Identity through Sports:

Basketball and Black Masculinities

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Abstract

The development of black masculinities is a complex negotiation that is affected by various social constraints. While historically black males have faced significant checks on their construction of identity, their engagement with sports has been an area in which black masculinities have flourished. Specifically, participation in sports has been a cornerstone, where young adolescents have been able to develop their masculinity. This thesis looks to understand the intersection of sports and black adolescent masculinity. Through the lens of James Messerschmidt's Structured Action Theory, I have investigated how black young adults understand their masculinity through basketball and how participating in the sport shapes their understanding of self. Participants in this study are coaches and members of a Canadian university basketball team. Semi-structured interviews revealed that participants, while uniquely having their own narratives, demonstrate patterns in how they engage with the concept of black masculinity. The importance of educational advancement emerged as a key theme in their reflections on masculinity, basketball, and their futures. Findings of this study also have implications for how we think about varsity athletics and about basketball as a strategy for crime reduction.

Key Words: Black Masculinity, Structured Action Theory, Intellectual Masculinity, Sports Participations, Resistant Masculinity

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Lawrence Akintoye-Bentola

STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTIONS

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and that no part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication. I have used standard referencing practices to acknowledge ideas, research techniques, or other materials that belong to others. Furthermore, I hereby certify that I am the sole source of the creative works and/or inventive knowledge described in this thesis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

It is in all of our natures to aspire to achieve the same level of success as those whom we consider to be our role models. Personally, I think of my grandfather who instilled values and taught me lessons of responsibility and hard work that still resonate with me today. In a broader sense, I look to celebrities like Deion Sanders who spoke a motto of "Look good, feel good; feel good, play good; play good, get paid good". This little motto gave me confidence as a young boy and is a quote that I still live by.

The Netflix documentary series The Last Dance follows the career of legendary basketball player Michael Jordan and highlights the 1997-1998 basketball season. The series affords the viewer a behind-the-scenes look at the life of Michael Jordan as well as the media and popularity that followed him throughout his career. One of the resounding points that stood out was the influence he had on millions of youth around the world. The dream to "fly like Jordan" has inspired countless basketball players, whether they play professionally or recreationally. To simplify, celebrities and people of influence can inspire an individual to follow in their footsteps. For one to growing up with a significant deficit when it comes to the area of roles models, it is only logical that youth would look to celebrities and people of influence for guidance. However, this is not the case for all, literature will show the importance parental figures have in impacting a youth's development of masculinity. The apparent impact of sports celebrities like Sanders and Jordan led me to investigate the following question: what influence does the sport of basketball have on black Canadian student-athletes and their masculinity? More specifically, how does it impact masculinity in young adults? To expand further, my particular interest in masculinity and sports stems from two distinct areas. To being, my interest in masculinity comes from the desire to understand how individuals see themselves within society. As such, I stand in close alliances with the belief that when we understand peoples gendered identity, we in turn can understand why they chose to engage in a particular action. Therefore, a launching board for my personal goals within academia comes from the desire to further the current literature around gendered identify.

The sports aspect of this thesis comes form previous work around black masculinity in sport, it has been a great pleasure to learn more about how we can understand ourselves through the medium of a particular outlet. Put differently, while I do contend that when we understand gendered identify we can understand individuals, I further my understand by addressing the fact that the labor or most frequent actions are a strong marker for how we are as people. Conclusively, the investigation of student athletes and their presentation of black masculinity is an excellent intersection for me to further contemporary literature and expand my personal knowledge in a subject I enjoy.

Structured Action Theory (SAT) is the theoretical paradigm that will be applied in this thesis. The perspective focuses on how the performance of masculinity is constrained by societal structures. However, sport, and specifically collegiate basketball in this case, provides a context in which young black men can actively shape their masculinity; often in ways that are resistant or divergent from the forms of black masculinity that have long been imposed on black men. As such, this thesis will look to identify how black masculinity in student-athletes is developed fluidly, through their participation in basketball.

This interesting dynamic will be investigated throughout this thesis, and illustrated through observations made by participants. To be specific, based on their insights, we will be able to get a glimpse into the minds of the participants and whether or not they believe they can be more than just basketball players. From this same conversation, we will be able to understand the impact that participation in basketball has, particularly in relation to black masculinity.

In examining the masculinity of the black basketball player, this thesis will seek to extend previous literature on the concepts of black masculinity. To be specific, the work of Messerschmidt illustrates the restricted dimensions of not only black masculinity, but also the more general term of masculinity. This thesis will touch on the changing connotation and usage of this specific word, ultimately concluding that the masculinity of black student-athletes is fluid, which results in youth coming into adulthood assigning different indicators to what is considered masculine. While this will later be expanded in greater detail, our discussion also explores what constitutes the

masculinity of black basketball players. Findings from this study indicate that when a basketball player is aggressive, loud or macho - all traditionally understood characteristics of masculinity - in the words of coach Ethan (one of the participants interviewed), they will likely "take three fouls and spend the rest of the game on the bench". In other words, traditionally masculine behaviour may not benefit them in their game play, as they are likely to be penalized for such types of behaviour. Conversely, traditionally feminine traits such as gracefulness may be qualities which actually help players to be more effective.

During interaction with participants, their ability to be self-aware was remarkable. Participants were able to easily recognize the world in which they live and particularly what it means to be black within this world. As researchers, we like to label, quantify, categorize and provide one definition for a specific phenomenon. However, the reality is that we are simply not able to categorize and define black masculinity in only one way. Therefore, this thesis will make the argument that there are, in fact, multiple forms of black masculinity, which can be supported by some underlying core themes. These core themes range from the brutality, violence and hardships some face in their daily lives, to the privilege, beauty and unique cultures that make up the experience of being a black male.

There are some relatable points that can be taken from the participants' individual lived experiences, including the shared importance of gaining a post-secondary education. This runs counter to the tendency of some American scholarships to constrain collegiate players only to the pursuit of the "hoop dream". Furthermore, this also fills an interesting gap when it comes to the value that black Canadian basketball players place on their post-secondary education. This will be addressed in further detail, but put simply, the university basketball players interviewed were all able to recognize the true importance of gaining an undergraduate degree. Ultimately, this shows a deviation when compared to university athletes in the United States. This uniqueness will be explored to see if it is an ideological difference in the values and goals of the players, or if it is the very systems they participate in that create the differences between the two countries.

The second theme will look at the development of black masculinities, as participants make note of the complete shift in values and personality characteristics that are developed while participating in basketball. The youths that were interviewed suggested that their participation in basketball enabled a level of personal awareness and growth as an individual. Fundamentally, these young men showed a clear and abundant understanding of who they are and how the world sees them as individuals. This level of self-awareness manifests into an understanding of the hardships, potential for violence and socioeconomic disadvantage within their communities. It is remarkable and perhaps paradoxical that the mentalities of these players reflect the existence of both marginalized, resistant and intellectual masculinities, a dynamic that will now be expanded upon. (Miller, Steinfeldt, Richter, & Mckinley, 2018).

Literature Review

Historical Perspectives of Black Masculinity

With a focus on work, class, gender, and race in structuring an understanding of black masculinity, Loewen's (2006) book Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism offers an exceptionally detailed account of the type of life blacks faced prior to formal desegregation in the United States (1870-1890). Loewen's work centers on his ability to offer an exceptionally detailed historical account, one that chronicles a deep level of insight about the experiences of power and labour for black bodies. The following will provide a brief picture and general understanding of what life was like for black bodies within western society immediately following the American Civil War. This is done so that we may develop an understanding of how black bodies began to negotiate their masculinity once no longer subjugated by the institution of slavery.

Loewen (2006) takes note of the sense of opportunity and the relatively positive conditions that blacks faced in this era of great opportunity and emancipation, which followed the American Civil War. Around the turn of the 20th century, collective rhetoric on the welfare of black people began to shift, which in turn increased negative sentiment that detrimentally affected black bodies (Loewen, 2006). Accompanying the political rhetoric was the cultural shift in opinion, regarding the upward mobility of blacks throughout the United States. Particularly, public opinion held that with the first

generation of blacks not being born into slavery, the entirety of black social standing should have changed (Loewen, 2006). When things did not begin to change, black Americans were labeled as lazy and unmotivated for their inability to rise beyond their social status.

It is important to understand that during this period, which stretched from 1890 to 1940, there was extensive cultural change throughout the United States. Most notable is the period known as the Great Migration, where black people from the south moved to the north in large numbers, in search of industrial employment (Loewen, 2006). This increased number of black people was a shock to northern residents, for it represented in the first time that many white Americans in that part of the country interacted with black Americans. Taking these factors into consideration, there has been a concerted effort to remove black people from towns, suburbs and in some cases large counties (Loewen, 2006). Additionally, Messerschmidt (1997) discusses labour as being one of the main avenues in which gendered identity is formulated. Historically, Loewen brilliantly lays out the systematic deprivation of labour for black males throughout the United States. This articulation of the economic trials and tribulations faced by black males during this period, where they were deprived of labour and the ability to even reside within specific areas, displays the difficulties that accompanied the development of black masculinity.

Post-segregation, black people were afforded the ability to redefine their identity through various methods. However, black people still remain constrained in their ability to authentically formulate their identity. Perry (2001) acknowledges that when black people engage in activities considered white dominant, serious repercussions are taken to ensure this does not occur again. This connects to examples provided by Loewen (2006), in which he illustrates instances of black people being run out of various towns for being associated with unionized work. This builds on the work of Messerschmidt (1997) and SAT, which discusses what occurs when black people engage in unestablished masculinities.

The violent defense of white masculinity is an attempt to protect what Messerschmidt refers to as traditional hegemonic masculinity (Messerschmidt, 1997). This can be understood as the most idealized form of identity, which is developed

through social practices such as political engagement, economic stability, and the status of family patriarchy, all of which were denied to black males (Messerschmidt, 1997). The denial of black hegemonic masculinity stems from the desire to maintain the dominance and superiority of white culture. As a result of the systemic belief of black inferiority, black males were subjugated in order to maintain a specific set of inferior masculine qualities (Perry, 2001; Messerschmidt, 1997).

From a historical viewpoint, we see a strong connection between race and gender. Countless justifications for the actions taken towards black bodies can be found in the belief of black hyper aggression and sexuality. This was made easy from a labour perspective, as black bodies had primarily hard manual labour positions available to them. The development of this belief system and that which has previously been touched upon is centred around a developed belief by white males that black bodies need to be controlled. As such, Loewen (2006) touches on this period of reconstruction as a moment of hopeful opportunity for black bodies, and a relative fear for white society. This occurs as a result of white males dealing with the fact that they can no longer control black bodies through the institution of slavery. The influx of stereotypes, all of which demonize black males, was a subtle attempt to constrain and ultimately control the production of black masculinity. It is fascinating to see that that while historically black bodies were categorized on a biological level, in contemporary society things have shifted towards black culture (Ferber, 2007). However, Collins (2004) makes the connection that white society finds the need to control black bodies "due to the damaged values and relationships among black people as the root cause of social disadvantage". It has become difficult to identify the aspects of control that are used to regulate black life, however, as Allen (2016) notes acts that were once overt and visible have now become covert and subtle. The lessons and depictions of black masculinity from a historical perspective are that of oppression and perseverance against difficult odds. Looking into our historical understanding of black masculinity allows us to understand that the stereotypes, actions to constrain and control, and overall oppression have encouraged a culture that believes complete falsehoods about black bodies to be common sense truths.

Alternative Black Masculinities

Black masculinity is an ever-evolving paradigm that, as Messerschmidt (1993) stated, is historically contingent. If this were the case, then it is worth considering how the transition of these masculinities occurs over time. Put differently, if we are to contend that the development of masculinity is socially constructed, then it is necessary to understand how these masculinities are developed differently over time. When reflecting on this dynamic it seems important to make note of the role parents and older family figures have in the development of manhood and masculinity. Allen (2016) found that fathers would take steps to socialize their sons with ideas of manhood and what the presentation of masculinity looks like. We bear witness to a fascinating reality when we contend that all actions we engage in may in fact be learned actions that we integrate into ourselves for our own use. Ultimately, it seems fitting to understand these notions as the by-product of involved mentors and role models. It will be discussed later that the impact of a positive role model within the black community can have an extensive impact in the pro-social development of black youths. However, some of the same notions used to develop pro-social qualities can be used to understand the development of black masculinity here. When they study the world around them in an attempt to develop an understanding of themselves, black youth must also learn racial socialization as black fathers see it as crucial that their sons understand and recognize racism within a supposed post racial society (Allen, 2016). This is an added element for the development of black masculinity and crucial for the development of a masculinity that is not oppressed. This recognition of a racialized socialization allows black bodies to understand how they are being disadvantaged and act accordingly to fight back. For example, Allen's participants made note that they face significant racism while attending school, particularly in the form of teachers and school staff assuming them to be of low intelligence or inherently deviant. Moreover, participants found themselves not enrolled into the higher ability courses by counsellors (Allen, 2013).

Conversely, the fathers of these participants had to endure similar forms of racism, particularly during the U.S. civil rights movement. These experiences have given these fathers an understanding of both overt and covert expressions of racism, with the covert experiences being what these children now experience. As such, Allen (2016) and Du Bois (1903) reflect on the same notion from different perspectives. Du Bois (1903)

identifies the notion of double-consciousness to reflect on how black bodies would engage in actions of self-regulation of certain masculinity practices. Allen (2016) sees this as a destigmatizing practice that black bodies engage in so they can improve their chances within the labour market. For both scholars, the focus is on the practice of mitigating the stereotypes that would be used to demonize them. Watkins (1993) sees this entire point as black functionalism, which states that for black bodies to succeed within a white world they must learn how to play the game and adopt the rules.

Similar to the research direction of this thesis, there has been some interesting research into the development of university aged black males and their masculinity. From this research we are able to identify an interesting designation defined by Mutua (2006:7) as progressive black masculinity;

Progressive black masculinity, on the one hand, personally eschews and actively stands against social structures of domination and, on the other, value, validate, and empower black humanity… and multicultural humanity of others in the global family. More specifically… at a minimum, they are pro-black and antiracist as well as profeminist and anti-sexist… they are decidedly not dependent and or not predicted on the subordination of others.

Similarly, McGuire, Berhanu, Davis, and Harper (2014) suggests that among undergraduate black males, there is a concerted efforted for these males to transgress rigid heteronormative masculinities and disrupt heterosexism and homophobia. Put differently, individuals who express this notion are looking to consciously fight against the oppressions that both men and women face during their daily interactions (McGuire et al. (2014) In an attempt to acknowledge oppressions and understand the disadvantages and privileges particular individuals have, black feminist literature is integrated into the understanding of progressive black masculinity. In supporting this perspective, we see a recognition of black male privilege, whereby black males maintain a gender privilege over black females and those black men who do not identify as heterosexual (Collins 2004; Crenshaw 1991; hooks 1990). Taking this into consideration, proponents of this process argue that the only way we can achieve black liberation is by eradicating all forms of oppression, including sexism and homophobia (Collins, 2004). As has been

shown, this perspective encourages the active negation of various oppressions, all of which starts with having a strong understanding of self. The inclusion of black feminism into this perspective helps to ensure that black males understand the role that females play within the black community. Specifically, as a result of institutionalized slavery and systemic issues, black males lacked an ability to hold patriarchal status within the black family household. As such, black women filled the vacant spaces left by adult black males. They acted as caregivers and the foundation of the black family household, therefore playing a crucial role in the development of black masculinity. Allen (2006) found that a significant portion of the fathers in his study came from households where only the mother was present. While that led them to seek out other role models and mentors, black females played a significant role in the teaching of various lessons and the development of youth character.

This leads us to the second aspect of this perspective, which is the active engaging of black males in a process called autocritographical authoring. This process is defined by Awkward (1999:7) as "A self reflective, self-consciously academic act that foregrounds aspects of the genre typically dissolved into authors always strategic self portrait. In other words, it is an account of individual, social and institutional conditions that help to produce a scholar's professional concerns."

McGuire et al. (2014) makes note that while this process is defined and understood from an academic research perspective, it may also be used by black males who write to expose their personal concerns and how prior socialization experiences inform their present experiences. When attempting to present a progressive black masculinity, we are left with an individuals who is cognisant to actions that would victimize or oppress specific individuals. Moreover, the use of all of these tools during the undergraduate period enables black males to understand the experiences the face, as for many the university experience is the first time they become exposed to the world unimpeded by familial guardianship.

Basketball has become one important realm in which black men have been able to redevelop their masculinity, including oppositional forms (Mohamed, 2017). Whether in a professional capacity as a part of the National Basketball Association (NBA), or simply

as an everyday pickup basketball game, having this realm where black males are not restricted from growing and displaying their masculinity provides a sense of hope. The importance of this game takes us back to our discussion of slave participation in sports; it is ingrained deep into the Africans that participation in sport is an important aspect of life. When black slaves were taken from Africa and brought to America, this same belief followed and was severely regulated by plantation owners. At the time it was seen as producing hope among a group of people whom owners preferred to subjugate. In modern times, while not directly overt, similar constraints are still faced by members of the black community. While no longer significantly regimented, black bodies are participating in sport with the same intentions that their ancestors had. This ranges from the demonstration of physical prowess to members of the community, the releasing of pent up frustrations and anger, to the production of hope for a better life. Notably, by assessing the development of black masculinities through basketball participation, Mohamed (2017) found that pick-up basketball is the purest form of the sport "due to the fact that there are no scouts, coaches, or referees, just ten guys competing to be the best". Furthermore, recognizing that participants within the game are fully aware of their socioeconomic situations, the game becomes an escape where they are temporarily free from their daily personal problems (Mohamed, 2017).

According to Mohamed (2017), the development of black masculinities through basketball is an attempt to resist the inequalities that have existed for centuries. As such, the presentation of basketball masculinities can be looked at as an oppositional masculinity, for the fact that it exists through taking resources from the social structures that are available to black men. An interesting question becomes present when we are discussing oppositional masculinities: can there be other forms of masculinities exercised by black bodies? How might an oppositional masculinity formed within basketball interact with a more progressive Black masculinity formed within a higher education setting?

The presentation of these masculinities is fascinating as they provide subtext to the narrative experience of all black bodies. While this discussion can continue at length about the various forms of masculinity, we will look to outline two broad understandings

which offer a good encapsulation of black masculinity: resistant masculinity (includes oppositional and progressive forms) and marginalized masculinity. The latter illustrates a form of masculinity that presents a level of subservience to a boss, while the former is mobilized as a process to retain cultural identity and therefore keep an understanding of one's own identity (Miller, Steinfeldt, Richter, & Mckinley, 2018).

Marginalized masculinities represent the opposing aspects of the discussion around resistant masculinities. Where one looks to stand and fight for the retaining of cultural values, individuals forced into the realm of marginalized masculinities are individuals looking to survive. This dynamic is clear and present when we look at the relationship between white superiority and black subordination. Believing it to be the most viable method for survival, black bodies endure the punishment and ridicule of others. As discussed previously, within resistant masculinities black bodies did use physicality to some degree so that they could retain an aspect of their manhood (Miller et al., 2018). Perry (2001) notes how they come to be stereotyped as brutish or bestial. The other stereotypical representation found is that of the Sambo, which displayed characteristics of being subservient, naturally entertaining and childish (Turner, 1977).

The dynamic of a resistant masculinity is one that has been discussed and played out by a variety of excellent scholars. While using different terminology, Messerschmidt (1997) speaks of resistant masculinity as oppositional masculinities, which can be understood as a form of identity that is generated through the available sources of capital within a society. Resistant masculinity as understood by Miller et al. (2018) is the struggle to maintain one's cultural identity and confront the forces that look to oppress and marginalize black bodies. One can make the argument that both of these points work in tandem with one another, in that exercising an oppositional masculinity is one step before one seeks to steadfastly hold onto the presentation they are giving off. To understand the result of this resistant dynamic, look no further than to the enslaved bodies who would fight against the subjugation that was forced upon them.

Unfortunately, as mentioned by Perry (2001), the bestial designation was associated with black males, in an attempt to denigrate and force suppression upon them as a whole. Put differently, by labelling them as dangerous hyper-sexual individuals,

justifications can be made with regards to the type of treatment black bodies endured. A relatively suppressed aspect of black history is the world of Mandingo fighting, where black males would be pitted against one another for sport. While typically black bodies were never allowed to express any form of physicality outside of sex and working, these athletic bouts were available and in essence became a method for black males to express a level of manhood (Lussana, 2010). Lussana (2010) writes of the slave named John Finnely who attempted an escape to freedom by participating in the act of Mandingo fighting because he felt that the individuals who did so became well known and respected by the other enslaved members of their plantation. This demonstrates the difficulty and challenges faced when individuals of this early time period attempted to negotiate their masculinity. As in Finnely case, he is left with do I endure this physical punishment for reward, or do I continue to live with the current treatment.

This exertion of violence became a tool of the time when individuals sought to express individuality through resistant masculinities. Another remarkable example of this comes from The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave (Douglass, 1845), where during August of 1833 he was working for a Mr. Covey. During this time, and only after an extensive beating, Douglass stood up for himself and fought off Mr. Covey successfully. From that point on, Douglass noted it as a turning point in his life as a slave, for he resolved that no other individual would place their hands on him, and no one did. I take this time to establish this backstory, as it is important to know the extent of the growth that has occurred with respect to resistant masculinities. Moreover, it is interesting to see how the exercising of resistant black masculinities was reframed by white culture to demonize black males as aggressive brutes, worthy of harsh treatment.

Resistance to a specific reality is something that is contingent on the situation and particular moment in time. While historically, violence was used to exercise resistance, it was also the only avenue that was left and understood. However, as we move to consider Black masculinity in contemporary sport we are able to see that the need to use violent measures has largely gone away with the times.

Resistance, in a more contemporary sense, is displayed through advocating, using one's platform, and simply knowing that the negative manner in which one is being treated is not correct. This last point is the most important as Griffith (2018) found from testimonies of former slaves - the realities in which they lived were all they knew; therefore, how could they know any better?

When we look at more recent individuals, we can see the actions of sports figures like Mohammad Ali, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, LeBron James, and Colin Kaepernick (Miller et al., 2018). Each of these individuals have sought to shine light on specific issues that were of grave importance to them. LeBron James looks to assist low-income neighborhoods and even built a school, and Ali, Abdul-Jabbar, and Kaepernick each brought attention to issues of racial inequality. All of these individuals were exercising a resistant masculinity as they used their positions as athletes to defy norms and articulate a message to support and retain aspects of black culture (Miller et al., 2018).

Thus far we have looked at resistant masculinity as it pertains to athletes; however, there are other forms. An additional form of resistant masculinity is an intellectual form. With the participants of this study being black student-athletes, we would be setting this research at a disadvantage to not reflect on this form of masculinity. An individual who strives along this path is seeking similar goals as those who participate in athletics; however, they are looking to attain knowledge and insight to better the lived experiences of black bodies. What this shows is the fluidity of resistant masculinity, in that it does not singularly look at the physical but rather the intellectual as well. The black freedom fighters and abolitionists of the 18th century sought to spread a message of opportunity and of hope for the future to come. Individuals like Douglass (in his later years), Henry Bibb, Paul Edmondson, Paul Jennings, and William Wells Brown chose the path of an intellectual (Green, 2014; Brown, 1863; Rohrs, 1994). These exceptional individuals became leaders in their own communities and worked to achieve the type of change everyone was dreaming of. Even today, the existence of intellectual masculinity begets an individual who looks to study aspects of the past in order to understand how best to navigate the existing barriers of oppression. As such, we are can see a connection to progressive black masculinities. For as one looks into their past to understands the various barriers of oppression, they are in fact engaging in a reflective look process

where one can identify the oppressions of others and stand against the elements that encourage the existence of these oppressions. Put differently, as these black youths develop their intellectual masculinity while in school, they are in turn developing a progressive masculinity that acknowledges societal constraints.

Street Masculinities and the Cool Pose

As we will dive deeper into Anderson's understanding of a street masculinity it seems appropriate to stop and discuss the notion of the "cool pose," as there is a connection between the disenfranchisement that stems the presentation of a street masculinity and adherence to a street masculinity. Majors & Billson's (1992) notion of cool pose represents an understanding of the psychological defense mechanism that occurs within black males, stemming from the disenfranchisement that occurs among black males who have been deprived by social factors, which would constrain their presentations of masculinity. Cool pose in a sense works as a mask that black males wear to protect themselves from the disadvantages faced during their daily lives. These disadvantages can stem from economic instability, to systemic racism that reaches back to historically institutionalized slavery. Majors & Billson (1992) make note that from a historical perspective the cool pose works to protect the black male from unwanted pressure and violence. The expression of this cool pose is a process that enables black males to project a level of confidence and self assurance, two aspects that have been withheld from black males.

The inclusion of this perspective within the conversation about street masculinity is important. Anderson's (1999) code of the street reflects on how members of the inner-city deal with a level of disenfranchisement from social services. Due to this they create their own code of conduct. The implication of Majors & Billson's (1992) concept of cool pose helps to reflect on how a specific individual may operate within a society that looks to disadvantage them where possible. Moreover, it is crucial to recognize Majors cool pose for what it is, an act. Making references to Goffman's (1959) work on the presentation of self, particularly his ideas about impression management, the cool pose can be seen as a way for Black men to manage the impression they give off to the world and subsequently how the world interprets that self presentation. As such, the cool pose is

a tool that black males use to navigate their daily lives. As Majors notes through self reflection, to subscribe to this fully would only develop a one-dimensional form of masculinity. When a particular individual loses the belief others have in his presentation of the "Cool Pose", they ultimately are subjected to the breakdown of their black masculinity (Majors & Billson, 1992). It is also worth noting that, while the cool pose can be implemented within all forms of masculinity, the need to do so can change depending on the particular objective. To illustrate a form of masculinity and how it would be used, let us look at Andersons (1999) work on the code of the street and street masculinity that are shaped by this unofficial normative code.

The concept of street masculinity is important in Anderson's (1999) Code of the Streets. Within this seminal piece of writing, Anderson was able to advance our understanding of how black bodies within these situations operate. Most specifically, within the code of the street respect reigns supreme and is the currency that allows individuals to operate within a volatile environment. Generally, individuals who are likely to subscribe to the Code of the Street are males who come from low income neighborhoods and are more often than not regularly unsupervised (Anderson, 1999). To maintain one's position or status, individuals who follow the code of the street are likely to resort to more violent methods to ensure that they are not being "messed with" (Anderson, 1999). When looking to understand the concept of manhood within the framework of the code of the street, strength and the ability to defend one's self are crucial components. Interestingly, individuals within these low-income communities can be presented with influences that can counteract the negative impact of the inner-city community. These influences can be an impactful role model, parental attention, and/or strong love from a particular individual (Anderson, 1999).

One influence behind the code of the street is the lack of trust a particular community has in law enforcement's abilities. As such, members of a community develop their own code of conduct, which can promote this street form of masculinity. To summarize, respect, willingness to resort to violence to protect ones own, and overall physical prowess are all key elements within this street masculinity. Individuals resort to this form of masculinity when they believe that it is their only option, or when they are

socially conditioned into it from either their peers or older members of their family (Anderson, 1999).

Black Masculinity and Sports

Sports leisure became one method within U.S. society that black people used to shape the identity of who they are. Within North American society, the involvement of black bodies in recreational sports was present even during their time as slaves throughout the United States. More interestingly, music, religion and sports have been core aspects of black culture even before black bodies were taken from their homes and forced into slavery. Sports in particular were used as a method to display physical prowess to other individuals within their native tribe (Griffith, 2018). While the usage of sports became a source of personal pride and growth for young men in their African tribes, when subjugated into slavery adaptations were made to take into consideration the vastly different lifestyle they were now living. To be specific, the infusion of various cultures at the height of the slave trade enabled black bodies to be exposed to a variety of different sports that they would adapt for their own use. Baseball, boxing, running, horseracing and wrestling were all common sports in which black bodies engaged during that time (Griffith, 2018).

For a lot of black bodies, engagement in recreational sports was a source of freedom and an activity that encouraged survival. With examples that can be seen even today, participation in recreational sports offered an ability for black slaves to escape, for a short period, the pain they faced on a daily basis. Participation in sports afforded black slaves the opportunity to release the pent-up aggression and frustration caused by their daily lives. Through the union of competition, slaves would be able to attempt the same construction of manhood and demonstration of physical prowess that was present while they were in Africa (Griffith, 2018). Moreover, within the very situation there was even the possibility of black men competing against white males, and this was an opportune time for one to fight against their oppressor. We can see that the induction of sports within slave culture is the first attempt to grasp the notion of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. While black participation within American sports faced significant

challenges throughout history, there is also the amazing accomplishments that should be spoken of at the same level of importance.

Modern sports offers the appearance of meritocracy through an avenue of equality of participation, governance of sport, quantification of results and quest of records. These benefits are significant as they represent, within one fashion or another, things that have otherwise been restricted to black men in everyday life (Gleaves, 2017). The act of participating in sports offers a reflective look at how we as a society see ourselves. The heroic acts conducted by athletes to win games resonate within a society and become accomplishments that fans can take pride in (Gleaves, 2017).

Interestingly work from Messner (1989) found that the black family unit is one of many elements that serve to push black bodies at a disproportionate rate towards sports like football, basketball, and boxing as sport has been a positive realm that has helped, and continues to help, members of the black community. Messner (1989) argues The simple reality is that there is too much of an emphasis that is placed on sports by the black community. As a result, it has led to countless black youth believing that striving towards a higher level of sport will lead to upward mobility. However, as Messner (1989) notes, "visible black role models in many other professions now exist, they say, as such there is ample evidence which proves that sports careers are at best, a bad gamble". This leads us to what Messner (1989) looks to discuss, this being the relationship between race and social class.

The construction of a black athletic identity is complex, as it considers the biological, social, and historical components which have followed black people throughout generations of change. The usage of Messerschmidt's Structured Action Theory uniquely addresses this dynamic, with the focus on gendered actions. The biological and social constraints that are discussed through SAT, when outlined by the historical components, are what legendary athletes sought to navigate so that they would be able to develop a legacy. By chasing hegemonic masculinity, black athletes are in fact personifying an oppositional identity. This notion of oppositional identity reflects how involuntary minority groups, such as black males, develop an identity that is counter to the mainstream understanding of this minority group. Messerschmidt (1997) discusses

how historically westernized hegemonic masculinity was synonymous with white masculinity. Particularly, white masculinity was formulated through stable employment, political engagement, and being the patriarch of a family. Alternatively, due in part to systemic issues of racism, black males were unable to associate with these particular elements of proposed hegemonic masculinity. Loewen (2006) provides accounts of repeated incidences where black males were barred from specific employment and given no political representation. This unfortunately led to the inability to hold a strong sense of patriarchy as it was extremely difficult to financially take care of a family (Messerschmidt, 1993). Therefore, oppositional identity became prevalent for black males throughout history as they fought to find alternative methods to sustain a living (Messerschmidt, 1997).

The unfortunate reality is that black athletes have the potential to threaten the notion of white male superiority, as it leads to questions of whether black males could be considered better. However, while the growth and depictions of black athletes can also act to reinforce stereotypes of animal-like nature, aggressiveness and physical power, it is important to note that this entire line of thought comes from the myth that black bodies have more natural athletic ability (Coakley, 2006). Just as has been discussed, there has been a history of far-right white supremacy rhetoric that plagues the image of black athletes. This results in black athletes being seen within an interesting light, as either "good blacks" or "bad blacks". To be specific, good blacks are designated through their ability to be controlled by white males, and as such, their bodies are admired for it (Ferber, 2007). Collins (2005) makes the point regarding the opposite when identifying players that we love to hate. Players like Allen Iverson, Charles Barkley, and Dennis Rodman are all individuals that would be seen through the lens of white ideology as uncontrollable, and therefore are labeled as the villains through contemporary media. What is fascinating about this distinction is that white society shows to be more forgiving of a designated "good black" making a mistake, as opposed to one they have already demonized. Ultimately this references the reality of how willing white fans are to forgive and accept a "good black", as within the fans' eyes, these players are not like the rest (Ferber, 2007). Take for example athletes like Kobe Bryant, who in 2003 faced rape charges in Vail, Colorado. Instead of being demonized within the media and by general

society, he was greeted within sympathy. This illustrates the contradiction within white American racism. When it comes to white fans they concluded that individuals like Kobe are not like the rest. They are "our" blacks, "good" blacks, the kind of blacks that white fans love to cheer for (Ferber, 2007). In short, we must be careful when delineating a contemporary understanding of sports masculinity, as historically it has been rooted in racialized stereotypes. Understanding what is authentic and what is ultimately incorrect is crucial as scholars look to advance this conversation.

Effects of Popular Culture

We live in the age of mass media, where youth are more likely to gather their information from the television than from a textbook. In the pursuit of a positive representation, it is important to question the images that are presented to black youth through popular culture and social media. This is most concerning as, through the digital age, black youth are learning aspects of their identity through non-traditional sources (Powell, 1991). Two important contemporary sources are grounded in sports and the rap music industry. Each provides a venue in which youth can seek out an understanding of self, and of black masculinity. We are able to see the outcome from some of these factors when we look at the overrepresentations of black bodies within professional sports (Beamon, 2010). As it stands, black bodies make up approximately 78% of the National Basketball Association and 67% of the National Football League, an outcome of a culture that emphasizes sport over other elements like higher education or formal labor (Beamon & Messer, 2013).

The overrepresentation of black bodies within athletics shows a culture of socialization through media outlets around how sport is appropriate for black youth to engage in. Beamon (2010) makes note that social elements like family, neighbourhood and the general African community all work to enforce this sports outcome. This is done through undervaluing other things like different hobbies, particular role models and other elements of life that would take them away from sport. Beamon's (2010) work found that 17 out of 20 Division One student-athletes found mass media or popular culture to be the primary source of sports socialization. Participants found that when turning on the television they were bombarded with sensationalized images of these black athletes and

their lifestyles. The presentation of black athletes in advertising only enforces particular beliefs as they are continuously represented in a stereotypical manner. To be specific, Dufur (1997) found that 57% of black athletes were portrayed as successful based on their physical abilities, size, speed, and strength, whereas their white counterparts were shown as succeeding based on their intelligence. Moreover, 36% of black athletes were shown as violent and aggressive, as opposed to only four percent of white athletes being shown as such (Dufur, 1997). Ultimately, we are seeing that mass media is playing a substantial role in guiding black youth towards sports and away from other endeavours like formal education.

Mass media plays an incredibly deep role in this by bombarding children with images of the sports lifestyle. Rap music is one outlet that not only socializes black youth but also glorifies the sports lifestyle for the money and fame that could follow. Originating from the early 1970s in the south of the Bronx, hip-hop offered a method for the desperate conditions in urban ghettos and systemic racism to be projected widely to the world. Hip-hop music developed into a culture that allowed the truly disadvantaged to have a voice (Hagedorn, 2008). From this reality, youth who had not been able to connect with elements in their world were able to find commonalities. From this a deep passion evolves, as they finally believe someone understands what they are going through.

It is important to understand the effect that media socialization has on an individual. While some may argue that this is positive, others can see that it limits the available options of black youth. Rap music can help black youth understand how their sense of being is different and is celebrated in music that speaks to issues of social inequity. This form of music helps to confirm their identity and dictate social consciousness (Tanner, Asbridge, & Wortley, 2009). However, the music can be negative and represent women in an over-sexualized manner. The resulting impact of these images is that young black males begin to sexualize their female peers (Johnson-Baker, Markham, Baumler, Swain, & Emery, 2016). The perpetuation of this negative music feeds Messerschmidt understand of hegemonic masculinity, whereby he sees the subordination of women as a connecting aspect of white masculinity. Therefore, the perpetuation of this particular style of music only continue a problematic cycle that seeks

to keep women as less then men. Taking this into consideration when discussing the influencing factors of black masculinities, it is crucial that we consider mass media and popular culture have an underlying impact that can be greater than we recognize.

Black Figures in Media

The theoretical framework of this paper illustrates the various constraints that are placed upon black bodies, most notably the social structures within society. As discussed in the historical reflection, the particular social constraints that shape the development of black masculinities have shifted over time. One current trend that we see is the limitation of particular masculinities by these athletes, whereby players like Colin Kaepernick or LeBron James are seen as athletes and nothing more. This pattern fits well with Messerschmidt's SAT, as it outlines the limited resources available for black bodies to negotiate the masculinities they present. The media reaction to both of these players represents an attempted correction by the white majority in retaliation for stepping beyond a perceived boundary of identity. For LeBron James, the correction is seen through a Fox News commentator who condemned him for commenting on political matters by stating that he should "shut up and dribble" (Sullivan, 2018). For Kaepernick, the correction was seen by the wilful misinterpretation of his social justice kneeling protest, by then president-elect Donald Trump (BBC News, 2018). To be specific, Trump said "Wouldn't you love to see one of these NFL owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, to say, 'Get that son of a bitch off the field right now. Out! He's fired. He's fired!'" (Graham, 2017). The point of these examples is to illustrate how athletes use media to project their message of change to the greater public. Conversely, these points show how, through media, there can also be a visceral pushback against athletes' actions.

It is an unfortunate reality that the actions of some have the ability to affect the perceived presentation of a particular group. This is the burden that professional athletes face, as their actions reflect back on how people view members of the black community. Moreover, given the opportunities available to them, some athletes have made it their goal to give back to their home community. This is a great responsibility that has been tasked onto black bodies, one that is illustrated nicely by Du Bois (1926). Put simply, he wrote that art for the African is communal and should address the issues of society.

Essentially, this suggests that black artists need to be culturally responsible and produce work that will enrich their society (Du Bois, 1926). The same might be said for contemporary black athletes.

The questions about whether it is indeed necessary that members of the black community be culturally responsible for their actions remain. For some, this transpires into bettering the community and advocating for something better. Colin Kaepernick, John Carlos, Tommie Smith, Jackie Robinson, LeBron James, Carmelo Anthony and Chris Paul all represent athletes that have used media and their respective platforms to take a stand against injustices that are prevalent within society (Monteagudo & Wheaton, 2016). This is a tremendous responsibility that we place on black athletes as they are competing with white public opinion, which tends to only be comfortable with them being athletes who should stay within the confines of the white public's definition.

Black figures in the media must work to navigate the social relations of gender, class, and race, which work to structure a multidimensional reality that they must contend with to be successful. The gendered relations of power make it so that a particular element of society controls the image that is presented to the overall public. This image ensures that American culture is synonymous with white culture, and is accomplished by labeling anything else as inferior (Gammage, 2017). Just as articulated by Messerschmidt (1993), white males who historically held dominant power controlled and restricted the presence of black culture within white media.

At the Super Bowl 50 halftime show where Beyoncé Knowles performed, Beyoncé aimed to highlight her black heritage through her performance of the song "Formation" and using clothing that mirrored that of the Black Panthers. This forced a discussion of a hidden past that stood in opposition to American history that excluded these important moments, ultimately making people enraged and uncomfortable for politicizing a supposedly sacred sporting event. Ultimately, the controversy died down and Beyoncé did not waver in her stance, taking pride in the performance she gave. As figures in the media, black individuals are held to a different standard by individuals not associated with the culture. As such, is it fair to hold black bodies to this standard of responsibility? For those looking to advocate, are you prepared to hold white American

culture to the light, and have them face the institutionalized racism they have helped to develop?

Positive Influences of Sports

Whether for leisure or competition, sports have the capacity to reflect specific cultural values, perceptions, and narratives which aid in the development of human identity (Gleaves, 2017). Taking this into consideration, it would only seem logical to tap into resources which steer youth away from criminal activity. A variety of researchers have tackled the impact that sports have had on the development of youth and the community. Notably, Kelly (2010) shows that through a social policy of Positive Future Programming (founded in the United Kingdom), sports-based intervention programs could help improve local tension. Alternatively, the benefits of sports are prevalent within youth crime prevention, as sports can be shown to have positive effects on rehabilitation, social development and social control (Kelly, 2012).

The conversation around the benefits of sports on the deterrence of youth deviance has been a topic of interest that has fostered a great deal of academic scholarship. Interestingly, there has been no consensus on the impact that sport has on the deviance of youth. Chamberlain (2013) posits that there is no direct link between sports-based intervention (SBI) programs and crime reduction, but that SBI programs assist with social development of youth. This social development, in turn, provides youth with positive skills that make it less likely for them to engage in deviant activities (Chamberlain, 2013). Hartmann and Depro (2006) found that during the existence of the midnight basketball programs, there was a dramatic decrease in property crime in cities that had the program, as opposed to cities that did not have them. Hallingberg et al. (2015) found that participation in organized sports was associated with less hazardous drinking; however, the individuals who are most at risk are the ones less likely to seek out this avenue of action.

While scholarship on this topic has looked to examine the various outcomes and benefits of SBI programs, some undeniable realities exist that make it difficult to produce research that would lead to solid conclusions on the overall benefits of this approach. Of particular concern is the often-unsustainable nature of these programs, based partially on

the financial impact they have (Nichols & Crow, 2004). Unfortunately, all too often SBI programs are used to secure funding for limited sports facilities or programs. Alternatively, municipalities use these programs to make it appear as if they are taking steps to deal with issues of urban crime and violence (Hartmann, 2003). Nonetheless, there are exceptions. For example, Hartmann (2003) discussed notable expert Larry Hawkins and the various SBI programs he had established throughout the Chicago area. The programs developed and skills learned paint a clear picture of why SBI programs are important to have within communities.

One argument for the value of these programs is that SBI programs are not singularly a space in which youth can engage in sports, rather the sport is the method for drawing in individuals for which one can then implement educational programs that would look to better youth for the pursuit of higher education (Hartmann, 2003). Take note that education represents one of many avenues of improvement. What is most important is that we properly implement these programs and not over-emphasize the participation in sports. Put differently, what is needed is the development of skills that help with positive social interaction, along with the tools needed to meet conflict and challenges in a positive manner. Nevertheless, this remains important as sports-based intervention programs can assist with instilling positive values in the youth participants, if implemented correctly. Hartmann (2003) outlines that while sports-based intervention programs are a powerful force for social intervention, it is the actions that are taken in combination with these programs that make the difference. Ultimately, this is referring to social engagement that is present within these programs. Please note that these programs are not simply areas in which youth can play sports, but rather they are sports with support and teaching from mentors who encourage and influence a different sense of self in the youth participants.

As it currently stands, we can suggest that engagement beyond sport itself has to occur for there to be proper impact on the development of at-risk youth. Recent scholarship has identified predictive factors which work to decrease the potential for deviant behaviour by at-risk youth. These factors help to show what conditions are necessary for SBI programs to be successfully implemented. These factors are youth

(subdivided into sex and type of education), coach (educational attainment, rules based on behaviour, motivational behaviour, and guidance), and context factors (sociomoral climate at the club and type of sport). When these factors are present within an intervention program, we are able to increase the level of intervention success (Spruit, Van Der Put, van vugt, & Jan Stams, 2018). With the evaluation of these factors, additional takeaways from this program are the importance of knowing the specific population being targeted and having facilitators that hold strong expertise in what they do.

Speaking on a similar topic in a different manner, we are able to see within certain literature a discernable change in the crime rate when particular SBI programs are run according to the proper implementation standards. Hartmann and Depro (2006) conducted specific research on the relationship between midnight basketball and urban crime rates. Their findings did not definitively conclude that midnight basketball is directly associated with decreased city level property crime rates (Hartmann & Depro, 2006). Rather, their research was able to conclude that, in association with midnight basketball, there was an indirect effect that contributes to a reduction of crime within the cities where midnight basketball existed (Hartmann & Depro, 2006). A notable explanation for the reduction in crime is seen by Johnson and Bowers' (2003) publicity effect. This effect can be broken down into two outcomes, first being a deterrence effect, since as criminals witness the amount of investment placed into crime prevention initiatives, there is the recognition of the proactive attempts and increased efforts being made to prevent crime. This instills a sense of fear of being caught, subsequently leading to a deterrence from crime. The second conclusion is that the programs send a positive message that helps to affirm community trust and solidarity, and ultimately develops a sense of collective efficacy (Sampson, 2012).

Sampson (2012) adds to this perspective by discussing his idea of collective efficacy, which refers to the degree of neighborhood cohesion and trust. Hartmann and Depro (2006) discuss Midnight basketball and describe the outcomes that occur when a community exhibits strong levels of collective efficacy, stating that there is more trust and comfortability allowing for such activities to be present. Hartmann & Depro (2006)

outline how these activities establish a sense of community within the neighborhood, which is important in facilitating and promoting youth participation. Put simply, with a higher sense of collective efficacy, youth could potentially feel safer and be willing to engage in sports as opposed to deviant activities. Having formulated an understanding of previous literature, it is now prudent that we focus in on the theoretical direction of this particular project. Moreover, while this these will touch on the various forms of masculinity previously touched on, this project will focus in on James Messerschmidt's work on Structured Action Theory.

Theoretical Frameworks

James Messerschmidt's Structured Action Theory (SAT) seeks to explain how and why crime is committed through gendered actions. This process is incredibly interesting through the lenses of social relations such as class, gender, and race. Along with elements of labour, power and sexuality, SAT is able to provide a rational explanation for why specific people commit particular crimes. While the usage of this theory to explain crime is fascinating, this thesis will use this theory for its understanding of structured action and the development of masculinity. For the purpose of this thesis, the tenets of SAT offer an excellent starting point for examining black masculinity. However, this thesis recognizes that black masculinity within western society has traditionally been subordinate to white masculinity. This thesis will seek to explore the ways in which some black youths challenge the constraints that have long shaped black masculinity.

Structured Action Theory uses gender, race, and class to understand the exercising of actions in the context of social structures, which can then shape the presence of criminal acts. While this perspective is typically used to understand crime, and how crime exists within these specific frameworks, the aim of this thesis is to pay close attention to how social structures are formulated to shape the reality of black masculinity. The complexity of SAT posits that individuals rationalize a reality where social actors play a strong role in shaping the social structures that make up their everyday surroundings. Messerschmidt (1993), paraphrasing Joan Acker (1989), succinctly states that "social actors maintain and change social structures within any

particular interaction, and those social structures simultaneously enable and constrain social action" (Messerschmidt, 1993:77). If we are to work with this understanding of social actors, we need to unpack this perspective and discuss the components that work in conjunction with one another. Put differently, a clear definition and thorough understanding of the concept of social structures must be established.

Gendered Social Actions Through Social Structures

SAT operates on the assumption that criminal behaviour is conditioned by gendered social actions and interactions. From both historical and social conditions, we are able to develop a contextual understanding of gender, race, and class (Messerschmidt, 1993). Therefore, we are able to begin developing an understanding of how we co-construct our shared reality. Through the social construction of gender, race, and class, we are able to engage in situational accomplishments. As social actors, we are constantly displaying ourselves to others and vice versa (Messerschmidt, 1993). For example, a black low-class male is accomplishing the construction of gender, race, and class by progressing in his life through these particular frameworks, and according to the interactions with and reactions of others in his social sphere (Messerschmidt, 1993). Put simply, the validation we give ourselves and that which we receive from others shapes the situated accomplishment. As we monitor ourselves and others, we are in turn able to develop the social setting of life.

In short, according to Messerschmidt, social structures are patterns of behaviour that are constrained and displayed in specific ways (Messerschmidt, 1993). Connell (1987) would argue that social structures are largely derived from the divisions of labour, power and sexuality, which are produced through the act of doing gender, race, and class. Therefore, the presence of defined social structures plays an integral part in the production of social action. Put differently, social action and social structure work hand in hand and cannot exist without the presence of the other. As such, constraints placed upon individuals by divisions of labour, power, and sexuality, depending on the individuals' place along hierarchies of race, class and gender. Therefore, it is social structures that operate through social action, which provides resources and power, from which individuals can engage in particular actions. Messerschmidt (1993) contends that,

because individuals realize their behaviour is accountable to others, they construct their actions in relation to how they might be interpreted by others in a particular social context.

It is unmistakable that within westernized society, the introduction of black bodies came heavily from institutionalized slavery. From the very earliest accounts, there was an ability for the white majority to produce a hierarchy of masculinity. From that point on, black culture has had to fight against, and more often live with, the cultural belief in this hierarchy of masculinity, not knowing what the outcome of this would be. What transpired was an unequal distribution of power and resources that predominantly favoured white males. The construction of this hierarchy made it so whiteness was the benchmark against which all other masculinities were judged. From this embedded cultural reality, black masculinity could not measure up to that of its white counterpart. The result of this produced black masculinity as the "other". The othering of black bodies made possible the subordination of their masculinity. The class structure that this dynamic fostered can be linked as one justification for the lack of resources and general power for black bodies.

The influence and control that divisions of labour, power and sexuality have on a particular individual's masculinity will be expanded upon shortly. For now, it is sufficient to know that due to constraints formed by the divisions of labour and power, individuals (for example, visible minorities or women) are particularly constrained because of their shared historical and social experience.

Raced and Gendered Division of Labour

As social actors, we are all expressing ourselves by what Messerschmidt refers to as social actions, which take place in particular social settings. As Connell noted, social structures are the divisions of labour, power and sexuality that are produced (or reproduced) when we do gender, race, and class. Building from this, Messerschmidt makes note that the gendered division of labour represents an arena, that as social actors we work towards situated accomplishments. Both Connell and Messerschmidt's notions work together, as it is we as social actors who negotiate our own gender, race, and class within the formal labour market on a daily basis. A discussion of the labour market is

necessary as Messerschmidt highlights labour as being an integral part of producing masculinity. With this in mind, the production of masculinity is fascinating as it is historically contingent while socially constructed and subsequently constrained. In other words, the production of masculinity depends on the particular moment in history within which it is being exercised. This is because the particular social constraints of that historical period can dictate the available resources needed to socially construct a particular masculinity. Taking this into consideration, the history of black bodies within western society tells a story of institutionalized discrimination that fueled social constraints at all levels of society. This ultimately makes the place of black bodies within the formal labour market difficult.

Keeping the focus on western society, Messerschmidt (1993) sees that one's ability to negotiate the formal labour market is contingent on where a social actor falls within the categories of gender, class and race. Put differently, based on a social actor's gender, class, and race they will likely have particular resources and an allotted amount of power. This power (a notion that will be described in more detail later) affords some the ability to impose constraints and ultimately dictate the resources available to others, resources they need to negotiate their own masculinity and operate within the formal labour market (Messerschmidt, 1993). Due to the ability of certain social actors to possess more power than others, they are able to dictate what the formal labour market will look like. As such, Messerschmidt has provided four basic spheres for how labour can be broken up into: (1) housework, (2) child care, (3) unpaid versus paid work, and (4) within the paid labour market and individual work (Messerschmidt, 1993).

Let us briefly look at the intersection of gender and labour. While there is the potential for men and women to operate in any of these spheres of labour, Messerschmidt takes the stance that when we categorize gender in western society, there are explicitly gendered expectations. While a somewhat dated example, Messerschmidt notes that there are particular jobs more likely occupied by men and those more likely occupied by women. Of the four previously mentioned spheres, housework and child care are the forms of labour that were historically considered to be labour suitable for women (Messerschmidt, 1993).

Labour is also defined across class lines. It is an unfortunate reality that as of 2018, 20.8% of black Americans live below the poverty line (Acs & Loprest, 2009). This statistic indicates there is still a strong connection between class and race. Moreover, as of 2017, 14.3% of black workers were working jobs that would be designated with a poverty level wage (Acs & Loprest, 2009). When considering unemployment rates for 2020, we are able to see that for black Americans over 16 years old, there is an unemployment rate of 13.2% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). When we compare this to 2016 Canadian Statistics, we are able to see that between the ages of 25 and 59 there was an employment rate of 78.1% (Statistics Canada, 2020). These statistics provide a contemporary understanding of the association between class and race, as we specifically look at black masculinity. Throughout the vast majority of black history within western society there have been social actors who are unwilling to validate the presentation of black masculinity. Moreover, having been deprived of the resources necessary to operate within the formal labour market, challenges arose when black males attempted to emulate western hegemonic masculinity. Black males would ultimately begin to navigate oppositional masculinities out of pure necessity. These will be expanded on within the literature discussed below. Nevertheless, a few interesting examples of how black males negotiated the formal labour market are worth noting here. Historically we can think of domestic servants. Whether under slavery, Jim Crow, or more recent patterns of exclusionary hiring, this has historically been one of few available options of paid labour for black men and black women. Within this dynamic, we can see a clear hierarchy of masculinity that helps to distinguish class and race constraints, restricting black males to subservient positions.

When looking to modern examples let us look at Masai Ujiri, President of Basketball Operations for the Toronto Raptors. On the one hand, a strong argument can be made that he has reached an idolized form of black masculinity, as he has successfully navigated the formal labour market and countless people have validated his social actions. Yet, consider an incident in 2019 when he was refused entrance onto the basketball court after his team won the NBA Finals. Moreover, he was accused of being aggressive and assaulting a police officer. It was not until a year later that video evidence was released, showing he was not the aggressor. Ultimately, this example shows that

even when someone can successfully negotiate the formal labour market, there will still be social actors who refuse to validate the construction of a powerful and positive black male's masculinity. Social action, regardless of what it may be, comes with a certain degree of choice (Messerschmidt, 1993). In saying that, Messerschmidt is reflecting on the fact that one's ability to negotiate social constraints comes down to the ability to make a choice to do one thing or the other, for the sake of either upward mobility or pure survival.

When looking at more modern presentations of black bodies in the paid labour market, black men often do not have the capacity to make the choice for themselves, as very few opportunities become available within their fields of interest. Take, for example, the representation of black coaches within the National Football League (NFL). As of January 2020, of the 32 available head coaching positions there exist only three black head coaches, two offensive coordinators and ten defense coordinators (Hill, 2020). This is problematic in a league comprised of 70 percent black players (Sonnad, 2018). Moreover, the Rooney Rule, enacted in 2003, mandates that all teams must interview a minority candidate for all coaching and executive positions (Belson, 2010). From the perspective of SAT, this presents a subtle manipulation of both division of power and labour. Within the NFL, power is held predominately by the white majority owners and while the Rooney Rule mandates that a minority coach be interviewed, it does not say they have to be hired. Owners are therefore able to dictate the makeup of the administrative arm of the sport. As such, this example shows that black males do not generally have the chance to decide whether they will engage in this profession, as they are not even given the opportunity to do so.

The underlying assumption that has long shaped the choices open to black males was that they were inadequate, as they were unable to engage in basic aspects of manhood. This issue made it difficult for black males to accomplish social actions, as other social actors would either refuse to, or hold too high the level of accountability needed to, validate a person's social actions. Put simply, SAT suggests that presentations of self are held accountable in a way that has the social actors' actions determined to be appropriate for their specific position. For black males, we can see that that being black

can be viewed as at odds with performances of institutional authority and power. As such, black males' actions are controlled and constrained by these gendered divisions of labour in society. This inadequacy was not particularly predominant for white males, especially among higher income percentiles, as there was no direct force impeding them from engaging in the labour market.

Aligning this framework with the direction of this thesis, we are able to integrate our understanding of sports into Structured Action Theory. Sport as a from of labour is fascinating as the intrinsic makeup of the institution fits nicely with some of the already established notions within SAT. For instance, just as Messerschmidt discussed how labour becomes an intrinsic aspect of an individual's identity that ultimately makes up how they see themselves and how they present themselves to the world, sport operates in a similar way. As previously discussed, sports are a realm for which in a historical context black bodies were able to access aspects of masculinity that they were blocked from in the rest of society. While we can continue this broader conversation around labor and sport, it would be more effective to focus down into the field of varsity sports and how players navigate this social structure as social actors.

As it has been identified, in the construction of black masculinities there are social constraints that work to control the presentations black bodies can give. Black student athletes are no different, as influences of coaches, professors, and the general athlete code of conduct work to influences the actions of student athletes. Specifically, we see the influence of power within this particular dynamic. Seemingly, while there is a vast array of factors that influence the actions of the student athletes, within the varsity athletics system there is the code of conduct that sets out some foundational principles that all athletes must follow. Ranging from guidelines on academic performances to an individual's behaviour and actions, this specific document can be seen to influence and constrain these particular athletes. For example, athletes are held to strict academic requirements whereby if they violate such requirements they could be removed from the respective team they play for (Ontario Tech University, 2020).

Within the US context, Hawkins (2010) argues that black bodies relinquish the control of their physical talents and subscribe to the rules of an institution so that they

may continue participating in sport as a form of labor and as a strategy for achieving hegemonic forms of success. From this perspective, the athletes code of conduct, and the rules and guidelines therein, become a necessary evil for these black student-athletes to continue the pursuit of a hegemonic sports masculinity. The role that codes of conduct play in the lives and masculine performances of black male varsity athletes in Canada is less known. The aim of this thesis is to explore that dynamics in more detail.

Raced and Gendered Relations of Power

The relations of power between and among men and women is an excellent continuation from the division of labour, as it provides for a well-rounded understanding of this subject. We have already outlined that within the context of labour, black bodies have long had unequal access to the formal labour market. As discussed, race, class and gender all play a distinct role in the availability of paid labour for black bodies. Taking this into consideration, this section will look specifically at the availability of power and how the lack of power for black bodies assisted in constraining their masculinity. As Messerschmidt looks at particular periods throughout history to understand both hegemonic masculinity and individual masculinity, he found that groups within society had power that they used to control subordinate masculinities. To revisit a previous point, the power individuals had within the formal labour market to control those who had access is one of many different manifestations of power present within society. In this section, we look at other power differentials that affect the lives of black bodies.

Power provides an essential element to Messerschmidt in the understanding of masculinity. The power accrued by those atop the hierarchies of race, gender and race affords a person the ability to control others. Within westernized society, power finds some defining roots in institutionalized slavery. Take, for example, Messerschmidt's (1997) work on crime as structured action, where he makes note within a case study on lynching and the roots of black masculinity that black males during this period were tied to the patriarchy of white, propertied males. For black males of this period, there was no ability for them to hold any semblance of control over their work or the construction of their family system. As white males of this time owned the black males, they held power over the choices these black men had. Ultimately, this particular power structure

formulated a hierarchy of race that has metastasized into a systemic issue that is prevalent even to this day.

Institutionalized racism has enabled a present culture where white males still hold a significant amount of power over females, black bodies, and members of other ethnic groups. Very simply, in regards to gender, the patriarchal system that exists within western society has enabled white males to hold sway over the resources available to women, consolidating resources for their own advantage (Messerschmidt, 1997). It is why we still see women getting paid two-thirds less than men, or that males dominate specific professions that pose a "glass ceiling" for women. Conversely, the legalized nature of slavery and the Jim Crow laws would make it virtually impossible for black males to possess material resources that would in turn give them power (Pilgrim, 2012). For example, black bodies within the Southern United States were segregated from the usage of public facility and basic social services stretching from 1870s to 1960s (Pilgrim, 2012).

As outlined, The NFL has a dismal recording when it comes to the hiring of black coaches. The NBA is no different as there is a significant underrepresentation of black male coaches. A league that has 81.1% black players, the NBA only has five black head coaches. This shows a significant underrepresentation of black bodies within managerial positions compared to players. The NFL is simply no better, as there currently are only 3 black head coaches in the entire league. The simple reality is that while both of these leagues promote that they encourage diversity within their ranks, there are simply no guidelines to ensure this is the case. The NFL, for example, has a ratio of only 28% black bodies working at the league's headquarters, and an average of only 11% of black bodies working at the various franchises (Belson, 2020). This brief example outlines the lack of representation and power that black bodies have in two leagues which they significantly dominate as players. Once more, the ultimate reality explained within the division of labour is present within the division of power more broadly, in that there is an unequal distribution of power within society. The outcome of this unequal distribution of power is that white males are able to produce an idolized form of western hegemonic masculinity, while black males are regulated to a subordinate masculinity (Messerschmidt, 1997).

Race and Sexuality

The final aspect of understanding the social construction of identity is sexuality, which represents a major aspect of the formation of social structures. One of the most salient aspects of sexuality is that it is socially constructed, being that it is our interactions with self and how we understand others' social cues, which in turn help us to understand masculinity (Messerschmidt, 1993). Essentially, elements that are assigned to the conceptualization of being male and female are how individuals are able to distinguish each other as such. This understanding allows one to associate particular acts as being masculine or feminine. It is from this perspective that the reality of multiple forms of masculinity or femininity can be acknowledged. As it has been established that there are multiple forms of masculinity, it can be concluded that we evidently exist to facilitate the presentation of "gendered practices", which are understood to be actions related to the existence of specific masculinities.

Sexuality speaks well to the understanding of the gendered relations of power, for it displays how males hold control over women, and why women are seen as inferior to males. More specifically, as women have historically been dependent on men for economic stability, they have unfortunately been subjected to the whims of men. The whims and desires of men tend to control and restrict females' understanding of self, making them believe in the need to present as sexual beings. The final aspect of sexuality that is essential to address is the normative belief in the appropriate expression of sexuality. When considering a western industrial society, heterosexuality was, and mostly still is, considered normative. Not only does this dynamic work to socially construct life, it also works as a method to present power over an individual.

The normative designation of heterosexuality has added to the production of power for men. Sexuality has afforded men a unequal distribution of power based on the following: (1) female sexuality has historically been limited by economic and social dependence on men; (2) just as men have power within the labour market, they too hold power to define sexuality; (3) the limitations of marriage; (4) the burden of reproduction; and (5) the endemic fact of violence by men against women (Weeks, 1986). The availability of this power to construct the understanding of sexuality has enabled the

development of a hierarchical system of sexual values within western society. This system has developed a framework where married heterosexuals stand alone at the top, followed by unmarried heterosexuals, lesbians and gay men, prostitutes, transvestites and sado-masochists in a hierarchical manner (Rubin, 1984). When looking at the distribution of power between men based on the notion of sexuality, we can see that, as previously stated, heterosexuality reigns above homosexuality. Within the black community this is no different. Calbrese et al. (2018) found that when looking at the sexuality of black males, homosexual black males were seemingly assigned designations placing them lower than a homosexual white male. Particularly, words such as lewd, diseased, dirty, and down-low were used as stereotypical terms to describe black homosexuals. Ultimately, this brief conversation is meant to show that whether between men and women, among men or with particular races, one's sexuality plays a particularly strong factor in how one's masculinity is received throughout society.

Just as with gender and labour, sexuality works to constrain how we present ourselves through class and race designations. According to our cultural understanding of white male masculinity, it is seen as acceptable that there is an intrinsic sexual drive that compels white males to seek the affection of women. This ultimately is considered natural and acceptable; however, if one were to examine black males the opinions shift dramatically. It has long been a constraint that black male sexuality is reproduced as a method for demonization. This is realized through black male sexuality being labeled as aggressive and bestial, a designation that is too frequently used to justify the theory of aggressive action that enforces the subjugated mentality of the black body.

Ultimately, we see that the accepted nature of white male sexuality allows white males to maintain another level of superiority over members of other groups. For black males, the aggressive distinction that follows them also ensures that sexual intercourse outside of one's own race or class is seen as definitively against normative culture. In the early 20th century in particular, this was reflected in the lynching's used to express white dominance over black males and also ensure blacks knew their place within the racialized hierarchy. Visually we are able to see this entire discussion play out within the motion picture Birth of a Nation, wherein the Ku Klux Klan is sent to exact vengeance for a

bestial black male who violates a white woman (Lumenick, 2015). Through all of these examples we are able to see that power ties things together, as each of these actions are an exercise of power through various elements of gender, class, and race.

Presented in this section has been an articulation of Structured Action Theory, which is to be used to understand the masculinities of the participants for this particular study. Two main points should predominantly stand out upon reading this section. The first being that it is crucial to recognize the multiple layers that exist when developing an understanding of this theoretical framework. One act cannot and does not stand alone; race, gender, and class all have a discernable impact in the understanding of the self. The second point is that examples and points of reference weigh heavily on historical contexts, some of which may be outdated. Put differently, when looking at the development of black masculinity the integration of historical context is necessary as it is the layered experiences of these decades that helps to provide context to the current experiences of black bodies. It is important that we reflect upon our need to understand where we came from in order to understand where we are going. For the purpose of this particular research project, we are striving to understand an important benchmark within black youth masculinity.

These young adults are reaching adulthood where they will begin to formulate their masculinity from the resources available to them. As such, questioning and investigating how these young black participants understand and personally see their masculinity can potentially provide an understanding of what resources and factors they stress when presenting their masculinity. Therefore, the usage of SAT to understand the self-identity of participants will potentially enable an understanding of the multi-layed nature of black masculinity. When considering the historical aspect, it is obviously difficult to make direct comparisons between past historical experiences for events in the present day. However, we are able to use historical context and past events to understand the contemporary nature of participants' experiences. For example, issues of systemic discrimination are a layered concept that require an understanding of past events to fully grasp the current events participants are speaking of. I turn now to a consideration of the

ways in which SAT underscores the development, specifically, of hegemonic masculinity as the standard against which all other forms of masculinity are measured.

Hegemonic Masculinity

In their analyses of the notion of hegemonic masculinity, Messerschmidt and Connell offer a reformulation of the concept that is built off of more contemporary research and critiques associated with points previously discussed. More simply, the following will outline how Messerschmidt and Connell reconfigure their understanding of hegemonic masculinity by reformulated notions of gender hierarchies, the geography of masculine configurations, the process of social embodiment, and the dynamic of masculinity. We have already discussed how hegemonic masculinity is formulated through the existence of hegemonic femininity (also known as emphasized femininity), along with the suppression of subordinate masculinities. However, it is simultaneously true that existing hegemonic masculinities are altered by the heightened presence of emphasized femininity and subordinate masculinities. As stated by Demetriou (2001:345), "notions of dialectical pragmatism capture the reciprocal influences of masculinities on each other; hegemonic masculine patterns may change by incorporating elements from each other."

Ultimately, Messerschmidt and Connell (2005) conclude that an understanding of hegemonic masculinity needs to incorporate a more holistic understanding of gender hierarchies, one that recognizes the agency of subordinate groups as much as the power of dominant groups and the mutual conditioning of gender dynamics and other social dynamics.

Geographically, we are able to see that hegemonic masculinity - or masculinity in general - is altered by the environment and general stage on which it operates. The emergence of this consideration comes from a heightened sense of globalization, which in turn alters our perceptions of masculinity as we are able to see regional representations of masculinity. For example, participants of this study are representative of various African and Caribbean backgrounds, they carry regional masculinities with them and it is these masculinities that assist in the development of their current presentation of self. As such, we are able to see an association with one's environment coupled to their

understanding of masculinity. With this altered presentation of masculinity, Messerschmidt provides three levels on which masculinity may ultimately be measured. These levels are as follows:

1.   Local: constructed in the arenas of face-to-face interactions of families, organizations, and immediate communities, as typically found in ethnographic and life-history research;

2.   Regional: constructed at the level of the culture or the nation-state, as typically found in discursive, political, and demographic research; and

3.   Global: constructed in transnational arenas such as world politics and transnational business and media, as studied in the emerging research on masculinities and globalization (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

While it may be natural to consider there to be a hierarchy of some sort to these distinctive levels of masculinity, this is not the case. The limited research of global masculinities has shown that there is no distinct power formulation that can overwhelm regional and local masculinities. When associating this with the research at hand it would be more appropriate to look at both the local and regional level. Within that dynamic, at a regional level we can see professional athletes and predominant figures within society. If we are to reference the local, regional and global levels of masculinity, we are able to posit that professional athletes and the notion of their masculinity is represented on the regional level. As they signify a point of aspirations for average individuals who are represented on the local level of masculinity. Put differently, average individuals whose identity can be identified on the local level actually look up to professional athletes at the regional level and see the presentation at that level as their understanding of hegemonic masculinity.

Social embodiment is the next aspect that needs to be reformulated within the context of hegemonic masculinity. This is a fascinating aspect, reflecting the ways in which social actors engage with their masculinity in "real" terms; that is, what men look like in portraying their assumed roles. As stated by Messerschmidt and Connell (2005:851), "In youth, skilled bodily activity becomes a prime indictor of masculinity, as

we already see in sports. This is a key way that heterosexuality and masculinity become linked in western society."

While these factors remain present, we now need to provide a much deeper understanding of masculinity to recognize the body as being the medium through which we interact socially. From that consideration Connell (2002) makes note that bodies are both objects of social practice and agents in social practice. The final point of reformulation is understanding with greater detail the complexities surrounding the dynamic of masculinity. Ultimately, it must be understood that masculinity is layered and can be affected by emotional and physical outcomes and interactions. Consequently, the stability of hegemonic masculinity may in fact be weaker then perceived. The subordinated status of ethnic masculinities or the patriarchal structure is no longer as solidified as it once was, given that women, ethnic, racialized, and non-cisgendered communities have made significant strides in deconstructing these pillars. It is crucial to note that the unstable nature of these societal structures may in turn be a good thing as it allows for the opportunity to realign the relative place of multiple and diverse masculinities and femininities. Having structured the theoretical framework of this paper, we shall now look to understand how the research for this project was conducted.

Methodology

Understanding the Research Questions

As we begin got address the process of this research project, it is necessary that we begin by looking at the over arching research questions that guide the direction of the interview questions. To begin, this project will look answer how do black varsity athletes engage with black masculinities. This is the overarching research questions as it touches directly on the notion of black masculinity and the target population. When we are looking to transfer this to the interview questions, we can see it touch on the subject matter through questions like "what does it mean to be a black male? And how do you see your basketball masculinity? moreover, our understanding of this research question is underpinned by the findings discussed within the first section of the literature review. The second overarching research question looks to understand the impact of popular culture on the participants black masculinity. As such, this can be seen through the question,

what effect does popular culture have on your presentation of black masculinity. Notably, the particular research question is underpinned by the findings discussed within the section aspect of the literature review. Moreover, within the interview questions we are able to directly touch on this area of interest by asking the question what effect does popular culture have on your masculinity. This direction of questioning helps us to understand some of the potential outside factors that influence our presentations of self. Finally, the last overarching research question is looking to investigate the pro social development that occurs when one participates in basketball. With that, we are essentially asking the following, what qualities and attributes that make up your masculinity were learnt through their participation in basketball. For this line of questioning we are asking participants What impact do you believe sports have on a community, a person and yourself? And, do you think basketball can help keep kids out of trouble? Conclusively, this section of questioning is underpinned by the third section of the literature review that reflects the pro social development of sports-based programming.

Methods for Gathering Information

With the impact of COVID-19, the process by which information was gathered had to dramatically change for the possibility of collecting first-person research to continue. Where once I had planned to conducted both interviews and focus groups, information was solely gathered through the use of one-to-one interviews. The use of one-to-one interviews enabled me to ask more in-depth questions about the participants' understanding of their personal masculinity. It was the intention of this project to use one-on-one interviews to reflect a better understanding of the influences on the development of black masculinity. General information like the importance of popular culture can be coupled with individual accounts of personal masculinity to get a well-rounded understanding of the subject matter\

The Interview Processes

With the alterations that needed to be made as a result of COVID-19, one-on-one interviews became the method by which information was gathered for this thesis. However, even this new direction did not go unaffected by COVID. Rather than being

conducted privately and in-person, the interviews were done through one of two methods, either through Google Meets or over the telephone in a quiet area.

The interviews targeted personal and demographic information, with a focus on participants' understanding of masculinity, and black masculinity specifically. The interviews were generally about 45 minutes in length with a 15-minute debriefing period at the end. As previously stated, this project was designed for the focus groups to occur first, with the interviews to follow after. This direction would have been taken so that when recruiting for the interviews, individuals who had already been engaged in conversation on the topic could be recruited. Therefore, when gathering information during the interview, the participants would feel more comfortable and be willing to provide a deeper response to questions about their masculinity.

When approaching the interview, there are a variety of tested approaches which can be used to gather qualitative information. This project took an active interviewing approach, which helped to disclose information in a manner that produces a narrative reality. This narrative reality is where information is gathered that maps the personal experiences of the individual being interviewed (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). The active interviewing process works in combination with a notion referred to as creative interviews. Essentially, a platform of mutual disclosure is established, where both the interviewer and interviewee contribute to the conversation at hand. The process of active interviewing relies heavily on the use of available resources that can provide an environment conducive to content sharing.

The direction of this project reflects on how black masculinity is developed through participation in basketball, while also seeing how the sport can deter youth from deviant activities and promote prosocial development. To accomplish this, the current project divides up the interview questions into three separate categories, with each section touching on a particular part of the overarching question. The separation of these particular sections affords the participants the ability to begin getting comfortable with the questions, while progressing to more complex topics that require deeper contemplation. To begin, I start with understanding the effects of popular culture. This is a likely starting point, as these questions are relatively easier and touch on easily relatable

topics. Particularly, we ask questions like, "What impact does popular culture have on your daily life?" with probing questions around the impact of music, the NBA or NCAA, and fashion. These questions allow for us to understand the influences that society has had on these youth and the degree to which it has impacted their participation in basketball. Additionally, questions like "Do you think there is an association between the word 'cool' and the black basketball player?" allow us to understand how participants believe society views them. From there, we progress toward talking about the importance of the sport.

There is a significant amount of interview questions that touch on the impact and importance of basketball for these participants. When we look deeper into these questions, we are able to see that questions point to one of three realties; the importance of basketball to their community, themselves, and other people around them. This is a powerful asset in understanding the impact that the game of basketball has on participants, and through examining the elements around them we are able to get a more complete picture. Examples of such interview questions: "What impact does basketball have on you and your community?" or "Do you find basketball to be an escape from your daily lives?". These questions enable us to understand the driving force behind the importance this studies participant hold in the game. One more question asks participants if they would still be friends with people from their neighborhood if these individuals were not involved in the sport. This is a crucial question, as it makes participants contend with where their priorities lie, socializing with friends or sacrificing for a personal goal. Ultimately, this proved indispensable when writing the analysis.

Finally, the third aspect of the overarching research question is to get an understanding of how participants saw their own black masculinity. For the purpose of this endeavour, specific questions like; "What does it mean to be a black male?", and "Use three words to outline your own personal black masculinity" are asked. This is a particularly difficult section, as these are not easy questions for the participants to answer. For this reason, this section was left to the end, as it provides a better likelihood that previously-answered questions would provide some context to how they answered. Additionally, questions like; "What is your understanding of the word masculinity?"

allow for us to see the benchmark which these participants are using to understand their own masculinity.

Site Selection

Due to the way that COVID-19 has affected our lives, the method and location of the interview process has had to change from the original method and intention. Initially, it was our intent to conduct both focus groups and interviews at the South Oshawa, Donavan, and Del Park community centres. However, in the end I was not able to conduct research in these centres as they were closed down during the COVID pandemic. Instead, I opted to interview black collegiate basketball players from a university basketball team in Southern Ontario. The selection of this university was inspired by its close proximity to the Greater Toronto Area, which is home to a significantly large black population.

Method of Inquiry

Theoretical guidance is an essential part of developing a well-structured and effective research project. With the direction of this project looking to understand the development of black masculinity, a narrative methodological approach seems the most fitting to understand the experiences of these participants. According to this approach, narratives can be defined as 'discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way for a definite audience' (Elliot, 2011). This approach is well suited to understanding masculinity as we are able to reflect on the process of how masculinity is developed. With the sequential order of this approach, we are able to recognize the various experiences over time that contribute to the development of masculinity. From this, we are able to identify three interesting features of narratives. Pursuant to the particular research questions, researchers would look to focus on one particular area. These areas are as follows: (1) some advocates of the use of narrative stress the temporal nature of social life as providing a rationale for a narratively informed methodology (Elliot, 2011); (2) others, who might be placed more centrally within a hermeneutic tradition, focus on the evaluative or subjective dimension of narratives and their ubiquity within everyday social interaction to justify a call for greater sociological attention to narratives (Elliot, 2011); (3) groups can be identified whose interest lies in the social

processes surrounding the production and consumption of stories (Elliot, 2011). The underlying feature that fits closer with this research project is aspect (2). In applying components of narrative analysis to this project, we are looking to focus on the evaluative or subjective dimension of narrative and its ubiquity within everyday social interactions to justify a call for greater sociological attention to narratives. It is an important caveat that taking this understanding of narratives research as a stand-alone reality is an oversimplification. Rather, this feature only adds to our understanding of narrative inquiry (Elliot, 2011).

When it comes to understanding the foundation of Narrative research, there are a variety of researchers of the years who have commented on this subject. This process can highlight the participant's conceptualization of masculinity as it enables a researcher to understand how the participants see themselves within society. To begin, it is important to note that the narrative analysis process is where the researcher collects descriptive information on events and rework them into a story that follows a specific path (Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark, & Morales, 2007). This is resent when we look at autobiographies, which are an excellent example of a narrative approach to research. Another form of story telling is personal-experiences stories, which is the study of someone's personal experiences found in single or several episodes. We are looking at these individuals' stories as the narrative form of research looks to assume that there are gaps within literature that the individual perspectives of participants can potentially fill (Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark, & Morales, 2007). When one looks to understands these participant perspectives we are in effect engaging in a process known as Restorying. This process looks to gather stories, analysis the key information and rewrite them in an appropriate and chronological sequence. From here we will be looking to understand the participants personal and social life, their past and present, and the place. The conceptual understanding is one that is similar to Gergen and Greens (2011) work, and would be an interest piece to further extend one's personal knowledge. Conclusively, it is fascinating to understand the narrative approach as due to the invasive nature of this work, there is the potentiality for the researcher to develop their personal understanding of self. This is a dynamic that was present within this project as being a member of the target group it was interesting to see how similar individuals think.

Sample Size

While addressed briefly within the introductory paragraphs, it is important to further discuss the project sample size. As mentioned, participants were black youth between 18 and 20 years of age and coaches between the ages of 38 and 45 years of age. Due to the effects of COVID-19, the sample population was slightly changed and focused on the black basketball players who play on a university team in Southern Ontario. Due to this significant change, the sample size needed to be significantly reduced for the success of this project to continue. In the end, I interviewed seven participants. Interviews provided participants with the opportunity to voice their personal thoughts. Encompassing the player interviews, there were two additional interviews done with the head coach and assistant coach of this university's basketball team. Furthermore, due to this school's basketball program being relatively new, these players are all either first- or second-year students.

Analytic Approach

Once the desired information is gathered, a thematic analysis is conducted with the information to identify relevant themes and patterns. This approach is not new, as it is a highly effective tool for understanding qualitative information. The use of thematic analysis involves two predominant steps for proper implementation. The first stage involves an initial reading of the information to make sense of what has been provided. During this process, the researcher will be looking to find similarities, and group that information together. The second stage of this process is the implementation of coding to organize information. This process can be understood as axial coding (Liamputtong, 2011). Speaking particularly to the focus groups, as we make it explicit that we desire to understand the collective understanding of the participants, it is important that we distinguish between an individual's thoughts and the collective understanding on a particular subject. It is important to make this distinction so that the minority opinion does not get misrepresented as the thoughts of the majority. The use of thematic analysis and proper coding would ensure this does not become an issue. To follow will be a breakdown of how confidentiality will be maintained throughout this research project.

Insider outsider

Within this part of the discussion I will use this space to address my association to this research and how I am to some degree an insider of this participant group. Within various forms of methodological research, we are able to see researchers have the ability to either be an insider or outsider. This dynamic reflects how as an insider participant and researchers have the ability to find common ground and therefore enhance the quality of their work. As an outsider, you are still about to develop some quality literature, however one may not be able to develop a strong level of association to the participant group. As such, when reflecting my personal association, I am able to identify myself as a black male who has a strong history of participating in basketball and comes from a family that values both academics and athletics. The nature of disclosing this point is to identify an additional layer to this research, which in fact helped to make my interaction with these participants smoother.

Confidentiality

The confidentiality of participants is an important aspect of all research projects, with this project being no different. It must be made abundantly clear that there is no intention to collect information that would make these participants easily identifiable. To ensure this does not occur pseudonym will be used in place of the participants real names. During the interview process, participants provided insight that would encapsulate a particular point well. When situations of this sort come to light, pseudonyms used in place of their given names. Conclusively, this project intends to keep the best wishes of participants in mind. It is acknowledged that information gathered throughout this project is low-risk, it is crucial to note that we have adhered to the guidelines and protocols set out by Ontario Tech University's Research Ethics Board.

Findings

Within this section, we will dive deep into the remarkable stories that have been told by each of the participants. To accomplish this task, we will once more look to identify key themes and points of discussion that are common between all who participated in this study. To reiterate, throughout this study insight was gained from five

young athletes and two coaches, who offered a level of perspective that can only come from age. Consequently, from these interviews, we are able to discern three key points of discussion. The first point addresses the targeted aspect of this thesis, being the participant's individual understanding of black masculinity. From the insights offered, it is evident that our cultural interpretation of black masculinity needs to change.

A remarkable aspect that has become evident during this research and deserves a complete research project of its own is the degree to which black men are self-aware of how the world sees them. Participants showed a clear level of understanding in regards to how society sees them, and in several cases, it led them to alter their behaviour. Put differently, participants spoke about how they would change and act in specific ways so that they did not attract trouble. Moreover, and most importantly, this level of double-consciousness has altered their attitudes, whereby some participants did not show a favourable opinion when asked about social justice issues and what life is like for black youth. While various points will be expanded on in greater detail shortly, this acts as but an introduction to some of the points that will be looked at within the first theme.

The second point of discussion will focus on the pro-social elements of sports, and within the context of this research thesis, basketball specifically. This particular theme reflects the importance sport has for youth and what sport is able to accomplish. The final theme, and an unexpected finding, is the importance that education plays in the development of these young adults. For too long, black male athletes have been streamlined through universities and often given a full scholarship, based solely on their ability to throw a football or dribble a basketball. During this process, there is no attention paid to academics, and good grades do not seem to be a priority. This reality is evident within the American college and university systems. For so long, we have seen the term student-athlete actually being presented as athlete-student. The interesting question that stands is that if this is the dynamic within the United States, what exists here in Canada? This discussion will show the relative importance of academics as both a motivator and key for future success. Has the "hoop dream" ended, or has the reality become clearer for black youth participating in university basketball? Participants here lend credence to the possibility of an "intellectual masculinity" as noted above. This final

theme ties up the entire discussion, as it speaks to different points present in the two previous arguments.

Theme One – Black Masculinity

The task of understanding one's masculinity can be seen as an exercise in self-reflection. When we understand ourselves, we in turn have the ability to understand the world around us. This research project looks to focus on black masculinity as it has historically been an area shaped by social constraints and impeded by institutionalized racism. Whether constrained by slavery, institutionalized racism or a systemic culture that is present to this very day, black masculinities have been marginalized, subjugated and stereotyped for hundreds of years. Consequently, the lasting question remains, what does it mean to be a black male? More interestingly, what does it mean to be a young black male? This period in a person's life is significant. Due to the nature of this research, we are able to contrast the opinions of both young adults and older males. As such, we will also look to examine the differences between these two groups, in how they view themselves in relation to the world.

Participants in this study were asked various questions relating to their understanding of the term masculinity. An interesting finding was the displeasure with the usage of this particular word. When asked about their understanding of this term, participants made connections to terms like tough, aggressive, strong, and provider. This was interesting because participants made note of how the overall term masculinity made them feel uncomfortable. This begged the question why? When expanding on these thoughts of masculinity, participants Eric, Jason and Lester made note that this was how they were raised to understand the concept. Their upbringing reinforced the understanding that these are the attributes necessary to represent a proper masculinity. Contrary to what they view as the culturally given definition of masculinity, participants viewed their own masculinity through a completely different lens. To put it simply, participants outlined a more fluid understanding of masculinity, as opposed to rigid definitions that would ultimately be associated with what some would call a more mainstream definition of masculinity. For example, Lester was quoted as saying; "people don't realize that I am not always like what I am in public. When at home I'm actually

pretty quiet. But when I go out, people just expect a certain persona so I give it to them". Moreover, Jason was interesting as he noted that; "when people see me they see this big black man and label me as aggressive or dangerous, but if you get to know me I'm none of these things." In working this back into our discussion, we were able to see from participants that general society views them in a particular light and seeks to only view them through such context. Ethan made an interesting point about when he went back home; "people see me as just a basketball player. When I am walking down the street with my girlfriend, people come up and say 'Wow, you made it'. But it's like I am no different than anyone else and I tell them they could do the exact same thing". These quotes are interesting, as they reference the fact that these participants do not see their own masculinity in the same manner that is projected upon them. Rather, to reference a notion by Du Bois (1903), they engage in the concept of double-consciousness, whereby they act in a manner that looks to mitigate the stereotyping of their masculinity.

Understanding masculinity

For many of the participants, basketball has helped to disrupt the socialized understanding of the term masculinity, the presentation of a tough, manly and aggressive individual (Dictionary.com, 2020). Participant Ethan made an excellent point regarding how basketball has enabled him to reject that socially imposed understanding of masculinity:

> For someone to be effective as a basketball player, it is not useful for someone to be overly aggressive. This is because an aggressive basketball player is someone who takes three fouls in the first quarter and spends the rest of the game on the bench.

This observation is quite profound as when reiterated to all other participants, each individual wholeheartedly believed in this statement. As such, for one to be effective as a basketball player, one needs to possess patience, control, and finesse; or, if we are to follow Messerschmidt, attributes that are more feminine in nature (Messerschmidt, 1993). So what does this mean? For the purpose of this thesis, we would contend that masculinity is fluid. Specifically, participating in basketball helps to teach black males that their presentation of self does not need to be a tough, macho display. Rather, it is

completely acceptable to display weakness when it is appropriate. For too long, black masculinity has been seen as aggressive and dangerous. Perry (2001) illustrates that the term bestial was used to describe the aggressive primal nature of black males. The use of terms like this paints the incorrect understanding of black masculinity that is still present to this day. A similar point by Lester was also reiterated by Patrick, that is tiring to be "on all the time", and that he enjoys when there is not a need for him to be the aggressive macho male that people expect him to be. In conclusion, it is important to understand that this represents the lasting effect that participating in basketball has for black males. This results in the teaching of a more fluid masculinity and the erasing of preconceived beliefs in the aggressive black male. When done correctly, the lessons learned on the court can remain and impact the daily life of black males in a positive, confidence-building manner.

Participants' masculinities

As previously mentioned, it is not possible to associate a single framework to the understanding of black masculinity; rather, it would be more effective to consider the understanding of black masculinity through a narrative understanding. This point is made as to understand black masculinity you must recognize the individualism that each body holds. To orient these perspectives, let us begin with the older participants. The following discussion by Charles and Ethan was guided by the question "What does it mean to be a black male?". Charles made the point that when looking at older black male masculinity, there needs to be a priority shift. He stressed the need to move away from inappropriately labelling sport as socially significant. As a culture, we have become fixated on the game, on previous players, on who the best players are, and why. He insisted that these things should not be the focus, as there are other matters that should be of more importance. Charles referred to the importance of family and giving loved ones love and attention. Charles noted that while an individual is at the ages of the younger participants, it is okay to have a strong interest in sports, as it is healthy. Charles furthered his point by making the following argument: "as one gets into their 30s and 40s, one's attention should turn to other priorities, like a career or their family". This inability to progress beyond a fixation on sports is what he attributed as one of the issues when looking at the development of

black masculinity. Beamon (2010) offers some empirical validation by illustrating the role that the older generation has in pushing youth towards participation in sports. As the adults look to glorify sport and the figures represented within it, they are also acting to devalue other hobbies and role models in different industries. As such, when we have an older generation that glorifies participation in sports, we are in fact limiting the possibilities of youth and not presenting the reality around how nearly impossible it is to become a professional athlete.

Ethan reiterated some of the same aspects as Charles; however, he took more of an educational stance towards this. Specifically, he noted that while basketball is an excellent vehicle for upward mobility, "education is what solidifies one's place in society". This is a message that the coaches both emphasize to all players who cross their path. It is necessary to be completely aware of the challenges found within the "hoop dream". Therefore, it is important that we motivate youth towards education, but it is up to them to decide how to use the message. Put differently, Ethan addressed the importance of education in the interpersonal development of black youth. As a coach, he is taking the steps to push his athletes towards gaining an education, as opposed to reinforcing the belief of sports being the only method for upward mobility. He is attempting to go against what Beamon (2010) found about parents and the African-American community, where they would encourage sports participation beyond all else. Moreover, as he makes his players aware of the "hoop dream" he is also showing them the challenges associated with it. These challenges include, but are not limited to, the sheer amount of competition, time, and dedication needed to be successful, and ultimately the difficulty of turning professional as a Canadian athlete where your talents are not widely visible.

Charles also noted that, within the older generation of the black community, there is a lack of passing down previous experiences. To be specific, Charles discussed his perception that the black community fails to teach the younger generation about what it means to be a male, or provides a skewed vision. Therefore, we ultimately expect the younger generation to innately know these life lessons, which is simply not the case. This thought was echoed by Ethan when he stated, "How is it fair to assume our youth know

what it means to be black? This is why I believe coaching is about mentorship. It is our opportunity to provide a positive message". This resonates with Messerschmidt's work, which might suggest that the inability of the older generation to teach the younger generation comes from the systemic inability of the older generations them to have developed their own sense of identity while they were young. Consequently, we see the narrow understanding of black masculinity as a generational problem. The generational nature of the problem links to a consideration of how youth view their own masculinity.

Thematic understandings of Participants

While each of the players expressed very different presentations of self, there were interestingly some underlying themes present within each story. These themes play out within three particular contexts; the subjugated, the hopeful optimist, and the fighter. These three terms illustrated the underlying thoughts of these participants' understanding of what it means to be a black male. Through the lens of masculinity, it might be said that the first one corresponds to what was described above as marginalized masculinity, while the other others represent some form of resistant or oppositional masculinity.

As argued above, black masculinity has been marginalized or subjugated through various mechanisms in society. Messerschmidt (1997) depicts the story of Malcolm X, wherein he discusses the challenges Malcolm went through in order to discover his identity. When considering the history of black masculinity, one can see that for too long, black males have been feeling lost. In saying this, I make the argument that being placed in a state of subjugation where one is not able to authentically present a proper masculinity can leave one unsure of who they are. This results in a state of not being able to present a positive black masculinity. Instead, black males have had to use the resources that are available to them to devise a sense of their blackness and their masculinity.

Interestingly, only one participant seemed to correspond to the category of subjugated masculinity. Patrick is unique, as he has experienced poverty and contends with an increased number of hardships due in part to this neighbourhood. Specifically, Patrick noted that his community experiences a heavy police presence, and therefore he is left feeling watched constantly. When discussing his understanding of black masculinity, Patrick discussed the feeling of being seen as threatening by others. Specifically, "when

people see me they see this large tattooed black man, but the thing is I am a lot softer spoken and honestly a teddy bear". He continued, "I feel people judge me and judge black people before they really know us". Ultimately, the difficulty Patrick has contending with his masculinity can be rooted more in how he feels the world sees him. As an individual, he does not consider himself to be dangerous, yet he knows the world sees him as such. With that, there is labelling theory in play. Patrick has been repeatedly seen as a threat and therefore needing to be watched. As such, over time he has to grapple with believing it to be true.

It is encouraging that many of the players expressed a more confident and broader understanding of their masculinities. When asked, Lester, Jason, and Eric expressed a level of hopeful optimism in what it means to be black. Specifically, Lester made note of it being a privilege as the culture and what we have to offer as a people is something truly special. Despite this, Lester sees how, as a culture, "others look to put us down and label us as dangerous so that they can invalidate our voice". Jason was similarly optimistic regarding his individual masculinity, stating that he is proud to be black. Ethan, having the benefit of being older and capable of looking at his own life in more detail, stated that he is happy with the way his life has played out. Designating these individuals as the hopeful optimist is a simple way to identify that they are proud of who they are and the culture that they are a part of. To expand on Jason's thoughts, he very eloquently noted that "it is a blessing for me to be black, just as it is a blessing for Indian people to be Indian. The music, the fashion, and the culture are all things I am proud of and so I am grateful to be black".

Continuing this discussion, we turn our attention to participants Nathan and Tyler, who can be described as fighters. It is important to note that when considering the underlying theme of a fighter, I am not labelling them as troublemakers. Rather, I am contending that these participants in different contexts are willing to fight against the subjugated masculinities that are imposed upon them. As such, this fits into previous conversations regarding resistant masculinities, in that these participants seek to present their masculinity in ways that suit them regardless of what society imposes on them. For example, Nathan described himself as a tall individual who can come off as physically

imposing. Nathan knows that society sees him as a dangerous person, however, Nathan also described himself as a very gentle and caring individual. As such while at first glance he may appear dangerous, Nathan makes the point to break apart these views and ensure people know him for the person he truly is. In doing so, while living in a low-income neighbourhood that by his description has a regular presence of law enforcement, Nathan makes a point of staying out of trouble and off the streets.

Nathan is not alone in this desire to rid himself of the "dangerous black man" designation. All participants made a considerable effort to acknowledge that they do not wish to get caught up in street life. Nevertheless, Tyler faces much of the same reaction as Nathan as he is also a large man and can come across as physically intimidating. In projecting a resistant masculinity, Tyler emphasized the importance of education. While this will be expanded in greater detail later, it is worthy of note here that he sees his education as his top priority. While he feels that basketball is important, Tyler specifically made note that his brain is what will lead to greater change. As discussed previously, individuals like Frederick Douglass and W.E.B. Du Bois used this notion of intellectual masculinity as their methods to fight against the oppression they faced daily. Tyler shared the same sentiment, as he sees his intellect as the method from which he can fight the social constrictions that black people can face throughout their lives. While it does not come out directly, we are able to see some tenants of Andersons (1999) code of the Street and subsequent street masculinity. We are able to see participants like Nathan who sees that people view him as dangerous black man, this fits close to how people understand street masculinity. This is because a strong ask of the street masculinity is the physical prowess of an individuals. Encompassing this is how all of these participants talked about the value of respect and how they were for the most part unsupervised by their families, this can give credence to why the all value the lessons learnt at their respective community centre. Tyler, was one who seems closest to this discussion around street masculinities and the work of Anderson (1999). This is due in part to people within his community engaging with the code of the street, along with how his father taught him lessons of street masculinities and what his family referred to as the 'trap'. Within this dynamic we are able to see a real-world realization of the street masculinity and the difficulties that come from it. It is difficult to expand further using Andersons work as it

was not an original focal point of this research project, however it seems valid that future research could expand on this dynamic of varsity basketball players and this notion of street masculinities.

Theme Two – Pro-social Influences of Basketball

The lessons learned from the game of basketball are everlasting as they have the capacity to shape individuals who understand how to act appropriately throughout their lives. By no means am I articulating that how they are already acting is incorrect; one can only work with the tools that one is provided. Participating in the game of basketball simply adds more tools to help develop pro-social qualities in each player. Most important is the period in life when these qualities are learned. Following Messerschmidt (1993), an individual's adolescence is when they cement their understanding of self. In this project, I am interested in how basketball has helped young black males develop pro-social traits, and whether they think it has helped to keep them out of trouble.

To begin, let us look at the question that arguably is the root of how this project came into existence. Does participating in sports help to keep youth out of trouble? In a humble attempt to provide my two cents, I would affirm that it does. As a black male who would fit into the target population of this project, participating in sports allowed me to remain focused on a positive outlet as opposed to getting into trouble on the street. The dynamic of this argument stems from discussions around the concept of unstructured socialization, whereby a youth who possesses a significant amount of idle time, for various reasons, would likely end up getting into trouble. In this context, the individuals that one associates with can play a significant part in whether one engages in deviant activities. As such, participants were asked about the individuals they associate with and whether the desire to play basketball was a factor in whether they continued to hang out with potentially bad influences. Interestingly, participants were divided on this point; some acknowledged they still associate with friends from their old neighbourhood, while others mentioned that sacrifices are necessary to achieve one's dreams. To be specific, participants Jason, Patrick, Eric and Tyler all made similar points that sacrifice is necessary to be successful. The desire to chase basketball is something so important that they were comfortable with potentially not associating with old friends who could be a

bad influence. Interestingly, Eric made the point that "true friends understand what it is you are trying to do and are willing to support you; those who are not may in fact not be your real friends in the first place". Jason felt differently as he states "I think it is possible to have your same friends from your past and still be dedicated to basketball". Ultimately, this is a conflicted point of discussion. While some participants believe it is okay to still have friends who may be a bad influence, others believe that chasing a dream requires sacrifice. As such, further research would be beneficial to understand the influences individuals have, be it positive or negative.

Tyler made an interesting point regarding the two very real outcomes that are present for black males who are seeking to better themselves. This is the choice between the street life and ball life. He acknowledged that black youth use basketball-centred life to escape the possibility of life on the streets. Tyler made no judgement on the individuals who choose the street life over something else, and believes that it is not our place to pass judgement on others' circumstances or decisions. However, Tyler used the term "the trap" to illustrate the difficulty of changing one's life when they choose the street life. Conversely, Charles, Ethan, and Nathan did not articulate a problem with associating with people who choose a specific life. Nathan particularly noted that just because you are striving to achieve something with basketball does not mean you should abandon your friends. Charles and Ethan were unique, as they stated their friends were all basketball players, therefore there are really no differences for them.

For various reasons, all participants truly believed that participating in basketball helps to keep youth out of trouble. The majority of participants made the point that participating in the game offers a place for kids to go that is safe, and enables them to develop a distinct passion and drive to work towards something they personally care about. Jason, Patrick and Nathan all illustrated that on a personal level it helped keep them out of trouble. They each reported that they were troubled youth who were prone to getting into trouble. However, when they found basketball it was a life-changing event, as their entire thinking about life was altered. For example, Patrick made the point that "playing basketball within the community centres was a safe place where I did not feel watched by police in the neighbourhood". Jason further illustrated "It was honestly like a

second home, whenever I needed to get away from my home I could always go there and know everything is going to be okay". Finally, Nathan was more simplistic when he reiterated the fact that "playing basketball at the community centre kept a lot of us from the neighbourhood focused on something and off the streets". It is important to conclude that all participants felt this way because it was their sport, and it is likely that this would be transferable to individuals who play other sports. The key factor is the passion one has for the sport. If there is passion, then there is buy-in from youth to focus their time on playing these sports.

Lessons of discipline and even what it means to lose – gracefully - were lasting lessons, as it gave players tools to deal with aspects of their daily life. Youth participation in sports at local community centres may be, for some people, the first moment they are exposed to competition with others. Therefore, youths may not possess all of the tools needed to grapple with and understand defeat properly. Moreover, this dynamic is excellent for youth who would otherwise develop a strong fear of failure, since they have the chance to instead learn from it in an appropriate environment, where mentors have the ability to explain and teach proper life lessons from it. This supports the previously cited work on midnight basketball that suggested that participating in basketball not only affected the individuals but also the community (Hartmann & Depro, 2006). Ultimately, this point is referencing the fact that when participants have the opportunity to learn pro-social skills that articulate failure as only a part of life and not the end of the world, youth can grow from this. When faced with similar outcomes in life, they know how to act accordingly. Tyler, Jason and Nathan all made this same point that the effect on the community was significant and brought a collective consciousness that made the neighbourhood feel safer. These are the lessons that are effective when considering policy implications. Investing in the development of a community, and having access to sports like basketball is a positive way to ensure kids stay out of trouble and potentially focused on a particular goal.

So how does this participation affect individuals? It is important to recognize that mentorship is a significant aspect of the development of various attributes that the participants illustrated. Mentorship and coaching help players to understand the feelings

and thoughts that come to light while participating in the game of basketball. It is important that the message that is given off by the coaches or mentors is one that is realistic and impactful for the context at hand. Charles and Ethan, who are both coaches themselves, attested to this reality and make the point that providing a guiding philosophy helps shape the reality of potentially troubled youth. An interesting reality is how Charles and Ethan view the manner in which lessons are taught, as opposed to the players who believe it is learned while participating in the game. For example, Ethan made the point that basketball is but a vehicle that can get kids in the door. How they are treated while on the team is what ultimately leads to the development of positive life skills. Charles and Ethan both agreed that their job is not truly to teach the game, but rather teach their players important lessons about life. Basketball is but the medium through which the lessons are learned. However, basketball by itself is not sufficient to teach lessons of pro social skills, rather there need to be proper mentorship to guide the right train of thought within the participants. This affirms previous literature by Spruit et al. (2018), Chamberlain (2013), and Hartmann (2003), who all note that basketball is but the tool, not the solution, to producing these positive outcomes in life.

The players' understanding of this dynamic is quite different. To be specific, participating in basketball acts as a catalyst and context for the learned outcomes. All participants made references to learning skills like conflict management, discipline, a strong work ethic, leadership skills, and overall communication skills. Furthermore, coaches have the ability to instil the importance of learning, and as such, basketball and education become linked. All participants made reference to how basketball is their motivating influence to focus on their education. While education was described by all participants as an important part of their life, they all also recognize that basketball helps them further it. In reality, basketball has the ability to help the less educationally driven to still achieve a sound education at university. This will be expanded on in greater detail later. What needs to be noted here is the incentive basketball offers for some to achieve something that would otherwise be considered unattainable. What is important is the mentality around it and understanding the realities that are before them. Participants all made note that they understand the difficulties associated with becoming a professional athlete. Recognizing this reality enhances the development of these players' character and

allows them to see that while basketball is important, it is not the be-all and end-all. As a point of discussion, make note that this reality stands as a Canadian perspective. Nathan stated, "While my primary focus is to gain my degree, I do hope that I could support my family someday through playing basketball. While this most likely will be overseas, I am not unaware of how difficult this will be and so I do try to focus on my studies.". Lester furthered this when stating "People have no idea how hard it is to go pro, especially as a Canadian. We hardly ever get recognition, but you know it is getting better with Toronto winning the championship last year". These participants clearly understand the reality of the "hoop dream", and while their coaches do not automatically say it is an impossibility, they are incredibly upfront about the challenges. Charles and Ethan both reflected that as coaches, "it is a difficult line to walk. Do you encourage their dreams or do you set them straight on the realities?". This reality is one Charles and Ethan do not have an answer to.

Theme Three – Black Student-Athletes

As it has been touched on, the importance of education has been an unexpected finding from this research project. As such, the following will look to understand the dynamic of a student athlete, how scholarships influence players, the importance of education and how these is a difference between Canada and the United States. No matter the skin colour, everyone desires a better life for themselves and subsequently, their children. This desire can be understood as upward mobility. A person will take on various jobs, careers and even go back to school to better their skills. Education is unique in the pursuit for upward mobility as you are not guaranteed a better life outcome, rather you are merely positioned better than others who are uneducated. Nevertheless, it has become a social necessity for people to gain a particular level of education. In western society, it has become a social norm to gain proper education at an institution, whether at a college or university. However, like many things in life, it comes at a cost. On average, the cost of attending university in Canada ranges between $6,400 to $7,000 per year (QS TopUniversities, 2019). For the United States, it is a cost of approximately $21,000 annually (QS TopUniversities, 2019). It is necessary to know this because, despite the common expectation for young adults to attend post-secondary school, for many groups in society it simply is not possible.

It is no overstatement to note that the black community has faced significant economic and social hardships throughout history. Consequently, this has left a population who, on average, lack the financial capability to outright pay for their attendance to various institutions. Therefore, in the hopes of still attaining this ultimate goal of bettering one's self through education, black males tend to pursue sports as a means for accomplishing their goals. We have already touched on the impact and visibility of black males within the world of sports. Make no mistake, sports have and will continue to offer a fulfilling aspect to black masculinity. When examining marginalized masculinity, we are able to see that black males would endure various acts for the pursuit of something better. Black participation in sports offers entertainment to white spectators, a dynamic that has been exploited for financial gain. The unfortunate reality is that universities with revenue-generating sports programs have continued this trend of exploiting black youth for financial gain, by tempting them with the possibility of overcoming the social, political and economic marginalization that they face in their life.

With that, we cycle back to the fact that society has conditioned us to believe that education is a necessity for one to be successful. Literature by Hawkins (2010) and Eitzen (1987) found that the integration of unprepared black bodies into areas of higher education for the purpose of exploiting their athletic talents has produced a detrimental system that leaves these men and women unprepared for society. What I take issue with, and subsequently look to unpack in the following pages, is as follows: how sports scholarships are used to exploit black youth for financial gain, what the current opinions and importance that black youth place on obtaining an education are, and finally the difference between Canada and the United States in terms of student-athletes exhibiting a strong intellectual masculinity. Perspectives that have been gathered from this project's participants will of course be discussed, as they will provide current insight from the target population that affects each of the points of discussion.

Canadian perspective

It feels only proper to start this discussion by looking at the dynamic of sports scholarships and the actual control that it has over players and, subsequently, their

education. To provide perspective, these scholarships are an avenue through which black youth who do not possess the financial capability can attend university to pursue an education. Depending on the scholarship, a player could have all or part of their tuition paid for. Moreover, in the Canadian context, there is an Athletic Financial Assistance (AFA) Program which distributes funding to players based on their academic success (Athletics Financial Awards Committee, 2020). For example, players in Ontario who obtain an 80% average in their classes in high school can be eligible for approximately $4,500 dollars per year, which would be directed toward tuition. For a second-year player, that average is dropped down to 70%, in order to adjust to the workload and expectations that come with being a student-athlete. Participant Ethan made note of some discretionary bursaries that are available to players; however, these are not substantial. Participants Jason and Ethan made note that this reduces the interest that players put in the money and allows them to focus on playing, attending classes and participating in basketball-related events. This dynamic is mandated by U Sports, the organization that operates university sports within Ontario. To their credit, it shows a concerted effort to encourage the engagement of students with their studies. This presents an interesting discussion around the mentality and value Canada puts on their university sports. Canadian university sports are far below their American counterparts in terms of financial support for athletes. This raises the unfortunate question about whether Canadian players are even at the same talent level as the Americans, or whether Canada even possessed the infrastructure to broadcast games. There is a third dynamic, which is the completely different level of priorities at an administrative level. In Ontario, the AFA represents the primary route for players to obtain scholarships at university. With it being diverted towards tuition, players are therefore conditioned to shift their priorities toward academic success as much as success on the court. With this position, this thesis would make the argument that the Ontario university sports system does affirm the notion of a student-athlete.

United States Perspective

Conversely, the United States seemingly takes on a completely different position on this topic. Popular Division One schools generate significant sums of money, and thus

they look for incredibly talented youth who can keep generating profits for the school. This distinction was noted by participants, all of whom suggested that there is a considerable difference in motivation and intensity between playing in Canada and the United States. This drive is what fuels players to attain the scholarships that help to pay for the high costs of school in America. Playing for the potential of upward mobility, the revenue-generating programs attract black youth who, as Hawkins (2010) notes, are literally willing to sign away their abilities to a particular institution, not unlike black males who were sold for use during slavery. While some may consider this to be dramatic, the reality is as George Will notes:

> The worst scandal is the slipping of academically unqualified young men into the back doors of academic institutions, insulating them from academic expectations, wringing them dry of their athletic – commercial usefulness, then slinging them out the back door even less suited to society than they were when they entered. They are less suited because they spent four years acquiring the idea that they are exempt from normal standards (cited in Eitzen, 1987:1).

Although written over 30 years ago, Will's point remains relevant to this day. These programs are more interested in generating revenue than providing their players with quality education. Moreover, in the context of Division One schools, the use of cost of attendance stipends have been affected since 2015 (Karels, 2018). This enables the university program to provide players with a monthly income that can be used towards anything they choose. Given the reality that many players do not come from comfortable financial backgrounds, one can hypothesize that they are not always keeping that money for themselves or even using it in a responsible manner. As such, an unfortunate dynamic becomes visible where players feel as if they owe the university sports program for giving them the opportunity to attend post secondary school (Rubin, 2016). This is the American environment today, where players push their focus away from their studies and focus on their sports, with the intention to either attain some aspect of upward mobility via going professional or to complete some unspoken agreement that exists between the player and program they are representing. As such, this thesis would make the point that

there is a reversal of roles for students who play collegiate sports in America, relative to Canadians. Instead of student-athletes, these youth are athlete-students.

Education and Canadian Student Athlete

Stepping away from this dynamic, let us turn our attention back to Canada and the participants of this study. Specifically, let us look discuss the importance of education for these players and what they view as their path towards upward mobility and the overall betterment of their personal masculinity. To begin, all participants in this study view the attainment of education as the most important task before them. Participant Tyler made a specific personal reference regarding how "my family did not immigrate to Canada for me to simply play basketball. They came so that I can gain an education". Moreover, Nathan, Jason and Patrick all noted the motivating power that basketball has, knowing that for them to neglect their studies would mean that they could no longer participate in basketball. Furthermore, players also made note of the significant de-stressing ability that basketball has during exam time. Jason reflected on how "nothing makes me feel better to be able to finish writing a test or exam and be able to go shoot hoops right after". Nathan shared the same sentiment when he stated that "whenever life gets a little too much, I know that I am able to step on a court and feel comfortable that for the next few hours my world is within the lines on the court". Ultimately, we are able to see that the effectiveness of playing basketball comes down to their ability to control that environment and for them, it brings a level of ease to their life. Put differently, these participants likely feel overwhelmed by the university environment. Therefore, being able to retreat to a space where they feel comfortable, but also know that they have the talent for this sport, can go a long way to increase their own levels of confidence.

From a sheer policy perspective, it would be a remarkable idea to increase the availability of these athletes to access their sport. Student-athletes represent some of the most stressed individuals on a university campus. If participating in their sport helps to even out their mental health then we should look to improve accessibility to their sport during this period in a student semester. Participants from the studied University discussed how the gym areas are converted for the use of exam writing, thereby eliminating the possibility to play basketball at the university. Ultimately, participants in

this study showed a keen interest and desire to attend university for the purpose of gaining an education. This point is referenced because it stands in contradiction to Beamon's (2010) work that showed a society that pushes these youth to participate. Moreover, these participants also go against the findings from Rubin (2016), who found that players in certain American collegiate programs focus on their sport over education, as they believe they owe the program for providing them with a scholarship. As such, they would neglect their own studies to focus on their sport, in an attempt to show dedication to the sport and sports program. This is due to the lack of information from a Canadian perspective that fits the parameters of this study. Nevertheless, participants of this study showed a strong association with the previously mentioned notion of intellectual masculinity. It should be clearly understood that all of these participants regard education with high status, and therefore it is clear that each of these players sees themselves as more than just a ballplayer. Charles made an interesting point when saying "as a coach, I am happy and enjoy my association with basketball; however, it has taken me a long time to be okay with this. You always get the feeling that should you or could you be more than just a basketball player. Ultimately, it is an aspect of my identity that I will always grapple with". This is powerful, as it reflects the difficulty with seeing oneself as something more than how society and, interestingly, the self establishes masculinity. As such, the presentation of this intellectual component to these participants' masculinity is interesting. Further research should look to expand upon how contemporary black society views the presentation of intellectual masculinities.

Discussion

The participants of this study were excellent in providing a wealth of interesting information that both reaffirms and challenges current literature. To break down some of these points, let us begin by looking at the discussion around black masculinity. Within the context of this study, we looked to align our understanding of black masculinity through the theoretical framework of SAT. Messerschmidt's (1993) work talks about the association of class, gender, race, and how they work to configure our understandings of social structures and the actions we engage in daily. Participants showed a clear level of understanding in regards to how society sees them, and in several cases, it led them to alter their behaviour. Put differently, participants spoke about how they would change

and act in specific ways so that they did not attract trouble. Moreover, and most importantly, this level of double-consciousness has altered their attitudes, whereby some participants did not show a favourable opinion when asked about social justice issues and what life is like for black youth. While these elements are still present for these participants, the one aspect that stands out is the fluidity of black masculinity. In Messerschmidt's work, he highlights the exercise of one particular form of black masculinity, stressing that which is subordinate to white masculinity. This thesis looks to make the argument that it is through participation in sports that black youth are able to develop an understanding of a fluid masculinity. This fluidity would elevate the participants beyond some of the constraints that hampered the development of black masculinity. Through the spheres of gender, class, and race, aspects like the division of labour and power are able to dictate the availability of specific actions (Messerschmidt, 1993). This research looks to identify previously-defined constraints as contingent on the mentality a particular black male has. Put differently, black males who seek to better themselves in any fashion can obtain their desired goal, whether through an intellectual masculinity, resistant masculinity, or some form of sports masculinity that offers a sense of upward mobility. This is what stood out among the participants' answers. The mentality of the marginalized masculinity seems to be fading among the younger generation.

While the existence of marginalized masculinity are clearly fading within participants, there is still a level of control that affects the action of the participants as student athletes. Specifically, this is shown through our previous breakdown of SAT and how sport can be seen as a form of labour, distinct from forms discussed by Messerschmidt. As we see sport to be their form of labour, we must investigate the factors that influences and constrain their actions within this particular labour market. We have already theorized the impact that a player's code of conduct has on the behaviour of a student athletes. When we reflect on this dynamic in relation to these participants an argument can be made that implicates this student-athlete code of conduct as reinforcing some of the pro-social characteristics shown by these participants. Now, it is important to note that it is beyond the scope of this paper to definitively link the characteristic and attributes that these participants note as essential to their masculinity to the guidelines

within the student athletes code of conduct. Rather, it should be regarded as being a notable variable relevant to the wider conversation at hand; particularly, in the context of the argument in this thesis that sport be analyzed as form of labour within Structured Action Theory.

So, if we are able to affirm the presence of sports as a distinct for of labour, let us discuss more closely how these participants, as social actors, negotiate the constraints faced daily. From a broader perspective, we see points within the literature review that touch on how, from a professional level, black athletes are socially constrained from extending beyond their sports masculinities. Particularly, examples were provided, including individuals like Colin Kaepernick who was black balled from the NFL for speaking out on social justice issues and police violence. The negative feedback he faced shows the social constraint that society can impose on a presentation of masculinity that they do not deem to be valid. The overall acceptances of sport as a labour industry (in the professional sport context), aligns with Messerschmidt's SAT. The influence of power on a professional level has the capacity to manifest in a variety of different ways. Nevertheless, when performed according to expectation we see a societal validation of their black masculinity and an unfortunate designation of being considered a "good black" (Ferber, 2007).

If we are to turn our attention away from the professional context and focus back on the participants of this student and the structural context of varsity sport, we see some of the same realties present among these participants. Specifically, the participants' presentations of sports masculinity are validated by not only other social actors, but also the social constraints and forms of power that exist within their daily interactions. The interviews from this project suggest that, just as with collegiate sports programs in the US, players must adhere to the rules within their guidelines or face consequences. Therefore, for these participants to negotiate a sports masculinity, within the varsity sports context, they must subject themselves to the guidelines within the institution (Ontario Tech University, 2020). As such, to subjugate oneself to these guidelines is to agree to have socially constructed constraints imposed onto oneself, so that one may present a sports masculinity. Therefore, while these participants show fluidity as part of

their masculinity, one form that is available to them can be characterized as a marginalized masculinity that is subjugated by factors within the vast consortium known as organized sport. As such, while participants within this study did not directly reference the university or athletic department's code of conduct as being an influencing factor to how they carry themselves, you are able to see some subtle indications in how they express their thoughts as student athletes. Therefore, further research would do well to dive deeper into the impact that the player code of conduct has on how student athletes present their masculinity.

When addressing the pro-social influences of sport, there are several consistent points between the literature and the information gathered from these participants. Among these findings were the characteristic attributes that participants used to identify themselves. Consistent with the finding from this paper, Hartmann (2003) found that basketball is a tool that can create positive social development. Additionally, as mentioned by participant Ethan, the strength of the sports-based intervention program is determined by the specific message that is given to the participants. Ultimately the question stands, can sports keep kids out of trouble? Based on this participant population, the answer is yes. It is not just that sports occupy youths' time; rather, the particular skills and traits that sports instil are completely indispensable. To give some perspective, participating in sports enables black youth who may not come from stable backgrounds to learn lessons about failure, discipline and hard work. These are incredibly important proficiencies to develop, as they enhance youths' capacity to handle future hardships in a proper manner. In an indirect manner, participants are describing how they see themselves, and we come to understand what attributes make up their understanding of self, including those skills that they have picked up as athletes

While the context is slightly different, the underlying goal is to provide a message that is beneficial to the development of both the youth who participate in the prevention program and the basketball players that come from the various communities outlined above. When participants were discussing their experiences within their various communities, they mentioned how the presence of recreational basketball allowed them to focus on something productive. While it is not possible to identify whether the

community programs in which the participants were involved resulted in a reduction of crime, the youths' observations attest to the collective efficacy of the community. This refers to how the community is able to rally around a particular event, and bring something positive to a community that may deal with systemic disadvantages.

This final thematic element of this thesis highlights the importance of education for black males. The unfortunate reality is there is a lack of scholarship on the importance that Canadian black males place upon education. Rubin (2016), Eitzen (1987), and Baker and Hawkins (2016) all make that point that black student-athletes come into university and are already placed at a significant disadvantage relative to their white counterparts. Whether this disadvantage is academic challenges or access to resources, there are consistent challenges that black student-athletes face while on campus. As discussed, some of these shortcomings are due to students not being academically prepared for course work, or even being too focused on the sport. The reality is that in the American context, black youth are not having consistent academic success (Rubin, 2016). Participants from this thesis made note of the difficulties that are faced as a student-athlete, having the added responsibility for playing consistently at a high level and performing academically at a similarly high level. However, all participants mentioned the extra resources available to ensure that they stay successful in academics. Moreover, while a high proportion of black youth want to attend post-secondary education, few believe that it is possible due to either their financial or academic circumstances (Statistics Canada , 2020).This is once more consistent with participants, as from a financial standpoint the scholarship plays a significant part in their ability to remain in school. Therefore, it is important to take note of a few recommendations that could better the all-around situation of black student-athletes.

Policy Implications

So, what does this all mean in regards to making quantifiable change within society? To begin, from this body of work there are three particular areas in which improvements can be made. These are at the collegiate level, in terms of altering the AFA scholarship process and the availability of sport during periods of extreme stress; at the community level, improving accessibility to sports in communities of lower

socioeconomic standing; and finally, on the societal level, as there needs to be a change in the mentality of how we value a specific form of education, but also how we label and stereotype these black youth.

Collegiate Implications

Let us begin by understanding the improvements that can be made at the collegiate level. Sports scholarships have been a remarkable avenue for talented young men to aspire towards higher education, while participating in a sport about which they care deeply. Make no mistake, while this thesis has outlined some unfortunate outcomes of this process, I hope this thesis also reflected that some incredible aspects walk hand-in-hand with the bad. For example, the development of positive black masculinities gives black youth the inspiration to achieve something greater than what they already have. Nevertheless, at a collegiate level there exist some challenges that are worth improving, including the entire premise of the AFA. While well-intentioned, the process of requiring an 80% average for an incoming student can place a difficult standard for these youth in high school. While this is not necessarily a bad thing, there are scenarios where it becomes impractical. As a hypothetical, a black male who managed only a 78% average in high school does not qualify for the AFA scholarship (Athletics Financial Awards Committee, 2020). Furthermore, while there are provisions that indicate the ability for students who do not meet this academic GPA requirement, it still can lead to a significant amount of undue stress. For a population that may already lack the tools to be successful academically, and are walking into an environment with which they are unfamiliar, being asked to maintain the same level of success is problematic. Taking all this into consideration, there is a simple remedy that I would suggest - lowering the Scholarship entry GPA to 70%, which is typically the entrance requirements for most programs (Athletics Financial Awards Committee, 2020). In doing so, we are in effect lowering the possibility of undue stress during a particularly difficult time. Some additional consideration would be to interject some academic mentorship and opportunities that can further assist and develop essential skill.

Related to this is the second improvement that can be made at the collegiate level: offering more accessibility for players to engage in their sport during periods of extreme

stress. A remarkable finding from this project's research was that each of these participants would use the game of basketball as a way to relieve stress that has built up from their daily life; and more specifically, from the pressures of school. However, during some of the most stressful times (such as at the end of a semester), the ability for these youth to have access to the sport they love can be limited. For the institution involved in this study, it is a regular practice to use the gyms as places for final examinations. By ensuring that at least one part of the gym is accessible for these players to destress during these periods of stress, we are in fact positioning these players for the best opportunity for success.

Community Implications

When looking at the community implications, we need to consider the enhancement of services and the promotion of beneficial role models. To begin, let us discuss the importance of enhancing community services, as each of these participants discussed the impactful role of having access to community centres and being able to participate in sports within their community. In the context of this research, we have been able to see that participants value the community centres as safe spaces, where they would not be affected by the disadvantages posed by the community. Within the city of Oshawa, there are currently several community centres in various communities. The original parameters of this project sought to interview participants from three of these centres to see the impact that basketball has had on them. While this was not a possibility due to COVID-19, the participants from this study all reflected on the impact of having these spaces available.

Given the experiences of the participants, a number of possible strategies emerge. The first of these is the importance that stems from providing something for youth to engage with during their idle time. This idea of attempting to keep youths occupied is highlighted in ground-breaking research around midnight basketball programs, and found theoretically in the concept of unstructured socialization. As discussed, the use of popular sports as a deterrent did in fact lead to a sharp decrease in property crimes (Hartmann & Depro, 2006). Once more, participants from this study all validated this point regarding

the deterrent effects of participating in basketball. As such, providing more structured and affordable leagues within the community may in fact produce a healthier sense of self.

The second aspect that is worth nurturing at the community level is the promotion of positive role models. Recent literature has shown that black youth that participate in basketball look to professional athletes as role models (Allen, 2016). While there is nothing wrong with this, it would nevertheless be of significant impact to have someone in their daily life acting in the position of role model. Within the context of this study, the team coaches were the ones who filled this position. The underlying point is to have in place an individual who can express a positive message that youth can internalize. Take, for example, Charles and Ethan. They both made note that while they are coaching, their job is more to mentor these young men. As mentioned previously, basketball is but the vehicle that enables at-risk youth to hear a message of effective social development and upward mobility. In providing youth mentors who are a part of the same community, we are in fact giving youth the tools to aspire to something more. Ultimately, we are then able to ensure that youth are not negotiating difficult situations on their own, a point that participant Charles mentioned as being a significant default in the black community.

Conclusion

As the long journey of this thesis ends, it has been a challenging but also a fascinating journey. This master's thesis set out with the objective of understanding the development of black masculinity through basketball. The remarkable nature of this subject is that there is no end to understanding this subject. From the research that has been conducted here, I can humbly say that I understand the subject better than I did two years ago. Structured Action Theory has provided a solid structure for understanding the masculinity of the participants. Previous literature has shown there to be a lengthy history of black males using sports to claim ownership of something in their lives. Whether it is to develop a personal masculinity, or as a source of relief from stress and frustration, sport has truly been an impactful aspect of black culture. Therefore, this project took steps to understand how basketball particularly has provided young black adults with a sense of ownership, and developed them into the men they are today. The literature articulated that while the participation in basketball has a significant impact, it is the

message and lessons taught by mentors that help to produce pro-social qualities (Hartmann, 2003). This thesis has similar findings. As Ethan made note of previously, "sports are just the tool we use to get them in the door, it's the message we give them that makes the difference". It is the unfortunate reality of mentors and teachers that they may not know the impact they have on someone. Yet in speaking with participants, I was able to find that the characteristics of responsibility, hard work, good communication skills and personal accountability were all used by the younger participants to describe themselves. These are promising findings, and are worth deeper investigation in future research.

One of the core findings from this project is that black masculinity, when associated with sport, is fluid. For example, the game of basketball teaches an individual an abundance of skills that through the lens of SAT would be considered either masculine or feminine. Knowing when to be aggressive, but also delicate and graceful, are all important for someone to be successful as a basketball player. Therefore, it is the game of basketball that teaches an individual how to negotiate the appropriate time to act in a certain way, be it aggressive or not. Moreover, providing an association between sport and SAT shows that sport as a form of labour fits into Messerschmidt's conversation on the divisions of labour. As such, this thesis makes the contribution of inserting sport into Messerschmidt's conversations of masculinity and how sport as a form of labour offers an expanded expression of SAT, ultimately showing the applicability it has beyond the defined objective of being a gendered theory of crime. With everyone's experience being unique, it is difficult to know if these characteristics for personal growth are influenced by other sources or simple the true make up of these participants.

Therefore, sport offers an environment for which valuable lessons and personal growth can emerge. Once more, each participant was unique, they all exhibited various defined forms of masculinity. These defined forms were marginalized, resistant and intellectual masculinities, and after gaining a full picture of these participants you were able to see how their experiences and unique lives made the various forms of masculinity previously touched on interchangeable within all participants. Note, while a vast array of masculinities was visible within each participant, there can be particular forms that are

called upon more then others. For example, Patrick did not come from a high-income background and lived within areas that were highly policed. From this, Patrick referenced that he always felt like he was on edge or being watched. Moreover, he referenced a more negative association with being black; this was shown to have an effect on him and how he believes black people are seen within society. Particularly, Patrick made an association with how black bodies need to work to ensure they are not stereotyped as being a threat or aggressive.

A resistant masculinity was one more associated with the bulk of these participants. Participants Lester, Nathan, Ethan, and Tyler all reflected positively on what it means to be black. These reflections ranged from being proud of their culture, what black people have to offer the world, to an almost arrogant stance that "black people do it best". This was all meaningful, as it shows the mindset of these participants and the belief they hold in not allowing the world to dictate what they choose to do. It is the opinion of this researcher that these positive beliefs are present due to the participants' engagement with an intellectual masculinity.

This project has illuminated some interesting gaps in current literature, the most prominent of which is the lack of information on black Canadian student-athletes and their experience navigating the world as a student-athlete. These gentlemen possessed a remarkable understanding of their personal masculinity, and I am forever grateful for their participation. From my discussions with them, I unexpectedly discovered the importance in which they hold gaining their education. Not a single participant suggested that their participation in collegiate sports was more important than their education. While I am truly confident that the majority of black student-athletes in either America or Canada value getting their education, literature and mass media have represented this group as singularly interested in playing their sport and neglecting school. Rubin (2016) makes the argument that American students especially feel the pressure of meeting expectations from their sports programs. This is a disheartening reality that these young men face. However, it appears that there is some cultural specificity to the Canadian experience, where education for these student-athletes is generally even more important than the sport. They recognize the near impossibility of turning professional. None of

these participants were delusional about this reality; rather, they recognize the significant amount of hard work that is involved in the process. As such, obtaining their education while using their skills as an athlete to help offset the cost of post-secondary school is where they currently stand.

Investigating the development of black masculinity has become a strong passion of mine, and will likely be something I continue with into the future. The particular findings that have been uncovered by this thesis provide several avenues for future projects. Just as with all subjects within social science, there will always be something more to learn. With the increased passion that Canadians have for recreational sports like basketball, the possibilities for future research are endless, and are therefore something I look forward to uncovering.

Appendix

Found below is an organized list of question guides used for the interviews.

Interview Guide

1.   Do you think basketball can help keep kids out of trouble?

2.   When you are hanging out with peers, what are some things you like to do?

3.   What aspects of yourself do you believe are shaped by the culture of basketball?

5.   What is the role that basketball plays in your everyday life?

6.   What are some inequalities you see in your own community?

7.   Would you consider basketball to be an escape from everyday life?

8.   What impact do you believe sports have on a community, a person and yourself?

9.   What does it mean to you to be black? To be male?

10.   How do you think there is an association between black basketball players and "cool"?

11.   What are your thoughts on the lack of black ownership in the NBA?

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