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Glimpses of Local Masculinities: Learning from Interviews with Kiowa, Comanche, Apache and Chickasaw Men

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Introduction

This paper emerges out of the American Indian Fatherhood Project (AIFP), originally based at the University of Oklahoma, with follow-up currently taking place through Wake Forest University.¹ From 1998 through 2000, the project's staff conducted 375 interviews with 204 Chickasaw, Kiowa, Comanche and Apache subjects (80% men and 20% women) on the topics of fatherhood and masculinity. Two full-time ethnographers lived and carried out participant-observation in these communities. Ten interviewers were employed by the project; nine of the ten were Native Americans from Oklahoma, though not in all cases of the same tribal backgrounds as the interviewees.

The male participants in the study were biological and/or social fathers of Indian children; the women were biological and/or social mothers of Indian children. Indian blood quantum (degree of Indian ancestry) and tribal affiliation(s) were self-reported. The study included representatives of all socioeconomic categories, and participants ranged in age from 18 to 87.

Community members were involved in designing this project as well as carrying it out. Focus groups from each community, including representatives of tribal government, worked with researchers on the design of each of two interview instruments. These focus groups continued to meet monthly while the research was being conducted. The researchers also held events designed to provide project results and benefits to the communities, such as *Oklahoma Indian Fathers: A Celebration of Tradition*, a day-long celebration and educational event, featuring free health screenings, workshops, and a fun run.

The project explores the ways in which fatherhood and masculinity are conceptualized and practiced in these communities, and the complex intersection between these masculinities and the hegemonic forms of mainstream U.S. culture. There are several reasons to think that not only would masculinity in these two communities differ from the masculinity of the dominant society, but also that these two forms might differ substantially from one another. The Kiowas, Comanches, and Apaches (locally called KCAs) were originally treated as a single population because they are extensively intermarried and have since the early twentieth century inhabited a common geographic and jurisdictional area. They also share important

social and cultural characteristics. From the introduction of the horse into the nineteenth century, all three cultures revolved around mobility, hunting (especially of bison), gathering, warfare, and raiding. Men's activities were the primary basis of the subsistence of these groups, and male status was based on war honors and, in some cases, on membership in male military societies. All three were traditionally organized into bands on the basis of extended family ties and marriage and exhibited cross-sex avoidance between in-laws and/or cross-cousins. The three groups have also traditionally recognized bilateral kinship ties. These tribes have origins in the Plains and Southwest.²

The Chickasaws, by contrast, were originally Southeastern farmers, having been removed to Oklahoma (then Indian Territory) in the nineteenth century. Matrilineal descent groups have served as the primary basis for Chickasaw social organization. By contrast with the Plains and Southwestern groups, the Chickasaws and others from the Southeast received the dominant society's label of "civilized tribe" (e.g. see Foreman 1934). This meant that in the nineteenth century they adopted Christianity, and some mainstream U.S. practices such as farming techniques formal education.³ Today, on the whole, Chickasaws exhibit less indigenous language use and less participation in non-Christian traditional religious practice than do the Kiowas, Comanches and Apaches. (As a possible reflection of this, when asked if they follow elements of the "Indian Way," 65% of Chickasaws say yes, while 90% of Kiowas, 91% of Comanches, and 100% of Apaches say yes.) The Chickasaws also have a higher standard of living than these other groups. The two groups, KCAs and Chickasaws, thus embody many significant dimensions of cultural contrast (e.g., traditional economic and social roles, kinship, and religion) as well as overlap related to fatherhood and masculinity.⁴

Finding multiple masculinities, even within a population sometimes treated as unitary by outsiders, should not be surprising. Recent gender studies scholarship has made it clear that the word *masculinity* has no single, monolithic referent, and that accepting the existence of multiple *masculinities* is an important step toward responsible scholarship in this area (Connell 1995 and 2005, Hooper 2001, Paechter 2003, Sargent 2005, Whitehead 2002, Whitehead and Barrett 2001). The reasons for this are important. First, masculinity is never disconnected from other aspects of social life, including culture, race, class, sexuality, and history (Adams and Savran 2002, Brandth and Haugen 2005, Elliston 2004, Gavanoas 2004, Radhakrishnan 2005, Weis 2003, Wilde 2004). As these change, local forms of masculinity change too. Second, masculinity is not currently understood as an essence, a permanent characteristic of biological males. Masculinity is produced through the meaningful, transformative actions of situated individuals (Elliston 2004, Paechter 2003). This is one of the reasons why much scholarship over the past generation has focused on the relationship between masculinity and labor (Brandth and Haugen 2005, Mills 2003, Willis 1977). Considering masculinity as situated practice means that specific forms of masculinity will always be highly context-dependent.

Masculinities always articulate with power structures and with national and global processes (Connell 2005, Mills 2003, Weis 2003). Forms of masculinity can position members of a group to be closer to or farther from a society's dominant model and the rewards associated with it. Masculinity can support or interfere with large-scale transformations. This is why the U.S. government and its agents encouraged Chickasaws and other Indians of the Southeast to transform their perceptions of masculinity to support male farming and property transmission through men. Women had been the traditional farmers of Southeastern societies, but men were seen by European Americans as better suited to the technological innovations and individualism of the European-American agricultural traditions. Making farming manly also meant that Southeastern men would not have to engage in wide-ranging hunting and warfare in order to enact their masculinity, but could be more contained and land-centered. This was to the benefit of European-American expansion and its associated plans for land use.

It is important to understand that, though masculinities are produced through practice, they are not entirely the creative product of individuals. Institutions and structures that are already in place provide the tools and the media with which individuals work in practice. In the dominant U.S. culture, the institutions that contribute to the production of specific forms of masculinity include the nuclear family household, formal educational institutions, mainstream religious institutions and the American mass media. But in looking at KCA and Chickasaw masculinities we have the opportunity to study the impact of alternate structures, such as men's societies, descent groups and other extended family units, traditional religious societies, Native American boarding schools, and the lessons coming from native history, mythology, and language.

KCA and Chickasaw men mobilized and described quite different resources when talking about their lives as men and as fathers in the interviews. In this paper, I consider three such differences in turn: the ways in which KCA and Chickasaw men used their indigenous languages in the interviews, the cultural or personal narratives they offered or alluded to when asked about oral traditions that helped them, and the cultural institutions that they talked about as sources of lessons, models or support. This paper is not intended as a comprehensive account of masculinities in these communities. It addresses only the specific phenomena just mentioned as reflected in interviews focused on masculinity and fatherhood. These phenomena were chosen because they created noticeable patterns in the interviews and suggested interesting differences between the communities that should be the subject of further ethnographic research.

Language Use⁵

Although these interviews were conducted in English, there are numerous occurrences of native language vocabulary within them. This is not the kind of sustained code-switching in which the interviewee signals a change in tone, content

or context by changing from “casual interview” English to some other dialect or language for an entire response, sentence, or even phrase. Rather, it is almost always one word at a time. There is another interesting pattern in the interviews, in which both interviewer and interviewee switch not codes exactly, but channels or media, by temporarily turning off the tape recorder. This phenomenon is actually quite widespread in the interviews, and while it probably entailed a specific kind of code-switching at the time of the communicative event, the result for the receivers of these interviews now is a kind of null code.

The availability of this null code means that the recorded native vocabulary items were considered important for the recipients of the taped interviews to hear, and were not just used as a way of blocking out meanings from English-speaking receivers. What concerns us here is how and in what contexts this vocabulary is mobilized, what we can glean about the functions and meanings of the indigenous language use in each case, and the relationship of these linguistic events to the production of specific forms of masculinity.

There are several functions and ways of meaning that seem to be represented in these events: the indigenous terms may be mobilized to index solidarity with the interviewer or those expected to hear the interview; they may be mobilized to index distance from the same (or from those referred to in the interview, as we’ll see); they are sometimes intended to index the speaker’s ethnic or cultural identity or authenticity; they are sometimes mobilized for humorous effect or to shift to slang register. But some of these events result from the lack of a corresponding term in English. There are differences by tribal group in the extent to which indigenous language use serves each of these functions.

In some cases, the function is unclear because the indigenous terms remains opaque, not translated by either the interviewer or the interviewee. This might be a kind of purposeful opacity, since the option of turning the tape recorder off is always available.

It is significant here that the status of the native language varies across the four tribal groups. Forty-two percent of Kiowas said they “speak” their native language or “speak it well,” as compared with 19 percent of Comanches, 19 percent of Chickasaws and zero percent of Apaches. When asked if their biological father spoke his native language, 89 percent of Kiowas said yes as compared with 61 percent of Comanches, 58 percent of Chickasaws, and 11 percent of Apaches.

Not surprisingly given the numbers above, there are fewer instances of indigenous language use in the Chickasaw interviews than in the KCA interviews. In 68 interviews with Chickasaw consultants, there were seven uses of indigenous language vocabulary. These were distributed across four of the 68 interviews. Among Comanche interviewees, there were ten occurrences across 18 interviews, but these were concentrated in only three of the 18 interviews. At the time of this analysis, though a small number of interviews had been conducted with Apaches, no recorded interviews with Apaches had been transcribed. Therefore, those interviews will not be cited in the following discussions of language use. In the Kiowa data, there were

66 occurrences of native language use in 48 interviews,⁶ these distributed across 16 interviewees. Thus Kiowas are in our sample about twice as likely as Comanches to use native vocabulary, and about six times as likely as Chickasaw interviewees. When Kiowas use such language they use, on average, about the same number of native terms per interviewee as do Comanches and about twice as many terms as the Chickasaws. What is especially interesting is in response to *which questions* in the interview the use of native language vocabulary occurs in the three groups.

Three out of the seven instances of Chickasaw language use involved use of the word for white person (*naholli*). These all occurred in a section of the second interview on “living in two worlds,” and specifically when interviewees were asked about how comfortable they were communicating with white people. This is interesting, because the occurrences of these words took place in the context of interviewees asserting that they are comfortable communicating with whites. The use of this word, however, might at the same time signal a distance from whites that the subject feels is important. One interviewee, when asked if he likes to tease and joke around with whites, answers: “Yeah, yeah, shoot yeah! With Indians, you know, they *naholli*.”⁷ When the interviewer asks for clarification, the interviewee says, “Them white people, they *naholli*.” Three of the remaining seven Chickasaw utterances were names of types of food or numbers, brought up to illustrate the need for Chickasaw language support outside of the home. The final instance is a word, *nota*, translated by the interviewee as “go to sleep.” The interviewee used this word to illustrate activities that constitute being a good Chickasaw father.

It is interesting that no instances of indigenous language use occur when Chickasaw subjects are asked if they follow the “Indian Way,” because this is overwhelmingly the most common context in which Comanches mobilize an indigenous term, this pattern characterizing six out of ten instances. Their answer thus indexes or models their participation in the Indian Way, which, for these speaking informants, at least, includes language use. Several of these remain untranslated but are contextually linked to the interviewee’s family background. One interviewee counts in Comanche to illustrate both that speaking Comanche is part of the Indian Way and also that few are really able to live up to this ideal. There is an interesting instance here of empathetic language use on the part of the interviewer. One interviewer, who is Indian but not Comanche, uses a native term for white person (*taibo*) to refer to a scholar who has written about Comanche history. This happens when the interviewee notices a book about Comanches on the interviewer’s bookshelf. The interviewer explains that the author is *taibo*, the interviewee says, “That figures,” and they share a laugh. Another interviewer use of indigenous vocabulary occurs when an interviewer tries to draw a parallel between the agricultural and dietary practices of the interviewee and himself, by asking if a particular food is like *kishwa* (a Caddo word for parched corn). Another instance involves the mobilization of indigenous language vocabulary to shift to a more informal register. The subject uses the word *to?i* for pipe, in the context of discussing recreational smoking. One example is brought up to illustrate the

difference between knowing words (as white people do, the implication being that the non-Comanche interviewer has this relationship to his own language as well) and being able to speak. This is one of the few cases where native language use creates distance between interviewer and interviewee rather than solidarity.

Interviewer: Do you think it's important to understand the language to be a good Comanche man?

Answer: Yes. Yes. There's a difference in understanding language. You can understand the words.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Answer: Phrases, perhaps.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Answer: But the...conversation[al] Comanche. . . . *Pámana nekwaru*. That means, "I'm gonna talk to you." Conversation[al] Comanche, conversation[al] Caddo.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Answer: In saying words, the way you're counting . . . [These are] two separate things, you know.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Answer: White people know Comanche. They can say words. But they can't talk.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Answer: You know? Not like my grandma and my grandfather and my dad could. They could sit and . . . all day long and talk Comanche, not say a word of English.

Interviewer: Mm.

Answer: Now that's conversation[al] Comanche. You can't do that. Not as good as they can.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Answer: But I can get by.

And finally, one interviewee uses Comanche to describe a way of assessing the value of a man. When asked what characterizes a good Comanche man, he says: "*Ik'ona pukuya*. We're gonna pick this horse." This metaphor and concept for exemplary masculinity are probably not fully accessible through English, as illustrated by the fact that the interviewee does not elaborate in English beyond giving the translation.

Among the Kiowa interviewees, three areas of questioning stand out for eliciting indigenous language vocabulary. First, nine of the 66 instances occur when interviewees are asked about their tribal identity and whether they follow the "Indian Way." Second, another nine instances occur when interviewees are asked about Kiowa ideals of masculinity. Finally, 23 of the 66 instances occur when interviewees are asked about the cultural resources they have to draw on as men

and as fathers. In this last area, there are 14 references to *Séndé*, the Kiowa culture hero, four terms that refer to Kiowa men's or military societies or roles in them, one that refers to a rite of passage, and five religious terms, some untranslated and some being words from specific prayers. These Kiowa language terms that arise when talking about cultural resources, then, are mobilized because their referents do not have English labels and, beyond this, they do not have European-American social or conceptual parallels. This is thus more reference-driven language use in which indexical and relational effects are less foregrounded than we see in the other sets of interviews.

This difference does not necessarily mean, of course, that Kiowa men and fathers have more native cultural resources to draw on than do Comanches or Chickasaws. Certainly, cultural institutions and practices can be maintained in the face of language shift and/or new ones can emerge to meet social needs. However, having specific linguistic resources with which to discursively engage and produce masculinity is important. Our next area of comparison suggests that there are at least differences in the *types* of cultural resources these groups have available to draw on in the areas of fathering and manhood.

To summarize, Chickasaws are most likely to use an indigenous language term when discussing Indian-white relations, seemingly to assert a non-white identity while expressing ease of communication with whites. Comanches are most likely to use indigenous vocabulary as part of an assertion of their identification with the "Indian Way." Kiowas are most likely to use native terms when describing the cultural resources they have available to support them as men and as fathers. For those Kiowas with some knowledge of their traditional language, then, the Kiowa language is a medium more specifically linked and linkable with their masculinity. For Chickasaws and Comanches, on the other hand, native language use seems to index a more general tribal or Indian identity rather than a specifically masculine one.

Oral Traditions

One of the questions interviewees were asked about cultural resources was: "Are there cultural stories or oral histories that teach you how to be a good man and a good father?" A real divergence appears among the three groups in their responses to this question. Of the 48 Kiowa interviewees, the vast majority said that they did have resources of this type to draw on, and 14 out of 48 specifically mentioned stories about the culture hero *Séndé* (also spelled *Saynday* or *Say-n-day*). In the Chickasaw interviews, approximately one third acknowledged having such stories to draw on, but of those very few had any specifics. In the Comanche interviews, approximately half the interviewees said there were such stories, but again, few were specific.

So who is this Kiowa *Séndé* who appears to have no Chickasaw or Comanche equivalent? One account of *Séndé* goes as follows:

Saynday was the one, they say, who got lots of things in our world started and going. Some of them were good, and some of them were bad, but all of them were things that make the world the way it is.

Saynday is gone now. He lived a long time ago, and all these things happened a long way back. When he was here on the earth, he was a funny-looking man. He was tall and thin, and he had a little thin mustache that drooped down over his mouth. The muscles of his arms and legs bulged out big and then pulled in tight, as if somebody had tied strings around them. He had a funny, high, whiny voice, and he talked his own language. His language was enough like other people's so they could understand it, but it was his own way of talking, too (Marriott 1963:1).

Kiowa poet and ethnographer Gus Palmer has suggested, however, that this portrayal of *Séndé* stories is too cute and mild. In his informative work on Kiowa storytelling, Palmer argues that

true Kiowa *Séndé* stories treat the kind of subjects found in the Star or the National Enquirer Magazine. Sex, bestiality, adultery, fornication, and lying are no unfamiliar subject of a *Séndé* story. He will assume any form he wants so he can play tricks on people and animals, 'and is [even] the victim of tricks; he is amoral and has strong appetites . . . is footloose, irresponsible and callous' (Palmer 2001:9)⁸

It is also significant, given that the topic of masculinity provided the context for these interviews, that *Séndé* is seen as having androgynous qualities (Palmer 2001:8). *Séndé* may be more of an anti-example than an example of proper manhood.

These Kiowa lessons about manhood are funny, and always serve as a point of engagement with the interviewer. Those interviewees who know about *Séndé*, know about him in considerable detail which they freely draw upon in the interview context.

The *Séndé* stories fall into three main categories, represented by the following illustrations. Some of the stories emphasize *Séndé*'s trickster nature, some portray him as something of a buffoon, and a third group uses *Séndé*'s actions to map out the unthinkable. The first quote, from a 79 year old Kiowa man, exemplifies *Séndé* as trickster.

White man was coming along on horseback and he run across *Séndé*, you know. And he said "*Séndé*, I heard about you. You always fool people. Can you fool me?" *Séndé* said, "Uh, not, not right now. I can't fool you because my medicine . . . see that mountain over there? My medicine's over there." And then he said, that white man says, "Would you go get it?" "Well, it's too far," he said. "If you loan me your horse, I'll go get it." White man says, "All right." So he loaned him his horse and . . . *Séndé* got on that horse, you know. And he started out and pulled the reins on that horse you know, and that horse backed up and won't ho, you know. And the white man says, "What's the matter?" He said . . . "He doesn't think I'm you." He

said to him, “If you loan me your clothes he might think I’m you and he’ll go.” So the white man, “All right,” he said. He took his clothes off and give them to *Séndé*. He put them on, put his hat on. He got on the horse and the horse went, boy! He came up just a little ways and stopped. “White man, I already fooled you. I got your horse and clothes.” And he rode off. And the white man was standing there naked (*both laugh*). So, I don’t know what the moral of the story is. I guess never trust anybody, I guess (*both laugh*). I guess *Séndé* can really fool you.

In the second category of stories, exemplified in the example that follows, rather than outsmarting unwitting victims, *Séndé* is himself the butt of the jokes.

Séndé come on a riverbank and he’d seen a bird fly up from [a] tree and dive into . . . the river was ice. And he’d go right through that ice and come up with a fish, you know. *Séndé* kept watching, wondering if he couldn’t do that. And pretty soon he asked that bird, he said . . . “How do you do that?” He said, “You gotta have good medicine.” He said, “When you dive, you have to have good medicine to go right through that ice so you won’t hurt yourself.” And *Séndé* said, “Can you give me that medicine so I can do that? I want fish to eat.” And he, that guy, that bird, kind of hesitates, says he heard about *Séndé*, you know, so . . . He said, “No, I don’t think I’ll give you that medicine. You might hurt yourself.” (*Interviewer chuckles*) And *Séndé* says, “No, no. I want to do that, do what you’re doing.” So, so he—the bird—finally consented. He said, “Well, all right. I’ll give you my medicine. But when you dive, I don’t want you to open your eyes. The trick of this is: close your eyes and you’ll go right through the ice.” So, he gave him that medicine and *Séndé* got to wondering. He said, “I don’t know why he told me that. He’s . . . I bet if I opened my eyes I still could go through that ice.” So he’s going to disobey that bird, you know. So he dove and as he got closer to that ice he opened his eyes. And BAM, he hit that ice and it didn’t break. He splattered that blood all over his face (*both laugh*). And that bird said, “I told you not to open your eyes!” he said (*both laugh*). Yeah.

This third example, from a 56 year old Kiowa man, exemplifies *Séndé* as a figure who illustrates the limits of acceptable human behavior.

The one I remember the most is the one about . . . where *Séndé* was having dinner [. . .] Somebody asked him ‘Where’s that uh . . .’ –oh, they were all eating. See, they were all commenting on how good the meal was, and someone asked *Séndé*, ‘Where’s that, uh . . .?’ meaning the youngest child. They hadn’t seen him around in a while. *Séndé* says, ‘We’re eating him.’ (*interviewer laughing*) ‘That’s why it’s a good dinner.’ I remember that one. I thought, ‘Man, you don’t do that.’

Many of the interviewees, even though they do not actually tell stories themselves, nevertheless offer general comments about the role of *Séndé* stories in Kiowa socialization. A 63-year old Kiowa man said, “The old folks, they didn’t have a harsh punishment. They [would say] ‘don’t be like *Séndé*—don’t be [a] bad person,’ like *Séndé*.”

Another male Kiowa interviewee suggested, “You know a lot of the *Séndé* stories have to do with greed, so what it does it teaches us how to be generous and not greedy.” A 35-year old man said, laughing, “*Séndé* stories are about how not to do things.” One interviewer suggested that *Séndé* was good. He was quickly corrected by the interviewee, “Yeah, he was good and bad. I don’t know.”

Comanches responded differently when asked about oral traditions that serve as instructive narratives on how to be a good man or a good father. They generally recounted personal life stories, especially from grandfathers. One 61 year old man said,

I think there are fables that are probably more joking . . . than myth, or laughter and for entertainment, not as opposed to any moral teachings. Comanches pretty much were, in describing things, they pretty much laid it on the table. This is what you look like. This is what you smell like. This is what you are. This is what you dress like. You know. And they’d just outright tell you.

Another man, 33, said, “[My grandfather] just always told me you’re gonna be working for the rest of your life, so . . . (*chuckles*).” The interviewer, also laughing, asked, “So, get used to it?” The interviewee responded, still laughing, “Get used to it.”

The Chickasaws who said that there were stories teaching good masculine and paternal values most often said these stories came from the Bible. One specifically said that stories teaching about being a good man and father come from the Bible, and *not* from Chickasaw tradition. It was fascinating to note, however, that not one of them offered an illustration. The opaque reference to the Bible never serves as a point of engagement with the interviewer, who never presses for an example, but moves on to the next topic.

The second most commonly identified potential source of life lessons for Chickasaws is the historical Trail of Tears, the forced removal of Chickasaws from their homeland in the Southeast to Indian Territory. Like the stories told and alluded to by Comanches, this is a personal/historical one, but it is on a larger scale. One interviewee offered the gruesome story of an elderly friend or relative who had been on this bitter journey.

He’d seen people die. They said they was gonna bury them and they wouldn’t bury them, so more come along and see them, where the wolves been eating on them and stuff like that. Try to feed them spoiled meat or weevils in their meal and stuff like that. And they’d drive them like driving cattle? That was way back there when they moved from the East up here.

We encounter several different types of narratives, then, across these groups. Many Kiowas tell stories about a trickster—a kind of man, non-man, and anti-man all at the same time. Comanches talk about the lessons offered by everyday life and by the experiences of themselves and their relatives. Chickasaws allude to,

but don't tell, Christian narratives. The stories they do tell are of a cataclysmic, genocidal historical event. As resources, then, the told stories offer in one case a model of how not to be, in the second case a model of what presumably is ("real life"), and in the third case a model of what can be overcome. The time perspective in each case is, respectively, mythic, current, and historic.

In talking about narratives that inform their lives as men and fathers, why do Christian interviewees not tell Bible stories? That is, why is the telling of stories from the Bible not seen as desirably performative in the interview context? Why would this not be an effective way of demonstrating something about oneself to the interviewer in the same way that telling *Séndé* stories is? Perhaps it is because Biblical narratives are not seen as distinguishing members of these communities from members of the dominant society, but as performances that would suggest a shared culture. Or perhaps it was assumed that the interviewer and future readers of the interview would know such stories, that they constitute a set of shared, presupposed reference points that do not need to be articulated.

Institutional Resources

For the KCAs, and the Kiowas particularly, the themes of the interviews frequently elicited discussion related to war and warrior societies. Among Chickasaws, discussion of fatherhood and masculinity often led to the topic of the Chickasaw Nation as a supportive cultural institution and resource. The following discussion will draw only on Kiowa and Chickasaw interviews.

Kiowas were especially likely to talk about war or military service when asked about men they thought were examples of good fathers or good men or when asked what a good father should be like. One was asked: "What is the most important gift a Kiowa father can give to his child?" He responded:

I guess it would be a legacy. You know, when you think about the experiences that you've had, the experiences that I've had, to us it doesn't mean anything. But to your children it means a lot. You know, things like serving in the military during war time or a conflict. To you and I it was just a job, but to our children it's something I guess, that has a positive influence on the way [they] feel about us. Because we were able to make sacrifices, in my way of thinking. . . . It was for them, too. And even though, collectively, it was for all of our countrymen, it was for our family too.

When asked about the traditional roles of Kiowa fathers, one interviewee offered a window onto how men prepared their sons to be warriors:

Those Kiowa fathers. They don't want their children to work. I don't know why, but I've heard some older people say, "Don't work my son. He might exert himself too much," or something like that, you know. But times are changed, you know. You don't keep your children from working now. Maybe it was necessary way back there when they was warriors, you know. All they did was fight.

Another said, when asked who he thought was a good Kiowa man:

He was [a] great Kiowa man. . . . That was my hero, one of my heroes when I was growing up, because he went to war. And I remember him going whenever . . . a song, certain songs, would come up in our family—whether they were [Black Leggings] songs or whether they were Kiowa hymns.

Warrior societies, especially the Black Leggings Society, were mentioned as being important sources of support for adult men and for youth learning how to be men as well. One interviewee was asked, “You know if your community has a ceremony that initiates a boy into adulthood?” He responded,

The only thing that I know, with like the Black Leggings, the men initiate two boys into the society as young boys, and they took care of their needs, on, on war party raids, like taking care of the horses and . . . things like that. Gathering wood for fire and, preparing, you know, some type of meal or something. But I don’t know if it totally initiates them into a manhood type thing. But I think it gives them the encouragement or it gives them the backing, you know, that “We chose you boys for a reason,” you know. You’re upright and good standing young men, so . . . I mean obviously they’re not gonna pick some little kid who’s . . . always running around tearing it or something, you know.

In the Chickasaw interviews, it is not warrior societies but the Chickasaw Nation itself that serves as a presupposed background social force affecting the quality and expression of everything in social life, including fatherhood and masculinity. The Chickasaw Nation is most explicitly connected with masculine role models and with fathering in the person of Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby. This may seem surprising until one realizes how all-encompassing the Chickasaw Nation is as social network and support.

One interviewee was asked, “Think of someone you think is a good Chickasaw man, and what is he like?” He answered, “I’d say the Governor.” Then asked to describe Governor Anoatubby, he said, “He’s honest and he, you know, he speaks the truth, and he’s fair, you know, he’s fair to all race[s]. He’s a very good, you know, very good leader.”

Asked to name a good Chickasaw man, another interviewee said,

Governor. I think that he is an awesome, awesome man. I think that he is, the respect that he has, the leadership that he has within the community, the love that he has of his children and his grandchildren are awesome. And, people can see that. And this man is a man that is a leader of the Chickasaw people, you know, does that make sense?

Note the interviewee’s use of “Governor” as a proper name for the Governor, parallel to the use of a kin term like “Grandfather” when used as a term of address.

When asked about who was a good father, another interviewee said:

They don't go around with any, quote, look who I've been and what I am and what I've done. They just know who they are. They're not looking for their identity; they know their identity. Governor Anoatubby is the same way. He knows his identity he doesn't need anybody to tell him what's he's done. And he doesn't go around really parading it. He just, if you ever, if you've ever been around Governor Anoatubby whenever he is at a public gathering, he just goes around and says "I'm Governor Anoatubby." (*laughs*)

Another was asked: 'What's the most important gift that a Chickasaw father can give to his child?'

The most important gift? I would say, uh, the certainty that a child was loved by their father. Everything else aside, if the child knows that the father loved him and cared for him and was willing to be there for him. You know, love has many different forms and words but if the child understands that and knows that and accepts it, you know, that's the best gift of all is when . . . they honor their father. And to have honor you have to have trust and respect. [It] goes both ways. So I know like in the case of, this case like Governor Anoatubby's son, he really does that with his dad. He really respects, trusts, and loves his dad and there's no doubt that Governor Anoatubby loves his sons. There's just, there's no doubt. (*laughs*)

The same interviewee was asked, "What are the most important values that a Chickasaw father should try and teach his child?" He said,

The phrase that Governor Anoatubby always says that goes back to, relates to the Chickasaw is the unconquered, unconquerable spirit. . . . And it's a development of an attitude that says, I want to be here because I do not want to be enslaved, I want to be free. I want to be like the picture up there. I want to be able to soar like an eagle. I want to be able to be free to not be in somebody else's box.

For these interviewees, Governor Anoatubby has come to embody the masculine ideals associated with the Chickasaw Nation. But it is also clear from the interviews that the Nation itself is central to many Chickasaw men's sense of self, of community, and of identity. When asked if he participates in activities that are part of the Indian Way, one interviewee answered, "Well . . . I've been an active participant in the tribal political process. Far as voting." Several talked about their pride in the accomplishments of the Nation. One father discussed sharing this pride with his children:

I always try to tell my kids it doesn't matter, you know, what color that you are. But, you know, that you always should be proud of being American Indian. . . . [He explains how people who didn't self-identify as Chickasaw in the past do so now.] So I guess you can say the Chickasaw Nation, you know, we've come a long ways.

It is especially interesting that even those who expressed some dissatisfaction with the Chickasaw Nation or the Governor still seemed to suggest that the Nation

and Governor *should be* a major social resource for them. General questions about being Indian move inexorably back to a discussion of the Nation. For example, when one interviewee is asked, “How sure are you that you can get along with Indian people?” his answer equated “Indian people” with the Chickasaw Nation. “I don’t know,” he answered, and proceeded to tell a story about being unable to get a job with the Chickasaw Nation. Another, when asked how involved he was with “Indian ideas and issues,” answered:

Indian ideas and issues. I got a lot of ideas, but I never have spoken mine, up on that . . . let them know what I had to say about it. [. . .] I mean, Chickasaw Nation.

For this interviewee, “Indian ideas and issues” relate exclusively to Chickasaw National politics. Whereas for Kiowa men participating in these interviews, then, questions relating to identity and ultimately to fatherhood and masculinity are bound up discursively with cultural values and institutions related to warfare and warriors, for Chickasaw men these phenomena are embedded in a discourse of National identification and growth.

Conclusion

The uses in the interviews of these three media—native language, oral narrative, and iconic institutions—is informative, especially when considered together. Differences between the Kiowas and the Chickasaws are particularly striking. For Kiowas, native language terms point to specific cultural resources that have been available to generations of men and fathers. Many of the stories that come to mind are of a specifically Kiowa mythic personality. And the institutions that serve as and provide models of Kiowa manhood are the warrior societies that have cross-cut Kiowa society in the past as well as in the present. In talking about fatherhood and masculinity, then, many Kiowa interviewees mobilize and bring into present-day relevance resources that they characterize as traditionally Kiowa. This ideology of continuity is an important part of how Kiowa masculinity is conceptualized and expressed.

Many of the Chickasaw interviewees, on the other hand, express connections among masculinity, adaptability, transformation and overcoming. Some interviewees use the native term for ‘white person’ to show that they maintain their Chickasaw identity *in spite of* a close relationship to whites. The stories some tell demonstrate that they have survived *in spite of* the forced removal. They have taken a model of bureaucratic social organization that certainly resonates with the dominant society and transformed it into a model of proper Chickasaw masculinity. It is important to recognize that, like the expression of masculinity reflected in the Kiowa interviews, this expression of masculinity and the practices associated with it are conceptualized as aspects of Indian identity and behavior by the interviewees. Learning how these expressions of masculinity articulate with the larger social and cultural contexts in

each case will help us to better understand the complex nature of masculinities. Such research will, it is hoped, be useful to the communities themselves and to those who work with them to meet the needs of men and fathers.

Notes

1. Funding for this project was originally received from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau [grant MCJ-400827], with Lisa J. Lefler as Principal Investigator. Additional support has been received from the Archie and Social and Behavioral Sciences Research Funds at Wake Forest University, and from the Philips Fund of the American Philosophical Society. Deepest thanks go to the Kiowa, Fort Sill Apache, Comanche, and Chickasaw tribal governments and the communities they serve for their partnership in this project.

2. For more detail on Kiowa, Comanche and Apache culture and history, see, e.g.: Foster 1991; Harris 2000; Lassiter 2001, 2002; Marriott 1945; Meadows 1999; Mihesuah 2002.

3. For a classic perspective on Chickasaw culture and history, see Cushman and Debo 1999.

4. Cultural contrasts between KCAs and Chickasaws are not simple or absolute. Women play strong roles in the Plains communities as well as among the Chickasaws (e.g., see Harris 2000); Christianity has developed into a “traditional” religion with cultural specificity among all these groups (e.g., see Lassiter 2001; Lassiter, Ellis and Kotay 2002). We often found differences between the Kiowas and Comanches that were just as significant as those between the Kiowas and Chickasaws. The historical differences between these two larger groupings thus provide a starting point for our comparison, not an end point.

5. Both the discussion of language use and that of the narratives that follow are preliminary, based only on the material that was transcribed as of 2002, approximately 50%. Interestingly, in both cases, I found that the results broke down along tribal lines, rather than regional.

6. Fourteen of the 66 instances of indigenous language use in the 48 Kiowa interviews involve naming of the Kiowa trickster Séndé. If occurrences of that proper name are excluded, there are 52 instances of indigenous language use in the 48 interviews.

7. Spellings of native words are generally those of the transcribers, who consulted with the interviewers and other community members to arrive at preferred spellings.

8. At the end of this quote, Palmer is himself quoting scholar Alan Velie.

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“My Boys Act Like Midwives”: Changes Across Three Generations of Indian Fathers

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As scholars focused on fatherhood have pointed out in recent years, more qualitative research is needed to understand “what makes fathers tick” and how “social processes, among others, shape their roles” (Lamb 1997 and Marsiglio 1995). To try to address these issues among Indian men in Oklahoma, the American Indian Fatherhood Project¹ conducted interviews with Chickasaws, Kiowas, Comanches, and Ft. Sill Apaches about fatherhood in their communities for a year and a half. This project represents the first extensive ethnographic research completed among contemporary American Indian populations to find out more about fatherhood roles. In the 200 interviews considered in this analysis, men and women discussed how fathering has changed in the last several generations. Through this process we have gained a new understanding of men’s and women’s perceptions of Indian men’s roles as fathers and a new appreciation of the issues they face.

Four tribal nations agreed to partner in this study. The traditionally matrilineal Chickasaw Nation, who occupy a thirteen county region in south-central Oklahoma, are seen by themselves and others as a “progressive” Indian Nation, one of the “Five Civilized Tribes” from the Southeast. The Kiowa, Comanche, and Ft. Sill Apache Nations, referred to locally as the KCAs, comprise the other study community. The Ft. Sill Apaches are also identified at the Ft. Sill-Chiricahua-Warm Springs Apache. These latter groups have organized warrior societies which are important and prominent social institutions today (Meadows 1999). They are also seen as more “traditional” than their Eastern neighbors and share a history of “Plains Culture” and more recent incarceration and/or relocation at the hands of the U.S. government. They live predominantly in a contiguous five county area in Southwestern Oklahoma. Men and women from this region both have a greater tendency to marry other Indians, particularly among the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache Nations, than do Chickasaws.

Background

The Medicine Lodge Treaty of 1867 designated the Kiowa, Comanche and Apache homelands near the Wichita Mountains in South-Southwestern Oklahoma. With the loss of their land claims in the 1901 Lone Wolf vs. Hitchcock decision, “excess” reservation lands previously allotted by the Jerome Commission in the early 1890s

were opened up to land grabbers. Families could only maintain 160 acres as initially planned by the federal government (Kracht 2005).

The Apaches, relocated from the Southwest by federal troops, had been prisoners of war since the mid 1850s and in 1894 were brought from their imprisonment in Alabama to Ft. Sill in Indian Territory, at what would be the KCA reservation. In 1914, the Apaches were finally released and given the options to return to New Mexico or remain on reserved lands in Oklahoma. A few of the Chiricahua-Warm Springs band remained and approximately 400 of their descendents continue to live there today.

Hunting, warfare, and membership in military societies have traditionally been important in the lives of KCA men. KCAs have historically and in modern times been proud to serve in military endeavors. Their military societies, the Kiowa Gourd Clan and the Black Leggings Warrior Society continue to be very active. These are organizations that welcome back veterans and honor those who have shown courage to serve their people and country. These societies still provide important collegiality and status for warriors. Today, women who have served may be included in many of the ceremonies and performances conducted at community events.

Oklahoma is home to the largest number of Native American tribes in the nation. There are at least 30 different tribes located in what was formerly known as “Indian Territory.” According to the 1990 census data, approximately 8.5% of Oklahoma’s population is made up of Native Americans. Native people constitute 15.5% of Ponotoc county, 23.2% of Caddo county, and 4.1% of Comanche county, three of the counties over which the KCAs have jurisdiction. The Native population of Comanche county is underrepresented by these figures because of the impact of Ft. Sill military base on the county demographics.

The study populations of Native people within these communities are representative of low, middle and high SES categories. The following tables² show the populations of the Chickasaw Nation and the Kiowa, Apache and Comanche tribes as well as their income and poverty levels and educational attainment.

**SUMMARY OF MARITAL STATUS, AND INCOME
FOR THE CHICKASAW NATION POPULATION (1990)
Jurisdiction Statistical Area for Oklahoma**

Total Population: 6,171

Number of families: 4,994

Married Couple families: 3,715 (74.4% of all families)

with children under 18: 2,182 (58.7% of married couple families)

Female households, no husband present: 962 (19.3% of all families)

with children under 18: 676 (70.3% of female headed households)

Median Income All Families: \$19, 080

Married Couple Families: \$24,019

with children under 18: \$24,528

Female householders, no husband present: \$9,237

with children under 18: \$7,233

**SUMMARY OF MARITAL STATUS, AND INCOME
FOR THE KIOWA, APACHE AND COMANCHE POPULATION (1990)
Tribal Jurisdiction Statistical Area for Oklahoma**

Total Population: 12,979
 Number of all families: 2,909
 Married Couple families: 1,817 (62.5% of all families)
 with children under 18: 1,089 (60.0% of married couple families)
 Female households, no husband present: 910 (31.3% of all families)
 with children under 18: 543 (60.0% of female headed households)
 Median Income All families: \$16,189
 Married Couple Families: \$21,464
 with children under than 18: \$21,616
 Female householders, no husband present: \$8,008
 with children under than 18: \$6,388

**Table 1a. Income Levels for Families, Chickasaw Nation,
Chickasaw Tribal Jurisdiction Statistical Area, 1990.**

Income Level	Number	Percent
Married Couple Families	3,715	100% of married couple families
Less than \$15,000	1,126	30.3% of married couple families
\$15,000 to \$24,999	817	22% of married couple families
\$25,000 to \$49,999	1,269	34.6% of married couple families
\$50,000 and up	503	13.5% of married couple families
Female Householder, no husband present	962	100% of female headed families
less than \$5,000	271	28.2% of female headed families
\$5,000 to \$9,999	232	24.1% of female headed families
\$10,000 to \$14,999	147	15.3% of female headed families
\$15,000 to \$24,999	188	19.5% of female headed families
\$25,000 to \$49,999	93	9.7% of female headed families
\$50,000 and up	31	3.2% of female headed families

Table 1b. Families Below Poverty Level for Chickasaw Nation, Chickasaw Tribal Jurisdiction Statistical Area, 1990.

Poverty Status	Number	Percent
Married Couple Families	690	18.6% of married couple families
with children under 18	540	14.5% of married couple families
Female Householder, no husband present	501	52.1% of female headed families
with children under 18	412	42.8% of female headed families

Table 2a. Income Levels for Kiowa, Apache, and Comanche Tribal Jurisdiction Statistical Area, Oklahoma (1990)

Income Levels	Number	Percent
Married Couples	1,817	100% of married couple families
less than \$15,000	630	34.7% of married couple families
\$15,000 to \$24,999	420	23.1% of married couple families
\$25,000 to \$49,000	597	32.9% of married couple families
\$50,000 and up	170	9.4% of married couple families
Female household, no husband present	910	100% of female headed families
less than \$5,000	232	25.5 % of female headed families
\$5,000 to \$9,999	301	33.1 % of female headed families
\$10,000 to \$14,999	102	11.2% of female headed families
\$15,000 to \$24,999	175	19.2 % of female headed families
\$25,000 to \$49,000	76	8.4% of female headed families
\$50,000 and up	24	2.6 % of female headed families

Table 2b. Families Below Poverty Level, Kiowa, Apache, and Comanche Tribal Jurisdiction Statistical Area, 1990.

Poverty Status	Number	Percent
Married Couple families	450	24.8% of all married couple families
with children under than 18	351	19.3% of all married couple families
Female householder, no husband present	554	60.9% of all female headed families
with children under than 18	513	28.2% of all female headed families

Table 3. Education Levels for all persons over 18 (13,050 persons), Chickasaw Nation, Tribal Jurisdiction Statistical Area, 1990.

Education Level	Number	Percent
High School Graduate	4,346	33.3 % of Population over 18
Some College or Associates Degree	3,111	23.8% of Population over 18
College Graduate (includes graduate degree)	322	2.5% of Population over 18

Table 4. Education Levels for all persons over 18 (8,055 persons), Kiowa, Apache and Comanche Tribal Jurisdiction Statistical Area, 1990.

Education Level	Number	Percent
High School Graduate	2,956	36.7% of Population over 18
Some College or Associates Degree	1,892	23.5% of Population over 18
College Graduate (includes graduate degree)	726	9.0% of Population over 18

As Tables 1a and 2a suggest, income levels for married families in the Chickasaw Nation are somewhat higher than those seen for the Kiowa, Comanche and Apache tribes. Female headed households are also a smaller proportion of families for the Chickasaw Nation than for the other tribes. These family status differences contribute to a higher poverty level among married couple families and for female headed families among the KCA tribes (28.4% of married couples and 60.9% of female headed families) than is seen in the Chickasaw Nation (18.6% of married couples and 52.1% of female headed families). Educational attainment is similar for both groups. Surprisingly, given the economic differences between the groups, the percent of college graduates among KCA tribes is higher (9.0%) compared to the Chickasaw Nation (2.5%).

Preliminary Findings

This paper draws from 50 transcribed interviews, and it addresses only the section of the interview that asks men how fathering has changed for their tribe over the years. Women were also interviewed. Women were asked not only about their own fathers, but also about the men who fathered their children. Men were asked about their biological and/or social fathers and any other men who may have acted as a father to them. Almost half of those interviewed were raised by their biological fathers, the rest were raised by maternal grandparents (n=11), stepfathers (n=6), uncles (n=3), mother only (n=3), or non-relatives (4=boarding school and 1=a neighbor). The reason children were raised by maternal instead of paternal grandparents seems to be related to fathers being deceased or having left the home, whereupon the child's mother would either return to her parent's home or need the assistance of her parents in raising the children.

Upon entering the tribal complexes of the each of the KCA tribes, one becomes instantly aware that these agency offices are 90 percent occupied by women. Two younger KCA women and at least two elder Kiowa men mentioned that the “young men were lazy and their women were having to raise their children” and provide for themselves. Approximately 31 percent of KCA families are headed by women with no husband present, compared with 19.3 percent of Chickasaw families. This may also be connected with the responses from men and women concerning the needs of Indian fathers in their communities. The top three responses from both men and women were: 1) the need for more understanding and teaching about their cultural histories, values, and language; 2) the need for more love, affection and emotional support from their family and kids; and 3) the need for more time with their families.

One of the interesting differences in responses between men and women when asked about what they remembered most about their fathers is that men rarely said anything negative. If nothing else could be said, usually the men would say that they remembered their father was a hard worker or provider. Women however, generally had more to say--whether their memories were negative or not--both as they referred to their own fathers and to the fathers of their children. And the language used to characterize their fathers usually carried a different, more emotional tone. For instance, instead of saying their father was a provider, as men commonly responded, some women said their father was “supportive.”

Changes in Family Organization and Family Dynamics

Perceived changes in fathering roles fell into two main categories. First, among the KCAs, changes have occurred in marriage within the memory of some interviewees, both in patterns of exogamy and in marriage type (now monogamous, formerly polygynous). Second, for both KCAs and Chickasaws, there have been changes in childhood socialization practices, most of which participants felt translated into a loss of respect for elders, self, and culture. Identified specifically in this category

were four related areas: a) among KCAs, the disappearance of avoidance taboos, b) the erosion of traditional gender roles, especially related to men “going soft,” c) the loss of oral tradition, and d) the children’s inability or unwillingness to learn by example.

The topic of respect came up in almost all of the interviews at some point. One individual placed respect in the broader context of “Indian things”: “Sometimes we do things that are Indian [. . .] as the more obvious things like dancin’ and [. . .] the food you eat, respect for elders, maybe leadership ideals, things like that.” Most often, the word respect was used in connection with honoring and being humble before tribal elders. In a broader sense, there was some reference to respect for an Indian way of life including “Indian beliefs” and not wasting natural resources, like food and water. There is also discussion, in the KCA interviews, of respect for veterans and those belonging to military societies.

Fifty percent of KCAs said that the biggest change in family dynamics was the lack of respect now shown toward elders, in-laws, and between the genders. Regardless of tribal affiliation, sex, or age, interviewees felt that older generations were more respectful and demanded more respect. Most felt this was an Indian value that was not being perpetuated. Several also spoke of the familial avoidance taboos that were no longer kept which exemplified and taught respect.

We used to have good manners—respect for mothers, fathers, grandparents, daughter-in-laws, father-in-laws, and today it’s not like that. The old tradition is you can’t even look at a mother-in-law, or father-in-law in the eye, or touch each other. That’s how much respect we had for one another. Today, they’re just like white people, they sit together and do things together and it don’t hurt touchin’ one another. But the old tradition, some brothers and sisters [didn’t] stay in one room. (Kiowa man, age 75)

Another said:

The respect that we had for one another, it’s not practiced like it should be. But I know my father was respected by his sisters . . . to the point where sometimes they didn’t even speak to him because they respected him so much . . . for certain men you can tease, and there’s certain men that you don’t dare tease. You know, you have to uphold a respect. (Kiowa, woman, age 58)

Repeating these familial customs, a 52-year-old Kiowa man shares:

The teaching you receive in your upbringing was always that you never called your aunt, or your uncle or your grandpa by their name . . . Because always call ’em by the Kiowa word for uncle, you call him, you know, *segi* (*Uncle*) and *sadau* (*children*), you know that was kind of a [. . .] respectful attitude toward them. You never, you never say harsh words or bad words around your sisters or your brothers, and the other is that, the son-in-laws never talk to their mother-in-laws, and neither do the father-in-laws, sit in the same room with their daughter-

in-laws. Most of 'em call 'em “traditional ways,” I call 'em the way of our, our Kiowa people because . . . it is something that I think we need to pass on to our younger generation 'cause they're good, they're good morals, you know? They're good morals in that way.

A Chickasaw man (age 35) remembered as a child seeing elders receive more respect. He commented: “Things have changed . . . my grandfather was the first one to eat and the first one to sit . . . yeah, [there was] a lot more respect back then I think.”

An Apache elder whose family had been incarcerated at Ft. Sill from 1894 through 1914 explained that during that period, young men and women had been forced to intermarry (within lineages or bands), transgressing traditional protocols for marriage. Traditional restrictions had to be waived during the 20 years of imprisonment. After they were released however, many married into other tribes because it gave them more options. (R.D., field notes, Apache, OK, 7/99).

Others observed that they now could only have one wife, and that the marriages were no longer arranged. A Kiowa man (age 64) told us that both his grandfather and his father had two wives.

Changes in Roles and Learning

Several interviewees mentioned a loss of gender identity for Indian men. An elder explained the changes in roles this way:

Go back a generation. It was demeaning for--not demeaning, but condescending, I guess you would say, for the Indian male to assume some responsibility, the economic responsibilities of the family. When it came to get food on the table and get clothes for the kids, the grandma went out and did that stuff . . . your grandpa didn't have the means to do it and couldn't do it. He was in sort of a role where he had to step back and let her bring those things in. (Kiowa man, age 55)

I asked another Kiowa about this, and he explained:

Women did it all. They cooked, put up and broke down camps and tepees, got wood, honored and served men, and even took care of men's horses on war parties. This was just a generation or two back. The men were expected to be honored by their families. (B.P., (age 55), fieldnotes, Norman, OK, 10/99).

A younger Kiowa man, 35, agreed:

Yea, . . . let the woman take care of almost everything. I mean . . . I always wondered what the guys were doing. You know always have that vision of 'em sittin' around and smokin' a pipe and . . . and tellin' war stories y' know? Oh, that's changed quite a bit, I think.

When asked about how much hands-on care giving they contributed in child-rearing, approximately 75 percent of all men said that they provided a lot. However, there were some differences tribally among those men who said they contributed little or no hands-on care giving. Thirty-one percent of KCAs said they contributed little or none, compared with only 11 percent of Chickasaw men. A 51-year-old Comanche man told us:

I know the modern generation has changed. My boys act like they are midwives or something the way they hover over them little kids. I said, "You guys got a life, you've got a yard to mow, things to do." But they'd rather sit there and play with the baby and change diapers and nurse them and feed them and everything else. I said "That's blowing my mind." . . . Times have changed. My sons coddle their children too much. Maybe my dad didn't coddle them enough, maybe I didn't coddle them enough, but things have changed and whether it's good or bad, I don't know. That is breaking us down from being Indian and just like everybody else. What do they call it? Enculturating us into the society of the whites and the blacks and the Orientals or whatever.

Women often had different views than men did of how men parented their children and the level of "contributions to care" they offered. One elder (Comanche/Kiowa), age 71, had ten children by two different men. She mentioned that the children all lived with her and that she did not have help raising them. She said, "That's why I thank the Lord for givin' me good nerves with all these children." In her discussion of fathers, she felt that men do not show the respect of older generations as they had traditionally.

In talking about change across the generations, some speculate that the loss of language, loss of understanding values associated with traditional gender roles, and loss of time spent with family could be attributed to younger generations not being aware of the lessons and value in traditional tribal stories. The Chickasaws would sometimes refer to the use of traditional tribal stories, but did not specifically identify any. Some KCAs felt that the traditional Saynday and "camp" stories were important in teaching lessons in the traditional way. Saynday stories involve a supernatural being, who called the Kiowa into the world from a hollow cottonwood tree trunk and taught them the culture of the Plains (Wunder 1989:17). Camp stories involve passing down oral histories of what camp life was like, such as families put up tepees during particular times of the year, reminiscent of their traditional, semi-nomadic culture. It is through these stories that children would learn how things happened for their people and what was important to perpetuate for their tribe.

Learning by example is another traditional means of cultural transmission mentioned in the interviews. One quarter of those interviewed said that they had been taught about the Indian way in this manner. As one KCA woman, (age 58) said,

We learned by listening to and watching our parents. It was our place to be attentive and reflect. Nowadays, you have to almost set 'em down and say “This is what I want you to learn,” which is a barrier in teaching our traditional ways.

A Kiowa man (age 52) shared his memories of his father and how he learned to be a man:

He did not use the word “love” a lot, okay. But I knew . . . that my dad loved me. From the way he lived. And the way he acted and talked in front of us, okay. Uh, even though he didn't say that, I knew that he cared a lot for us. And . . . he would always try to do . . . for the children . . . what he thought was best! You know, we always wanted different things but . . . he would only do what he thought was best for us, for the need, you know. And as far as advice was concerned, he was not really a person that was outspoken a lot, you know. He just, he just kind of uh . . . did it. Rather than talk about it, he just did it and showed you, you know, that he cares.

Beliefs about Family Life and Fatherhood

All but two of the 50 said that there had been changes in fathering over the last several generations. Of these, 20 individuals, without prompting, offered explanation for changes. The factors interviewees identified fell into four main categories. In order of most to least common: nine referred to assimilationist institutions, such as federal laws and boarding schools, as being the primary cause of change; five cited technology, especially television; five said that cars led to people being gone more and spending less time with their families, especially among the young; and two cited abuse of drugs and/or alcohol as the major factor in change.

A 58-year-old KCA man summarized the influences by saying:

It's changed quite a bit I'm sure because of the technology now. I remember back when I was a child . . . my dad would have . . . we'd have people come to the house and set around and tell stories. The peyote drum, sing peyote songs, [we] all set around. But [you] know it seems like the parents don't have the time to even do things with their kids anymore. And it's largely because of the TV. Or you know the kids have cars. The kids get in the cars and take off. There's hardly not that much communication anymore . . . That was our time to get together as a group, was at the dinner table. And I remember back when I was a child we done the same thing. I guess that was just one of those things that's just passed on and on . . . That's where me and my kids, every evening we set down at the dinner table and we discuss things. But yeah, technology has ruined a lot of families.

All but two of the interviewees who attended or whose fathers attended boarding school mentioned the negative impact that the men's absence from their families had on their parenting skills. A KCA man (age 60) explained:

In a way I was denied [a family] when I went to school. I felt like an orphan. I was lonesome for a family . . . even though I had two other brothers and two sisters, we weren't together. You don't have anything. You don't have a dad, you don't have a mother, you don't have your grandfather.

Boarding school for most brought memories of being separated from siblings and family while being forced to give up all that was familiar. One of those schools, the Bloomfield Academy, has a long legacy among the Chickasaws. Its presence in Chickasaw territory lasted from the mid 1800s till 1949, first being a mission school, then a tribal school, and finally a federal boarding school. Those women who remember it during the federal boarding school period provide a fascinating look at the role the Academy played in their education. Amanda Cobb's (2000) *Listening to our Grandmothers' Stories: The Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females, 1852-1949* provides essential context for understanding the perspectives of women who attended there. One of the elder Chickasaw women who spoke with us (age 84), remembers her experience:

The only experience I had much when I was a child was when I went to Bloomfield and then they were trying to make the Indian children to become more like the white children . . . 'cause you had to conform to the way of the whites.

Several Chickasaw men talked about how their experiences and the experiences of their parents have provided them with important lessons that have improved their own ability to parent.

So the kids were taken away from the parents and you know they were abused . . . so if you're in a boarding school how do you develop parenting skills? How do you learn from your folks? I try to think about things like that. I understand my dad's [alcoholism] . . . and I know the most important gifts a Chickasaw father can give to a child is love, understanding, and be there when they need you." (Chickasaw man, age 44)

Another KCA female (age 54), spoke about the boarding school creating such a vacuum in her life that she had been unable to reconnect with her own siblings. She told her daughter,

You don't need to have children. You don't know how to be a mother, because I didn't know how to be a mother. I never learned. I was never able to see how that was done by my mother, nor by her mother. The boarding school has taken that away from us.

Absence from home and from other family members came in many ways, through boarding schools, through incarceration, through premature death of a parent or parents, and by having to leave and find work far away. A 27-year-old Kiowa man spoke about growing up away from Oklahoma, but being taught

traditional things and recognizing the importance of those things as part of the Kiowa way of life when he came back to his homeland to live and work:

I would say when I was a lot younger, that really, um, a lot of that stuff really went to the wayside. I guess when I was growin' up my parents just had me so much into, getting an education, getting into college, and you know I really, growing up [outside of Oklahoma] I really didn't know much about being Indian an' as far- when I was a lot younger, boy, I really, I really didn't know much when I came back to Oklahoma. And, just by seeing all my cousins and how different they were and how they were raised. Um, my father, y' know, he always stressed always bein' educated but he always taught me things here and there about y' know what you should do y' know only, when we went hunting, he taught me how to shoot, he's like, don't kill anything that you're not gonna eat, or you're not gonna use. Y' know don't just kill somethin' and just leave it there. If you're not gonna do it, you're not gonna y' know use it anyway, y' know don't shoot it so. A lot of the traditional things I got from my father y' know were just like little sayings an' y' know a lot of stuff that stuck in my head, 'specially 'bout bein' respect[ful] to nature and feeding certain things.

He spoke of his father in an almost reverent way:

A lot of my friends who don't have fathers y' know, really like my dad . . . an' uh, like how he is. I'd probably say I'm pretty respectful of him when I think about him . . . being a man of very little words he wasn't a very warm person to be around. But, y' know that's just my dad's way . . . the loving and caring for and emotion were all something that my mother showed, and that my mother was supposed to give to us, not my father.

This young father remembered when his dad left a very well paying job and came back home to take care of his mother when she became ill. The agency he worked for couldn't transfer his job so he worked at a blue-collar job outside everyday in the heat to provide for his family.

Y' know jus' one of those terrible jobs you have to get, I guess to support your family. But one thing he told was that uh, don't ever except anything from anybody, don't ever ask anybody for anything. If I can't give it to you, and it's somethin' you don't need, then you don't need it at all. Y' know if I can't give it to you an' it's somethin' that y' know. He said, you have a house, you have a roof over your head, you have your own room, you have food to eat. He said you don't need anything more than that and if I can't give it to you then don't ask for and, don't- don't ever ask anybody for anything.

He also felt that fathering had changed since his dad's generation:

I think it's changed a lot. I think they think, like I said before they y' know, they were more of . . . they got around a lot more, back in those days. [He had spoken

earlier of the “tradition” of Kiowa men having babies with many women.] I would say now, uh definitely, the view of the father has changed. Y’ know as far as being there for their children, I think a lot of fathers these days, a lot of my friends are there for their children, when their fathers weren’t. I see that a lot. And, I dunno, maybe it was due to being raised by women. I have no idea. Resenting what their fathers did to them, I dunno.

A 72-year-old Comanche man whose father died of tuberculosis when he was five was sent to live with his maternal grandparents on their farm. There he said, he learned the Comanche language and way of life, and joined the peyote church [Native American Church]. He had three wives (serially), who bore him eight children. He proudly speaks of his fourteen grandchildren and the lessons his grandfather taught him about treating his family with gentleness and working hard to provide for them. He also laughs that at 72, his only health concern is finding another woman. He shared with his interviewer his thoughts about changes in parenting since his grandfather’s generation:

Oh yeah, a lot [of change has occurred]. I’m, no-not speakin’ for myself, but watchin’ the other people ’n’ they just, excuse my language, they just don’t give a damn about their children. They don’t even try to help ’em, is the reason why a lot of our Comanche children are in jail an’ in prison, because the fathers don’t try to correct ’em in any way.

Another Kiowa man (age 52) agreed that fathering had changed since his father’s and grandfather’s time (both of whom had been sent to boarding schools):

I think it’s changed . . . because of the laws. That changed. It changed a great deal. Because today if a father . . . were to discipline his child as my grandfather did or my dad did, he would be hauled off to jail! And he would be put in jail or put in prison for a number of years. Ah . . . so I think, in the various ages and the changes comes . . . according to the changes in the law. And—that, the law today has taken a lot . . . taken away a lot of . . . fatherhood, and parenting, and has placed it in the hands of the government, or somebody else, who is not even a part of the family.

A Chickasaw man (age 38) reflected on his experiences with both his biological father and his step-father. He felt that in his case, Chickasaw fathering had improved for his generation. He felt that neither had “been there for him” or “provided a good role model.” He also said he had no role models or traditional examples to provide guidance for his parenting. When asked what made him want to be a father, he responded, “To have one [a child] and give her the things that I’ve never had, being raised without a father.” He went on to explain that he thought fatherhood for him was different than for his father, because he was around for his child and he and his child were “extremely close.” He commented further that the most important things a father could give his children are, “Love, understanding, and guidance.”

In summarizing his thoughts about changes in Indian fathering, a 56-year-old Chickasaw man reflected on the experiences of his own father and grandfather.

Yes, it's changed a lot in outward appearance, but my grandfather raised a large family with twelve kids and of course he had stepchildren too, but he did what he could to provide for his family and take care of them. He was always respectful to his children. There was never any harsh punishments and he didn't put his children into a bad situation. He didn't create an atmosphere that was unhealthy, mentally, physically, or emotionally . . . and my father, there was ten kids in our family, nine of which he raised into adulthood. My father said to me when I was very young, eight or nine years old, that the best mark of a man was his ability to accept responsibility, to be a responsible person, and yes, there was also affection. And not a day goes by that I don't hug or kiss my [own] kids. Yeah, all I can really do for my kids is love 'em.

Another Chickasaw man (age 42) spoke of his father teaching him the Indian ways:

You know, like, when it's goin' up and down in the cost, you know, we never, we never waste anything, you know. If we, like if we cut down a tree for firewood, we would use basically use every bit of that tree because he [his father] said that's the way the Indian people do. He was teachin' us this, you know. We never, never waste anything. And, you know, he used to tell us things like that if we go fishin', you know, he said don't catch more than you're gonna eat, you know, if you're gonna throw it away don't catch it. Because the Indian people never waste anything. So that's why we always had things to come back on. And, you know, he taught us that and he taught us some of the, of you know, like, we had a medicine man that could turn themselves into certain animals, you know? And, let me think, some of the things that he taught us . . . he always taught us to be, you know, to be proud of ourselves. You know, especially bein' Chickasaw, he said that, you know, back in the old times that they were a pretty feared nation before I guess the, they were really taken over by the white people. They never lost a war, and he was always tellin' us, you know, if you're Chickasaw you be proud of yourself.

He continued to talk about his father and his feelings about him:

I'm proud of him. He's . . . he's a good man. Uh, love him so much, you know, he's got cancer now, and, I know I'm gonna lose him real soon an' I'm scared o' that but, uh, (pause) I'm proud of him because he did a lot of good for us when we was growin' up. (Softly) Wouldn't starve. We wouldn't go hungry. That's . . . that's the way I think of him.

This thought was sustained as the man explained his father's teaching them how to live and then commenting on the change in fathering from his father's and grandfather's generations:

He was teachin' us how to be, you know, to survive, I guess, he's teachin' us how to plant a garden, you know. Things that we needed to know. Always, you know, and how to help around the house. Like when we turned, uh, thirteen years old? We got, got a twenty-two [rifle]. I think we shot a twenty-two that, he got me and my brother too so when my other brother got older and, uh, turned thirteen, he got a used, you know? This is how we learned to shoot that rifle, you know. You know, he showed us how to shoot it and be careful with it. [He had] other two brothers. And then we got, like, I don't know, about sixteen years old, he was always tellin' us, you know, I think the oldest one can take him and have him a summer job, you know. Workin' for the county. And he did each one of us that way. To get us started in the field of workin' . . . and not bein' late for work, you know . . . taught us if you can be thirty minutes early, be thirty minutes early . . . [he taught us] all the way up to eighteen years old.

[Being a father] I believe it's gotten harder. To the times, you know, about everything, and people not as close as they used to be. You know? Go-go-go-go-go. Yeah, doin' whatever, you know, working or whatever. They're not . . . close like they used to be.

Conclusion

These interviews reflect various changes that have taken place over the last three generations of Indian fathering. One of the most compelling differences between generations seems to be represented by the interviewees' discussion of loss of respect. Interesting in these narratives is that this discussion, by men or women, seemed to refer specifically to a loss of respect for men. Several commented on role reversals and loss of traditional role expectations for men or women in their families.

Many of the interviews did not reflect concern about changes in fatherhood as a social practice, but rather focused on barriers to good fathering or changes that impede good family cohesion. Examples include the mobility of family members, such as men working away from home, which leads to lessened family cohesion. Also mentioned was the absence of fathers due to premature death, substance abuse, or incarceration.

In terms of difficulties that men have in dealing with their children, most seem to express that fathering is harder in recent generations due to a lack of good jobs and adequate income. When many spoke of their fathers' and grandfathers' lives and their relationships to them, they said that processing how they felt and what they could remember about the topic of "fatherhood" was something they had never done before. Talking about fatherhood prompted them to examine those relationships and the relationships they had with their children and grandchildren in a new and different way. Memories about the good times and questions about the difficult times generated discussions about both "fatherhood" and "Indianness." For example, there were stories that alluded to the pressure to become more "white-like," while holding on to Indian ways, and how that was difficult to juggle. One Kiowa father and grandfather (age 52) expressed his beliefs this way:

Based on our traditional beliefs, I guess on some of the upbringing, there has been a great move to I guess Americanize our Native Americans to the point where the European is thought [to] be the highest quality of all. But my belief is that, as Native Americans, we have a great heritage. And we ought to be proud of it. And I think our children ought to know that. Rather than them being robots to different types of societies and governments and say, you know, "Well, yes sir and yes sir." But they'll be an individual, and knowing that they are Native American, that they're Kiowa, and they can be proud of that. So, as far as, not following Indian ways . . . I don't think it's detrimental to anybody, who is Kiowa, but I think it's more of a, it's more of an improvement of that, of a person's character who is Kiowa, to let somebody know that, "Hey you know, uh, we're a people just like anybody else." And the thing is, is that, once they begin to think that they're somebody else or . . . [more] what we would call *thaukau* [Kiowa word for "White person"], than they are . . . Indians, then, it's uh . . . you kind of lose everybody, you lose everything. And today, it's always a move to try to be who you are—not, who you can be or who you ought to be. But who you really are right now, and I think that that's important. Rather than thinking about our peyote churches or our peyote meetings, a Native American Church, versus that of the, what we call a "white man church," or a "cowboy church," or whatever. But, I don't think that there needs to be any kind of a barrier there. I think each one of us ought to be able to exercise our beliefs, as we believe.

The stories that these Indian men and women shared were powerful, moving, and humbling. Those who worked on this project and were fortunate enough to meet these people have been forever enriched by their experience. Our thanks and gratitude go to all who allowed us to understand just a small portion of the rich legacy and diverse heritage of these nations.

Notes

1. This paper represents a sub-study of the American Indian Fatherhood Project, funded by a grant from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau [grant MCJ-400827].
2. The data in the tables that follow come from the 1990 U.S. Census (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1990).

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Indigenous Masculinities in the Global Lobster Economy

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Indigenous Miskitu men have worked as deep-water divers in the international lobster economy for the last forty years. Because of the long-term “boom” in the lobster economy, Miskitu society has become increasingly involved with monetized economies, agriculture has declined, and families now purchase their subsistence foods from stores. This article’s main research question asks how the global lobster economy has helped shape Miskitu masculinities on the Honduran Caribbean coast. Ethnographic fieldwork draws from the author’s doctoral research (1997-1998, supported by a Fulbright grant) in the Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve (RPBR), Honduras. The research combines participant observation with the collection of oral texts.

The research is unique because it highlights indigenous men’s sexuality, a topic for which there is relatively little anthropological information (Gilmore 1990; Gregor 1985; Jamieson 2000a; Lancaster 1988, 1992). The research also uses oral texts as primary data to examine male sexual identity (see also Basso 1990; Howe 1986; Jamieson 2000b; Sammons and Sherzer 2000; Sherzer 1983, 1990). The oral texts collected are songs that Miskitu men sing about themselves and their livelihoods, as participants in various coastal economies. The songs include Miskitu standards from the “old days” (a Caribbean English phrase now used widely along the coast) and the newer hits that focus mainly on men’s lives as lobster divers today.

Analysis and comparison of the older and newer songs reveals that Miskitu manhood is defined consistently throughout the texts. Despite the economy in which men have participated, masculinity is defined as the ability to provide resources and money to women. Therefore, this article argues that local constructions of Miskitu manhood have not changed dramatically as a result of the lobster-diving industry. However, song texts and ethnographic data recorded reveal that relations between women and men have become highly commodified. Conclusions suggest that the commodification of Miskitu identities and gender relations has intensified during the latest “boom” in the coastal economy, but that this commodification has developed alongside the globalization of western values and monetized economies that have influenced the Caribbean coast since colonial times (see also Connell 1995; Gutmann 2003; Jackson 2001; Kimmel, Hearn and Connell 2004).¹

Socio-Economic Background

The indigenous Miskitu people speak their own Miskitu language (a Misumalpan, Macro-Chibchan language of South American origins) and trace their ancestry to an Amerindian group that intermarried with African and European populations in the sixteenth century (Helms 1971). Their homeland—called La Moskitia in Honduras and the Atlantic Coast in Nicaragua—extends from Black River, Honduras to just south of the Pearl Lagoon area in Nicaragua. During the colonial era, when other indigenous groups were experiencing death, destruction, and de-territorialization (Gould 1998; Newson 1986; Stonich 2001), the Miskitu expanded their numbers and territory, while developing a strong cultural identity (Conzemius 1932; Helms 1971; Herlihy 1997; Offen 1999). They have continually expanded their population and established their identity through interactions with the British, North Americans, and other foreigners who have come to the coast.

The interconnectedness of global and local social identities is not new to the Miskitu peoples, who have participated in foreign economies since colonial times. Classic Miskitu scholars such as anthropologist Mary Helms (1971) and geographer Bernard Nietschmann (1974) describe historic and modern-day Miskitu economy as a combination of subsistence agriculture and wage-labor economies. In the last two hundred years, for example, the Miskitu people have participated in a series of “boom and bust” (in the terminology of Mary Helms) economies along the Honduran and Nicaraguan coast. International companies have employed Miskitu men as laborers to extract a variety of local resources, such as gold, bananas, mahogany wood, sea turtles, and most recently, shrimp, conch, and lobsters. (Conzemius 1932; Dennis 2004; Dodds 1998; Helms 1971; Nietschmann 1974, 1997).

Miskitu domestic organization is Caribbean in nature: the men are absent earning money in migrant wage labors, while women raise children in female-headed households and matrilineal groups. The village of Kuri, where the author lived and completed her research, is geographically divided into five family residential groups composed of members related through the female line.² *Kukas* (or grandmothers) are heads of larger matrilineal groups and hold the highest leadership positions in the village. Mothers, daughters, and sisters in Kuri live near each other throughout their lives and create the most important kinship and economic sharing networks in society. With the men gone, related women also play heightened roles in transmitting Miskitu language and culture to the children. Other scholars have documented these historic and modern-day matrilineal residential patterns (Garcia 1996a; 1996b; Helms 1970; 1971; 1976; Jamieson 2000a; Peter Espinoza 2002).

Río Plátano Miskitu men and women experience ambiguity in their local conceptions of gender ideology (see also Blackwood 2000; Menon 1995; Scott 1995). Men maintain authority as society’s main wage-earners and hold all positions of leadership at the regional and national levels. Yet, male absenteeism brought on by men’s participation in migrant wage labor has augmented women’s power and control of resources in an already matrilineal society (Herlihy 2002).

Miskitu women's high status in relation to men is evidenced when compared to Latin American women's positionality in *mestizo* societies with "*machista*" gender ideologies. Since the colonial era, Spanish and *mestizo* families have revolved around the patriarchal male as the main breadwinner that maintains a firm economic and social control over his household and its members. In Plátano Miskitu society, however, this is not entirely the case. While men earn the money, women living in matrigroups and female-headed households ultimately gain control over the money and make all household economic and child-rearing decisions.

The Lobster Diving Economy

Since the early 1970s, Honduran Miskitu men have worked as deep-water lobster divers, harvesting lobsters that are mainly sold to U.S. companies. The sea-workers contributed an estimated U.S. 3.2 million dollars per year into the economies of the Plátano reserve's north coast villages, primarily between Ibans and Barra Plátano. Twenty-five lobster boats operated during the 1997-98 season, employing 700-800 lobster divers and canoemen. At the time, local divers and the Honduran Ministry of Public Health both claimed there were about 4,000 divers and canoemen in the entire Honduran Moskitia (Proyecto Nautilo 1993:6). Thus, about one-fifth of all Honduran Miskitu divers and canoemen hailed from the north coast of the RPBR.

Dodds explains (1998:11):

Boats based in the Bay Islands come to pick up Miskitu men and boys as divers and canoemen. The boats then search for spiny lobster (*Panulirus argus*) in the continental shelf waters off Honduras and Nicaragua, and as far away as Colombia. After an excursion, the Miskitu sea-workers are then dropped off along the coast at their respective villages while the boats continue on to the Bay Islands; there, the catch of lobster tails is frozen and packed for shipping, mostly to the United States.

The lobster tails are exported from the Bay Islands to Florida and purchased by United States companies, such as the restaurant chain, Red Lobster, Inc. Through this venue, Miskitu men from the RPBR are linked to the national and international economy.

Miskitu men have become internationally known as skilled deep-water divers and lobster hunters. The men gained fame for diving without tanks as the economy first developed, a time when lobsters were plentiful and the divers found them in shallow waters. In the late 1970s, lobster divers began to use tanks that enabled them to dive deeper and stay underwater longer. Divers were forced to dive deeper to find lobsters because they over-exploited and diminished the natural resource.

Over-exploitation of the lobster caused the Honduran government to take action, placing an annual moratorium on lobster diving from April through July to protect the resource. The moratorium occurs at a fortuitous time during the yearly

agricultural cycle, when the locals burn and replant their fields. Men normally are able to combine some agricultural work with lobster-diving.

During the diving season, men usually take two trips a month, each trip lasting about ten to twelve days. Most inexperienced and younger *buzos* (lobster divers) make between one-hundred and fifty to three-hundred U.S. dollars on each trip, but older, more experienced divers can earn about twice as much. All divers, however, claim their take-home pay depends largely on luck. When “lucky,” they can make between \$200 to \$400 U.S. dollars, but when “unlucky,” they may come home empty-handed.

Only the tails are taken from these relatively small, spiny lobsters and divers are paid by the pound, between U.S. \$3.50 and \$4.00 during the 1997-98 lobster-diving season. Dodds (1998:13) states, “One successful 12-day outing can provide as much cash income to a diver as a year of working diligently in the fields to produce and market a cash crop.” Accordingly, locals prefer to work as lobster divers and purchase their household’s daily subsistence foods and material goods from stores. These economic changes have put increasing pressures on men to risk their lives as they dive deeper and deeper to bring up the elusive lobster that means more money for their families.

Lobster-diving is an incredibly dangerous occupation. Divers are forced to live and dive in unsafe conditions on boats. They are given little training, use old diving equipment, have no depth gauges, and the boats have no decompression chambers on board (Meltzoff and Schull 1999; World Bank 1999). The divers also use cocaine and marijuana on boats, often before they descend into deep waters to hunt for lobster, which increases their chances of injury.³ Many have developed serious health problems related to their work, including the “bends” or decompression sickness, an affliction that they call “*liwa mairin*” or “mermaid sickness” (Barrett 1992; Dennis 2004; Garcia 1996a; Perez 2000).⁴

When a diver has symptoms of decompression sickness, such as paralyzation of the legs, the boat Captains do not always take him directly to the nearest sites with decompression chambers in Roatán, Awas, or La Ceiba. Captains may simply drop off the injured diver on shore for treatment by local healers and plant specialists, shirking their responsibilities to the injured diver.⁵ Although lobster diving is dangerous, where men lack proper training and equipment, they continue to risk their lives in order to provide money and store-bought goods to their families.

Lobster Diver Songs

Buzo (lobster diver) songs, as locals refer to them, include both older and newer songs that men sing about their lives. These songs are called lobster diver songs because the men perform them together, while off-shore working on lobster boats and when socializing back on shore. The songs presented in this article were originally performed by Wilinton Suarez and Eucevio Guevara, lobster divers and musicians who live in Kuri.⁶ *Buzo* songs are part of a broader category of Miskitu

music called *tasbaya lawanka* (“earthly or profane songs”), that locals distinguish from *dawan lawanka* (“church or sacred songs”). Many more songs that the author recorded were documented in her 2002 dissertation, “The Mermaid and the Lobster Diver” (Herlihy 2002).

The newer *buzo* songs commonly lament the emotional hardships that lobster divers endure working off-shore, away from home and loved ones. These songs describe the dangerous and life-threatening work conditions (about 15% of divers are injured, paralyzed, or killed while deep-water diving). But the saddest songs have to do with the way women use and abuse them for their money. Two songs presented below, “Money Tree” (“*Lala Dusa*”) and “Flat Broke” (“*Zero Man Zero*”), are recently written *buzo* songs. Textual analysis of these two recent lobster-diver songs reveals different aspects of Plátano Miskitu masculinity. Ethnographic data adds an element of thick description to the linguistic data to illustrate how Miskitu men experience gender, power, and sexuality in their everyday lives.

The first song, “*Money Tree*,” explains how *buzos* feel about themselves when they have money in their pockets. The lyrics mention how they garner prestige and status by bringing home money to their families and girlfriends. This prestige comes at a price, as the *buzos* continue to risk their lives in order to earn cash needed by others.

Money Tree

<p>we are who we are we are the money trees we are who we are</p> <p>we work for an important company we do important work we are who we are we live on the sea shore we are who we are</p> <p>there was a guy on the coast I am that guy we are who we are</p> <p>we rule the big fishing boats we rule the big towns we rule the great Miskitu people we are who we are</p> <p>the grandfathers are happy the grandmothers are happy the elders are happy when the money trees arrive the children are happy the elders are happy when the money trees arrive</p>	<p>the grandmothers are happy the teenage girls are happy because of the money trees we own the big ravine we own the great Miskitu people we are who we are</p> <p>“where did you come from?” “where do you work?” I’m a Kuri man I came to build a house I’m the money man the elders are happy the teenage girls are happy the elders are happy the grandmothers are happy when the money tree arrives when the company’s boats came to the coast the grandmothers were happy the elders were happy</p>
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The text of “*Money Tree*” reveals how Miskitu men’s self identity is intricately related to their wage-earning occupations. Miskitu men are extremely quick to define themselves as lobster divers in any interaction. Men are proud to be divers because they are internationally recognized as skilled divers, and the entire coastal Miskitu population’s economic and emotional well-being depends on the money they earn.

Money gained by Miskitu men in the lobster export industry has been the primary source of income and cash flow into the Río Plátano’s north coast villages since the early 1970s. Besides some subsistence staples, almost all of the household’s daily necessities are purchased in stores. With the additional costs above basic food stuffs, an average Kuri household (around seven people) spends about U.S. \$150.00 per month. Mothers visit stores and send their children daily to buy beans, rice, lard, flour, salt, pepper, coffee, sugar, chips, cookies, and candy. They also buy meat about twice a month at spontaneous markets. In addition to foods, they less frequently buy clothes, school supplies, health care and medicines, household items like pots, buckets, knives, jewelry, perfume, and hair accessories. On special occasions, larger items such as bicycles, mattresses, and jam boxes are purchased.

Helms (1969) stressed the emotional dependence on cash and commodities that Miskitu individuals had developed. She called Miskitu society the “purchase society,” explaining that foreign goods had become cultural necessities to the indigenous families. She believed that during “boom” phases of the economy, the Miskitu were happy when outside industries worked in the region and locals had access to money and foreign goods, but that they acted emotionally depressed during economic “bust” times when they were unable to acquire precious goods.⁷

Even with the long-term “boom” in the lobster economy, mini-bust occasions arise when men have unlucky trips. They use the words “*lala apu*” (“to be flat broke”) to describe their sad and downtrodden emotional state. Locals act depressed during these times and are left without a way to earn money they need to survive. The next song, “Flat Broke” (“*Zero Man Zero*”), demonstrates Miskitu men’s self identity during economic “bust” situations.

Flat Broke

Say hello to my father-in-law
 say hello to my mother-in-law
 I’m going out to sea
 I’m looking for my children’s clothes
 looking for my wife’s clothes
 I’m leaving right away
 I’m going out to sea
 I left from the beach
 I saw all kinds of boats
 I saw airplanes above
 the first work that I found
 was work on a lobster boat

say hello to my father-in-law
 say hello to my mother-in-law
 I'm going out to sea

when I finished 12 days
 I turned back for home
 when I figured out my earnings
 there was zero man zero
 say hello to my father-in-law
 say hello to my mother-in-law
 I'm going away again
 I have to return to the sea
 tell them to buy a pound of sugar
 tell them to buy a pound of salt
 I'm a poor man now
 what can I send them?
 I'm a poor man now
 what can I send them?
 I'm a poor man now

“*Flat Broke*” tells the story of a man who found work as a lobster diver. He wants to earn money so that he can buy clothes for his children and store-bought goods for his wife and her parents. The diver works at sea for 12 days, but when it comes time to figure out his pay, he realizes he has earned next to nothing. The diver has had bad luck on this trip to sea and sings apologetically to his in-laws—he can only buy them one pound of salt and one pound of sugar. In these personal “bust” situations, a Miskitu man’s self worth is low because he cannot even put food on their kitchen table. When the men are *lala apu* (or broke), they complain that no woman would want them. This is often the case, as women often claim not to want a penniless man hanging around their house.

Together, the two songs illustrate much about Miskitu manhood in the Plátano Biosphere. The first song, “Money Tree” (“*Lala Dusa*”) celebrates the Miskitu men’s concept of self as a cash earner in the “booming” lobster-diving economy—men feel brave and macho, like heroes in their communities. When the divers have money in their pockets, they arrogantly refer to themselves as “*millionarios*” (in Spanish). The second song, “Flat Broke” (“*Zero Man Zero*”), laments the men’s concept of self during an economic “bust” situation—men feel impotent and useless. Combined, the two songs illustrate the importance of accessing money and being a good provider to the self worth and self esteem of Miskitu men.

Lobster-Diver Songs from the “Old Days”

The following three songs, performed by Wilinton and Eucevio, are ones that they classify as being from the “old days.” These songs describe Miskitu men’s lives and relationships in subsistence and canoe-making economies. The first song is narrated

from the perspective of a young man who wants to marry a girl. He sings to his in-laws, using respectful terms of reference, "Aunti and Uncle."

Aunti, Aunti, Aunti

Aunti, Aunti, Aunti, Uncle, Uncle Uncle,
 I want your daughter to be mine
 I will buy her a chicken, a pig and
 build her a house close to your house
 Aunti, Aunti, Aunti, I want your daughter to be mine
 I will give her pigs and I will give her dogs
 I will give her a house close to your house

The prospective son-in-law reassures the girl's parents that he will not take her away to live somewhere else. After marriage, mothers give each of their daughters land on her property. Husbands prove that they are good providers by building a house for their wife and giving her small animals. The song illustrates that even when men participated in subsistence labors, earning and giving resources was a fundamental component of a Miskitu man's concept of self. The following song from the "old days" further demonstrates this:

Beautiful Darling

Beautiful Darling
 This arm will be your yucca field
 This arm will be your banana field
 This arm will be your banana field
 Beautiful darling
 This arm will be your house
 This arm will be your money
 This arm will be your clothes
 This arm will be your orchid
 This arm will be your bean field
 This arm will be your yucca field

In the above song verse, a man sings to his wife about how he will provide her with subsistence and cash resources. The text demonstrates how men give to their wives both agricultural items and money earned in the local agriculture markets. Men involved in subsistence labors have gained access to cash by selling their beans, rice, and in local markets for the last 100 years.

The next song tells of a man that goes into the forest to build round-bottom, wooden canoes. He plans on selling the canoes in order to give the money to his wife, Arelita. Canoe-making has been an historic and modern-day Miskitu wage-earning activity, one for which the neighboring Tawahka Sumu people are today better known (McSweeney 2000).

Arelita

Wait for me for a day or two
 I'm going to the river
 I will stay for weeks
 I will stay for months
 Arelita woman
 I will be away for weeks
 Arelita woman
 I'm entering the forest
 I'm going to make *cayucos* [Spanish for round-bottom, wooden boats]
 Arelita woman
 I have two or three *cayucos*
 Arelita woman
 Wait for me
 This *cayuco* is your money

Men from coastal villages like Kuri must leave their communities and travel up-river into the rain forest to find the trees needed to make *cayucos*, sea-faring canoes. The song text tells the story of a man departing for the forest. The man asks his wife, Arelita, to wait for him. He promises that he will bring her money when he returns. The text demonstrates that men historically made money in the canoe-building industry, which they in turn provided to the women. The three songs combined demonstrate that the definition of Miskitu manhood by the ability to provide resources to women dates back to before the lobster-diving industry developed.

Despite the economy in which men have participated (subsistence, cash-based subsistence, canoe-making, or lobster diving), there appears to be more continuity than disjuncture in the textual construction of Miskitu masculine identities.

Commodified Gender Relations

Fieldwork demonstrates that relations between women and men have become highly commodified in the Plátano reserve's north coast villages. Combining interviews and first hand field observation, this section will discuss four examples of the ways in which gender relations have been commodified. Most noticeably, cash and commodity-orientated obsessions ("commodity fetishism") continue on the Honduran north coast, and have been augmented by the long-term boom in the lobster economy.

Cash-Oriented Obsessions

The lobster economy provides steady work to men from August through March but a moratorium exists on lobster diving during the *veda* (or off-season in Spanish). During the *veda*, many individuals fall into a dreary emotional state and have

withdrawal symptoms from the gifts of cash that they have been receiving all year. Women, who buy almost all of their subsistence foods from stores, feel especially helpless trying to feed their children with no money available. They subsist on the few agricultural items that men provide to them, with little dietary diversity.

Grandmother or *Kuka* Denecela and her daughters, members of the community in which I worked, looked defeated toward the end of the 1997 *veda*. They had not eaten anything but beans, rice and bananas for weeks; their world was monotonous, their outlook on life, bleak. Meat, now a coveted resource and a prestigious cash item, was the resource that *Kuka* Denecela and the Plátano Miskitu women most highly desire. Men once provided meat to the women through hunting, but forest animals—such as spider monkeys, deer, *teposquintli* (a type of nutria), and tapirs—are increasingly scarce today. During the *veda*, *Kuka* Denecela often lamented, “No meat, no men, no money, I’m going to die.”⁸

Women like the *Kuka* remained depressed for the entire *veda*. And with the opening of the lobster-diving season that August, she and her daughters returned to their more highly spirited selves. Excitement prevailed as the lobster boats, merchandise boats, and advance payments to the divers all arrived together. Just before the first boats reached the coast, *Kuka* and her daughters Delfina and Tomassa looked out to the sea. Delfina raised her nose to the wind and said, “the smell of money is in the air.” Her sister Tomassa began to rub her hands together in anticipation and responded, “any minute now.” Women’s desires for cash and store-bought goods that only men can provide, reinforced the power that men had in society, and underscored the male-dominant political economy that operates on the Honduran Miskitu Coast.

Conspicuous Consumption

Being a Miskitu man in the RPBR has to do with one’s ability to earn money lobster-diving and by one’s generosity in giving presents away, especially to the women. Indeed, if a woman were to return or not accept a gift from a diver, this would insult his manliness and his ability to be the good provider. Those regarded as the most masculine members of society are the divers who killed the most lobster, made the most money, and gave the most away. These rich, “macho” men are treated like heroes. They draw crowds at stores because they regularly buy cokes, beers, and other luxury items for family members and friends. Locals may follow them to stores, hoping to receive a coke or more. Some tag-a-longs may get angry and call the diver *slabla* (stingy) or *min* (mean) if they receive nothing.

Lobster divers now participate in conspicuous consumption, where they give away purchased goods and money to family and friends. In these situations, the men exchange gifts of cash for social prestige within their diver’s culture. The younger Miskitu divers often spend their money celebrating in a ritualized activity known in Spanish as “*vagando*” (carousing together). As discussed above, lobster-diving is a dangerous and life-threatening occupation—over 100 men in the region have

been injured, paralyzed, or killed while deep-water diving (Herlihy 2002:257). Because of this, divers in large groups celebrate each safe and healthy return to shore by *vagando*. Divers buy rounds of drinks (rum and beer), cigarettes, marijuana, and even cocaine for each other,⁹ and they give gifts of money to women, often after sexual liaisons. After two or three days of *vagando* and womanizing, many young divers end up hung over and broke, with little or no money to bring home to their families.

Tice (1995), among the Kuna of Panama, reports a similar pattern of lobster-divers spending their wages partying before they return home. Many gender scholars interpret the added element of spending wages on alcohol and other luxury items (and withholding winnings from the household) as pathological (Jackson 2001). Yet, Miskitu men spending money on themselves and each other appears to be part of their initiation to manhood. Participating in male-bonding activities is an essential element in becoming a man, as noted by scholars cross-culturally (Adams and Savran 2002; Chant 2001; Gilmore 1990; Herdt 1982).

In contrast to the younger and more irresponsible divers, the older and more experienced divers tend to spend their money more wisely. Daugoberto (*Kuka* Denecela's grandson), a *buzo* in his early-thirties, usually brings home between 300 and 500 U.S. dollars per trip. Daugo splits the money about equally between his wife and members of his mother's matrilineal group. He claims to spend 50 to 100 dollars partying or *vagando* after returning to shore, but then gives the lion's share of his earnings to his wife, children, mother, sisters, or grandmother. Daugo also has outside girlfriends and a semi-permanent concubine, but he does not routinely give money to these women. Instead, one year he waited for the biggest trip of the season and then gave one of his girlfriends enough money (U.S. \$700.00) to build a house.

Monetized Sexual Transactions

Female-headed households with small children and no permanent men in residence struggle to survive on the cash-oriented coast. Many mothers stay on the coast, living off of what cash they can acquire in gifts from their husbands, outside boyfriends, sons, and brothers that earn wages in the diving industry. Men regularly give *prisant nani* (presents) to their wives, mothers, and sisters. There is a strong belief that a present is, indeed, a present. Once the money passes from male to female hands, the money enters a "no man's land" of the strictly female domain of household cash. Divers do not inquire about how women spend the money they give to them. The divers would be considered un-manly for meddling with the day-to-day running of a woman's household.

Men customarily exchange money for sex, paying women *mairin mana* (literally, women's pay or salary), which refers to the cash exchanged for sexual relations. The commodification of affection in Miskitu society is most apparent in *mairin mana* encounters.¹⁰ However, the locals do not perceive these exchange-encounters as acts

of prostitution, although many consider it a bad habit. Locals consider prostitutes those women who make a living exclusively (or nearly so) by receiving cash for sex, take birth control, and have a set price for, and get paid prior to, sexual relations. They do not view community women that accept *mairin mana* as prostitutes because these women only participate in these behaviors a few times a month, do not use birth control, and do not attach a set price to sex, usually being given the gift of cash after the sexual encounter. *Mairin mana* seems to be a part of the divers' ritualized behavior of giving: a modern-day and monetized manifestation of a more traditional economic system where men provided resources and cash to the women.

Sexual Magic

Miskitu divers frequently give their lovers cash, exchanging between 10 to 30 U.S. dollars for sexual relations, but a man can give much more if the woman successfully bewitches the man with magic potions. While once used primarily to gain the affection of a love interest, women now use potions to manipulate men into giving them inflated sums of cash. Women's use of magic potions to access cash reveals women's agentive capacities within the male-dominant lobster economy (Herlihy 2002).¹¹

Miskitu women use their agency to fight back against patriarchal structures in their society. Indeed, men often claim that women are deceitful and devious, that women use and abuse men for their money. Commonly, women stay with a man while he has money and then abandon him as soon as his funds are depleted (see also Fonseca 2001). The women then find another man with money, and the pattern repeats itself. Men fear women because they are known for bewitching men with secret potions to gain access to their winnings. These potions are learned and transmitted in matrilineal groups. Indeed, *kukas* or grandmothers were known for possessing these powerful remedies.

The following song is a newer song that describes how a diver falls in love with a woman named Minerva and spends all of his money on her (partying and giving gifts.)

Minerva

I went to Tuman disco
 And saw a lot of women
 And from them I chose one
 It was the beautiful Minerva
 My little pigeon, my little flower
 I liked the way she walked and the way she talked
 Minerva the beautiful woman
 When the sun began to rise
 I was in the patio of Tuman

Minerva had picked up another man
And was still with him at daybreak
The next day I came back to the house
I didn't have a cent
Not one Lempira
And a hangover that is killing me
You did me wrong
Minerva

The song ends with Minerva betraying the diver when she chooses another man to stay with for the night. After the first diver spent all his money, she found another man with funds. The first diver ends up penniless, heartbroken, and with a hangover. In these situations, locals assume that Minerva has been using sexual magic to beguile the divers. If a woman is ugly (as most agree that Minerva is), this would only increase the belief that her gains came through the use of sexual magic. Through magic potions, women now manipulate men and gain access to their winnings.

Cash-oriented obsessions, conspicuous consumption, monetized sexual transactions, and the use of sexual magic to access money are all examples of the highly commodified gendered and sexual relations that have emerged in the last few decades. During interviews, elders often commented about the “old days” when these behaviors were not the norm. Elders attribute the development of these newer behaviors to the long-term “boom” in the lobster economy.

Conclusions

This article brings into focus the inter-linkages between global economic forces and local level identities. Through textual analysis of the Miskitu men's songs, we see that Miskitu manhood is largely represented through its relationship to the coastal economy. Being a man has to do with earning and sharing money. Songs from the old days and from the present reveal that men have continuously worked in various cash-based labors to earn money for their wives and girlfriends. This suggests that indigenous gender ideologies have not dramatically changed during the latest boom in the coastal economy. Continuity in Miskitu manhood prevails.

The first two songs presented, “Money Tree” (“*Lala Dusa*”) and “Flat Broke” (“*Zero Man Zero*”), reveal how the gendered and sexualized identities of Plátano Miskitu men are linked to their historic and present-day “boom-and-bust” economic patterns. While earning money most of the year, the Miskitu men felt like heroes, but during times when they were broke, they felt like losers. Combined, the two songs reveal that historic “boom-and-bust” economic patterns have become manifest in the concept of selfhood among Plátano Miskitu men.

My conclusions suggest that indigenous notions of sexuality and power are profoundly affected by global economic forces. In the case of the Miskitu people, these effects started long ago and have remained constant. However, textual analysis

of the songs illustrates that Miskitu men's sexual identity, and their interactions with women, have become intensely monetized. There is no doubt that the long term boom in the lobster economy and the expanding market economy have augmented commodified relations between women and men in the RPBR.

Field research illustrates that being a Miskitu man now has to do with earning money as a lobster diver and providing it to others, while being a Miskitu woman means beguiling men into giving them their wages. Men construct their gender identity as a rich and generous "macho-man," while women construct their collective identity as a money-hungry "femme fatale." My findings on Miskitu sexualities describe what some social scientists call the "glocal" connections.¹²

Notes

1. Scholars recently have focused on how the globalization of western values and neo-liberal economic restructuring have affected Latin American masculinities and men's behaviors (Almeras 2001; Chant 2001; Pineda 2001). Most significantly, men's role as provider has come into question as women have entered the workplace and more informal economic sectors. The new research also focuses on the fact that men must frequently migrate to find work and are losing control of their lands and resources. Yet, research demonstrates the ways in which Latin American men are still trying to maintain a hold on their domestic patriarchy.

2. These five female-centered residential groups accounted for 89% (22/25) of the houses by 1998. Even in the cases of the four marriages that occurred between young men and women within the village, these couples live near the wife's family.

3. Phillip Dennis (2003) describes cocaine use in Miskitu villages.

4. The Liwa Mairin is the main Miskitu goddess. She is believed to be the owner of all resources from rivers, oceans, and lagoons. When men overexploit her resources, such as killing too many lobsters, they are faced with the wrath of the mermaid, who may capriciously punish them with death and illness. Many divers claim to have seen or felt the mermaid or her hair before being stricken with decompression illness.

5. Dennis (2004:142) states: "Decompression sickness results from breathing compressed air, in which nitrogen is the major component, and then rising from the depths to the surface too rapidly." Dennis (2004:143) goes on to argue that because many Miskitu people (besides divers) claim to have seen mermaids, the divers' mermaid sightings can not be simply explained as hallucinations associated with decompression sickness. I also have spoken with many Miskitu individuals that claim to have seen mermaids, often while bathing at sundown in the lagoons. Many locals describe how the mermaid's hand, which pokes out from beneath the water's surface, only has two fingers (the fore finger and the small finger).

6. The songs were translated from Miskitu to Spanish by Eucevio Guevara, and from Spanish to English by the author.

7. Nietschmann (1974) described the Miskitu people's dependence on wages. Nietschmann focused on Nicaraguan Miskitu men that worked turtle-diving. He predicted that Miskitu communities would be left feeling impoverished, economically and emotionally dependent on cash resources that no longer existed after the turtle industry "busted" (due to over-exploitation of the resource) and left the region.

8. When I asked the *Kuka* which scarce resource on the coast that she wanted the most, she answered, “huina” (meat). She explained, “Look out the window, you see lots of men pass by, sure to have money in their pockets, but when’s the last time you’ve seen a piece of meat walk by?” Accessing a man, and subsequently, his money would have been merely a means to an end.

9. Philip Dennis (2003) describes cocaine use by the Miskitu in more detail.

10. My research findings are similar to other scholars that focus on prostitution and the tourist industry. Many have found that foreign men with money seek to take advantage of local women for sex, but that women are also manipulating the men for money, attempting to transform sexual encounters into more long term alliances based on romance and affection. See, for example, Brennan (2004); Brenner (1998); Kempadoo (1999); and Kempadoo, Sanghera, and Pattanaik (2005).

11. See McClaurin (1996) for similar findings in Belize.

12. Babb (2001) similarly examines the relationship between global economic restructuring and Nicaraguan women’s gender ideologies.

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Ideal and Stereotypical Masculinity and Issues of Adjustment to College Life for Men of Color

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Introduction

Researchers in a variety of fields have noted the links among masculinity, the health disparities of African-American men, the difficulty retaining African-American men in educational institutions, and the rate of incarceration of these men.¹ However, recognition of the role of masculine beliefs and behaviors in social issues affecting minorities has been slow to emerge in large measure due to contemporary discourse about discrimination, or uncritical presumptions about the behavior of men. Popular discourse about affirmative action, for example, has tended to conceal the lived experiences of African-American men, or to elevate those experiences to stereotypes, such as “male dominance.” This creates social ignorance about the lives of African-American men.

Whitehead (1992) offers a useful framework for understanding masculine ideology among African-American men. He describes the “Big Man/Little Man Complex” (hereafter, BM/LMC) observed in African-American and Caribbean populations. The framework has two categories of attributes, respectability and reputation. Whitehead argues that both low-income and high-income men value respectability attributes, such as being a strong family man or good provider. However, respectability attributes in American culture depend upon economic capacity, and low-income men do not achieve this capacity.

Masculine respectability attributes contribute to the maintenance of social order and healthy family functioning, while attributes of reputation may be interpreted as potentially contributing to social disorder and unhealthy family functioning. P. J. Wilson (1973), who first identified the respectability-reputation dialectic in the West Indies, defined respectability attributes as expressions developed by the colonial powers and maintained by the West Indian middle classes—the two groups with the most to gain from prioritizing such attributes. Wilson argues that the West Indian lower classes created various ideologies as a way of rebelling against colonial

and class oppression. These ideologies emphasize attributes of reputation. These are sexual prowess, toughness, defiance of legal and other authority, and use of material goods (eye catching jewelry, clothes and cars) in an effort to achieve a stronger sense of the masculine self. Reliance upon reputation places low-income men at greater risk for fathering out-of-wedlock babies, involvement in illegal activities, violence, incarceration, and death (Whitehead 2000). According to Whitehead, men expressing reputation attributes experience “fragmented” gender identities (Whitehead 1997) that overlap with social stereotypes of African-American men. The gender identities of these men are fragmented because (1) access to resources that would support respectability attributes are not open to them, and (2) reputation attributes often reinforce social stereotypes of African-American men.

Unlike P. J. Wilson, Whitehead associates reputation and respectability attributes with bicultural ability among well-adjusted African-American men, regardless of economic class. As a consequence of experiencing two forces of socialization, African-American men experience cultural beliefs and values embedded in both notions of masculine behavior. With reputation as one extreme, the measure of a man relates to his being “anti-social” in his interpersonal relations, particularly evident in weak conjugal ties, and yet community reaffirming when his anti-social behavior rejects dominant cultural characteristics, particularly those based in patriarchy and racism. The other measure of a man, respectability, reaffirms dominant cultural characteristics in his interpersonal relations, in patriarchy, but doing so inevitably overlooks the “racial sexism” within which patriarchy also functions. Either extreme type of man may be seen as “good” for the survival of African-American communities. However, bicultural men are likely to be healthier men (Brown 1997; Franklin 1984). Whitehead has called for male-based intervention programs that have goals of “gender” or masculinity transformation (Aronson et al. 2003), and that offer strategies of empowerment that move men away from a restrictive core of reputation attributes to respectability ones.

This paper examines the experiences of African-American men on a college campus in an effort to understand how they relate masculinity to difficulties faced in adjusting to contemporary American society and culture. Our goal was to explore BM/LMC as a model of African-American masculinity. The sample included African-American male college students attending a southern state university with 70% whites and 30% minorities, among the latter 14% African Americans. The sample included members of Brother-2-Brother, a network of “students-of-color” organized in 1993, but other students who were not members of this organization were included as well. Ethnographic interviews, focus groups, and pile-sort techniques were used to examine the experiences of these men, and the ways in which participants described themselves in relation to reputation and respectability attributes. While the majority of these men participated in Brother-2-Brother, the hometowns of these men ranged from rural and urban areas of North Carolina to urban New York and Washington, D.C., and there was one individual from the Ivory Coast.

Methods

A total of 29 participants, ages 18-24, engaged in discussion about college life and masculinity through focus groups and individual interviews, and all except three men identified as African American. All men identified as a “person of color.” A member of the research team included a senior African-American male, anthropology major. This student was trained to do pile-sort tasks and ethnographic interviews. He was also assigned the task of attending each Brother-2-Brother meeting, with the permission of the group, and he recorded observations of each meeting.

86 pile-sort cards were developed based upon themes elicited from African-American men in another study by Aronson (2003), and based upon key constructs in Whitehead’s BM/LMC (Table 1). The interviewees from an earlier study were older men who had failed significantly as younger men, but who were participating in a program to help them become better men. These men had experiences allowing them to express both dimensions of BM/LMC, reputation and respectability. Ethnographic interviews were used to elicit from these men culturally salient language, themes, and items, including types of men, characteristics of the types, behaviors and roles of men in families, in communities or society, and characteristics of “ideal” men and fathers. The 86 pile-sort cards included descriptors that we categorized as reputation or respectability, in addition to terms deemed ambiguous and dependent upon context.

The 86 descriptive cards were used to elicit in an open pile-sort the relevant dimensions of masculinity, and then identify important characteristics or behaviors of African American men. This approach is based on ethnoscience—principles and methods of defining, eliciting and understanding the structure of cultural domains as described by Spradley (1979), Bernard (1988), D’Andrade (1995), Borgatti (1999), and Goodenough (1981).

In the open pile-sort participants were asked to place similar descriptors with each other, and to aim for between six and eight clusters (see Table 1). Participants were also asked to provide a descriptive label for each of the clusters they created. We expected participants to distinguish reputation descriptors from respectability descriptors in several different categories. Then, additional pile sorts were completed with reference to: (1) the qualities of an ideal man; (2) the top ten qualities of an ideal man; (3) the important qualities of a man on campus; and (4) the top ten qualities of a man on campus. Results from these pile-sort data indicated differences in the choice of masculine descriptors depending on whether participants were considering the qualities of an “ideal man,” in general, or of a “successful man on campus,” a specific context. Similarly, we observed differences in the choice of top ten masculine descriptors depending upon context, i.e., an ideal man compared with a successful man on campus. In addition, the interviews and focus groups supported the existence of cognitive and behavioral shifts as related to difficulties that young African American men face in adjusting their behavior and beliefs to an

appropriate situation. We will present comparison of the pile-sort data completed by a total of 24 men, and then narratives corresponding to the results of pile-sorts, addressing shifts from reputation to respectability.

Analysis

Data from the pile-sorting activities were entered into the software program Anthropac 4.0 for analysis. Multi-dimensional scaling and hierarchical cluster analyses were used to identify clusters of items that tended to be grouped together into the same piles. Reputation and respectability attributes of masculinity were pre-coded based upon the perspectives of men in a prior study, but also explored in focus groups among the participants in this study.

A total of 29 interviews were conducted with African American men enrolled in college. Three focus groups were conducted with a total of 15 of the 29 participants. Five participants in the interviews and focus groups did not participate in the pile-sort activity. Participants were selected through a convenience and snowball sample, beginning with men involved in the group called "Brother-2-Brother." An African American male conducted the interviews and focus groups, after having received the proper training. An IRB of the college approved the interview and focus group guides. All participants were given consent forms describing the purpose of the research and the policies regarding confidentiality.

The interview guide included a set of seven questions, each with possible probes that could be used as needed. Questions focused on the experiences of men-of-color in on-campus contexts, definitions and attributes of men, and behaviors of men that may increase risks for HIV infection. Focus groups further explored how participants, as well as society at large, define what it means to be a successful man, or an unsuccessful man. They also explored men's perceptions of the threat of HIV/AIDS, the impact that HIV/AIDS has had on the sexual experience of college students, and a discussion of behavioral risks for HIV. All interviews and focus groups were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were then entered into the software Atlas Ti for qualitative data analysis. We have limited ourselves in this paper to how the men described masculinity in their experiences as men.

Results

The following analysis was performed on the open pile-sort completed by 24 interviewees. They were asked to place the 86 descriptors into six to eight similar categories. Johnson's hierarchical clustering analysis produced six clusters of items with the minimum level of correlation to be included in a cluster at the .30 level. The categories noted below summarize each cluster, and they are based on the descriptive names given to each pile by the participants. The items in each cluster were labeled as either respectability or reputation based on a prior study, or not labeled. Results of the pile-sort resulted in the following categories: spirituality;

family man; hustler/pimp; extreme toughness; self-determination and goal setting; and physical strength. Our next step in analysis was to determine which of the descriptors within each cluster was most commonly represented in four subsequent open pile-sorts of (1) “ideal man,” (2) top ten qualities of ideal man, (3) “successful man” on campus, (4) top ten qualities of successful man on campus.

Table 1: Clusters from Pile Sorts Using Johnson’s Hierarchical Clustering (n=24)

Cluster Name	Descriptors
1) Spiritually Motivated, Upright Community Role Model	His friends can count on him He gives gifts to his friends He is generous with his money He will pay back any debts or favors He is good He regularly attends a place of worship He is guided by values He is only subservient to the God of his understanding He is spiritual He is respectful of his elders He is respectful of his supervisors at work He is respectful of his neighbors He is respectful of authorities He is law abiding He is true to his word He has moral integrity He is respectful toward women He is a positive role model He is a leader He stands up for what is right He is a willing participant in the struggle and cultivation of his people He is involved in bettering his community

Cluster Name	Descriptors
2) Family Man	<p> He remains faithful to his mate He shows his commitment to his mate through marriage He gives gifts to his mate He can support himself and his family through working He has fathered children He supports his children's mother He disciplines his children He teaches his children He spends time with his children He loves his children He cares about how his children will turn out He cares about his children's needs He is a good father He contributes financially to his children He gives gifts to his children He takes responsibility for birth control He protects himself and his mate from sexually transmitted diseases </p>
3) Hustler/ Pimp	<p> He can handle his liquor He can always get by He can hustle He is sexually active He is good with women Women fall for him easily He dresses well He drives a nice car He owns many things </p>
4) Extreme Toughness	<p> He does not need the help of others He demands respect He is always ready to fight if the situation warrants it He answers to no one He is feared by others He is intimidating He will not tolerate disrespect </p>

Cluster Name	Descriptors
5) Self Determination and Goal Oriented	<p>He is able to select, obtain and prepare nutritional food and drink</p> <p>He is able to take steps to protect and develop his own health</p> <p>He is self-taught</p> <p>He makes decisions quickly and easily</p> <p>He is resourceful</p> <p>He is well educated</p> <p>He has a good job</p> <p>He is wise with his money</p> <p>He knows how to budget his money</p> <p>He knows the difference between reality and the perception of reality</p> <p>He takes his time when making decisions</p> <p>He can meet his basic needs on his own</p> <p>He will sacrifice his own desires to achieve a goal</p> <p>He is able to set and work toward achieving goals he determines worthwhile</p> <p>He is able to plan his work and works his plans to completion</p> <p>He is free to change his mind about decisions</p> <p>He exercises self-control</p> <p>He is self-disciplined</p> <p>He has self-determination</p> <p>He is confident</p> <p>He knows what needs to be done without anyone telling him</p> <p>He can decide things for himself</p> <p>He will accept responsibility for his decisions actions consequences</p> <p>He takes initiative</p>
6) Physical Strength	<p>He has a powerful voice</p> <p>His behavior is not controlled by others</p> <p>He will defend himself</p> <p>He is strong</p> <p>He is a competitor - he always tries to win</p> <p>He is physically strong</p> <p>He is athletic</p>

Analysis of the “ideal man” pile-sort included simple frequencies of items selected. The number of times items from each cluster were selected enabled us to assess the importance of these dimensions (clusters) of masculinity. Clusters 1, 2 and 5 contained items that were identified as important characteristics of the “ideal man” by 75 percent or more of the men. These clusters contain easily identifiable descriptors associated with respectability, as labeled prior to the pile-sorting activity.

Table 2: Items selected as important to being an “ideal man” by 75 % or more of 24 men

Cluster	Item Descriptors Selected
Spirituality	He is a positive role model He is guided by values He is law abiding He is respectful of his elders He is respectful toward women He has moral integrity He is true to his word His friends can count on him He stands up for what is right
Family man	He spends time with his children He teaches his children He cares about his children's needs He can support himself and his family through working He loves his children He cares about how his children will turn out He is a good father
Self-determination	He knows the difference between reality and the perception of reality He is resourceful He is wise with his money He is self-disciplined He is confident He knows how to budget his money He has self determination He will accept responsibility for his decisions and actions and their consequences He exercises self control

Items rarely or never selected as important were also examined. The following clusters contained items chosen by 25% or fewer of the men as characteristics of the “ideal man.” Note here the inclusion of items from all clusters, including the reputation descriptors in clusters 3 (hustler) and 4 (extreme toughness) of the first open pile-sort, in addition to the added descriptors identifying “physical strength” as an attribute of “ideal man.” In other words, 25 percent or fewer of the men included reputation attributes (hustler and extreme toughness) that most others excluded, in addition to adding descriptors associated with physical strength. Finally, when we look at items selected by very few or none (<25%) it should be noted that only one item from each of the following clusters are included: spirituality, family man, and self determination. This is in sharp contrast with the frequency with which

these clusters were represented among the items selected by the majority of the respondents (>75%).

Table 3: Items selected as important to being an “ideal man” by 25 % or less of the 24 men

Cluster	Item Descriptors Selected
Spirituality	He gives gifts to his friends
Family Man	He has fathered children
Hustler/Pimp	He can handle his liquor He is sexually active He drives a nice car He owns many things Women fall for him easily He dresses well He can hustle He is good with women
Extreme toughness	He is intimidating He answers to no one He is feared by others He does not need the help of others
Self-determination	He makes decisions quickly and easily
Physical strength	He is athletic He is physically strong He is a competitor—he always tries to win

Increased difficulty emerged in a second open pile-sort in which the participants were asked to identify the top-ten qualities of an ideal man. There was considerable disagreement in selecting the top-ten qualities of an ideal man. No more than 50 percent of the men identified the following descriptors as top-ten among the qualities of an ideal man. The items selected represent the clusters of spirituality, family man, and self-determination.

Table 5: Items selected as being important qualities of a successful man on campus by 75% of men

Cluster	Item Descriptors Selected
Spirituality	He is respectful of authorities He is guided by values He is true to his word He has moral integrity
Self determination	He is able to plan his work and works his plans to completion He knows the difference between reality and the perception of reality He takes initiative He is confident He will accept responsibility for his decisions and actions and their consequences He has self-determination He is self-disciplined He exercises self-control*

*Selected by 100%

However, 25% or fewer of the men selected reputation descriptors to identify qualities of a successful man on campus, as noted below by the inclusion of hustler (five items) and extreme toughness (three items), one item related to physical strength, and 12 items in the cluster of family man.

**Table 6: Items selected as being qualities
of a “successful man on campus” by 3-25% of men**

Cluster	Item Descriptors Selected
Spirituality	He gives gifts to his friends He is generous with his money
Family Man	He gives gifts to his children He gives gifts to his mate He contributes financially to his children He supports his children’s mother He teaches his children He shows his commitment to his mate through marriage He disciplines his children He spends time with his children He loves his children He cares about his children’s needs He is a good father He cares about how his children will turn out
Hustler/Pimp	He drives a nice car Women fall for him easily He can handle his liquor He can hustle He is good with women
Extreme toughness	He answers to no one He does not need the help of others He is always ready to fight if the situation warrants it
Self-determination	He has a good job He makes decisions quickly and easily
Physical strength	He is physically strong

The top-ten qualities of successful man on campus, the fourth pile-sort, included items from the clusters spirituality, family man, and self-determination, as noted by 25-54% of the men. The items in spirituality decreased to four in the top-ten qualities of a successful man on campus compared to eight items in pile-sort 2, the top-ten qualities of an ideal man.

Table 7: Items selected as being in the top ten for a “successful man on campus” by 25-54% of men

Cluster	Item Descriptors Selected
Spirituality	He is spiritual He is respectful of authorities He is guided by values He is true to his word
Family Man	He protects himself and his mate from sexually transmitted diseases
Self-determination	He knows the difference between reality and the perception of reality He is able to set and work toward achieving goals he determines worthwhile He will accept responsibility for his decisions and actions and their consequences He is self disciplined He is well educated He takes initiative* He has self-determination*

*50% or more

In summary, the characteristics of an “ideal man” included descriptors representing spirituality, family man, and self-determination by 75% of the men participating in pile-sort 1, compared to 75% of men in pile-sort 3 who excluded attributes of family man from the characteristics of a successful man on campus. Items from clusters representing hustling, toughness, and physical strength were rejected as unimportant for either an ideal man, or a successful man on campus by 75% percent of the men participating in pile-sorts 1 and 3. However, items representing hustling, toughness, physical strength, and family man attributes were selected by 25% or fewer of the men in pile-sorts 1 and 3. A comparison of pile-sort 2 (top-ten qualities of an ideal man) and pile-sort 4 (top-ten qualities of a successful man on campus) indicates that the number of spiritual qualities selected decreased from eight to four. One item noted in the top-ten qualities of a man on campus was “protecting self and partner from STD’s” in the family man cluster. The following items were NOT selected by any of the men in pile-sort 2 and 4, top-ten characteristics of an ideal man or those of a successful man on campus.

Table 8: Items NOT SELECTED as being in the top ten for either an “ideal man” or a “successful man on campus”

Cluster	Item Descriptors NOT Selected
Spirituality	He gives gifts to his friends He is generous with his money He is respectful of his supervisors at work
Family Man	He has fathered children He gives gifts to his children He gives gifts to his mate He contributes financially to his children He supports his children’s mother
Hustler/Pimp	He can handle his liquor
Extreme toughness	He is intimidating He is feared by others He does not need the help of others
Physical strength	He is athletic He is physically strong

At times qualities that were considered as important for an “ideal man” were different than those seen as important for a “successful man on campus.” The following are items within clusters of top-ten qualities of a successful man on campus [50 percent of men] *NOT* found in clusters of top-ten qualities of an ideal man [50 percent of men], for pile-sorts 2 and 4, above: Respect for authority, knowing the difference between reality and perception of reality, setting and achieving goals, protection against sexually-transmitted diseases, and being well educated—were all seen as more relevant on campus compared to the characteristics of an ideal man.

The following descriptors are characteristics of an ideal man [75 percent of all men] *NOT* found among qualities of a successful man on campus [75 percent of all men], pile-sorts 1 and 3.

Table 9: Items seen as important for an “ideal man” but not for a “successful man on campus” by 75% of men

Cluster	Item Descriptors
Spirituality	He is only subservient to the God of his understanding He is respectful of women He is a leader He has moral integrity He stands up for what is right He is a positive role model
Family Man	He can support himself and his family through working He has self-determination He is a good father
Self-determination	He is confident

These descriptors were among those coded as attributes one would associate with respectable men, and these descriptors lie within the clusters of spirituality, family man, or self-determination. Men who wish to become empowered as respectable men (Aronson et al., 2003) find the above attributes socially desirable, and therefore relevant to any context in which men find themselves. We infer from this comparison of specific descriptors that the above ideal qualities of a man (Table 9) are not, in the minds of these young men, directly relevant to their perceptions of campus life, but are in their minds important aspects of an ideal man in some other context.

Two descriptors that appear in clusters of important qualities of an ideal man [75 percent of men] that do NOT appear in clusters of qualities of a successful man on campus [75 percent of men], or top-ten qualities of a successful man on campus [50 percent of men], or top-ten characteristics of an ideal man [25-50 percent], should be noted: *He has moral integrity* and *He is confident*.

The following descriptors overlap characteristics of an ideal man [75 percent of men] and the top-ten qualities of a successful man on campus [50 percent of men].

Table 10: Items seen as important for both an “ideal man” and a “successful man on campus”

Cluster	Item Descriptors
Spirituality	He is spiritual He is guided by values He is true to his word
Self-determination	He will accept responsibility for his decisions and actions and their consequences He takes initiative

Do these findings suggest a shift in meaning between a campus context and some other contexts in which reputation attributes are arguably relevant but not as relevant on campus, or in which an ideal man is relevant but not as relevant on campus?

While our findings are preliminary and based upon a small sample of men, Whitehead’s BM/LMC does appear to reinforce reputation and respectability attributes as classified by these men. All 24 men identified reputation and respectability attributes as important. However, some reputation attributes were selected as salient by up to 25 percent of these young men. Assuming that reputation attributes are relevant in some contexts but not on campus, to what extent do these men classify and exclude reputation attributes from *expressions* of their behavior on campus? How do shifts in meaning apply to behavior? These questions led to the following analysis. We interviewed the same 24 participants who completed the pile-sorts, and we held three focus groups with a total of 15 men.

Stereotypes and “Not-to-Test”

Our interview data reinforce the pile-sort data and Whitehead’s assertion that African-American men value both types of attributes of masculinity—reputation and respectability—but vary in their perceptions of what these attributes mean. One insightful interviewee, Brian (pseudonym), demonstrated a knowledge of reputation attributes, noting that daily nuances of expression among men involve signals, “not to test, as in . . . you don’t want to be on them . . . you don’t want to make them feel like you’re trying to corner them. You can’t have anything up over them. So they try to make sure you won’t.” Projection of “not-to-test” attitudes requires knowledge and expression of reputation attributes commonly associated with extreme toughness (see Table 1). An individual’s demeanor is essential in projecting a “not-to-test” attitude in low-income contexts where men are not able to associate self-esteem and achievement with respectability attributes, also noted in Table 1. Most other people [on campus], Brian noted insightfully, are unaware

that “talking like we are gangsters” reflects a need “to be perceived as somebody not to test.”

When men spoke of extreme toughness they talked about the ability to be “respected” (not to be confused with respectability attributes) both in the classroom setting and in the streets amongst their friends. In order to build their reputation amongst friends outside the classroom, these young men must be respected in the streets, and this means exercising their competency in reputation attributes. The “streets” in the minds of some of these young men, especially as freshmen, are the same on campus as anywhere else. In the classroom the men often stated that they had to appear “academically tough” in order to become respected by their classmates. Academically tough means to be fully knowledgeable on the topic of discussion in class and have a clear understanding of the course work. Several of the participants in the pile sort made it very clear that a man of color needed to be “tough” inside the classroom.

“Not-to-test” attitudes are often confounded by clothing and other stereotypes of African-American men. Don notes that: “It’s like how most of the world is now. How they listen to the hip-hop, and want to walk around with their pants sagging. And it’s really not even like that.” Referring to his white roommate, he said, “he was using the stereotype of the African-American male to try to fit in with African-American males. It would have been a whole lot easier [. . .] for him if he would have just been himself.” African-American freshman, whether from low-income or high-income backgrounds, do not express their attitude of “not-to-test” through dress, but instead through actions and behavior. For example, the sight of a young man of color in baggy jeans and fitted hat does not mean that he has the “not-to-test” attitude, except as a stereotype related to how men dress. Although appearance can sometimes be used to identify those who have a “not-to-test” attitude, appearance alone is not the qualification for identifying such individuals.

“Not-to-test” expressions are exhibited through bodily demeanor, use of language, or engagement in risky or violent activities. For a man to express a “not-to-test” attitude does not necessarily mean that he will be “respected” or feared. Based upon the interviews of the participants it is evident that a “not-to-test” attitude is often used to validate hyper-masculinity. In doing so, reputation attributes become important.

Noted in the comments of two interviewees, Brian and Don, and expressed less fully in a composite of all interviewees, is the way in which behavioral expression can reflect two different meanings. One expression involves legitimate “not-to-test” signals of low-income African-American men, and the other meaning involves stereotypes about clothing in a college context. Both behaviors may imply the same “not-to-test” meaning, but clothing alone involves the projection of a stereotype. For example, Don and Brian noted in their experiences that some white male students reinforce societal stereotypes of African-American men, through clothing and hip-hop, out of a desire to interact with African-American men but are caught unaware of legitimate “not-to-test” expressions of behavior.

Brian and Don survived their freshmen years, and learned in the process that clothing can confound legitimate “not-to-test signals” with societal stereotypes. Chuck provided another example. He decided to change the way he dressed. Chuck did not express perception of a “not-to-test” attitude as noted by Brian and Don. His observations about classroom behavior reflect a clothing stereotype instead—initially to “disprove” the stereotype, and then rise above it.

[Being African American] changed the way I dressed for a while. Because I didn't want to look like the average little hood kid coming up in the classroom. And [being African American] changed the way I acted in class. Before, I never talked in class. But then, when I realized everybody was looking at me . . . like if I came to class in some baggy clothes or some jerseys or something, I would make sure that I spoke up and gave some kind of response so that people wouldn't think I was the average little hood kid. I felt like it was my mission to change some people's minds. Now I don't care.

Focus group participants noted that stereotypes surface in many domains other than clothing. For example, one interviewee commented that he called campus police to report that his car had been burglarized. In this instance the legitimate behavior and “signal” is to report a burglary. However, upon their arrival, officers tried to arrest the owner of the car who had just called them.

Joey expressed an intra-ethnic illustration of this problem of cultural interpretation and stereotypes. His African-American friend “tried to buy into the whole-America's image of the African-American male. Like how African-American males are depicted in these hip-hop videos, and in these magazines, and in these movies, and in these TV shows.” Joey's friend wanted to distance himself from a two-parent household and relative affluence so that he would be found more appealing to other African-American men, like Joey. But, Joey said, “a lot of men [from his low-income neighborhood] are not like that.” Thus we perceive again how one pattern of behavior involving hip-hop videos and the commodity production of African-American symbols may have multiple interpretations related to intra-class differences.

The interview data revealed fairly consistent rejection of reputation attributes and acceptance of respectability in an ideal type of man. Kenny noted, for example, “You have some men that think they're a man because they're tough, they say what's on their mind, they'll curse people out, be disrespectful. Then you have guys that are more—so laid back, so he gets his point across. And I feel like to be a man, you don't have to be forceful.” However, Leroy had knowledge of and respected persons who also expressed reputation attributes: “Okay, I happen to have a friend who is a drug dealer. But I don't agree with him, I don't hang with him, but I've known him since before elementary school. And I know if I needed anything from him, he'll get it. But, I mean, that's how I look at a good man . . . somebody that's got you like that . . . you know what I'm saying. And that's not gonna lie to you.” Leroy perceived reputation masculinity as functional in the attributes of his friend.

Three other men expressed aspects of hyper-masculinity. For these three men, above all, a man *must* succeed. As the first man put it, “a man should be able to stand up on his own when all chips are down.” Or as the second man asserted, the only African interviewee, “the man has to realize that he is the leader and he has to take responsibility [. . .] qualities that put him to work harder than anyone else.” He added, “in this culture I found that the [black] males are pretty much passive, they don’t take initiative, and everything is directed by females.” And the third man said, “the characteristics of a man to me are what people see as strong willed, brave, daring, intelligent, but . . . fearless. They are willing to step out of their boundaries and try things or do things they don’t want to do. They know they might have to do it to accomplish whatever goal they want to accomplish.”

The remaining men expressed gender comparative beliefs about masculinity. What masculinity means for them necessarily involved women, as expressed in the following examples. Seth said, “Just like a woman will stay with a man who will try, and who will fail, she will stay with him. She sees his effort. But for a man who fails and has no vision, a woman’s not going to stay very long.” David said that a successful man isn’t a quitter, but the reference for quitting wasn’t money: “To me a successful man is truly content and happy with how life turned out or how it is turning out. It is not about who has the most money, girls, and cars but it’s about a person who gets their education.” Cliff qualified the masculine role in this way: “In actuality, a female can definitely stand up and be the leader. There’s never ever any kind of problem with that. But I think you have situations where it’s a man and a female, you definitely should be able to look toward the man to be able to step up.” Bob described a man as “bold, should be decisive, should have some goals,” but also noted “it could be the same thing for a woman, though. So I don’t feel like there’s really a big difference.”

All 29 men associated African-American masculine behavior with stereotypes of African American men, as illustrated by the comparison of legitimate “not-to-test” behavior and a clothing stereotype. Focus group data indicated that African-American men face multiple interpersonal dilemmas that confound legitimate ethnic behavior and societal stereotypes.

Conclusion

Steele (1997) describes one type of response to stereotypes that sums up the views of participants in the focus groups. When negative stereotypes about a minority group are salient in a new context, individual members of minority groups may experience “stereotype threat.” How to behave in ways that are not consistent with perceived stereotypes, in a new context, may become an immediate concern. Knowing exactly how to respond in an unfamiliar situation may be confounded by skills and behaviors that are functional in low-income environments but not as functional on a college campus. In academic settings, for example, a person’s search for appropriate behavioral expression, in response to stereotypes, may result

in pressures that negatively impact an individual's academic performance. Research has supported this observation (Steele and Aronson 1995). Furthermore, minorities in a college context may develop oppositional educational identities (Fordham and Ogbu 1986), and show lowered efficacy or extreme effort in academic domains, or other domains of behavior.

Men who expressed bicultural skills appeared to have command of stereotype threat and to be less affected by it. Of the 29 African-American men in this sample four of them (one of them African) possessed bicultural skills in both on-campus and off-campus contexts, allowing each of them to avoid confounding legitimate ethnic behavior, such as "not-to-test," with societal stereotypes. Two of these men are members of Brother-2-Brother, the goals of which include helping young men make the transition to college, a process that involves acquiring bicultural skills. Bicultural skills include the ability to separate intra- and inter-stereotypical perceptions from one's identity and behavior as an African-American.

Alan, who has improved upon his bicultural skills, understands now that dress is connected to stereotypes related to improved classroom performance but he is careful in his description not to discredit those who purposefully send "thug vibes," or to discredit a teacher who expressed an interest in his academic success.

The teachers will work with you and do whatever they need to get you to pass the class. But if you come to class—not to discredit anybody—but if you come to class and your pants are halfway hanging down or if you come to class and give off a thug vibe then teachers will not try to work with you. I actually went through that phase when I first arrived on campus. I saw that all the other black dudes on campus did this and that and I was really into fashion, so I wore the "fitteds" and "white-tees" but it did not help me in class at all. It didn't help me in the classroom so I had to change up my style and I saw a dramatic change in how the teachers treated me.

How will young men entering as freshman learn the bicultural ability expressed by Alan? Learning bicultural ability can be a difficult process.

Unfortunately, colleges and universities focus on ideologies of "cultural diversity" without addressing bicultural learning, in students and in members of the campus community generally. In addition to classroom work, bicultural learning is an additional task for African-American men. Without teachers, many fail the test. Brother-2-Brother eases this learning process as older men provide guidance to younger ones. Brother-2-Brother participants share their experiences as ways to acquire greater bicultural skills. They learn how to reduce intra-group stereotypes, and develop strategies to help them deal with societal stereotypes as well. As one sophomore man responded: "sometimes you just have to check yourself, to know what's going on. . . . Brother-2-Brother is a place to go to do that."

Notes

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