The Ghetto Sophisticates: Performing Black Masculinity, Saving Lost Souls, and Serving as Leaders of the New School

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***Note: Figures may be missing from this format of the document

Introduction

The oppressed suffer from the duality, which has established itself in their innermost being. They discover that without freedom they cannot exist authentically. Yet, although they desire authentic existence, they fear it. They are at one and the same time themselves, and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized. The conflict lies in the choice between being wholly themselves or being divided; between ejecting the oppressor within or not ejecting him; between human solidarity or alienation; between following prescriptions or having choices; between being spectators or actors; between acting or having the illusion of acting through the action of the oppressors; between speaking out or being silent, castrated in their power to create and recreate, in their power to transform the world. This is the tragic dilemma of the oppressed, which their education must take into account.

—(Freire, 1970, pp.32-33)

The educational discourse chronicling the experiences of African American educators continues to be limited while the anthropological and sociological literature appears to be more inclusive. In reviewing the literature I have found the typical representation of African American educators to be negative. Educational literature in regards to African American educators since my birth year 1966 continues to focus on how African American educators maintain the status quo and how the dominant middle class values of society are reproduced through dominant pedagogy. This is the duality in which African. Americans must struggle. And because of the absence of the marginalized and silenced "other" within the literature, very few first-person narratives, which articulate the issues in which African American educators experience in educating today's youth is in existence. This has created a "state of uncertainty," (my emphasis) for myself and the practitioners studied, because of the works of other black educators, i.e., Mc Whorter (2000), Hale-Benson (1982), Delpit (1995), Ladson-Billings (1994), regarding what works for black children. This state of uncertainty is predicated upon the various conservative, liberal, and progressive politics that frame the writings of these academicians; as well as, the range of discourses. The discourses curricula, educational leadership, culture, teacher preparation and language are also informed by the researcher's position regarding the intersections of their race, class, and gender.

Freire (1970), in the epigraph above, describes how this state of uncertainty causes a "fracture of the self."

I wish to explore this notion, fracture of the self, by sharing my experiences as an African American male educator (hence now referred to as a black male in this piece). I realize while sitting at this computer, the fear (' false evidence that appears real', which I often tell my graduate students) is apparent as I tackle this project. As a junior faculty member, I am concerned with the quality of my work in the areas of scholarship, teaching, and service; however, I envision myself as an advocate for social justice, one who seeks to transform the human condition (cause, 2002). Functioning as a black male educator, researcher, teacher, and social activist I have experienced poverty and privilege, "white flight," and black masculine anxiety (Harper, 1996). At times, I experience a "fracture of the self." Because of the intersections of race, class, and gender, in the work that I conduct, I have come to understand that the "fracturing," in which I experience is a social construct based upon the multiple positions in which I enact. It's drama!

Legitimacy

The debate regarding the production and consumption of academic texts and. the validity of those texts is on-going among scholars across many disciplines. Koschoreck (2003) states that

> The unrelenting focus on validity stems primarily from the epistemological assumption that the relationship between research data and analysis and an external reality can and should result in the production of an authoritative text that truthfully mirrors some aspect of the presupposed external real. (p.33)

My concern for legitimacy, validity, and "truth," (Brill de Ramires, 1999; Lather, 1993; Neisser, 1982) is appropriate, but to what extent. Must I write about the good, the bad, and even the unmentionables; should I present all of it (me) laid out for open- shame and/or scrutiny (Cherry, 2000: Ellis, 1999; Prideaux, 1991). To present black masculinity in terms of Hip Hop[1] culture and the "tension" that exists among African American educators and black youth is problematic, because I am a black male educator who happens to be a product of the Hip Hop generation[2] (Kitwana, 2003). The questions I raise in this article are informed by my own professional practice, as well as, the practice of others (e.g., Cherry, 2000; Boucher & Holian, 2001) and, personal experiences (Ellis, 1995; Ronai, 1992) so this data is autobiographical, because it does contain information about the self (Brewer, 1986). According to White and Cones, (1999, 67) "in contemporary America, the distorted images of Black masculinity projected by the media and social scientists are an ongoing phenomenon." African-American males are typecast as entertainers, clowns, and super-athletes. As I sit down to compose this piece with the thought of making a difference as a teacher/researcher/leader-activist, I can't help but reflect on how my masculinity (black masculinity[3]) has been constructed. I realize that don't want to play the game which has been set by the heteronormative order (Koschoreck, 2003) but; I also realize that this order has influenced my personal and professional choices. Am I looking for validation of African "ways of knowing" (Asante, 1987) possibly? Asante (1987) argues

> African methods seek to legitimize expression, public discourse, feeling, myth-making, and emotion as acceptable avenues of inquiry. Unlike European paradigms, Afrocentrism seeks out transcendence—that is, the quality of exceeding ordinary and literal experience. (as cited in Watkins, 1993, p. 332)

What situations does black masculinity create for those brothers who refuse to play the game? Who decides the rules? Why can't brothers create their own game with their own rules? I think they did. Could it possibly be Hip Hop? But hasn't that creation been commodified and co-opted to the point that black masculinity and African American identity has been (re) packaged to appear as savagery, which has created black masculine anxiety in America[4]? I would like to utilize this "space" to explore the possibilities.

Masculinity in "Pop" Culture

According to Harper (1996) the relationship between masculinity and the media first came to focus in the 1970s. Masculinity is represented and defined in various media, genre, texts, or icons. Black masculinity is presented as well, but often times in opposition to the "other" and/or dominant culture. Representations of black masculinity in the United States are historically structured by and against dominant (and dominating) discourses of masculinity and race, specifically (whiteness).

The black jazz men of the 1950s & 60s such as, Miles (Davis) and John (Coltrane) and the Rap &Hip Hop Artists of the 1980s & 90s such as, Sean Combs (P Diddy) and O'Shea Jackson (Ice Cube) are particularly emblematic of the complex social relations (race, class, sexual) and cultural politics surrounding the self-construction and representation of the black masculine in the public sphere (Rose, 1994). These artists like their contemporaries enacted a black identity (masculinity) that not only challenged whiteness but also exiled it to the (cultural margins) of blackness. Through their work blackness becomes a powerful symbol of masculinity/identity.

One irony of our present moment is that just as young black men are murdered, maimed, and imprisoned in record numbers; their styles have become disproportionately influential in shaping popular culture (Carbado, 1999; Weatherspoon, 1998; and West, 1993). For most young black men, power is acquired by stylizing their bodies over space and time in such a way those there bodies reflect their uniqueness and provoke fear in others. To be 'bad' is good not simply because it subverts the language of the dominant white culture, but also because it imposes a unique kind of order for young black men on their own distinctive chaos and solicits an attention that makes others pull back with some trepidation.

This young black male style is a form of self-identification and resistance in a hostile culture; it also is an instance of machismo identity ready for violent encounters (West, 1993).

The statistics show a clear disadvantage to being born black and male in America: Black males have higher rates than white males on mental disorders, unemployment, poverty, injuries, accidents, infant mortality, morbidity, AIDS, homicide and suicide, drug and alcohol abuse, imprisonment, and criminality. African American males have poorer incomes, life expectancy, access to health care, and education (Allen, 1999; Watkins, 1993; Harper, 1996).

Black Masculinity

The historical evolution of the gender identity of African American males presents many problems for analysts due, in large part, to the quality and paucity of the remaining data, that spared by the ravages of the legacy of capture, importation, and enslavement. It is clear,

nevertheless, that at the level of values, attitudes, and behaviors, distinct characteristics of African American males can be discerned.

Previous research has shown that while many elements within the values, attitudes, and behaviors of white and black males are shared, the total configuration differs in terms of quantity, quality, and their relationships to each other. While this can be partially attributed to the legacy of African culture, more significant causal factors derive from the dialectic of development of African American slavery and its Jim Crow aftermath, and, more recently, the social dynamics of black urban life (Booker, 1997). Of singular importance in this regard, is the evolving male role as African American males themselves perceived it, against that which the larger, white society perceived?

Those scholars, who pinpoint the black male dilemma as deriving basically from the gap existing between the ideal male gender role for the overall American society and the actual ability of black males to realize it, miss the mark. Throughout American history, black males were not, in fact, expected to be able to fulfill the ideal male gender role. Indeed, it was made abundantly clear that severe repercussions would follow if they made serious and persistent efforts to do so. Exercising power, at the economic, political, social, and cultural level, was n only not expected it was fervently opposed. Indeed, this was the source for innumerable violent conflicts, notably lynching, program-like invasions of the African American communities, and lesser forms of repression (Booker, 1997).

Black males and females of every period were quite aware that of these iron ceilings placed upon their advancement and of the restrictions that hound their every movement. For this reason, these bathers were regarded as a fact of black life, a clearly observable injustice, and this premise was embodied in the historically molded gender role values that emerged within Africa America. Thus, notions of the proper methods to respond to systematic injustice were and are an integral element of the evolving African American masculinity (Weatherspoon, 1998).

The dialectic of development for white males was historically linked to the underdevelopment of African American males. Slavery, reconstruction, Jim Crow, and other forms of exploitation served to transfer resources from blacks to whites. While there are some parallels between the social construction of white masculinity and that of blacks, it is notable that in almost every instance of, for example, war, technological change, or migratory movement, the lived experiences, perceptions, and the responses of black and white males to these challenges were distinct. In particular, the African American male experience with war has left a significant imprint on their masculine, attitudes, and behavior.

From the American Revolution, when some took advantage of Lord Dunmore's offer of liberty upon enlistment with the British, through the Spanish-American War when black heroism seemed unappreciated outside of the black community, to the Persian Gulf War, when returning veterans were greeted by mysterious illnesses, and unemployment—disillusionment, bitterness and, contrastingly, a new determination to smash the remaining obstacles to free travel, full employment, and full respect for African Americans, have characterized the mood of returning black soldiers (Booker, 1997).

This historical oppositional cultural current within black male America continues to play a role and can be seen in the diminished enthusiasm of black males for certain aspects of the mainstream American culture including the arenas of conventional business and politics.

In the national African American community in general, the concept of Black culture is generally viewed and accepted as a severely limited one (Madhubuti, 1990). When educating black children, the culture of this group as a potential force for political, economic, and social development is given very little attention during the "schooling" process.

The educational process in which African-American children engage reflects European cultural and educative hegemony. Madhubuti (1990) asserts that many African-Americans view the concept of "culture" as an invisible entity:

> To most of us, culture, as a concept, is abstract—that is, one does not actually observe culture. Yet, we all experience its manifestations, such as clothing, art, music, housing, weapons, films, literature, language, food, political, educational and social organizations and economic structures. (p. 5)

Ethnicity, and not race, should serve as the descriptor for defining our social culture. The consensus seems to be that social class and ethnicity interacts in the shaping of human behavior, but this interaction is a complex process (Havinghurst, 1976).

> The black male's cultural signature is his cool. It is sometimes the only source of pride, dignity, and worth in the absence of the outward status symbols of materialism and title that mark success in American culture. His status rides on his ability to communicate through human encounters, the most important information about himself: his coolness. Because it is so prized, preserving cool becomes an end in itself. (Majors & Billson, 1992)

Compensating for feelings of insecurity in a Eurocentric world has led the African-American male particularly the youth to redefine what it means to be a man in the present world. For most, this includes risk taking, machismo, aggressive social skills and sexual promiscuity. The noted mannerisms include physical posture, style of clothing, dialect, walking style, greeting behaviors, and overall demeanor (Harris, 1995). Or what I prefer to call the Diamond in the Back, Sunroof top, digging the scene wit a gangster-lean...profile. Majors and Billson (1992) collectively refer to these attitudes and behaviors as "Cool Pose." The black male is socialized to view every white man as a potential enemy, every symbol of the dominant system as a potential threat. Because of this, he is reluctant to expose his innermost feelings. Playing it cool becomes the mask of choice. Cool pose is a well-developed and creative art; it also exacts a stiff price in repressed feelings and suppressed energy.

African-Americans and African-American males in particular have resisted domination since slavery. African-American males historically have rejected exclusion and marginalization. Genovese (1974) explains, that enslaved Africans developed a culture of resistance to the institution of slavery and demonstrated their opposition through their language and communication patterns, their work rhythms, and their frequent running away from their burden of slavery (quoted in Kreisberg, 1992p. 17).

"These oppositional practices have been lived out and elaborated upon over the years, and constitute core cultural elements in the urban Black community today" (Weis, 1988, p. 185).

This has been demonstrated consistently within our schools. The behavior of Black males can be viewed in Kreisberg terms, as resistant forces. Many Black males resistant "playing" the "school game." They deceive teachers, refuse to complete homework, smoke and sell "dope" in school bathrooms, delay the beginning of classes, and wear clothing and utilize language that is often offensive to adults. Therefore the culture of Black males can be identified as a "culture of resistance."

Male Development and Masculinity

Dr. Nairn Akbar (1982, 1992), a well respected black male psychologist, asserts that "maleness" is a mentality that operates with the same principles as biology, that is, it is a determined biological fact, which is in no way subject to choice. Akbar (1982, 1992) further suggests this mentality is dictated by appetite and physical determinants and guided by instincts, urges, and desires, and feelings. He continues to assert that the "male mentality" is predicated on a sexist and objectified perception of manhood and predominates only in males who are not willing to take the prerogatives and responsibilities of "real manhood." Based on this premises, Akbar believes in order for Black males to transform into the stage of Black "men" (that is, responsible, productive citizens), their culture and orientation must be understood.

According to Majors & Billson (1992) European Americans often view the lifestyle and culture of inner city Black males as threatening, aggressive, and intimidating. These researchers view the nature of inner-city Black males as "cool pose," that is, he (the black male) is characterized as "being cool,""with the program," and "in the house." Major and Billson (1992) defines this inner city Black male disposition as

> [a] Distinctive coping mechanism that serves to counter, at least in part, the dangers that black males encounter on a daily basis. As a performance, cool pose is designed to render the black male visible and to empower him; it eases the worry and pain of blocked opportunities.... Cool pose is constructed from attitudes and actions that become firmly entrenched in the black male's psyche as he adopts a facade to ward off the anxiety of second-class status. It provides a mask that suggests competence, high self-esteem, control, and inner strength. It also hides self-doubt, insecurity, and inner turmoil. (p. 5)

A dilemma of the inner city Black male is his quest to exhibit masculinity; he is too often grounded in "masking strategies" that require him to deny and suppress his feelings. He is highly attractive; he is perceived and perceives himself as the epitome of control, strength, and pride. However, even in his "charismatic, suave, debonair, entertaining" persona, he presents himself as a "mysterious challenge" (Majors & Billson, 1992, p.2).

The political disturbances and cultural rearticulations of the black masculine these images produce require new contextualizations and different reading strategies. Black heterosexual masculinity is figured in the popular imagination as the basis of masculine hero worship in the case of rappers; as naturalized and commodified bodies in the case of athletes; as symbols of menace and threat in the case of black gang members; and as noble warriors in the case of Afrocentric nationalists and Fruit of Islam. While these varied images travel across different fields of electronic representation and social discourse, it is nevertheless the same black body— super star athlete, indignant rapper, "menacing" gang member, ad pitch-man, appropriate middle class professional, movie star—onto which competing and conflicting claims about (and for) black masculinity are waged. Like their jazz predecessors, contemporary expressions of black

masculinity work symbolically in a number of directions at once; they challenge and disturb racial and class constructions of blackness; they also rewrite and reinscribe the patriarchal and heterosexual basis of masculine privilege (and domination) based on gender and sexuality. Consider how, for example, neo-conservatives used the black male body under Reaganism. Black heterosexual masculinity was used in policy debates, in television news, and popular film representations to link the signs of patriotism, whiteness, family, nation, and individual responsibility.

Discursively located outside of the "normative conceptions," mainstream moral and class structure, media representations of poor black males (e.g., Rodney King and Willie Horton) served as the symbolic basis for fueling and sustaining panics about crime, the nuclear family, and middle-class security while they displaced attention from the economy, racism, sexism, and homophobia. This figure of black masculinity consistently appears in the popular imagination as the logical and legitimate object of surveillance and policing, containment and punishment. Discursively this black male body brings together the dominant institutions of (white) masculine power and authority—criminal justice system, the police, and the news media—to protect (white) Americans from harm.

Saving Lost Souls
As I visited several "hoods" and "ghettos" in many cities across the United States while working with youth who were in the custody of various state human service agencies, I realized that before, during, and after school hours the majority of the individuals that were out on the streets were African American males from the ages of 13-25. I found this to be fascinating. While riding on the Metro in one particular city, I was struck by the look on this one particular African American male's face. He appeared to be approximately 14 years of age, his pants were extremely baggy. He wore a blue "hoodie" (Hooded sweatshirt) with a very long t-shirt underneath and a pair of Navy and Buckskin Timberland boots which were unlaced.

As I watched him, I penned the following poem:

Bitter

As hard as the marble without a chip or trace
No smiles to be seen only a stern face.

The smell of sulfur, dirt as black as night,
The beating of drums, the drummer pounds with might.

Red as fire smoke unseen
Your sister's envy turns you green.

Kisses of pain, anguish, and rage
The book goes unread, yet you turn the page.

Gold uncorrupted, Silver melted down
Your only reply was to beat him to the ground

Flail all heroes, great and small
Ask me how I feel
Just bitter, that's all.
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I was so fascinated by the emotion that I witnessed from this young man. I felt as if, he had an old man's spirit in a young man's body. I wanted to know what kind of environment could create such a persona. I began to reflect on my own childhood, family life, school experience, and wondered if the experiences in which I cherished were those in which he despised.

So I began to spend several hours on some days after work just talking with these young men. Several spoke candidly o f their time in juvenile detention centers, county jails, prison, alternative schools, and their were some who spoke of memorable times in middle and high schools, playing on the football and basketball teams and even participating in student council, the marching band, and debate clubs. My central question to each of them was simple.

What happened to make you decide to spend the majority of your time in the streets and not in school? Many of the answers often given were the following:

Young Black Males: *"School ain't for me," "'ask da' teacher a question, and she, just ignore Inc," "I get mad and try to control my temper, but 'dey' push me over 'de' age," "half 'dem' teachers don 't know 'man '."*

Many of these black males see themselves at or near the bottom in academic standings. Because many of these young black males become so frustrated with the system, they finally dropout or find themselves pushed out (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Harper, 1996; Watkins, 1993). The negative pathological labels utilized to identify these students, such as "permanent underclass," "at-risk," "culturally deficient," continues to marginalize and banish them to the borders of the schooling process.

However, I have witnessed many of them make transactions that require excellent computational skills. Their communication skills were quite exceptional, within their own peer group. Upon spending a significant amount of time in observation with a group of them after the Cincinnati riots, which occurred after police killed Timothy Thomas, an unharmed black male in the Over-the-Rhine area, as reported by the Cincinnati Enquirer in 200 I ; I discovered these young men possessed the ability to rationalize and reason far beyond what many of them were told in terms of their academic abilities as measured by hegemonic testing data that schools rely upon which reproduces the stratification of class in American society.

Confessions of a Ghetto Sophisticate
I first met Gregory[5] three years ago while spending time in Over-the-Rhine while conducting research for my dissertation. I did not want to get into Gregory's personal business, however it was common knowledge that Gregory was a "Bailer" (had lots of money) and "Shot Caller" (Chief decision maker for his peer group). He drove around in a chromed out Cadillac Escalade, was "Iced" down with the latest Platinum and Diamond jewelry, and he wore designer suits when conducting "business" Monday through Friday and the latest Hip Hop "gear" on the weekend. He often appeared to be sophisticated and savvy in handling himself. It has been reported that he made more money from the "underground economy" in one month than I did as a former school administrator in six months. As I continued to develop a friendship with Gregory, I realized that his concept of masculinity was definitely constructed out of the images he consumed from rap

videos, the lack of a father as a child, the black church, and from social relationships that were developed while in school.

Gregory Befriends Me

Gregory: *G-man you are really cool for an old cat (older gentlemen). I mean you having been a principal and still understand what young heads like me are going through; I wished I could have been at your school.*

Me: *Gregory, I treated all of my students like they were my own children. I keep up with the latest music and styles of dress, intact sometimes; I like to wear my 'Tints ' and the latest Hip Hop gear. I sort of devoted my lift to helping people, especially young people.*

Gregory: *Man, with all them (expletive) degrees you have, you should be working in a big company or running your on business. Hey, maybe one day, I will open up something and you could run it for me.*

Me: *Well, man, I don't know about that. You are still dealing with some stuff that I think is a little shady. You make a lot of trips across the city. you keep weird hours, and you are always loaded with money and trying to buy me stuff*

Gregory: *G-man, you are cool and I just like that fact that you shoot some knowledge to me to help me understand myself as a young black brother. You, the first dog, I met who don't want nothing from anybody, including me. You also the first dog I know who understand the streets and ain't afraid of coming down here to help at anytime of the night.*

Gregory Discusses His Educational Experience

"Yo, G-man, I used to like school. When I got to middle school that's where it all began for me. I got tired of those teachers, the white ones and black ones, always dragging the brother. I used to come in you know, with the latest street gear, and I wasn't carrying no books. I talked to the honeys. I know my work, but I was cool, so I didn't want nobody to know I was smart at least in some of my subjects. I just got tired having to prove myself and what I knew. I had one black teacher that was school. Ms. Jackson, she stayed on me, but in a way my mom's used to do. She would talk to me in a cool, but hard manner. She didn't play. I did my work but she never made a big deal out of it, cause she expected me to do it and when I didn't do it, she didn't holler and stuff she just smiled and told me she would talk with me after class. Man, them other teachers, when, I didn't have no work, they put me out of class. So I roamed the halls."

Gregory Talks about Dropping Out of School

"I dropped out of school when I was in the 10th grade. I was trying to sling packages in them streets (sell drugs) and just wanted to make some ends (money). I didn't have no daddy and my moms worked 12 hours a day just to keep a roof over our heads. So, I figured it was easy for me to help out and get my own stuff (personal needs and clothes). I hung out all night with the boys on the block and did my thang. My attendance was poor and dem tests they gave us, I was too tired to take so, I figured wasn't any need to keep going and really didn't want to be there. I had one teacher, he was black and the track coach. Mr. Johnson tried to get me to go out for track. I knew he was trying to help me. I came out once, but I told him I wasn't running. He talked to me about being disciplined, but Yo! I wasn't hearing that (expletive)."

Gregory Discusses the Responsibility of Being a Man
"G-man, I'm a man and in these streets only men survive. I put these boys on some of that knowledge you shoot to me, because I realize that I'm going to need some skills to survive out here. I wished that I could have stayed in school and finished, maybe I'll get my GED (General Equivalency Diploma), go to community college and get a skill, but right now a man, got's to do what a man gotta do. You see, 'Luda' (Ludacris, a rap artist) and them boys in that latest 'joint' (video), man dim Spinners (Rims for tires), nice. Dat's what me and my boys are out here trying to do, make that paper (money). I ain't got no daddy, and I don't wont my kids wanting like I did. I provide for mine. When, we go to church, the preacher, always talking about, taking care of the family, well that's what I'm doing. Maybe it's wrong, but dis is my way, and all you see on these streets is people surviving the best way they know how."

Over the next year, I was able to meet and become a part of Gregory's "inner circle." I think Gregory did this because; he saw himself as a businessman and believed that I functioned as his "counsel." He finally talked about his dream of school and owning his own businesses.

Gregory Discusses His Education and Business Ventures
"G-man, what do you think about me opening up some businesses? Maybe a laundry for the community, a corner store, and a liquor store would be the ticket? I'm trying to clean this money up and do the right thing for the community. I didn't finish school, but you know I know how to count. I need your expertise in how to handle all of this."

Through our informal conversations, I encouraged him to invest in the community. He opened several businesses, sponsored several athletic teams, and under wrote educational opportunities for several young people in the community. As I spent time observing and becoming friends (but at a distance) with these young men, I realized that they were not just "drug dealers," "hoodlums," nor "gangsters," they were "ghetto sophisticates" who were out to save lost souls and serve as leaders of the new school. And because they believed there was no salvation in their schools, in their homes, nor even in their churches, they looked for salvation among their peers.

Conclusion
The stigmatization of African-American males has been embraced not only by European Americans, but by African-Americans as well. The dominant culture continues to perpetuate negative imagery of African American males through media, film and music. National broadcasts of African-American males being apprehended by law enforcement locally and regionally is a daily ritual. This imagery further perpetuates the demise of the African-American male. Damen (1987) presents to us that "culture is learned and shared human patterns or models for living; clay-to-clay living patterns; those models and patterns pervade all aspects of human social interaction; and culture is mankind's primary adaptive mechanism" (p.367).

Based on this definition of culture then what the media reports constructs a framework of stigmatization of the black male through the culture the media. Media representations of black masculinity operate within the cultural politics of blackness on yet another important (and for some) oppositional front. This figure of black masculinity marks the racial and cultural boundaries of a counter-hegemonic blackness, which stands for the black nation, the black family, and the authentic black (male) self. We must eradicate negative (re) presentations of

black males with anti- stereotypical images that showcase the positive role models and individuals that are present in the African-American community.

Implications

The new millennium has arrived and schools are still faced with issues regarding power, race, identity, violence, and ethics. However, a shift is upon the horizon in academic circles. At issue: how as the terrain within the educational arena evolved from the "sea of possibility" to the "background noise" of popular culture. Educational theorist Richard Quantz (2003) writes of the "puzzle master" and the forces of corporate culture that are transforming schools into sites of "consumerism." The meaning and purpose of schooling is being redefined, the relationships among teachers, administrators, educational leaders, parents and students have entered into a critical stage of re-negotiating what and whose knowledge is valid and valued. Quantz elaborates this perspective in his article, "The Puzzle masters: Performing the Mundane, Searching for Intellect, and Living in the Belly of the Corporation"!

> The twentieth century saw the consolidation of the nation-state with the corporate interest, but as corporations become transnational the desirability of strong national identity becomes counterproductive to their interests. To the extent that individuals maintain strong identities as citizens of a nation-state, the power of transnational corporations is potentially challenged. As nation-state identities become replaced with ethnic identities and with lifestyle identities, consumership replaces citizenship in the construction of identity. As power moves outside of nation-states and into transnational corporations, state institutions think of themselves less as centers of democratic action and more as corporate entities providing services to individual and other corporate consumers. (112)

As academics address these issues the worlds in which educational leaders exist continues to evolve with a greater impact placed upon their existence by transnational corporations. Because of this we are educating in a time ofan expanding globalization whose impact we witness via twenty-four hour digitally mediated discourses. How are schools and educational leaders keeping up with this global transformation? What type of impact does this transformation of schools from sites of democracy to "bed-fellows" of consumerism have upon the school and much larger global community? How are the "souls" of schools affected? In the journey of school reform are educational leaders acknowledging that the "process of schooling" is filled with "cultural politics"? How are educational administration programs preparing future school leaders, are education administration preparation programs preparing schools leaders for the "journey of the self' or for "the journey of the soul?"

The work of Quantz (2003), Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell (1999), Dantley (2003), along with, Carlson and Apple (1998) and Henry Giroux (1988), to just name a few, has situated the notion of cultural politics within the context of Leadership, Culture, and Schooling. Because of this we know that educational leaders need to search diligently for the discrepancies that exist between "what is" and "what should be;" however the work of Henry Giroux, presently explores the educational arena of popular culture (see Giroux 2000 and 2001).

"Pop" culture is the "background" noise to our daily existence; it presents enormous possibilities for researchers in assisting educational leaders in re-thinking Leadership, Culture, and Schooling while serving as a "roadmap" while "serving as leaders of the new school" I believe that it is imperative that academicians continue to explore emergent "thinking" on transforming schools by infusing educational leadership preparation programs with cultural studies. I consider cultural

studies because reality is made through human action, and consequently, contestation is a basic category and also because the 'popular' is regarded as the political terrain in which people struggle to exist, therefore political struggle must be carried out in the contemporary public sphere.

Notes

1. For the definitive account of the social significance of rap music, see Tricia Rose, Black Noise (1994).
2. The time frame from 1965-1984 is identified as the Hip Hop generation, see Bakari Kitwana, Hip Hop Generation (2003).
3. I utilize this term without exploring in this space, the fluidity in sexuality and gender in the African American community. For the definitive account of black masculinity and sexuality in America, see Devon Carbado, Race, Gender, and Sexuality (1999).
4. The level of anxiety for African American males is highlighted often by the portrayal and representations of African American males by the media as savages. For further exploration of this construct, see Phillip Brian Harper, Are We Not Men (1996).
5. The names, locations, and series of events have been changed to preserve the confidentiality of the participants. Gregory is also a composite of 5 (five) African American males interviewed and observed over the period of this study.

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