

Discussion Guide

**CRITICAL RACE & EDUCATION**  
**for Black Males**

**RACE + RACISM + POWER**  
**+ PROPERTY RIGHTS OF WHITENESS**  
**+ GENDER + MASCULINITY**



**When Pretty Boys Become Men**

Vernon C. Lindsay, PHD



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Dear Facilitator,

Thank you, for your purchase of *Critical Race and Education for Black Males: When Pretty Boys Become Men*. I have endured many sacrifices to complete this work, and I am grateful to have your support.

In this PDF, you will find discussion questions to assist with guiding conversations about the main ideas and topics of each chapter in the book. In alignment with my philosophy to support classroom autonomy and culturally relevant curricula, I suggest that educators modify these questions to fit the individual needs of their students. This discussion guide is designed to create a framework for more complex and customized conversations that can evolve from a small group setting. However, this PDF is convertible to a handout for individuals to complete for future sharing with others in larger environments.

For more information about me, social media handles, and to schedule a visit to your institution, please visit [www.vlindsayphd.com](http://www.vlindsayphd.com) or send an email to [vernonlindsay@vlindsayphd.com](mailto:vernonlindsay@vlindsayphd.com).

Thank you again for supporting this work.

With respect and solidarity,

*Vernon C. Lindsay*

Vernon C. Lindsay, PhD

## **Chapter 1: The Only Son**

“What is race? What is masculinity? How can we help Black males develop positive self-perceptions? In Chapter 1, *Birth of a Pretty Boy*, I begin with my early years on the Southside of Chicago in the Chatham community where I was initially socialized to understand my role in society as a young Black male. I discuss how growing up in a racially segregated city with a father who was a pastor, a mother who was a homemaker, and five sisters shaped an early vision of myself. This first narrative also describes the origin of the nickname Yellow Monkey that one of my sisters gifted me as a child. This chapter provides insight into how the communities of some Black males can influence the performance of socially constructed identities in school” (Lindsay, 2018).

### **The following are questions to assist facilitation of the topics explored in Chapter 1:**

1. What is race?
2. What is gender?
3. How would you describe the difference between sex and gender?
  
4. How did race and gender influence the author’s beliefs about himself?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. How do race and gender influence your self-perception?

## **Chapter 2: The Girl in the Pink Bikini**

“Chapter 2, *The Girl in the Pink Bikini*, provides the narratives of my first memories with racism. It makes use of my fourth-grade year in school, where I received ample requests for parent-teacher conferences and took a memorable Spring Break trip to Florida. My story reveals how I began to understand myself as a Black male in response to the perceptions that people from outside my community imposed on me. The goal of this chapter is to illustrate how individual beliefs are the products of systemic racism and how opportunities for Black males to share their experiences can facilitate changes in school policies and school cultures” (Lindsay, 2018).

### **The following are questions to assist facilitation of the topics explored in Chapter 2:**

1. What is racism? Can you offer an example
2. What are your first memories of race?
3. What is the difference between individual and systemic acts of racism?
4. What strategies do you believe will work to address racism among individuals and systems?
5. What are the dominant messages that Black boys receive about manhood?

### **Chapter 3: The Thug and Me**

“In Chapter 3, *The Thug and Me*, is the story of my transition from life in Chicago to a south suburb called South Holland. I describe how the concept of Black masculinity I learned up until the fourth grade continued to influence my approach in middle school when I transferred from a Chicago Public School (CPS) to a suburban district. This chapter articulates how the relationship I had with my father and the influence of my friends shaped my performance as a Black male in a new environment. The goal of this chapter is to offer strategies for educators in suburban school districts that are interested in creating inclusive school cultures that can assist Black males to obtain authentic identity and higher academic achievement” (Lindsay, 2018).

#### **The following are questions to assist facilitation of the topics explored in Chapter 3:**

1. What is masculinity?
2. What does it mean to be Black and male?
3. How can we use Hip-Hop to complicate the experiences of Black males?
4. Who are your favorite artists? Can we listen to one of their songs and analyze the lyrics?
5. What are some positive ways that we can recreate masculinity within communities of color?

## **Chapter 4: Follow the Leader**

“Chapter 4, *Follow the Leader*, discusses my evolving self-perception and the challenges I encountered with my teachers and school administration during my high school years. Through the narrative that explains how refusing to adhere to a school policy led to a suspension, I illustrate how I viewed myself as a teenager and how it influenced the choices I made to impress my friends and accumulate girlfriends. This chapter also reveals how a disturbing meeting with my school counselor after a suspension encouraged me to take a different academic approach. Throughout this chapter, I illustrate the value of programs that promote positive self-awareness and leadership among adolescent Black males, with the purpose to give alternative intervention options for professionals in high school settings” (Lindsay, 2018).

### **The following are questions to assist facilitation of the topics explored in Chapter 4:**

1. What is leadership?
2. How do you believe race and gender can influence a person’s ability to lead?
3. How is the leadership of Barack Obama compared with former presidents?
4. How can teachers and administrators better support students in their transitions after graduation?
5. How do you believe high schools can increase security for all students?

## **Chapter 5: Undergrad and Underprepared**

“In Chapter 5, *Undergrad and Underprepared*, I illustrate how my failures as an undergraduate student at the University of Illinois at Chicago led to later successes. This narrative begins with the challenges I encountered to get admitted to college and proceeds to discuss how poor decisions and study habits nearly jeopardized my undergraduate education. This chapter offers insight into preparing Black males for success in college, or other viable options post high school” (Lindsay, 2018).

### **The following are questions to assist facilitation of the topics explored in Chapter 5:**

1. What impact do you believe race had on the author’s ability to be prepared for college?
2. How do you believe race will or is impacting your experiences in college?
3. How do you believe gender influences the experiences of college students who identify as a man, woman, transgender, fluid, or some other identity?
4. What is one potential strategy to improve your chances of success in college courses?
5. How can your understanding of failure impact your ability to do well in school?

## **Chapter 6: From Pretty Boy to Man**

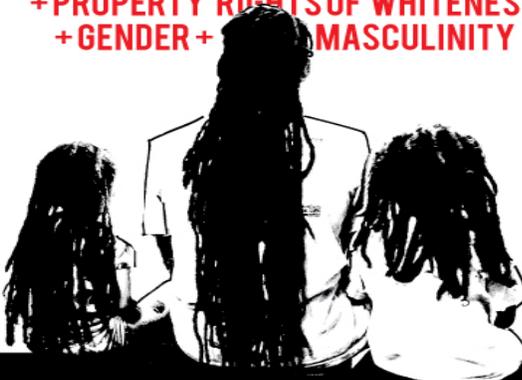
“How can we encourage Black males to persevere through academic and other life challenges? Chapter 6, *From Pretty Boy to Man*, is about my experiences in graduate school and the problems I encountered while completing my dissertation. As a research assistant, I served as the lead graduate student on a four-year study investigating the experiences of Black males enrolled in a Chicago high school. The study explored how educators and administrators can make use of Black males’ experiences to shape school culture and school policy. In this final chapter, I share the ordeal I endured to use the research for my dissertation. It discusses the perseverance I found to continue when accused of stealing research and the dream of earning a PhD became a nightmare. Chapter 6 illustrates how educators can foster the necessary internal motivation for Black males who possess aspirations for graduate and professional degrees” (Lindsay, 2018).

### **The following are questions to assist facilitation of the topics explored in Chapter 6:**

1. How do you believe race influenced the theft accusations the author describes in chapter six?
2. How would you respond if you were accused of stealing from an esteemed professor?
3. How can you develop the internal perseverance that the author claims are critical to success in graduate school?
4. The cover image on the book features the author and his two sons. How does it speak to the content of this book and in particular this final chapter?
5. What are your overall thoughts on the book?

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