior to the interviews. The researcher called or emailed each participant the day before the scheduled interview in order to provide an appointment reminder. Each of the participants was asked to sign the consent form to confirm understanding of study requirements and limitations before the interview began.

The purposeful sample of eight participants ranged in age from 66 to 78 years of age, with an average age of 71 years old. When asked how each would describe their race, five identified as African-American, two identified as Black, and one preferred not to identify, finally
choosing African-American “If I have to”. Three of these men lived in Washington, DC for most of their childhoods, two in Brooklyn, New York, one in Glassboro, New Jersey, one in Lenoir, North Carolina, and one in Charleston, West Virginia. They each attended public schools at some point, two attended private schools as well, with varying experiences attending segregated and integrated schools. Participants reported a wide range of work and career paths throughout their lives from childhood through present day.

**Interview format**

The study involved a single interview with participants that were asked questions about their life experiences as a Black man in America. Since the researcher did not know their life history or experiences, it was noted that remembering any unpleasant experiences could cause some emotional distress. If at any time, the discussions regarding life experiences made them uncomfortable, the informed consents reinforced that the participants were not under any obligation and could opt to terminate the interview at any time. A list of local support services was available to provide to the participants as needed. Any expenses accrued for seeking or receiving treatment would have been the responsibility of the participant and not that of the research project, research team, or Virginia Tech. All participants completed the interview without requesting termination. All participants also offered to speak to the researcher again about their experiences in the future. Most asked for a copy of the final dissertation. The one-on-one interviews ranged from 19 – 92 minutes and answer these research questions:

1. How would a Black man born in or before 1953 describe what it means to be a Black man in The United States of America?
2. What is one piece of advice on manhood that a Black man born in or before 1953 give to a young man Black man growing up in The United States of America?

**Interview questions.**

For the interview, the researcher used a standardized open-ended interview design, allowing “participants to contribute as much detailed information as they desire and it also allows the researcher to ask probing questions as a means of follow-up” (Turner, 2010). Questions were asked as neutral as possible with efforts focused on identical delivery of questions (See Table 1). The researcher avoided judgmental, suggestive or controversial wording that may have influenced participant answers in the interview prompts and follow up questions. Questions were asked one at a time, in the same order that they were presented on the advertisement flyers posted for the study. “Why” questions were not asked of the participants. Five of the participants pointed out a typo in the interview questions on the flyer; each of them waited until the conclusion of the interview to point it out to the researcher, each of them expressing sentiments of wanting to help the researcher.

Creswell (2007) suggests being flexible with the construction of research questions. He makes the assertion that participants may not answer the exact question being asked by the researcher and, may actually answer a question that is asked in another question later in the interview. This occurred with several participants when answering interview questions 2 and 9. During review of the transcriptions, the researcher noted that when answering question 9 (If you could give the 18-year-old you, one sentence of advice on what it takes to be a man, what would you say?), half of the participants eluded to their answer to question 2 (What does it take to be a respected Black man in America?). Interview question 9 was created to elicit advice to younger
generations of Black men, from older men who have lived through social and political climates that mimic those that exist today, detailed in chapters 1 and 2. Question 3 in Table 1 (Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions and Prompts) is a closed ended question. None of the participants required an interview prompt after question 3, they each expanded on their unanimous “yes” with examples of how the time in which they grew up impacts who they are now. The wording of the questions in this interview design is structured so that each participant answered identical questions. To create the interview questions, the researcher used some suggestions offered by Turner (2010) and Patton (2015).

Each interview question was created in hopes of prompting the participants to recall early memories of growing up in the United States of America. Questions were also created to prompt participants to recall specific memories that stand out from their childhood that shape their perceptions of being a Black man in America. The influence of their upbringing on their adult life was examined through questions 3 and 8, which ask about the impact of early memories and the time in which they grew up. Some of their values were examined through questions about what it takes to be “a respected Black man”. Their views of segregation were examined through responses to question 5, “what can you tell me about it?” Their means of maintenance and persistence was examined through responses to question 6. These interview questions for research question 1 were created to gather information useful to examine their perceptions; their responses gave the researcher data to describe, from shared experiences, what it is like to be a Black man in America. Although prompts were created for each interview question, many of them were not used during the interviews because participants easily answered most questions without need for clarification and prompts. Prompts were often required for questions 6 and 7. A few participants needed clarification prior to answering question 6. One asked, “helped me to
maintain or persist what?” For question 7, most participants reported that they do not personally know someone who has gone to counseling. With the interview prompts though, they were able to offer their viewpoints on Counseling.

**Interview guide**

The following interview questions and prompts were asked of the participants to guide the research study:

**Table 1: Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions and Prompts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Interview Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How would a Black man, born in or before 1953, describe what it is means to be a Black man in America?</td>
<td>1. What is it like to be a Black man in the United States of America?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview Prompt:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What is the difference, if any, between being a Black man in America versus being a man of any other race or ethnicity in America?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What does it mean to you to be black?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What does it take to be a respected Black man in America?</td>
<td>Interview Prompt:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What attributes in a person make you respect them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Are the standards for respect different for Black men than others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you think the time in which you grew up impacts who you are now?</td>
<td>Interview Prompt:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How would you describe the time in which you grew up?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>What experiences stick out in your mind about your childhood?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4. | **When was the first time you became aware that being black is different than being white?**  
   **Interview Prompt:**  
   **What types of things did you hear your family saying that explained the difference between black and white?**  
|   | **As a Black man who lived during segregation, what can you tell me about it?**  
   **Interview Prompt:**  
   **What can you tell me about the Civil Rights Era?**  
| 5. | **What kinds of things helped you helped you maintain or persist?**  
   **Interview Prompt:**  
   **Who or what in your life contributed to your life as you grew through childhood? Adolescence? And to adulthood?**  
| 6. | **Of people you know who have gone to counseling, what helped or didn’t help?**  
   **Interview Prompt:**  
   **What types of things do you think you think can contribute to success therapy? Do you think counseling or therapy is helpful to people?**  
| 7. | **What is an example from your early life that impacted who you are?**  
   **Interview Prompt:**  
   **Tell me about an experience in your childhood that shaped your view of the world as you grew into manhood?**  
| 8. |   |
2. What is one piece of advice on manhood that a Black man born in or before 1953 give to a young man Black man growing up in The United States of America?

9. If you could give the 18 year old you, one sentence of advice on what it takes to be a man, what would you say?

Interview Prompt:
- What is one life lesson you’ve learned that has helped you become the person you are?

Summary

This chapter focused on the methodology for this research study. It utilized a qualitative research methodology, based on a phenomenological research approach, searching for themes in the lived experiences of Black men, 65 years of age and older. Through first person interviews, themes reveal commonalities in the participant’s experiences and reveal what it is like for each man to be a Black man in the United States of America. The coding team was able to collaborate on those themes after review of the verbatim transcriptions of the interviews. Those themes will be discussed in chapter 4. The goal for this research is that experiences of Black men in America, 65 years of age and older, may give counselors another lens with which to view Black males in order to be more effective in treatment.
Chapter 4: Results

This study, “What does it mean to be a Black man in America?” utilized a qualitative research methodology, based on a phenomenological research approach, and used a standardized open-ended interview design. The coding team and researcher were able to find themes in the verbatim transcriptions of first-person interviews with Black men, 65 years of age and older, about their lived experiences growing up in the United States of America (see Table 2 Demographic summary of participants). The goal for this research is that experiences of Black men in America, 65 years of age and older, may give counselors another lens with which to view Black males. The themes found in these recorded experiences are detailed herein. In this chapter, the findings of the phenomenological analysis are detailed and these two research questions are answered: 1) How would a Black man born in or before 1953, describe what it means to be a Black man in America? 2) What is one piece of advice on manhood that a Black man born in or before 1953 would give to a young Black man growing up in the United States of America?

Participants

To answer these questions, eight men, ages 66-78 years of age, were interviewed to find themes in their experiences as Black men who grew up in the United States of America. Pseudonyms were created for each participant to respect their confidentiality; although most participants told the researcher that she could use their real names. To follow the research protocol approved for this study though, pseudonyms were chosen for all eight. Six of those men describe themselves as “African-American”, the other two as “Black”. When asked how he would describe his race, Lawson said, “I don’t” but eventually settled on African-American. Shepherd said “well when I was growing up, it was Negro, now, either one [Black or African-American] but my father said we not half Native-American, so Black.”
For most of their childhood, three of the men lived in Washington, DC, two lived in New York, one in New Jersey, one in North Carolina and the last in West Virginia. All the men attended public school at some point from birth through age 18. A couple though, also attended private school. Each of the eight recalled memories of segregation and integration in schools, though at different levels of schooling. The men interviewed have a wide variety of employment experiences in fields including and not limited to: law, finance, Information Technology, federal contracting, business and the military. Participant demographics are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Demographic summary of participants (N=8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSEUDONYM</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>RACE*</th>
<th>EDUCATION**</th>
<th>STATE LIVED IN CHILDHOOD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JOHANAS</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>P/I</td>
<td>DC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHURCHILL</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>P/I</td>
<td>DC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAWSON</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>P/I</td>
<td>DC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEVIE</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>P/S,I</td>
<td>NJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOLMES</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>P,Pr/S,I</td>
<td>NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RICHARD</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>P/S</td>
<td>NC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOUGLAS</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>P/S,I</td>
<td>WV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHEPHERD</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>P/Pr/S,I</td>
<td>NY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Race: AA = African-American  B = Black  
**Education: P = Public  Pr = Private  S = Segregated  I = Integrated

The phenomenon

In this phenomenological research study, the researcher used the Modified Stevick-Co-laizzi-Keen method to collect and analyze data; this required the researcher to explore preconceived ideas about the phenomenon in question to allow an unbiased examination of first-hand experiences. The phenomenon, or situation, in this research study is the experience of being a Black man in the United States of America. To explore her preconceived ideas, the researcher regularly examined her Epoche, in an effort to hear and visualize each man’s experience with
fresh ears and figurative eyes. This was done through journal entries before and after each interview, to check for biases and impressions of each experience. A review of the journal entries reveals, “WOW” written amongst the researcher’s notes after many interviews. The experiences shared with the researcher, and the commonalities of unjust experiences lived by the participants, as more interviews were conducted, are a testament to the importance of more qualitative research on Black men of this age group who are able to share lived experiences and life lessons spanning from before the Civil Rights Era to now. Details for future research will be discussed in Chapter 5.

**Researcher’s responsibilities.**

After exploring the researcher’s Époche, conducting transcendental phenomenological reduction, completing imaginative variation, and synthesizing the results, the coding team was able to find several themes in the experiences of these Black men. The experiences shared during the interviews tell stories of Black men who lived through the Civil Rights Era, and these experiences give readers insight through first person accounts, of the impact of a wide variety of life events including, involvement in social justice causes, the importance of family, the views of White America and the keys to motivation.

**Themes.**

Rich themes and lessons can be gleaned from the experiences and opinions shared through these interviews (See Table 3: *Themes by Research Question*). For the purpose of these writings, a few of the emergent themes, found across a majority of the sample, were extracted for discussion. The first research question, “How would a Black man born in or before 1953, describe what it means to be a Black man in America?”, revealed three themes in these men’s experiences: 1) personal experience with discrimination, racism or prejudice 2) the importance of
strong familial support and 3) the importance of being aware of differences. The second research question, “What is one piece of advice on manhood that a Black man born in or before 1953 would give to a young Black man growing up in the United States of America?”, revealed three critical themes in the advice and vantage points of these men: 1) learning about yourself 2) giving back to family and community and 3) views about the need for counseling. Chapter 5 will explore the implications of these themes for the community and for counselors and will detail the needs for future research.

Research question 1: How would a Black man, born in or before 1953, describe what it means to be a Black man in the United States of America?

These eight men grew up in five different locations, in the North and South, yet each of them was able to recount a first person lived experience of discrimination, racism or prejudice. These experiences spanned across three subthemes: work, school and the community.

Theme 1: Personal experience with discrimination, racism or prejudice.

“then to say that, oh, everything is good, everything is corrected as far as discrimination, it is not, not by far.” ~Johanas

Work.

Several of the participants described experiences with discrimination, racism, and/or prejudice at work. Stevie said, “you gotta play the game, especially at a job. You got to play the game, find out what they want from you and give it to them.” Johanas recalled that as a federal government employee “there were plenty of job opportunities that my white counterparts, that I felt was not as qualified as I was got them over me, but that didn’t stop me from continuing to move forward.” He also shared that black men would “be running a little harder than their white counterparts. And it shouldn’t be that way but that’s just how it is at this current time…you’re
Running head: BLACK MAN IN AMERICA

Churchill reminisced on the sleeping quarters in the military when he shared, “The white guys had a little separate room while we slept in the open area where all the beds was at, they had their own private room.”

Shepherd shared his view of the difference of treatment between blacks and whites when he said, “even in the work environment, they can do certain things and get away with it, we cant.” He advised, “Forget it, I mean, you may think you can, you might get away with it for a while but aye, it’ll come crashing down on you so you gotta keep yourself tight and keep moving ahead and don’t let nothing get in your way.”

School.

Many participants had vivid memories of racism, discrimination and prejudices in early education. Six of the eight participants recalled what they experienced when schools integrated and their daily educational environments changed. Theme 2, “Need for Strong Familial Support”, details the role that some family members played in advocating for a quality education for them in elementary school, specifically.

In 1954, when the Brown vs Board of Education verdict ruled that segregation of children in public schools was unconstitutional, six of the eight men were in elementary or middle school, the other two had not started formal school at that time. Douglas described the difficulty of being a young boy in West Virginia during segregation. When asked, “When was the first time you became aware that being black is different than being white?”, he recalled “my group was the first group to integrate schools.” Most of these men recalled that the integration of public schools did not yield welcomed reactions in or out of the school setting. Stevie referred to early education in black segregated schools as “subpar” and added, “they were nothing, they were one room, they were nothing. No education….”
Holmes remembered his experiences in New York and compared them to his experiences in South Carolina during the summers growing up. He recalled “‘seeing black people treated literally as second class citizens in South Carolina’ with memories of the school as “one room classroom with a potbelly cold stove in the center of it with multiple age children and my aunt teaching the class”, then going back home to New York and “the dichotomy, the difference between the two worlds was just eye opening, enlightening and person building.”

Douglas and Lawson shared that they felt unwanted in their school setting. Douglas remembered sitting in the front row of class on the first day of first grade and “I can still see this gray haired blue eyes, beady eyed teacher still staring a hole in me, TODAY! And that affected me for real. I mean, I, you know I didn’t understand the stares, I kind of got it but I wasn’t getting it, but I knew the next year to sit in the back.” Lawson shared that the first time he felt a distinction because of his race was when he went to law school “where I could sense that the people around me, saw me as different”. He realized, “then talking to white folks, they believed that I only got in because of affirmative actions, I couldn’t under any circumstances, be as intelligent as they were.” He was the first in his family to graduate from college [undergraduate] and found out that the University he was attending for a law degree in 1970 was requiring remediation classes for minority students. He shared, “they sent me this letter and I had to meet with the faculty and the dean to tell them why I should be allowed to continue in school.” He had to advocate for himself “Because I haven’t flunked out and I’m not on academic probation” so that he could continue to attend. Lawson was able to assert his position and show that he could be successful on his own academic merit in that law program without attending remediation classes as required of minority students. “I was never on academic probation and I did get through but, it was one of
those things where I was up close for the first time in my life, or what I viewed as I guess the sentiments of a racist society will exist. I mean, they haven’t changed.”

**Community.**

Despite their ages, locations and other demographic indicators, these men shared a plethora of experiences in their lives that made lasting impressions on them, showing them that Black was different than White. Some of these experiences are detailed below, grouped by shared experiences, used as subthemes of experiences in the *community* with: 1) movies and fountains 2) white strangers and 3) signs and restrooms.

**Movies and fountains.**

When asked the first time they realized that black was different than white, a few participants mentioned the movies, though the areas they had that first movie experience was different. Churchill remembers growing up in DC but spending time, around age 13, at a family members farm in North Carolina. “When I went to the movies was when I first realized that segregation exists because the black people had to sit upstairs, and the white people were sitting downstairs. That was the first time I actually encountered what prejudice was, and I couldn’t even drink from that fountain down there. That bothered me.”

Lawson recalled, “I remember having to go to the back of places with my dad, my parents, to get food. I can remember seeing signs said “colored only” or “white only”, I can remember going to the movie theater where blacks had to go up into the balcony, and I was one of those people and whites would go downstairs. But the funny thing about that is, I never saw that from our perspective as a negative, I just saw it as that’s the way things were.”

Stevie recalled that his mother was “a fighter” and advocated for equal treatment of him in school and at the movies, “she helped change that policy [segregated movie theater] in the
In his town, there “was a black section, which I was part of, and then there was a white section, and they had one movie.” His father was a doctor and his parents “would tell me they couldn’t sit downstairs in the movie, they had to sit upstairs.” It was explained to him that the “only reason they had to sit upstairs because we were black. We were a doctors family, and we were very highly respected. However, we were still black and we had to sit upstairs.” Richard’s early memories included similar experiences, “I grew up in the south and we were made to feel different, you know we had to go, when we went to the movies, we had to sit in the balcony, we had to drink out of separate water fountains, we had to ride in the back of the bus, we couldn’t go in certain stores and restaurants.”

Shepherd, like Holmes and Churchill, remembered summers in the South, “during summers, going downtown to the theater, you know we had to go up to Negro heaven! White kids sat downstairs in those chairs.” He also detailed differences in recreational activities such as going to Myrtle Beach. He reminded the researcher that Atlantic beach was for Blacks and Myrtle Beach was for Whites. “They had a rope in the water, from the highway to the ocean! When the kids came up to dry, it was like Moses parting the Red Sea. White kids going one way and black kids going the other. “

*White strangers.*

Several participants have memories of interactions with white strangers that made a lasting impression on them. Johanas reflected on the way he handled situations when confronted with racism, “If I was confronted with racism, of course, I dealt with it… as abrasively as I was confronted with it.” He reflected, “which was not really always the best way to deal with it, but it was the only way I knew because I grew up to fight back, and not to step back.”
Churchill recalled memories that made him cautious about trusting people. He was 12 or 13 years old and was asked by a white man at a service station to take some hub caps off of a car on a side street. He later found out that the car was an unmarked police car and when he went back to the service station to have the man explain his request to the police, he remembered, “we did what we said we were going to do for him, and he denied us at the very time we needed him the most.”

Stevie reflected on the caution that many needed to exercise, even in the North, in New Jersey there were “towns you couldn’t go to, the word would get out, or you can’t go to this town because they’ll string you up….” Shepherd recalls a time that he was standing outside of a store with a few of his friends. A white woman, who was a stranger, walked up to the group and asked, “What do yall think about going to school with white children? Yall know yall got diseases?” He explained that the influence of his family often prompted him to speak his mind. He responded to that white woman by showing her how much she and her counterparts relied on Black people when he said, “ma’am you just dropped your laundry off to that lady across the street to wash and iron your clothes. We serve you, we cook your food, we nurse your babies!” He added, “that stuck with me forever! That’s etched somewhere in the brain.”

Signs and restrooms.

Holmes recalled summers in North Carolina and memories as early as five years old, “I could read in 1957, words like ‘niggers and dogs keep out!’” He recalled that white men and white women had separate restrooms, however, “the colored was shared restrooms with men and women…[colored was a] unisex facility and also happened to be the janitor’s closet, and that was at Sears and Roebuck!” This difference in treatment by race and “seeing those signs and watching those behaviors and listening to white people talk down at me, and that kind of helped
propel me to at least want to achieve something from an educational perspective.” Shepherd also recalled memories that stood out to him about bathrooms while traveling in the military. He called the efforts to segregate blacks and whites “unbelievable.” One example was at a bathroom he stopped at in Texas where “this place had six bathrooms! White men, white ladies, colored men, colored women, Mexican men and Mexican women.”

Richard’s mother and aunt owned and operated several successful businesses in town. He recalled that the family was supposed to be the “black Echelon in my community.” His aunt volunteered him to rake leaves in a white woman’s yard that was supposed to be her friend. He remembered that he asked her if he could “use the bathroom and she told me ‘no’ I had to go up to the service station.” That was the moment that he realized, “I was less than them.” He walked out of her yard and “I kept walking, went right back home and told my aunt about it and they said I did the right thing.”

These eight men grew up in five different locations, in the North and South, yet each of them was able to recount the aforementioned lived experiences of discrimination, racism or prejudice. These experiences spanned across three subthemes: work, school and the community. The last subtheme, community, had rich stories that could be categorized into experiences with 1) movies and fountains 2) white strangers and 3) signs and restrooms. Theme 2 shows how family played a role in traversing difficult situations.

**Theme 2: Need for strong familial support.**

“strong family. I had no fear....” ~ Shepherd

Many of the men interviewed were given encouragement by their family members. Some were able to provide school advocacy for the men as they were matriculating through school.
Johanas interview was filled with advice from his beloved mother, who raised 12 children as a single mother. “Mother would always tell us that we can reach the top if we try.” His life has been guided by these sentiments, “There was no reason to stay down, get up, brush ourselves off and keep it moving.”

Holmes, too, spoke of his mother, remembering that “she wanted me to have an opportunity to learn and not be just part of the mill and that was part of the rationale why they moved me to private school.” He gave kudos to his family supporting him, “I’d say my parents were very strong in helping me maintain, my family, you know my aunts, uncles.” Similarly, Shepherd reflected on what helped him to maintain or persist and exclaimed, “family, strong family” adding that he “had no fear” at a time when stories of young Black boys being killed like Emmett Till, were rampant.

Richard learned a lot from his great-aunt who “was a wise lady, self-educated, self-taught.” One valuable lesson he learned from her that he always thinks of is, “anybody can quit, it don’t take no initiative, ingenuity or anything, you just quit! It’s easy.” She added that “it takes a special person to see something through….” Stevie, whose mother helped change some of the segregation policies in his town, wanted to expose him to what he calls “the niceties” of the world. He said that he was “exposed to a lot of stuff, societal things which I didn’t want to do at the time but she made me…she wanted to expose me to the things that would progress me in life and have etiquette.”

As these men were encouraged by their family members, they were also learning differences between being black and being white from lived experiences and from family members. The next theme for research question 1 emphasizes the importance of being aware of those differences.
Theme 3: The importance of being aware of differences.

“ignore what White America says about them” ~Johanas

Several participants emphasized the importance of understanding that for some people, there are different expectations and views of Black men, compared to other genders and races. Participants had strong views about societal expectations and white America’s expectations. Richard asserts that, “white America has tried to influence our view of each other, they try to separate and conquer.” Stevie recognized that “its still a lot of prejudice” and observed that, “in the eyes of a lot of White America, not all, because I have white friends, but you’re still black and you still need to stay in your place”

Johanas believed that one should “retain their self-respect, retain their dignity and integrity, ignore what White America says about them or think of them.” He emphasized that a Black man must understand who they are so that they cannot be swayed by society’s assumptions and opinions about him. He said, “White America cannot define who I am. They never could and never will. So their opinion is just that, their opinion” and added “just because they said it, doesn’t make it so.”

Shepherd talked about the way that young men should carry themselves, “Carry yourself in a respectful way” according to “the norms that society dictate.” Holmes detailed his perception of black men receiving respect when he said, “there’s a different view of respect, I think, when it comes to being observed by white people who are determining respect of the black man as opposed to one black man looking at another black man, and ascertaining respect.” Lawson reflected on his career in law and said that, “you got to recognize that this society hasn’t
changed.” He also detailed the ways that the criminal justice system continues to perpetuate discrimination, “when you look at the criminal justice system is just a substitute now for the Jim Crows, the separate but equal, and all the discriminating laws that we’ve had for years.”

The men interviewed for this study emphasized the importance of understanding that there are different expectations and views of Black men, compared to other genders and races. There were common themes of strong views in their perceptions of societal expectations and white America’s expectations. This led to many stories with life lessons that produced advice from these men to younger generations. Some of these lessons are summarized in the themes drawn from research question 2.

**Research Question 2:** What is one piece of advice on manhood that a Black man born in or before 1953 would give to a young Black man growing up in the United States of America?

When asked for one sentence of advice, only one participant gave a literal “one sentence” of advice. With the plethora of advice given, much of it focused on growth and maturity, recognizing your own faults and learning to overcome situations, the researcher was able to extract themes. Three themes reflect the shared thoughts of a majority of the participants. The themes in the advice given by participants to a young Black man growing up in the United States of America are: 1) Learning about yourself 2) Giving back to family and community and 3) Views about the need for counseling

**Theme 1: Learning about yourself.**

“Learn you, embrace you...you’d be surprised what you can do” ~Churchill

Black men learning about themselves, their limitations, and their strengths, was an integral part of much of the advice doled out by the participants of this study; so much so that the first theme under research question 2 has the following subthemes: 1) Control your destiny,
know yourself and understand your history 2) God and 3) Draw strength and motivation from your past.

*Control your destiny, know yourself and understand your history.*

Richard highlighted the importance of knowing your faults when he said, “I know my limitations and I know my faults and I’m very real with that.” Johanas advised “to respect yourself is to understand your shortcomings and understand that you have to deal with those shortcomings irregardless to how you feel about them.” He repeatedly emphasized that black men are “just as strong as black men in my day were.” He acknowledged that situations will be difficult and seemed to pull from lessons taught to him by his mother when he said, “because the situation is bad, because the situation is difficult. That doesn’t mean it can’t be done. That simply means that you have to get creative in how you’ll get it done. But it can be done.”

Shepherd, who mentors elementary school aged children tells them, “Don’t let anybody turn you around, follow your dreams because the skies the limit and you are, you have your own destiny in your hand.” As he reminisced on how times have changed since he was a child he said, “You can do whatever you want to do today.” Richard shared that “you have to be law abiding, you gotta love, you gotta look at everybody the same way as you look at yourself. Can’t be judgmental, and to be a good family man, a good father, a good husband” and emphasized the need to own “up to your responsibilities, whatever it is.”

Lawson’s advice centered on accountability to yourself. He emphasized that it is important to “accept that you are responsible for you, that you’re not responsible for anybody else.” He also promoted “real education”, including a trade if applicable, believing that a black man must use caution as “in many instances, they’re not educating us. And so we got to be careful.”
Churchill learned that he could overcome a lot of things in life by understanding his own limitations and applying them to his thinking and action. He said, “I knew me and when you know yourself, you have to accept that there are things that’s either going to get you in trouble or keep you out of trouble…for every action, there’s a reaction.” By understanding that, he asserted that “things can take place in your life and they can be negative but it’s about how you embrace it and what you do from there” but he had to “learn me first and I embrace that right now.”

*God.*

A strong spiritual belief or a belief in some higher power was one thing that resonated through a few interviews and some participants included it in their advice that they would give to a young black man. Churchill said, “If I knew then what I knew now I would say you need to have a little bit of God in your life” and shared that he believes when you have God and you have integrity, “How can you lose?”

Stevie detailed what helped him to maintain and persist, and answered without hesitation, “have a belief that there’s a higher being, you know, you got to have some reason to know that you’re not here by yourself.” He was convinced that “my belief in the Lord helps me to get through.” Holmes shared that having a “strong church background” helped him “so that I wouldn’t go off the deep end for lack of a better phrase.”

*Draw strength and motivation from your past.*

Along with the strength drawn from a spiritual relationship or higher power, many men talked about drawing strength and motivation from your history, from both positive and negative experiences and examples. Churchill said that while growing up, “knowing what it was like to not have food on the table”, he “never wanted to live like that” and learned how to take “care of
myself for the most part.” Douglas encouraged young black men to understand their Black history when he said that “We have opportunities that they didn’t have when black folk wasn’t allowed to read books.”

Similarly, Lawson emphasized the importance of history and education saying “I study every day. I still read, I still want to learn things” and insisted that people can learn anything they want these days but “you got to be motivated.” Richard added, “That’s how African Americans have been all their life really, making the best of your circumstances. Just think about it, being a slave and trying to survive.”

Black men learning about themselves, their limitations, and their strengths, was an integral part of much of the advice doled out by the participants of this study. Advice given also focused on taking care of family and community, “giving back” as it were. This is explored in theme 2 of research question 2.

**Theme 2: Giving back to family and community.**

“Are you a good father? Or are you raising your children well? Are you a responsible member of a community...” ~Holmes

Theme 2 of the advice given by the participants of this study focused on helping people in the community and taking care of family. Douglas frequents Black businesses to support them financially, he proudly told the researcher that “Everything I do is black.” He also promoted community service, and gave examples of how he has been “helping older neighbors by cutting grass” or by he and his wife making an effort to “cook big meals a couple times a week, all my black neighbors know that when it snows, I’ll shovel their sidewalk, just in case an ambulance comes down or something.”
Churchill was transparent with younger generations of men that he works with and shares his stories with them in hopes that they can learn from him; this is how he has helped others. He gave examples of advice he has tried to give like, “If you came from the ghetto, so did I. If you did drugs, so did I. So if I’ve done all the things you’ve done, and now that I’ve got God in my life, and if I had known back there then what it was like to have God in my life, I wouldn’t have done those things.”

Lawson’s focus was on responsibility to self in his advice to others, “look, what white people do ain’t got nothing to do with you, it’s what you do that matters, you have to define yourself.” Stevie, included being a role model to others in his advice when he said, “trying to be a role model for those young people who come after you” by being “a dependable person” and being determined to “live up to your responsibility.”

The first day he participated in demonstrations to protest segregation, Richard took a sign from someone and ended up getting arrested. Police took him to an old polio hospital that was being used solely as an overflow facility for overcrowding of the jails and “we [other student protestors being held there] started talking amongst ourselves the injustice that had been stowed on” and "that changed me so much. So much so that when I got out, I joined CORE and SNCC, all those things.” He later detailed that he “went down to the eastern part of North Carolina to register people to vote” and “got involved in the civil rights movement”. He attributed these life lessons to his determination to help others and advised that young Black men do the same. He admitted, “everything that I’ve done since that time, it’s been to try to help Black people.”

**Theme 3: Views about the need for counseling.**

The goal of this study was to give counselors another lens with which to view the Black male in terms of Counseling and therapy treatment. Each man was asked about his view of
Counseling. Most reported that they did not know someone personally who went to counseling. They were still able to give the researcher their opinion on it. Johanas received clinical treatment in elementary school. He described himself as “a very high strung boy” and shared that his mother did not know how to deal with that and “followed the direction of school officials and school counselors and recommend I see psychiatrists.” He was admitted to a psychiatric hospital “for about six months as a child, for observational purposes.”

Richard shared benefits of counseling and said that “if you have problems you trying to figure out and you can figure it out [in Counseling] instead of trying to make it on your own, that’s stupid. There’s no disgrace to go to counseling. We all are flawed, it’s not a sign of weakness, it’s a sign of somebody who’s trying to do the best they can in life.” Holmes highlighted the sentiments of a few participants who have not attended formal counseling but have sought out advice from trusted people. He said that he had been to a school counselor, a professor in college, his parents and his daughter for counseling and “I asked people for counseling throughout my life, but I’ve never been to a professional counselor.”

Stevie, with a history of working in the human services field and probation said that, “I hear how it helps and I believe it probably helps but personally I don’t know.” Reflecting on his years working at psychiatric facilities and in probation, Douglas shared, “I know medication definitely don’t help” and when focused on counseling he said, “I have worked in the field my whole life but what’s going on the back end?” adding, "I just don’t know. God it would have to be so structured. I don’t know how to answer that.” Shepherd reflected on how counseling would have been received during his childhood and adolescence when he said, “I mean but back then, what was counseling gonna do to change the way the laws of the land were written? You can
counsel all you want, you ain’t taking them signs down.” Implications of these views of counseling will be expanded in chapter 5.

Summary

Interviews, using open ended questions, were conducted with eight Black and African-American men, ages 66-78, to gain insight from their experiences as men who grew up in the United States of America. From these interviews, themes were discovered in their experiences. The first research question, “How would a Black man born in or before 1953, describe what it means to be a Black man in America?”, revealed three themes in these men’s experiences: 1) personal experience with discrimination, racism or prejudice 2) the need for strong familial support and 3) the importance of being aware of the differences. The second research question, “What is one piece of advice on manhood that a Black man born in or before 1953 would give to a young Black man growing up in the United States of America?”, revealed three critical themes in the advice and vantage points of these men: 1) learning about yourself 2) giving back to family and community and 3) views about the need for counseling. Chapter 5 will explore the implications of these themes for the community and for counselors and will detail the needs for future research.
Table 3: Themes by Research Question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 1: How would a Black man, born in or before 1953, describe what it means to be a Black man in the United States of America?</th>
<th>Research Question 2: What is one piece of advice on manhood that a Black man born in or before 1953 would give to a young Black man growing up in the United States of America?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 1: Personal experience with discrimination, racism or prejudice</strong></td>
<td><strong>Theme 1: Learning about yourself</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtheme 1: Work</strong></td>
<td><strong>Subtheme 1: Control your destiny, know yourself and understand your history</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtheme 2: School</strong></td>
<td><strong>Subtheme 2: God</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtheme 3: Community</strong></td>
<td><strong>Subtheme 3: Draw strength and motivation from your past</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-movies and fountains</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-white strangers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-signs and restrooms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 2: Need for strong familial support</strong></td>
<td><strong>Theme 2: Giving back to family and community</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 3: The importance of being aware of differences</strong></td>
<td><strong>Theme 3: Views about the need for counseling</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

A review of the literature emphasized the various contexts in which Black males of all ages experience a lack of respect and a sense of devaluation in The United States of America. Black males are experiencing a social, political and educational system crisis, highlighting the cyclical injustice in American society towards them. Throughout the country’s history, social and political climates have promoted the inferiority of Black citizens. Although many examples of this can be highlighted, the literature review in chapter 2 focuses on impactful time periods, such as during the Civil Rights Era, that highlight The United States of America’s unequal treatment of Black citizens, more specifically men. Similar social and political climates exist today and Black males of all ages are impacted in a staggering way.

Scarce is the research that records the long-term effects on Black boys growing up during the Civil Rights Era, witnessing covert racism, experiencing overt acts of racism and discrimination, while witnessing or being privy to violent acts that were made acceptable by the community in the form of events such as lynchings (Wendt, 2007). A rare study on elderly African-American men was Black and Rubenstein’s (2009), which showed that even at 80-90 years of age, the effects of that era still permeated their lives and decision making.

In order to address the gap in literature, and contribute to the literature on this specific population of Black men, this study sought to find themes in the lived experiences of a purposeful sample of men who identified as Black males, born in or before 1953, using the verbatim transcriptions of first-person interviews to gather data. The phenomenological research design of the study did not create nor test a hypothesis, instead it allowed the researcher to grasp the mean-
ing “and essence of the lived experience of a person or group of people” (Patton, 2015, p.573). In this study, the situation of interest, or the phenomenon, was the experience of being a Black man who grew up in the United States of America, born between the years 1940 and 1952.

Interview questions for this study were designed to examine the impact of the participants’ views of their experiences in the United States of America, detail these men’s views of respect, and elicit advice for younger Black men. While the results of this research study should not be generalized to all Black men, the data (themes) pulled from the first person interviews in this study were discussed in Chapter 4 and give readers a glimpse into the lived experiences of these men by answering the following research questions: 1) How would a Black man born in or before 1953 describe what it means to be a Black man in The United States of America? and 2) what is one piece of advice on manhood that a Black man born in or before 1953 would give to a young man Black man growing up in The United States of America? Given the lack of empirical studies on this population of men, this study provides important information on their perspectives. A discussion and implications of this study will be provided in this chapter in hopes of promoting awareness for counselors and counselor educators and promote solutions for injustice, even within the context of their research and clinical practice. Limitations of this study and areas for future research will also be discussed herein.

**Research question one**

Research question 1 focused on how a Black man, born in or before 1953, would describe what it means to be a Black man in the United States of America. Three themes were developed
from the responses received from the eight men interviewed: 1) Personal experience with discrimination, racism or prejudice 2) Need for strong familial support and 3) The importance of being aware of differences.

The literature review highlighted that even after state and federal legislation promoted equality for Blacks, there was immense resistance in the South to follow the national and federal steps towards equality (e.g., Brown v Board of Education of Topeka, 1954). Violence, discrimination and racism continued to be a common experience for Black citizens. Each of the men interviewed in this study shared lived experiences of racism, discrimination and prejudice in their lives. Dissimilar to the highlighted literature in chapter 2, these men experienced these incidents in both the North and South.

Warren’s (2011) research found that the negative vicarious experiences of family or friends with police, influenced reports of dissatisfaction with police encounters across races and experiences. His research also purported that “many minority families instruct their children on how to conduct themselves when interacting with the police.” Warren also found that blacks reported hearing twice the number of negative interactions with police from family and friends. The men interviewed for this study report teaching lessons to their children or other young people about how to conduct themselves in society, based on their lived experiences, which, for some, included negative interactions with the police. Distrust in the system, known as legal cynicism, is perpetuated because of incidents of police violence on unarmed Black men. This was highlighted by Desmond, Papachristos & Kirk 2016 examination of 911 calls to police, and Brunson’s 2007 qualitative research with 40 African-American men, of their lived and vicarious experience with police.
Nyborg and Curry’s (2003) study focused on feedback from African-American boys and their primary caregiver who served as a support with experiences dealing with the stressors of racism and discrimination. The men in this study emphasized a need for strong familial support and attributed that to their survival and courage, in prejudiced, discriminatory and racist experiences. In response to some of these experiences, one of the men in this study said that he dealt with them “as abrasively as I was confronted with it.” Similarly, Rich and Grey (2005) describe the “Code of the Street,” which encourages you to “respond aggressively to regain your respect” (p.817). Fitzpatrick and Boldizar (1993) detail similar coping mechanisms used to combat injustice, including “an acute perception about others’ intentions.” Another man interviewed in this study praised his family for raising him to have “no fear.” He referenced the case of Emmett Till, mentioned in the literature review, as a motivator for standing up for what he believed was right and a motivator for his family to protect him and his siblings.

A majority of men interviewed for this study had an experience in school with racism, discrimination and prejudice, especially when their respective towns integrated schools. Some, like Lawson, were the first to attend college. He believed that white people saw him as different when he was in law school, asserting that many did not believe he was intellectually qualified to be school with them. He also believes that some of the laws in the United States of America are created to work against the Black man and mimic the Jim Crow Laws. This is similar to information found in the literature such as Alexander’s (2012) assertion that many white citizens in the 1940’s-60’s believed that they were doing Blacks a favor by delaying equality and integration.
Sinanan (2012) found that Black male college students felt isolated, possibly leading to a lack of esteem or respect, in predominantly white settings of education. This is similar to the sentiments of Lawson who, at a predominantly white University, had to advocate for himself at a time that he felt unwanted at the school because of his race. In this research study, Johanas relayed a story of having to go to a psychiatric hospital for six months as a pre-adolescent for observation because he was “high strung” and the white administrators told his mother that he needed to do so. Douglas relayed the ineffectiveness of medication for mental health treatment from his observations as a probation officer. This is in line with Porter’s (1997) research which asserts that public education in the United States of America often stigmatizes Black males as disabled, having diagnoses such as ADHD and bipolar disorder, with ineffective treatment options.

Hotchkins and Darby (2015) selected for their study seven black male college students who held leadership positions in organizations on a predominantly white college campus. One of the themes the researchers found was “Black + male + nerd” (p.83). This was a distinction that they made in their identities, especially as perceived by their white counterparts. The men in this study also made assertions about understanding the differences between them and “White America” in privilege and societal expectations. This is also similar to the sentiments of Rhoden (2010) who relayed an experience when he spoke with Michael Jordan in person “about the racism that most of us take for granted as part of life in the United States” and found that he was certainly “aware of the double standards even at his level” (p.210).

Franklin and Boyd-Franklin (2000) also talked about “implicit societal expectations”. Six of the eight men in this research study mentioned sensing that white peers or teachers did not want them in school together, some attributed it to “affirmative action”. In Sinanan’s study, some
of the participants expressed they were “only being seen as ‘EOF’ (Educational Opportunity Fund) students” (p.4).

**Research question two**

Research question 2 focused on the advice on manhood that a Black man born in or before 1953 would give to a young Black man growing up in the United States of America. Three themes were developed from the responses received from the eight men interviewed: 1) Learning about yourself 2) Giving back to family and community and 3) Views about the need for counseling.

The majority of the men interviewed in this study did not have personal experience in therapy, nor did they know anyone personally who had been to counseling or therapy. Several factors contributed to the majority of men interviewed in this study reporting that they had not attended counseling. Factors included: cultural perceptions of seeking mental health support and disbelief in effectiveness of Counseling. On the other hand, research such as Adebimpe and Cohen’s (1989) findings show that there were Black men in the study over the age of 65 who were included in their analysis of diagnoses at a psychiatric clinic whose clients were predominantly black. Another contributing factor to the lack of participation in Counseling by the men in this study could be “stereotypes of black pathology (derived mainly from professional folklore) have been implicated in diagnostic errors with individual patients, resulting in inappropriate, ineffective, and biased treatment” (Adebimpe & Cohen, 1989, p.761). This is also supported by Broman (2012) who investigated race differences in the receipt of mental health treatment and found that Blacks were less like to receive mental health treatment. Alvidrez, Snowden and Kaiser’s (2008) study examined the experiences of stigma in the experiences of 34 Black mental health consumers.
Franklin and Boyd-Franklin (2000) offer some possible ways to manage the impact of racial slights, such as encouraging self-empowerment, sharing stories of racism and how to handle them differently, and developing their own racial identity. Similarly, the men in this research study drew strength and motivation from their past and highlighted the importance of knowing yourself and your history.

Hotchkins and Dancy (2015) discussed participant’s motivation to complete their degrees in honor of their ancestors who did not have the same educational opportunities. They understood their history and were motivated by it. This is similar to the experience of many participants in this research study who wanted to perform well in school, to honor their family of origin, especially because they were some of the first in their families to attend integrated schools and college. Hotchkins and Dancy (2015) referred to this as “intergenerational fulfillment.”

Hotchkins and Dancy (2015) highlighted that the college aged black males in their study shared that education was an integral part of their ability to improve the lives of older leaders in their families and communities. Similarly, owning up to responsibilities, and giving back to families and communities was a theme of advice throughout the majority of shared experiences in the lives of the men in this study. That study also showed the conflict that some college aged black males had when choosing “when to be authentically black”, whereas the men in this study placed emphasis on advising young black men to understand who they are as a person, the strengths and weaknesses, without changing themselves to feel more accepted.

Black and Rubenstein (2009) made note of their participants (Black men in their 80s and 90s) desire to change outcomes for future generations. In this research study, each of the eight
men participate in mentoring or volunteering in their communities. This promotes the idea of giving back to their communities and mentoring younger generations.

**Implications**

The literature review primarily focused on the state of black male adolescents and teens in the United States of America. The findings from this study contribute to the literature about the way Black men who grew up during the Civil Rights Era view the world. These findings are the result of themes found in the lived experiences of eight Black and African-American men, ranging in age from 66 – 78 years old. While the results of this study are not generalizable to all Black men in the United States of America, they provide counselors, counselor educators and community advocates with opportunities to find meaning in the lived experiences of these Black and African-American men and use those meanings to influence their work with these men.

**Counselors.**

Coleman and Baker (1994) provided research about Black war veterans whose diagnoses reflected “the diagnostic bias existing at the time of their initial diagnosis and the presence of racial bias.” Two participants in this research study had personal experience in counseling, one was in an informal counseling setting (counseling from a trusted person versus a counseling professional). Counselors should consider the climate of the country when diagnosing this group of men. They should take a candid look at their counseling techniques and honor their Black male clients by minimizing clinician biases to avoid “widespread misdiagnosis of blacks because of psychiatric practices based on white norms” (Adebimpe, 2004, p.543). This may be accomplished through application of cultural competency and individualized treatment plans.

Based on the responses from the men in this research study, it may be rare that a counseling professional will have a Black or African American man in a formal setting for counseling.
The participants in this study attributed this to several factors including stereotypes held by Black men about the effectiveness of and lack of change created by Counseling. Counselors should consider this if they do have an older Black or African-American man in counseling. Perhaps they can acknowledge the effort of the man to attend counseling or ask him his views about counseling and the reasons he chose to attend versus stereotypes held by other men with similar demographic variables.

Johanas is one research participant that shared his experience in a psychiatric rehabilitation facility as a child. He reported that his mother had a tough time trying to figure out what to do to better manage his behaviors in school, home and at work. He was placed in a facility for six months “for observational purposes” with little memory of reintegration back into the family or community. His experience is one that, decades later, other young men are living. Counselors should use this example to understand that sometimes, a family will trust the Counselors word. While that may be true, it is still imperative to create a treatment plan with the family so that they are an active part of successful treatment. Treatment can be significantly better when the identified client and caretaker are on the same page with the mental health clinician when creating the treatment plan with the client. It is also important for Clinicians to acknowledge that the lack of counseling theories based on Black norms, puts Black males at a greater risk for misdiagnoses.

Research shows that a white child with the same symptoms as a Black child, may be diagnosed with depression whereas a black child may be diagnosed with ADHD. Similarly, a Black male may be diagnosed with conduct disorder or oppositional defiant disorder, whereas a White male with the same symptoms may be diagnosed with a mood disorder (Porter, 1997).

The research on elderly Black and African-American men is scarce. It would be beneficial for counselors working with this population, or with children and adolescents being raised
by this population, to pursue continuing education or specialized training to understand the nuances of working with this population with historical influences in mind. Especially since a majority of the men interviewed identified disparities in their treatment by society versus white privilege and White America, counselors should give credence to the notion that the Counseling relationship should be one where the elderly Black man is respected and not made to feel like he is less important than other races, ages or genders of counseling clients.

**Counselor educators.**

The researcher was surprised by the split in identification as African-American and Black by the men in this research study. One man preferred not to identify as either. Counselor educators often encourage counselors to talk about cultural differences between counselors and clients at the beginning of counseling relationships. Based on the responses from the men in the study, it is important to note that some men may give more importance to race than others. It should not be assumed that race identification or lived experience is congruent with the results of lived experiences of the eight men interviewed in this research study.

While most of the participants in this research study did not have personal experience in a Counseling relationship, none of them expressed distaste of it or opposition to it. One man relayed that during the Civil Rights Era, counseling was not going to change the discriminatory laws and practices of that time. Perhaps a social justice and advocacy focus in the counseling relationship would be more effective for a man that shares his sentiments. Another man pondered over what would make counseling effective, suggesting that it would need to be structured but baffled about how to make it effective. One man, the only man interviewed that had participated in Counseling personally, articulated the benefits of the Counseling relationship. Since opposi-
tion to Counseling was not expressed, and more confusion or ignorance was expressed, counselor Educators should seek to explain the benefits of the Counseling relationship to men of this age group. or to counselors working with them Perhaps a better understanding of it could lead to more participation in it.

**Community advocates.**

The literature review highlighted different factors that may impact the perception of police by Black citizens. Three men in this research study remembered negative stories from their childhood and teenage years involving the police. Warren (2011) discussed negative experience with police and asserted that negative perceptions of them are often passed down through generations, along with beliefs on how to interact with the police. Community advocates, specifically involved in police and citizen relations can use this research to promote cultural competency training for officers, along with training on the implications of police and citizen relations in the United States of America.

Young black men are experiencing some of the same community and social dynamics that the men interviewed for this research study have experienced. Community advocates should consider pursuing funding to provide mentoring support to young black men who may need some assistance navigating themselves to success because of community, social and political turmoil. This funding can be directed to local community centers or mentoring programs that are working with Black males specifically.

**Limitations**

The results of this research study should not be generalized to all Black men. The first limitation of this study is that the researcher, who was the inquirer for the study, has personal interest in the mental health of elderly Black men because of personal affiliation through family or
community work with men of this population. The researcher had to be cautious about preconceived themes to limit the impact of clinician bias. To protect against the influence of these biases, the researcher used a phenomenological research design and regularly examined her Epoche through journal entries. Reflexivity, peer debriefing and prolonged engagement were also used to enhance rigor and credibility in this study. The second limitation of this study is that the data collected was self-reported data. Therefore, the accuracy of events relayed cannot be validated and the researcher relied on information provided by participants. The last limitation of this study is that the data was gathered from participant’s recollection. The self-reported details shared, or withheld during the interview, may have been influenced by a number of factors such as the participant’s mood or perhaps their subconscious desire to be viewed in a certain manner.

**Delimitation**

This research study sought to find ways to use the experiences of black men in The United States of America, born in or before 1953 to help create more effective counseling techniques for Black males across various age groups. It is equally as imperative to examine the experiences of younger Black men on their journey thus far to manhood; that was beyond the scope of this study. The purposeful sample of men for this study were selected in hopes that their lived experiences would include personal experiences around the Civil Rights Era. The age range chosen ensures that each participant was in the early adolescence or teenage years in the 1960’s. Since most of the research in the literature review focused on black adolescent males, the researcher focused on an age group that may be able to guide younger generations of black males through adulthood from lessons learned in their lived experiences.
Future research

This research study contributes to the scarce literature on elderly Black men with lived experiences growing up in the United States of America. Future research on these topics may contribute to professional development trainings for counselors and counselor Educators to enhance their knowledge of the ways that lived experiences impact the elderly Black man’s view of the world. Since most participants expressed lack of first-hand knowledge of counseling experience, future research with elderly Black men who have participated in Counseling may lend more assistance to counselors working with the geriatric population, who are seeking more effective ways to work with them. Since many of the men interviewed expressed the need for Black men to be responsible and give back to their family and community, future research interests may follow the creation or impact of community programs that focus on older community members mentoring younger ones.

One of the lessons that many of the participants learned in life was that they could use their struggles or the injustice exercised towards their ancestors, as power or motivation to be successful in life. Future research may be able to delve into the life lessons learned by young Black males today. Are they motivated by the pain, struggle or oppression that permeates the accounts of triumph and growth shared by the eight men in this study?

The literature review in chapter 2 highlighted the social and political crises that many Black adolescent males are experiencing. Future research should examine the lived experiences of younger Black men living in the United States of America. Some of the men interviewed mentioned different ways that some of their behaviors were handled in their youth. More insight can be gleaned from research that focuses on techniques that worked or were ineffective in address-
ing those behaviors in childhood in order to incorporate socially acceptable techniques into behavior intervention plans created in some counseling experiences for youth. Last, future research interviewing children of men and women who lived during the Civil Rights Era would contribute to counselor Educators knowledge of the impact of parental worldviews on life lessons taught in the home.

**Conclusions**

Scarce is the research on older Black men in relation to the long-term effects of lived experiences, especially throughout and because of life events such as the Civil Rights Era. This research study was designed to contribute to the gap in that literature. Themes drawn in this study from the lived experiences of these men, born between 1940 and 1952, reveal what it is like to be a Black or African-American man in the United States of America through their perceptions of lessons learned throughout their lives, and their effects. The findings revealed that all of the men have experienced racism, discrimination or prejudice throughout their lives. These experiences have impacted their paths in life and their outlook on how to live it. Their experiences illuminate the importance of giving ear to their voices. They also give credence to the need for young Black men and boys to be guided to success in life, by using the experiences of men who have lived through similar social and political climates. The holistic support for treatment, and the inclusion of natural supports (friends, family, persons in their life who are not being paid to do so) as permitted, may help shed some of the stigmas and systemic suspicion that is common among Blacks, particularly for medical and mental health systems that have been proven to perpetuate discrimination and racism.

For generations of Black men to follow, the experiences of these participants as they have developed into men, may serve as a guide for those men or for counseling professionals who are
supporting their treatment. More training should be implemented for counselors to work with Black men and boys effectively and counselors and counselor educators should advocate for these men and boys to engage them in mental health support as needed. This advocacy must be personable, individualized and include resources and supports that aim to improve the lives of these boys and young men across several contexts of life: mental health, education and employment, the civil rights era, police relations, the impact of disrespect, the impact of racism and sports.

The men in this research study illuminate the importance of specialized individualized treatment plans to guide the counseling relationship, especially since they did not express opposition to counseling, rather they expressed unawareness of its benefits while asking how counseling contributes to effective change. Counselors working with Black men over the age of 65 should continue to learn about the history of their client, in hopes that they will be able to incorporate into session with him, what it means to him to be a Black man in the United States of America.
References


Baker, F. M. (2001). Diagnosing depression in African Americans. Community Mental Health...


Appendices

A: Interview Questions

B: Demographic Questionnaire

C: Recruitment Flyer

D: Informed Consent for participants

E: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

F: In one sentence, what is it like to be a Black man in America?
Appendix A

Interview Questions:

1. What is it like to be a Black man in The United States of America?

2. What does it take to be a respected a Black man in America?

3. If you could give the 18 year old you one sentence of advice on what it takes to be a man, what would you say?

4. Do you think the time in which you grew up impacts who you are now?

5. When was the first time you became aware that being black is different than being white?

6. As a Black man who lived during segregation, what can you tell me about it?

7. What kinds of things helped you maintain or persist?

8. Of people you know who have gone to counseling, what helped or didn’t help?

9. What is an example from your early life that impacted who you are?
Appendix B

Demographic Questionnaire

1. What year were you born?
2. How do you describe your race (e.g., African-American, Black, Black Caribbean American, etc.)?
3. Which city and state did you live in for most of your childhood?
4. What kind of schools did you attend as a child (ex. Public or private, segregated or integrated, etc.)?
5. Which city and state did you live in when you were a young man?
6. Have you lived other places for a significant amount of time?
7. What types of work or careers have you had?
Appendix C

Recruitment Flyer

This is for a research study conducted by a Virginia Tech student exploring the experiences of Black men in America.

Are you a BLACK man?

Do you or someone you know fit the criteria below?
Recruitment is occurring in the DC metro area but men from anywhere in the US that fit the aforementioned criteria are eligible.

1. Do you self-identify as a black male, age 65 years of age and older?
2. Have spent at least half of your anywhere in the United States?
3. Are you able to participate in a voluntary one-hour audio recorded in-person interview with the researcher at a local library (South Bowie Library)?

Please contact Nerissa Snyder for more information and to participate in this research study. The results of the study will be published and used in a dissertation.

Interview Questions:

1. What is it like to be a Black man in The United States of America?
2. What does it take to be a respected Black man in America?
3. If you could give the 18 year old you one sentence of advice on what it takes to be a man, what would you say?
4. Do you think the time in which you grew up impacts who you are now?
5. When was the first time you became aware that being black is different than being white?
6. As a Black man who lived during segregation, what can you tell me about it?
7. What kinds of things helped you maintain or persist?
8. Of people you know who have gone to counseling, what helped or didn’t help?
9. What is an example from your early life that impacted who you are?
In Appendix D, the Informed Consent for Participants is detailed. This consent form outlines the purpose of the research project, which involves qualitative studies examining the life experiences of Black men, 65 years of age or older, who self-identify as Black. The study collects data for a doctoral dissertation and may be published or presented to professional audiences. The project involves 8-12 interviews conducted in-person at the South Bowie Public Library in Bowie, Maryland. Participation is voluntary, and the consent process includes an interview at the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB) Project No. 18-394, approved from August 29, 2018, to August 28, 2019. The form specifies that participants must self-identify as a Black male, have lived at least half of their childhood in the United States, and be recruited in the DC metro area. Risks include potential emotional distress, and all expenses for seeking support are the responsibility of the research team.
IV. Benefits
The benefits of this research are focused on improving counselors’ understanding of Black men. No promise or guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage you to participate.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality
Identifying information shared during the interview will be redacted from the transcript. Themes from the interviews will be reported but no individual participants will be identifiable. The Virginia Tech (VT) Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view the study’s data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human participants involved in research.

VI. Compensation
Participants will not be compensated for their participation in the research study.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw
It is important for you to know that you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. You are free not to answer any questions without penalty. Please note that there may be circumstances under which the researcher may determine that a participant should not continue as a participant. Should you withdraw or otherwise discontinue participation, you are under no obligation to the researcher or this study, nor is the researcher under any obligation to you.

VIII. Questions or Concerns
Should you have any questions about this study, you may contact one of the research investigators whose contact information is included at the beginning of this document. Should you have any questions or concerns about the study’s conduct or your rights as a research participant, or need to report a research-related injury or event, you may contact the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board at irb@vt.edu or (540) 231-3732.

IX. Participant’s Consent
I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

________________________________________________________________________
Participant signature
Date

________________________________________________________________________
Participant printed name

(Note: each subject must be provided a copy of this form. In addition, the IRB office may stamp its approval on the consent document(s) you submit and return the stamped version to you for use in consenting subjects; therefore, ensure each consent document you submit is ready to be read and signed by subjects.)

Thank you,

Nerissa L.R. Snyder
nhawk7@vt.edu
301-744-8161

Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board Project No. 18-394
Approved August 29, 2018 to August 28, 2019
Appendix E

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

MEMORANDUM
DATE: August 30, 2018
TO: Laura Everhart Welfare, Nerissa Lovella Rea Snyder
FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires January 29, 2021)

PROTOCOL TITLE: What does it mean to be a Black Man in America?
IRB NUMBER: 18-394

Effective August 29, 2018, the Virginia Tech Institution Review Board (IRB) approved the New Application request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report within 5 business days to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at:
http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm
(Please review responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:
Approved As: Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 6,7
Protocol Approval Date: August 29, 2018
Protocol Expiration Date: August 28, 2019
Continuing Review Due Date*: August 14, 2019

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:
Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals/work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date*</th>
<th>OSP Number</th>
<th>Sponsor</th>
<th>Grant Comparison Conducted?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Date this proposal number was compared, assessed as not requiring comparison, or comparison information was revised.

If this IRB protocol is to cover any other grant proposals, please contact the IRB office (irbadmin@vt.edu) immediately.
Appendix F

First Responses: What is it like to be a Black man in America?

The researcher did not have expectations for what each participant’s response would be to the nine interview questions. However, the answers that each participant gave to the first question set the tone of anticipation for the researcher to hear the answers to the questions that followed. The first responses from each participant to this question, give insight into what it is like for each of them, to be a Black man in America. Their responses are as follows:

**Johanas (66 years old)**, talked about the importance of understanding the world, even if things are not fair, and moving past these things. He said that being a Black man in America feels like, “Just a man, not with all the privileges that my white counterparts has, but you get over those and you move on.”

**Churchill (69 years old)**, with a military career background shared, “Two parts to it. One, being proud to be in this country. And one not being blind to the fact that it’s a struggle for Black people in this country.”

**Lawson (70 years old)**, did not identify with a race. He described being a Black man in America saying that he is “above race.” He explained, “I don’t use race as an excuse, I don’t try to use it as an advantage, even though I know it’s a relevant factor in a lot of people’s determinations. But for me, I don’t allow people to define me, I define myself.”

**Stevie (73 years old)**, spoke of the climate of the nation when he said, “I have to be constantly reminded of the racism in America.”

**Holmes (66 years old)**, commented on the Black man’s perceived place in society when he shared that being a Black man in America is “It’s hard. The Black man in the United States of America, one would like to believe he has some sense of pride, some sense of dignity, some
sense of being, and a lot of America just wants to seem to take that away from you, and make you feel like maybe less than or been gifted something. So it, it’s hard to be a Black man in America, we, we understand, know, what white privilege is, and being black is, and are very aware of that.”

**Richard (76 years old)**, shared that being a Black man I'm America is “being Black first as opposed to being a man.”

**Douglas (69 years old)**, described being a black man in America similar to the aforementioned comments of Holmes. Douglas shared that it is “Hard, complicated, I think that Black men in particular, we hold the keys to our fate, but we haven’t taken advantage of it.”

**Shepherd (78 years old)**, the oldest participant interviewed, shared, “You know, it feels great, however, you have to be cautious. It’s like a long time ago, what a white boy can do, you cannot do. So at all times you gotta keep yourself together.”