

Through Our Eyes:
The Lived Experiences of Black Male Early Childhood Teachers

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Abstract

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Special Education

The experiences of Black male early childhood teachers are the beginning to changing the narrative of them only being seen as disciplinarians. It's important we capture their voices so they can share their authentic experiences on becoming teachers. In this qualitative study, I used the portraiture methodology (Lightfoot, 2005) to co-create three counternarratives (Delgado, 2005) with Black male early childhood teachers. Additionally, I interviewed three school principals to capture their thoughts on the impact of Black male teachers. I also conducted two classroom observations to see interactions between the Black male teachers and their students. Lastly, two Black male teachers used a visual data protocol to capture how students view their Black male teachers. The findings from this study showed that Black male teachers have a true love for their children and community, principals also shared the importance of having Black male teachers, and children expressed their sincere connectedness to their Black male teachers.

Acknowledgements

This process has brought me to tears many times, but it was my father William L. White Sr., my mother Carolyn White, my uncle Howard White, sister Wendy Johnson, brother-in-law CJ Johnson, nephew Shawn Johnson, Dean Mia Tuan, advisor Kathleen Meeker, employer Gail Joseph, and others who kept me uplifted throughout.

I want to acknowledge the space that was given to me to speak my mind and be authentically me by my committee. This dissertation speaks to who I am as a Black male who spent over a decade in education and have overcome obstacles others have never seen. As you read this, I want to also acknowledge you as you read this with an open heart and mind. If you become uncomfortable as you read, I ask you to put it down, breathe and then continue learning of the experiences of Black male teachers in early childhood education

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

“You Don’t Know Me”
 As you question me and my Identity
 You don’t know the complexities of the inequities that have impacted me and
 Shaped my Identity
 As you continue to judge without knowing,
 You continue to push a narrative that wasn’t written
 by me because
 You Don’t Know Me

By William White

Black male teachers make up less than 2% of the teaching force, but their presence is called on now more than ever. Many ask why? Why call on Black males to enter the very classrooms they were exited from after *Brown vs. Board of Education*? In my research, I propose to capture the experiences of Black male teachers while creating co-narratives using a qualitative research methodology known as portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). This approach offers Black male teachers a much-needed platform to transform the white female dominated field of education into one that serves and nurtures Black men and boys.

Importance of Black Teachers

The current educational system is not supporting Black students, particularly Black boys (Scott, 2016; Vilson, 2015). Supporting Black students in the classroom is critically important to minimize the number of students experiencing outcomes not in their favor (Annamma & Morrison, 2018). It is important that we not ignore the pressing issue of supporting Black boys. With the school to prison pipeline (Bryan, 2017), overpopulation of Black students in special

education (Ford & Russo, 2016; Mills, 2003), high school drop-out rates (Knight, 2015), and school expulsion rates disproportionately affecting Black students (Loveless, 2017) we have to find a solution. I argue that schools are inherently racist systems that oppress men and boys of Color (Brockenbrough, 2012; Thomas & Warren, 2017) and perpetuate white supremacy. For the purposes of this research, white supremacy will be defined as, “the set of beliefs or ideologies that guides a system or racial domination and exploitation where power resources are unequally distributed to privilege whites and oppress People of Color” (Morrison et al., 2017). Schools are often staffed by white teachers who, wittingly and unwittingly, perpetuate patterns of white supremacy. The power and resources assigned to schools and teachers privilege white students and teachers over students of Color.

One factor shown repeatedly to be effective in supporting Black students in school is the presence of Black teachers in the classroom (Goings & Bianco, 2016; Scott, 2016; Vilson, 2015). Studies show that if a Black student has a Black teacher between grades three and five they are more likely to graduate high school and consider attending college (Gerhenson et al., 2017). Research also states that when a Black teacher is in the classroom, Black students are less likely to be put out of school or written up for disciplinary infractions (Wright, 2015). Researchers have argued that Black teachers have higher expectations for their Black students than do their white colleagues (Gerhenson et al., 2017).

The evidence is clear that having a Black teacher can be so important for Black students, yet, unfortunately, less than 6.5% of the teacher workforce is African-American. This is despite the fact that African-American students make up 16% of the students enrolled in school (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). A closer look at the intersections of race and gender in the teacher workforce reveals that only 2% of African-American teachers are males. Research has

shown that Black Male teachers in the classroom are a benefit to Black students (Anderson, 2015; Brown, 2009; Ferlazzo, 2018; Lynn, 2006; Milner, 2006). Many studies have emphasized that there are gendered expectations of Black male teachers as “disciplinarians” and “father figures,” but their intellect is not given space to thrive in their settings because of these continued narratives (Brockenbrough, 2012; Thomas & Warren, 2017). Such realities further marginalize students of Color-particularly boys-from their own educational experiences and ultimately from careers in education. In order to increase Black male teachers, we must create pipelines that will successfully help guide and mentor more young Black men.

Black Male Teacher Initiatives

One program that has answered the call to help increase Black male elementary school teachers is the “Call Me Mister” (CMM) program founded at Clemson University (Jones et al., 2019). The CMM programs started as a collaboration between Clemson University and several Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). When a young man becomes a participant in CMM, they receive financial support to help cover tuition and other expenses.

CMM stands on a conceptual framework grounded by several tenants: “ambassadorship, brother’s keeper, personal growth, teacher efficacy, and servant leadership” (Jones et al., 2019, pg.59). The tenets are pinnacle in helping build not only teachers but leaders for the community they are from. It is CMM’s mission to help navigate the variety of barriers Black men face to become teachers. CMM understand that there are many systemic barriers at their respective universities and state requirements. CMM has, in addition to required coursework, workshops that are focused on social justice issues that are taking place in the community they serve, workshops to help navigate state mandated testing, and community workshops to network.

Their program has been in existence for over a decade and continues to thrive across several states and additional partnerships they build. Though this is one example of a program looking to increase Black male teachers, it is the only one with multiple universities and many graduates. Other universities are now starting to follow in the footsteps of CMM. Bowie State University (an HBCU), for example, recently launched an initiative to get more young Black males interested in becoming teachers. Though the program is very new, program leaders see the value in Black male teachers and are answering the call (Jones et al., 2019).

Black male teachers are seen throughout research as disciplinarians by their peers and are recruited as the answer for Black boys. This narrative will continue if faculty and educators fail to create new pipelines to the teaching profession. Collectively, we must push school districts to see the impact of implicit bias toward Black male teachers and create structures of support that can increase retention of the teachers they have. Why do we think we can cultivate Black male teachers in a system created for white women?

The Power of Counter-Narratives in the Development of Black Male Teachers

To cultivate a system that truly serves Black men, we must listen to their stories. Black male teachers challenge the status quo and the dominant narratives of Black masculinity. By developing and sharing their own counter-narratives (Delgado, 2005), the field can begin identifying the elements that recruit and sustain Black men as educators. As an example of a Black male teacher's counter-narrative, White (2019) shared the following portion of a portrait of Derrick, a first grade Black male teacher:

“I'm definitely more than just their teacher, I'm a loving adult that they have present”

Mentor, Disciplinarian, Big Brother, dad, mentor and role model are just a few of the titles Derrick is identified as by his children. With very few Black males in early childhood education, there are many that feel it pushes on their masculinity and isn't their place. Derrick mentioned how he identifies with his students when they lack a Black male in their life. He described that he can tell by their actions towards him, whether it's what they share with him or when they "just come and lay on you". "You see after like ... it shows you that there might be something, a void there, something that they're missing from a male figure in general and they're looking for me to give them that."

(p.21)

Above is an example of Portraiture, a methodology by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot that allows researchers to capture the goodness of their participants and the essence of their settings and conversations. Portraits are co-created by both the researcher and the participant. This methodology is one of the most authentic approaches to research, to bring Black male teachers' voices to a platform and share their stories. Academia must create space in research to not only share authentic stories but to uplift them in order to create safe spaces for Black men in the educational system.

Purpose of Present Study

There is a minimal amount of research on Black male teachers in early childhood education. The purpose of my study is to bring the voices of Black male teachers in early childhood education to the forefront and inform the world of their importance, brilliance and excellence. This research describes the necessary systemic and institutional changes on a local, state, and national level to prepare and welcome more Black male teachers to early childhood education.

Proposed Research Questions

- 1: How do Black male early childhood teachers view their positionality as Black men in their schools?
- 2: How do students view their Black male teachers?
- 3: How does school administration view the contributions of Black male teachers?

Overview

In Chapter 2, I review the literature on Black male teachers. This section culminates in my conceptual framework which is grounded in Critical Race Theory and Black Masculinity Theory. Chapter 3 contains a thorough description of my methodology and research procedures. In Chapter 4, I present my findings in the form of four portraits. Three portraits represent Black male teachers' experiences and the fourth portrait offers a collective representation of leadership practices that sustain Black male teachers. Images drawn by young learners are interspersed within the first three portraits to offer children's perspectives on race, masculinity, caregiving, and their classroom experiences with their teachers. Finally, Chapter 5 offers a discussion of the findings, situating them within existing research and theory. It concludes with recommendations for higher education and school districts as they transform to better serve Black male teachers.

Chapter 2

Literature Review & Theoretical Framework

In this section, the theoretical framework is introduced, and I review the literature on Critical Race Theory and Black Masculinity theory. I demonstrate how both are interwoven and needed to complete my study. For my qualitative study, I will employ both a Critical Race Theory (Taylor et al., 2016) and Black Masculinity Theory (Jackson, 2006) to examine the experiences of Black male teachers in early childhood education using the portraiture methodology.

Portraiture methodology was developed by Dr. Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot. This methodology seeks to create an aesthetic whole (portraits) with the “goodness” of the data being placed at the forefront of the study. The portraiture method is very different from traditional qualitative methods because it makes an intimate connection with the setting of the study and deeper conversations with the participants. It is necessary to use both Critical Race Theory and Black Masculinity Theory when creating these portraits of Black male early childhood teachers because these theoretical lenses allow me to explore and represent the participants’ intersectional

identities as Black men. These theories amplify the voices of men who have been silenced in the field of education for so long.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory allows me to "unmask and expose racism in its various permutations" (Taylor et al., 2016, p. 18). Therefore, CRT offers a critical lens for examining the experiences of Black male teachers who were subject to racism throughout their educational experiences. It also offers a useful theoretical lens for understanding the ways racism permeates their current workplaces in schools and districts.

CRT is built on a foundation of 5 key tenets: 1) racism is business as usual in society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012); 2) counter-storytelling is essential when speaking against master narratives that have been told about marginalized communities (Delgado, 2005); 3) the mechanism of liberalism brings slow change (Taylor et al., 2016); 4) interest convergence is when Black people gain new opportunities only if their interests intersect with those of white people (Taylor et al., 2016); 5) intersectionality is vital when linking the different parts of ones' identity (Taylor et al., 2016). This study will employ several of these tenets as an analytic tool to understand the experiences of Black male teachers.

The first tenant of CRT posits that racism is endemic in society (Delgado et al., 2012). This means that racism is built into systems and has been a part of our society for so long that many white people believe it does not exist. Such perspectives have led to phenomenon such as "colorblindness," in which people (usually white people) profess not to see race, thus denying and silencing important aspects of racial and cultural identifies and lived experience. CRT offers a strategy for "unmasking and exposing racism in its various permutations" (Taylor, et al., 2016). This tenant allows me to examine racism within school structures and the culture that exhibits

inclusiveness from the outside while effectively excluding Black students and teachers. Schools' systemic racism significantly impacts Black male teachers and Black students (Pabon, 2016). By visiting and observing the schools firsthand in addition to interviewing Black male teachers, I will be able to capture their experiences in multiple forms, including the ways institutionalized racism impacts them in the “setting”.

The second tenant of CRT shares the importance of counternarratives. Delgado (1989) stresses the importance of “naming one’s reality” by sharing that stories are essential for the voice of marginalized people to be heard. He shares that reality is socially constructed, and it would be relevant to share that though one’s reality can be constructed, it can and will be interpreted by outsiders in different ways. Delgado’s drive to incorporate voice and one’s stories are the same as the vision of Dr. Lawrence-Lightfoot and her quest for goodness. For change to happen, stories from Black male teachers need to reach within and beyond academia. Only by lifting up Black men’s own stories, can conversations begin and change occur. The lens of counter-narratives allows me to create counter-stories with my Black male teachers such that they can openly speak about their experiences within the schools and children they serve. Their voices will be amplified to counter dominant narratives about Black boys and men.

The third tenant allows me to critique liberalism on the negative consequences it has for Black male teachers. As Taylor and colleagues (2016) argued, the changes demanded by CRT are systemic, but “liberalism has no mechanism for such change” (Taylor et al., 2016, p. 19). We see the effect of slow-moving “liberal” and “progressive” change in our current educational system, and we see consequences of such “progress” still impacting Black communities. For example, some of the tragic outcomes of cases such as *Brown vs. Board of Education* during the civil rights era were that many Black teachers were displaced from their jobs, principals were

demoted or fired, Black schools were shut down, and many Black students stopped attending (Oakley et al., 2013).

Today, Black children, particularly Black boys, are still subject to inequitable education as they are disproportionately placed in special education and out of school suspension (Ford et al., 2016; Bryan, 2017; Loveless, 2018). This slow change that was seen as liberal progress did not immediately benefit Black people, and the effects are still present today (Dancy, 2014; Oakley et al., 2013). The consequences of *Brown vs. Board of Education* directly tie to the decline of Black male teachers who were seen as pillars in their community at the time (Oakley et al., 2013). Now, a prevailing narrative is present such that Black men cannot be regarded as teachers of young children because what was once a norm is now seen as unusual and suspicious (Bryan & Browder, 2013).

The fourth tenet, interest convergence, allows me to explore the true intentions of initiatives across the country that aspire to increase the number of Black male teachers in school districts. Interest convergence reflects the phenomenon that Black people will only be able to benefit from policies and initiatives when their interests will also benefit white people. Derrick Bell made the argument that *Brown vs. Board of Education* was an example of interest convergence because the outcomes favored white people and barely Black people. It was of interest to him to explore questions such as, “Why now?” and “Why would the highest court approve such a law?” The outcome of integrating schools impacted the firing of thousands of Black school administrators and teachers. Now in 2021, we are now looking at the importance of teacher diversity and asking Black people to come back to very classrooms they were once pushed out of. I would like to examine interest convergence on the purposes of why school

districts are now interested specifically on their initiatives hiring more Black men in the classroom.

For example, many school districts are hiring more Black men, which benefits Black men seeking employment. However, such initiatives are possibly driven by predominately white school districts' perspective that Black men can serve as disciplinarians for Black boys and girls and therefore remove white teachers' responsibility to learn how to become more culturally responsive. This study will help identify whether interest convergence is evident in school districts that hire Black male teachers. When Black male teachers are continually seen and treated as disciplinarians and not educators in school districts, questions have to be proposed (Bristol, 2017; Bristol et al., 2018; Pabon, 2016). Though research supports racial matching between students and teachers being prevalent for increasing academic outcomes for children of color, is that truly the intention of school districts' rush to increase teacher diversity? (Brooks, 2019; Egalite et al., 2017; Milner, 2006; Rosen, 2018; Stanley, 2017; Vilson, 2015). Therefore, the questions raised are: What are school districts' real intentions when hiring Black male teachers? Will school administrators' answers corroborate with the views of the Black male teachers' experiences of and about the support they receive?

The fifth tenant, intersectionality, will allow me to look at the different parts of a Black male teachers' identity. Columbia Law School (2017) interviewed Kimberly Crenshaw, and she shared her definition of intersectionality:

“Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LBGTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things.”

I'm interested primarily in masculinity and Blackness. Additional gender markers such as sexuality, social class, and ethnicity will be explored through an intersectional lens. As most studies on Black male teachers assume their participants are heterosexual Black men, we must understand there could be dichotomy between a heterosexual Black man's experience and those who may not identify as being heterosexual. Taking Black male teachers' full identities into consideration is essential for understanding the difference in experiences and shaping narratives that are true to the participating co-portraitist. In regards to race, many participants may identify with African, African-American, Afro-Hispanic, etc. Therefore, their stories will be framed by their lived social and cultural experiences. Portraiture gives these men the opportunity to share. It is evident that one's culture is built from the community they grew up in and the impact of systemic and institutionalized racism that has shaped expectations for their identities. These forces change the dynamic of their trajectory. Intersectionality will allow me to look at the key pieces of the Black male teachers' identity and discover where the overlap and differences are among them through the experiences they share.

Black Masculinity Theory

In addition to Critical Race Theory, a Black Masculine Identity Theory lens will be used (Jackson, 2006). When studying Black male early childhood teachers' experience, it is essential to look more in-depth on what encompasses their identity as Black men. Black men are not seen as natural nurturers and therefore many Black male teachers are not seen as early childhood educators (Bryan & Browder, 2013; Hicks, 2016). With this knowledge, we must explore notions of one's identity and how Black male teachers navigate such assumptions both inside and outside the classroom. Jackson (2006) highlights the way one has to negotiate within one's self to "stay grounded in one's cultural worldview" when one lives in a life of "double consciousness." This

can be very damaging to one's sense of belonging and understanding as Black men. As a Black male, one's identity of being masculine can be uniquely judged by those in and around the community. If a Black man feels that his identity as a "man" has been threatened, his positionality will shift, therefore showing the fluidity of one's masculinity in a given situation (Jackson, 2006). Jackson (2006) suggests that there are five constructs shaping Black masculinity theory: "struggle, community, achievement, independence, and recognition" (p.134). These constructs are essential to apply when studying a Black man's identity and positionality, because their identity impacts their position in society. This section will define each in turn.

First, Jackson (2006) shared seven assumptions about struggle that are the foundation of Black Masculinity Theory:

1. Struggle is a human activity that solidifies one's sense of community.
2. Struggle is defined by group experiences (i.e., it is not that struggle is unique to Black males, but that racial and gender group experiences of Black males contextualize struggle).
3. Struggle is the centerpiece of the Black masculine identity model because of the complexity of defining and negotiating the Black masculine identity.
4. All identity theories, in some way, call for dialectic. In this case, Black masculine identities are enwrapped in an I-Other dialectic involving politics of recognition.
5. Black masculine persons are usually preoccupied with a sense of self-efficacy, which, when achieved, offers a sense of life satisfaction, autonomy, and stability.
6. Black masculine persons' motivation to achieve is culturally, historically, and socially founded.

7. Without struggle, recognition, independence, and achievement, commitment to the community is virtually impossible. (p. 135)

The “struggle” is something Black men learn to become resilient to from an early age because of the continual impact of inequitable systems built upon white supremacy. When exploring the experiences of Black male teachers, I will take a more in-depth look at the struggles they have navigating spaces that are not welcoming to Black men (Jackson, 2006). The “struggle” is the central point of Black masculinity theory and will be explored through the experiences of Black male teachers in early childhood education. As portraiture looks for the goodness, it is evident that goodness can be found in one’s struggle with their identity.

Secondly, Jackson’s (2006) notion of community is central to my work. I will look at how Black men view themselves and how they are positioned in the community. Many Black males throughout the literature explain that the main reason they wanted to become a teacher was to give back to their community (Hicks, 2016; Lynn, 2006). However, we see a lack of Black males in early childhood education (Bryan et al., 2013). Therefore, two questions are proposed: Why do Black males potentially not see being an early childhood education teacher as an equally viable way to give back to their community? Is it a threat to their male identity to be seen by others as a nurturer?

In using the third construct, achievement, I will explore what professional and educational achievement means to Black male teachers and to their students. This will allow me to explore how their community may have helped in their achievement and also how community celebrated them. The early childhood workforce has only recently begun shifting narratives to be recognized as a profession with distinct preparation requirements, professional pipelines, associated income, specializations, and advancement opportunities (NAEYC, 2020).

Perspectives about whether early childhood education is a distinct and respected profession could influence whether and in what ways an early childhood career is seen as an achievement. Additionally, as more Black men obtain advanced educational degrees and certifications, these achievements will allow them to grow professionally but also have the possibility of increasing their income. Though financial increase is not guaranteed in every state, these credentials and the professionalization of the early childhood field potentially provides Black males with the opportunity to move from teacher to administration and other advanced opportunities.

The fourth construct will provide a lens through which to examine the independence of the Black male teachers within the study. Knowing that each individual defines independence differently, we must first explore similarities across participants' experiences and how those intersectional experiences shaped their personal ideas about independence. It is also a critical construct because one may acquire independence through different means, and one may be constricted from achieving independence because of the systemic oppression faced by Black men.

The fifth construct examines recognition. As a Black male, recognition by one's community contributes to one's growth and mental health. However, a lack of recognition can be harmful. Thinking of recognition in the context of sports, when young Black boys are taught that winning is important and it is not achieved, a Black boy may become hurt, develop contempt, and be confused on the next steps to take (Jackson, 2006). When Black boys mature into Black men, this attitude does not leave them, but now recognition is looked for on another level. I would incorporate the word mature in my study because one reaches a different level of maturity in life through experiences. This construct allows me to examine the experiences and impact of

recognition or non-recognition of Black male teachers within their school building and their community.

Although research has shown the importance of both female and male Black teachers, I will focus on the impact of Black male teachers. In the following, I will be focusing on important themes found throughout the literature on the unspoken power of Black male teachers' presence in schools and their experiences with navigating racialized and gendered expectations, including: (a) the importance of Black male teachers; (b) perceptions of Black male teachers in schools; (c) networks of support and solidarity; (d) dominant expectations of Black male teachers in early childhood and the harmful consequences of these expectations; (e) significance of learning from Black male early childhood education teachers resisting master narratives; and (f) who benefits from reframing?

Importance of Black Male Teachers

Decades of research support the importance of Black Teachers in the identity development of Black youth (John-Hopkins, 2018; Loveless, 2018). While the low number of Black male teachers in the general population limits our ability to draw inferences about race and gender, we can draw upon the evidence base for Black teachers and male teachers, respectively. The research is clear that the benefit to Black youth operates on two key mechanisms: (a) referrals and (b) discipline practices. We also know that Black teachers are less likely to refer students for special education services (Mills, 2003).

The argument for the importance of Black male teachers on child and youth development dates back more than a century. African-American scholar DuBois coined the phrase "The Talented Tenth" to convey the transformative potential of Black leadership. Talented Tenth was an idea introduced by Dubois (1903) to consider opportunities to re-shape racist systems. From

this perspective, Dubois asserted the likelihood and importance of one in ten Black men becoming leaders. Those in leadership would be seen by many as the ones who would be seen by as many as role models of financial and intellectual success. W.E.B. Dubois also maintained that Black male teachers must also help African-American students gain necessary skills and knowledge needed to agitate and challenge the existing racial order (Dubois, 1902). Dubois advocated for the necessary supports to cultivate leadership potential in Black boys and Black male teachers.

Perceptions of Black Male Teachers in Schools

Research has shown that Black male teachers are perceived in their school setting as behavioral specialist first and a teacher second (Bristol-Mentor, 2018; Bryan, 2017; Egalite, 2017). This is an example of intersectional ways identity impacts teachers' experiences. Societal expectations about Blackness and maleness intersect to position Black male teachers as disciplinarians. Stereotypes of maleness lead to viewing males as authority figures; societal equations of "smartness" with whiteness lead to questioning Black teachers' identities as teachers. Black male teachers are viewed not just as male teachers, which is a rarity in the female-dominated field, but their race is a permanent factor in how they are perceived. Cultural beliefs about masculinity and Blackness are perpetuated in schools and impact interactions with white colleagues, female colleagues, and all students they serve.

Throughout the literature, Black male teachers are seen as the experts when dealing with Black boys' behavior in schools. This obligation falls on them with no regards to their other work responsibilities. Though many Black male teachers spoke of this being a burden, some see it as a call for social justice (Bristol, 2017). Black males who enter into the teaching profession

do so at a risk. Being both Black and male, they run of the risk of being ostracized by their coworkers because of the space being predominately a white female space (Tafari, 2016).

Moreover, Black male teachers are seen as de facto disciplinarians and also more likely to help deal with challenging behavior than as content experts. One interesting takeaway was that Black teachers rejected the idea that student's misbehavior changed because they were Black men (Bristol&Mentor, 2018). We learn that these teachers looked at their approach around behavior as more social emotional development. Bristol and Mentor (2018) also addressed how Black male teachers have the innate ability to reach Black boys in their schools through natural culturally relevant pedagogy.

Networks of Support and Solidarity

Another dimension to consider is whether Black male teachers are working alone (loner) or there are more than three Black male teachers on a staff (grouper) (Bristol, 2017). Teachers who were in the grouper category were more likely to improve their instruction because they worked in turnaround schools (schools that are in dire need of additional support in academics, funding, and instruction) where they were mandated to correlate student outcomes when planning instruction. Loners were, in contrast, not shown to have this structure in their schools. Loners were more likely than groupers to speak about leaving their environment because of their white colleagues. Teachers who were groupers were less likely to report any tensions in regard to race as an issue in their school setting (Bristol, 2017). It was found that Black male teachers may stay in their role regardless of racial inequities (i.e., pay, lack of agency, autonomy, teacher isolation, inadequate administrative support) because they learn to temper their zeal (Vilson, 2015).

One area that has not been explored in literature is the extra service and mentoring burden placed on Black males teachers (Burrows, 2016). In higher education settings, this is well known as the Black tax (Burrows, 2016). The Black tax occurs when Professors who are Black are called on by Students of Color for mentoring and help to learn how to navigate racism within the educational systems and then also called on by colleagues to serve on diversity committees, recruit diverse student candidates, and advise on how to teach Students of Color (King, 2016). These services are taxing on the professors because they take away much-needed time to publish, plan for teaching, family time, etc. This tax was referred to as the “invisible tax” because Black males reported “getting less support and being typecast into nonacademic roles (i.e., disciplinary enforcement, lead on race and equity conversations, unofficial advisor for struggling Black males even when not their teacher of record)” (Mekki, 2018). This is important to explore in P-12 schooling because this tax takes a toll on one’s mental health and can impact one’s success as a teacher. Knowing there is very little research actually looking at the invisible tax on Black P-12 teachers, I will examine associations between the extra responsibilities possibly placed upon Black male teachers and their mental health.

Dominant Expectations of Black Male Teachers in Early Childhood and the Harmful Consequences of these Expectations

Black male teachers are shown throughout the research as being placed in schools to fill the void of absent fathers in single households (Brockenbrough, 2012; Pabon, 2016). Research needs to explore what is the definition of a "father" vs. "role model" vs. “disciplinarian" to students, families, school districts, and researchers. This is a wonder because as many Black male teachers view themselves as role models or fathers, their colleagues, school districts, and some Black students see them as being disciplinarian (Bristol et al., 2018; Pabon, 2016;).

Brockenbrough's (2012) research is groundbreaking because it studies how Black male teachers view themselves as being seen by students in these roles specifically. Some students in his study revolted against seeing the Black male teachers as father figures. Similarly, Black male teachers had a confusing identity to some students who didn't know how to view them.

Brockenbrough also reported some Black male teachers felt a need to assert their hegemonic masculinity to put students in their place and recognize their authority. These behaviors are encouraged by their female colleagues as a way to control their classrooms.

Black male teachers have to negotiate their identities in several ways: "father, role model, teacher, black, male, etc." This is very detrimental to their mental health and brings concerns about what their identity as Black male teachers are. When a Black male is told to be the "disciplinarian" continually but never the educator, this negates them as holders of knowledge. Therefore, the master narrative will continue.

As Black male teachers build their own counter-narratives, they consider the ways their behavior becomes examples to the children they teach (Brockenbrough, 2012). Brockenbrough (2012) found that children were resentful of their Black male teachers and many times told them, "You ain't my daddy." Fatherhood, as a social construct, led children to only see the dynamic of their teachers as being "disciplinarians." This could lead to young boys thinking that this type of masculinity is appropriate. Female students may also see this as the way men should behave, which can lead to toxic outcomes.

There is much intent to increase Black males in school districts, but systems have to recognize Black males as teachers and not only Black bodies (Bryan & Williams, 2017). When looking through an interest convergence lens, districts may hire Black male teachers to discipline Black children and alleviate "stress" off of white teachers. Interest convergence comes to mind

again as districts recruit more Black male teachers, thereby appearing more “diverse” and representative of the community. Districts appear to want us but not our mind. Equitable systems of practice and protection must be in place to help Black male teachers navigate their identity as Black male teachers (Bristol, 2017).

Significance of Learning from Black Male Early Childhood Education Teachers Resisting Master Narratives

When defining the significance of learning from Black male early childhood education teachers resisting master narratives, two words come to mind "Black Excellence." One may ask what is the need to state "Black" in front of excellence? The struggle for the Black race to break down barriers of inequalities in education and society as a whole is a consistent struggle daily. When someone is given the title of Black Excellence, it is seen in the community as one that has achieved another level of success. Success in this context for Black males is defined as achieving an academic degree and working as a teacher

The Black Excellence that is exhibited by Black male teachers is evident in the communities they serve (Alford, 2016; Frank, 2017). There are many benefits to learning from Black male teachers though there is little research on Black males in early childhood education (Bryan & Browder, 2013; Lynn, 2006; Meidl, 2019;). With Black teachers in the classroom research has shown that students are less likely to drop out of high school (Gershenson et al., 2017), less likely to be suspended from school (Lindsay & Hart ,2017), and less likely to be referred for special education services (Ford, 2016). One of the themes across the research was the importance of race matching between students and teachers (Brooks, 2019).

Who Benefits from Reframing?

Many benefit from reframing one's view on the presence of Black males in early childhood education besides the Black male teachers themselves (Brown, 2012; Bryan & Browder, 2013). Black children will be in the presence of Black males, which will be the beginning of children seeing themselves and the possibility of thinking of being a teacher as they get older (Goings & Bianco, 2016). The children will have the additional benefit of having somebody who shares the same cultural awareness and understanding, which is more powerful than a social-emotional curriculum (Brooks, 2019; Bryan & Williams, 2017). Parents benefit by being able to communicate with someone that looks like them, and an immediate trust will benefit the outcomes of the students. By capturing the voice of Black male teachers in early childhood education, their counter-narratives of being effective "teachers" will push schools to change the conversation on Black male teachers and understand the systemic racism that's perpetuated in school districts (Lynn, 2006). The Black male teachers will benefit by seeing this change the expectations of their service within in the school, which will help their mental health tremendously and the burdens they carry daily.

Purpose of Study

In a field that's over 80% white women, Black male teachers' voices have been overshadowed and a narrative of their only purpose is to be disciplinarians in the classroom is perpetuated. In my study, I set to co-create portraits that allow Black male teachers to share their personal journeys as educators in a system that is inherently racist. The early childhood education field lacks literature that allows Black males to explore their identities.

Recommendations will be given to school districts to create a more inclusive and equitable environments for Black male teachers. This is necessary to change the current systems of

oppression that are inherently damaging Black male teachers. Black male early childhood educators' experiences differ from those Black males who teach upper grades because of the nurturing factor that many don't recognize in Black males. In order to change the deficit narratives and increase the proper foundational supports to make systemic and institutionalized change, we first must listen to the story of the impacts these systems have had, apologize and create actionable steps to create lasting change.

Chapter 3

METHOD

This study explored the experiences of Early Childhood Black male teachers. This section begins with the origins of portraiture methodology and my rationale for using it. In this section you will also find my research questions and research design which includes my analysis procedures used.

Research Methodology: Portraiture

Many have come across the methodology portraiture, but many don't understand the brilliance behind a method that aims to bring out the "goodness" in qualitative research. Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot is credited with being the developer of portraiture, but she gives credit to others such as Jessica Hoffman Davis who helped her write the book *The Art and Science of Portraiture*, Clifford Geertz, Samuel Johnson, Oliver Sacks, W.E.B Dubois and many others who she feels were doing very similar work. Like Lawrence-Lightfoot, all of these authors connected to their subjects through intimate conversations to create narratives that capture every essence of the subject including, most importantly, the setting.

In her early years, Dr. Lawrence-Lightfoot was captured on canvas by an artist, and it was there where she feels she was first introduced to the methodology. She looked back to those days where she realized the artist captured so many of her qualities. It was also in reflection that she recalled the connection and feeling as she was being captured. Dr. Lawrence-Lightfoot stated, "I was never treated or seen as an object, but always as a person of strength and vulnerability, beauty and imperfection, mystery and openness" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p.4). This connection was very important to Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot and is the approach she has taken when developing portraits of her subjects.

Lawrence-Lightfoot developed portraiture in response to what she saw as a focus on problems and solutions in most qualitative approaches. The difference in using portraiture is approaching a study looking for goodness and understanding that imperfections will appear, Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot gives the example that a researcher who asks “what is good here?” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p.9) will discover a different phenomenon when taking this approach than looking for “what is wrong?” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p.9). “Portraitist believe that there are myriad ways in which goodness can be expressed and tries to identify and document the actors’ perspectives” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 9). Goodness will look very different for each of a participant’s experience, but it’s the scientific rigor in her method to discover their goodness and how they draw upon their personal experiences to express what it means to them.

One example is to think of portraiture as if you are taking a selfie of yourself. When you take that selfie there may be things you do not want others to see, so you may add a filter to accentuate what you want one to see though there are still imperfections. These filters are not methodological flaws or threats to validity. Instead, they are an active tool for getting closer to the participants’ truth.

One important take away of learning about portraiture is understanding the strength of one’s imperfections. When you are painted by an artist, an artist is painting you as they see you and may cover an imperfection you may have or accentuate some part of you to make you look extravagant. As a portraitist, we take these imperfections that are shared and use them along with the rest of the context to create what Lawrence-Lightfoot called the aesthetic whole.

Dr. Lawrence-Lightfoot was driven to create research that is accessible to more than just fellow researchers in the field, in other words reach an audience that is in the “real world”

(Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis ,1997, p. 9). For this approach to occur, Dr. Lawrence-Lightfoot knew that the normal approach to her analysis of data had to differ from traditional qualitative research that “is meant to inform, not inspire” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997, p. 10). Her approach takes an intrinsic approach to creating a narrative that captures the attention of people outside the academy and draws deep thinking and discussion in different communities to inspire the masses (p.10).

Dr. Lawrence-Lightfoot shares her colleague Dr. Featherstone’s work around portraiture as “a people’s scholarship” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, p.10). “A people’s scholarship” is helping give those who would rarely have their voices heard, a wider audience. When these portraits are shared, it creates deep conversations on the experience shared by participants. This approach to research is designed to be more accessible for all communities.

Criticisms of Portraiture

Dr. Fenwick W. English (2000), in *A Critical Appraisal of Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot’s Portraiture as a Method of Educational Research*, suggests that “the problem with portraiture as a research method is to be found not in the technique, but in its failure to interrogate what it conceals, i.e., the politics of vision (p. 21).” Here, Dr. English scrutinizes the position of the portraitist/researcher being objective. He shares that the power dynamic between the portraitist and the participant as an “inequality” (p. 23). His biggest reason for this is that ultimately the portraitist holds the powers in deciding what is included in an aesthetic whole and what is considered knowledge. He continued this critique when bringing scientific methods of determining reliability in the portraits, since no outside source can confirm what is shared as really “truth”.

Dr. English position directly goes against Dr. Lawrence-Lightfoot's approach of her reasoning of portraiture. He neglects to think about the benefits of portraiture by looking through the "white gaze" that Toni Morrison speaks of. Since Dr. English cannot relate to the readings, doesn't see representation of white society, and doesn't have the power to control the narrative, he sees no worth in portraiture.

In response, Lawrence Lightfoot (2005) stated, "There is never a single story; many could be told" (pg.10). This response is one with dignity and respect and states about the power of research and how many would like some narratives that perpetuate negative stereotypes about Black people and other marginalized communities to continue to live.

Rationale for Portraiture Methodology

Portraiture methodology allowed me to capture and capture the full experience of Black male teachers. Being able to use portraiture, allowed me the space to have intimate conversations with my participants to understand their purpose, drive and determination. Portraiture allowed me to find the different textures and themes that's presented in the setting and the stories that was shared by the Black men unearthed a story that was hidden beneath the context presented at the surface level. Using Portraiture, Critical Race Theory, and Black Masculinity Theory allowed me to co-create counternarratives that consist of ones' power, strength, and struggle that reflect of the goodness of not only them, but the community they serve.

Analytic and Theoretical Framing

This section describes the theoretical framing used in the development and analyses of the portraits. First I will describe how Critical Race Theory was used as an analytic tool. Then I will describe how Black Masculinity Theory was used to enrich the portraits and analysis.

Critical Race Theory was utilized to co-create counternarratives with Black male teachers. CRT shares the importance of voice as in portraiture in pushing against the master narratives by creating counternarratives that drive against white supremacy in education (Taylor et al., 2016). CRT allows us to intricately pull back the layers of systemic racism and use an interest convergence lens when looking at the purposes for school districts to recruit Black males. CRT allowed me to use a intersectionality lens when looking at the different intersections of the Black male teachers and compare and contrast areas of experiences that shape their identity.

Jackson's (2006) Black Masculinity Theory, complimented CRT and allowed me to look deeper into the identities of Black male teachers. This lens allowed me to explore how one has successfully navigated the "struggle" of being a Black man in early childhood education. Struggle is central to Black Masculinity Theory as a black man's identity is very complex. By incorporating intersectionality of CRT and Black Masculinity Theory, I was able to better understand "ones" identity as a Black man and the pieces that may or may not fit together to create the aesthetic whole.

Research Questions

1. How do Black male early childhood teachers view their positionality as Black men in their schools?
2. How do students view their Black male teachers?
3. How does school administration view the contributions of Black male teachers?

Method

Participant Selection

Three Black male early childhood teachers were recruited for this study. Each met the following inclusion criteria: (a) identified as Black/African American or Caribbean (Jamaican, Haitian, etc.), (b) current head classroom teacher in an early childhood classroom (preschool through third grade), (c) two or more years of experience, and (d) had a good working relationship with their principal as evidenced by permission for a principal interview.

I conducted snowball sampling (Naderifar et al., 2017) to recruit 3 Black male early childhood teachers. Snowball sampling was appropriate given the need for trusting relationships between the portraitist and the subject. I began recruiting within my existing professional network for Black male teachers, and built upon these relationships to gain access to Black male teachers across a range of settings.

The three Black male teachers who participated in the study were Daniel, Robert and Dee. Daniel is a preschool teacher with over 5 years of teaching experience in a large urban district in the Mid-Atlantic region. Robert is a history and math teacher for 3rd and 4th graders with over 5 years of teaching experience in a large urban district in the Mid-Atlantic region. Dee is preschool teacher with 3 years of experience in a large urban district in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Three principals also participated in this study. Ebony identifies as a Black woman who has been a principal for over 7 years in a P-8 school in a large urban district in the Mid-Atlantic region. Jeffery identifies as a Black man who has been a school principal for over 4 years in a P-8 school in a large urban district in the Mid-Atlantic region. Ayana identifies as mix-raced who

has been a principal for over 7 years in a P-8 school in a large urban district in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Data Collection Procedures

For data collection, I conducted school and classroom observations, visual data, and semi-structured interviews. Observations of the Black male teachers and of the community provided rich context for their portraits. Visual data provided students the opportunity to express their connections and relationships through pictures. Conducting interviews with the school administrators allowed me to have intimate conversations on their views on Black male teachers. Lastly, the interviews of the Black male teachers were the key data piece as they helped co-construct their portraits of their journeys and experiences as Black men in a field dominated by whiteness. These data collection procedures were chosen and successfully helped meet my theoretical commitments.

Non-Participatory Observations: Black Male Teachers

Ciesielska et al., (2018) suggested that observational data is very powerful because it allows the researcher to see and experience in the moment. Observations for my study were a way to capture the full scope of the essence of how Black male teachers navigate their schools and also allows me to observe their interactions within the school community and outside the school doors. This type of data is very important to me as a portraitist because it allowed me to co-create a portrait that allows readers to see what the Black male teacher and I see.

Non-Participant observations allowed me to observe without disruption and capture the essence of the authenticity of the actions of those around. These observations occurred for two of the three teachers Daniel and Robert. Observations took place during each teacher's instructional

period on their online e-learning platform. Observations lasted 60-120 minutes. In addition to observing instruction, I also visited the school community to get a sense of where the school is located. Prior to meeting each teacher, I drove around the neighborhood to understand the physical location and the cultural landmarks. I observed how children, youth, and adults interacted with the school and surrounding areas.

Semi-Structured Interviews: Black Male teachers & School Administrators

Adams (2015) suggests that semi-structured interviews allow researchers to gain more in-depth knowledge in the one-on-one setting compared to the focus group setting. I conducted semi-structure Interviews with three Black male teachers and school administrators.

Interviews with the Black male teachers occurred in a setting they felt most comfortable. By allowing the participants to choose the setting of the observation, it gave me the opportunity to explore the community they teach in and bring the reader in touch with the surroundings. This connection is very important in portraiture, because my goal is for my readers to see, hear and feel what I feel. Interviews lasted 60-90 minutes and were recorded. Each interview recording was transcribed. Due to public health guidance, not all interviews were able to take place face-to-face. Daniel and Dee's interviews occurred in a conference room with 6ft of space between participant and interviewer. The interview protocol is available in appendix E.

I also conducted semi-structured interviews with three principals. These interviews were very important because they allowed me to learn how principals view Black male teachers. The interviews also allowed me to explore the affordance and constraints of having Black male teachers. These data were used for triangulation and strengthening narratives of Black male teachers' experiences. These interviews happened on using the Zoom platform and were

recorded and transcribed. Interviews lasted between 35-60 minutes. The interview protocol is available in appendix D.

Visual Data Collection: Students in Classroom

Pain (2012) gives direction on the multiple ways visual data can enhance your study. Visual data gives participants another way to communicate their thoughts, feelings and emotions without words. In this study the students of the Black male teachers were in an early childhood classroom that ranged from Prekindergarten-3rd grade. Teachers explained to students that I was interested in seeing them working together. Teachers than gave students the opportunity to draw pictures that reflect them in a picture. In Dee's class, some students also drew pictures of the co-teacher as well. This was important for my study because it provided additional layers of information about the teacher and student relationships. It also gave voice to children in a way that is accessible across the age of learners participating. This activity was conducted by the teacher on day one of data collection during the observation. Students who chose not to participate were not penalized. The visual data collection protocol is in appendix B.

Data Analysis Procedures

To analyze my data, I used the portraiture method while also keeping to my theoretical commitments to Critical Race Theory and Black Masculinity. As a portraiture, it was important to take in the essence of the setting, tone of conversations, body language, smells and views. I co-constructed a powerful portrait that reflects the goodness of the Black male teacher's identity and then combined all sources of data and wrote a poem that reflects the Black Male teacher's identity.

Portraiture Analysis Components

When analyzing my data using portraiture, there were several pieces that were taken in account. They consist of context, voice, relationships, emergent themes, and the aesthetic whole (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

Context

The context in portraiture lays out the groundwork for the portrait you co-create with your participant. When thinking portrait, think about “priming the canvas” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, pg. 74). A canvas is what artist use to paint on. Most artists prime their canvas, which includes a couple layers of base paint (usually white) so that when they begin painting, it will help the other colors pop out. When a portraitist primes their canvas, they are not actually using paint, but are setting the reader up by describing every detail that’s possible so that the reader can experience the story as if they were present. In portraiture, these details should begin as you journey to where the observation, interview, or focus group are to take place.

As you journey towards your destination, you need to record everything you observe which includes the sights, sounds, smells and landmarks that stick out. This is a very important when beginning to prime your canvas. Once you have arrived at your destination, you need to continue priming the canvas by recording what the setting looks like, and by describing what’s immediately around the destination. If one wasn’t to prime the canvas, then it would be an ordinary narrative of a person experience which is valuable, but the “goodness” will not show as clearly. The next value of using portraiture is “voice”.

Voice

“Voice” is approached in portraiture several different ways: “witness”, “interpretation”, “preoccupation”, “autobiography”, voice of others around you, and voice with those you speak

with (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p.87). Voice is the driving factor and tool for one to truly capture the essence of the words of those individuals in the context and especially with the one you are set to interview. The voice of the portraitist is used and seen throughout the portrait but should never be heard over the participant. The voice is given in the form of the narrative that is co-created with your participant. Table 1 provides an original example of each type of voice applied to my area of research

Table 1

Types of Voice in
Portraiture

by her students and families. I wanted to see this for myself as I've worked for a very strong leader before. The students quickly fixed their school uniforms as inspection was about to begin. She delivered the morning announcements and ended it with, if you need anything let me know, if you want to talk let me know, I'm here for you. Once the children dispersed quickly to their rooms, she took students to the side who needed clean school uniforms as she knew the consequences the students would face if they went to their classes with the current uniform. The student shared with her that their grandmother ran out of money and kept apologizing for their dress. She told them "don't worry", gave a hug to the student and immediately reached out to grandma to see how she could help. This sense of compassion was very evident and mimics my experience with strong principals.

football team. You could tell by his smirk that he was really happy to talk about football and began telling me about how he got his start in football.

what in their life influences their perspectives on the phenomena occurring in the setting and the way they approach the research since “voice” is the research instrument (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, p. 95).

Voices of Others. One important part of creating portraits is the importance of understanding the difference between “listening to voice” and “listening for voice.” When one listens to voice, they are simply listening to somebody tell their story or impromptu dialogue that may occur while observing, but they don’t capturing the true essence of the message. When one is listening for voice, they are listening by capturing in note form every move the participant or participants are making and the intonation in their expression as dialoguing is being delivered. This is very important to capture, because their movements tell a story in itself and drives you to think more critical about what they are trying to convey. It’s also important to listen for pauses and silence because they can help anchor the thoughts your participant is trying to share. It shapes your portrait and leaves room for interpretation for readers. One way to do this is write down the time and note of movement so that you can go back to listen to your transcripts and record that note and create your interpretation (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 99).

Voice in Dialogue. Voice in dialogue occurs when the portraitist speaks “with” the participant in a very intimate way to build a connection that brings comfort and support for both parties. Voice in dialogue will be very evident in a narrative as you will see a flow of direct quotes (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 103).

Relationships

Relationships with your participants is key to being able to successfully paint a picture that’s reflective of the journey and the experience of the person. This is first done by building a sense of “trust” before attempting to collect data. Trust is important to gain access to one’s

knowledge and experience, and also the setting. This trust may be hard to gain if you don't share the same race as the one who are trying to gain trust of. When one seeks to gain trust, you must be authentic in your approach and truthful throughout. Your participant will gauge when they feel comfortable to let down their guard as you build trust.

A large difference between portraiture and other qualitative methodology is the depth of knowledge one is asking to capture the stories within the stories. In order to discover phenomenon in one story, you have to have intimate conversations that will lead to information that's not surface level. This relationship has to be maintained from the beginning of your research to well after the aesthetic whole is created. If one is to break the relationship once data collection has finished, you may sour the relationship with the person and persons involved and revoke access for others who seek it (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis,1997).

Emergent Themes

Emerging themes are the patterns that appear in a review all of the data sources. These patterns can be found by repeated words, phrases, or actions shared by your participant or participants. It is also key that as you are collecting data, you are making notations so that you can quickly refer back to them to help guide the formation of the narrative. One step that's very important as your finding emergent themes is to member check them with your participant. This is important because you are co-creating the narrative and your interpretation needs to be reflective of the context included. The process of finding patterns in your data shouldn't be seen as labor, but a love to have the opportunity to share one's journey and the blessing to gain access as an outsider to a setting that tells a story everybody needs to hear (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis,1997).

Aesthetic Whole

The aesthetic whole is the narrative that has been created which portraitist declares as the final portrait. Once emergent themes have been identified, the portraitist begins crafting a story that is reflective of the experiences encountered and the journey of the participant. The aesthetic whole takes time as the author diligently finds the pieces from all sources of data that truly paints a portrait. The best approach in creating the aesthetic whole, is to make sure you are conducting member checks as you craft the whole because these member checks can give you vital feedback that can help the process go smoothly. Interpretation is key to remember as the aesthetic whole is created, but also understood that portraiture leaves places for readers to interpret for themselves on purpose. Lastly, as Dr. Lawrence-Lightfoot spoke about early, someone will always be critical about the portrait you share, but you need to remember why you chose this methodology in the first place (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 243).

Overarching Data Analysis

Figure 1 describes the steps I used to analyze the interviews with Black male teachers. The process described was used to create co-constructed counternarrative portraits. Themes identified across these three portraits contributed to triangulation.

Figure 1.

Black Male Teachers Interview Analysis Process

Step 1

Step 4

Figure 3 describes the steps I used to analyze the data from school observations. The purpose of the school observations was to provide possible triangulation with interviews, focus groups, and school observations.

Figure 3.

Observations in School Analysis Process

Step 1

Step 1

Step 1

Brother's Teacher, I have envisioned and I am currently creating pathways for Black and Brown males to either obtain their associates, bachelors, or graduate degree with financial support, mentoring support, and certification support they will need to reach a new level. I understand from my past experience as a teacher (Insider) and now researcher (Outsider) that I have bias when conducting research on the experience of other Black male teachers.

Data Trustworthiness and Credibility

There were consistent member checks during the analyzing of the data. The member checks occurred with the participants first, with reviews of the transcriptions completed and continued until we both agreed all changes are correct. Second, member checks occurred to see if we agreed on the themes identified within the transcripts. The third level of member checks occurred as the aesthetic whole was being co-created along with the participant. Triangulation occurred to strengthen the credibility of the portraits.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

This section contains the “aesthetic whole” portraits for my three participants: Daniel, Robert, and Demetrius. Each begins with a poem and a visualization I developed from an aspect of each teacher’s professional story. In some cases, the portrait ends with quote from the participant that we (myself and co-portraitist participant) felt would inspire continued reflection on the part of the reader. It should be noted that drawing on my participant’s voices, I will use Black and African-American interchangeably through my research.

Portrait 1: Daniel

Maintain your Social Distance

Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, I must laugh at the ignorance that exonerates from your mouth
 To many times I felt that I must respond, but think I think why tax myself?
 For to even share my thoughts would go in one of your ears and out the other bypassing that
 entity that’s a poor excuse for a brain because clearly it’s the last thing you know how to use
 One of you asked me “Are you in the right class?”
 Really,
 Oh, that’s how you welcome those who don’t share your identity
 Because usually those are the ones you’re sipping your tea with
 Well as you sip your tea, I’ll continue to sip my Hennessy
 For my mental health will not be tax by the ignorance of one who now chooses to join me in my
 neighborhood to benefit your student loan repayment bringing now those same biases to our
 children
 Please take a jog back to your community for you definitely got off on the wrong stop
 For those who do look like you, and want to do the work, are impacted by your
 continued ignorance

By William White

Journey Through the Community

I would like to introduce no other than Daniel, a 6'3, 41 year old Black male early childhood teacher who stands with an athletic build, and low cut fade. His affect is one that brings positive and a strong confidence of self with his posture comfortably set and head straight up. Currently he is employed at Charter Creek Public Charter School in a urban city on the East coast. As we begin our conversation, Daniel describes his daily commute to work that begins at 6:30 am.

Again, this is Ward 8, so you have majority Black, houses some boarded up A lot of apartments. You see a lot of liquor stores on the corner, a lot of fast food places, Chinese stores. It looks like it's (gentrification) happening, slowly but surely, because you could look at it, because over the river, again, I think in Southeast it's cheaper, you can see a few White people, because funny thing was, it was one day I was coming to work ... it was one morning I was coming to work and I was on Malcolm X Boulevard. It was like 6:30 maybe, and some I'm driving, I'm at the red light, and I see this lady, she's jogging. I was like, "Okay, one, I've never seen anyone jogging on Malcolm X Boulevard," so I'm like, "Okay." I finally look. I'm like, "Hold up, she's White." And then she had this big dog with her. So I said, "Oh, they're coming. They're definitely coming. They're definitely coming."

Journey to Teaching

It was the smile on his face that he had on his face that showed he was really excited to dig into explain his purpose in education and the love he has for teaching. He shared that “was

just the absence of a Black male teacher, particularly in the ECE field, you know? Pre-K through second grade.” that led him to the classroom. It wasn’t until 6th grade that he would be introduced to his first Black male teacher. He was well of aware of how he was viewed as a male teacher in a female dominated field and wanted to help change the narrative.

I wanted to have an impact on their perception, you know? I wanted to provide children with a real world perception. Their world is not all females, and so I wanted just to give them a real world perspective of what they will encounter.

Daniel feels a strong connection to his community. He wants to be a pillar in the community. This brings him internal joy, but he expressed doubts about his purpose. This changed when he started reflecting on the impact of Black male teachers in his life.

Yeah, and just my joy in just helping people. So first was the joy, because I consider it a form of human service, so I knew that was my area but I couldn't pinpoint where in the field. And so as I got older, that's when I narrowed it down to education and wanting to be a teacher.

He decided after high school to attend (South Carolina State University) a HBCU in the South and enrolled in their ECE program, where he successfully graduated with his bachelor’s degree and teacher certification. Soon after, Daniel decided to enter in their master’s degree program but was faced with a hard decision after a quick trip back home for the summer.

Yep, so I was there and I enrolled into the ECE program. So I graduated and enrolled into the master's program there as well. There was a time where I came home, because I'm originally from Delaware, so I went back to Delaware for like a summer break and I was so anxious to work and get a job, and so mind you I had maybe three or four courses left to complete my master's. So while I was home, I applied for a job at a charter school just

to see where I was in the field. So lo and behold, they called me the next day. I had an interview and so from there, I was torn. Like, "Okay, go back to school and finish or work," but me, I was young and I was kind of anxious, so I put my career on hold and became a first grade teacher at that charter school.

“Foot in the Door”

Daniel made the decision that he felt was best for him. He knew his immediate impact would be made and felt in the classroom. After getting his foot in the door, he taught first grade for a couple years before being approached by his principal, “the principal came in and he asked me a favor, "Can you go down to the pre-K level?" This question perplexed Daniel as he really didn't see himself teaching any younger. "No. I don't want to teach babies." But I went home and I was able to reflect on that, and I said, "You know what? I'll give it a try." Honestly I've now been there ever since.”

Daniel really enjoyed teaching Pre-K, “just the response from the children and their parents, that part right there, you know what I'm saying? That kept me there, and so I stayed at that school for three more years.” He began looking for another teaching placement afterwards and took the position as a Head Start teacher for three years and then found an opportunity at a local university which would allow him to complete his master's degree.

I went to work for a Head Start program, as a pre-K teacher there for about three years. I then applied for it's called The Learning Center, and actually it's under the University of Delaware. They have a learning center that is located on their campus, so I applied there, and lo and behold I got the job, right? So from there, they had a benefit where all the employees could go to school for free, so that was a time for me to jump on that bus and

so from there, that's when I completed my master's, but that's when I also realized I lost all my previous credits, so I had to start all over again.

Though he was disheartened to learn he couldn't do credit retrieval for his new master's program in human development and family study, the program excited him because of the focus on the "whole" child and family. This program along with the addition of required home visits gave him additional perception of the children lives he now taught.

Because at the Head Start we did home visits, and so that gave a little piece of where the children came from, their family, their culture. And so that right there, that planted the seed and so I was more interested. Well, not more interested but I guess more interested in the whole child. So, in the child, in their family, their home, their community and their resources, and so that's why I enrolled into their master's program.

Even though Daniel had successfully completed his bachelors and had received his teacher certification in South Carolina, his scores were too low in Delaware to be granted a teacher certificate. This was interesting to me as I then wondered if his teacher education program helped him meet the minimum just to get licensed but not prepare him to compete nationally for teacher jobs. Could this be intentional as graduates wouldn't want to leave the state when their scores wouldn't be good outside the state?

Yeah, my score was too low, so I had to retake it, and so that right there ... and so that's where I'm at now too, still trying to figure it out, because my score wasn't ... it still wasn't high enough, so I'm in the process now of retaking that too." I just think at the collegiate level, and not even that, probably before that, teachers tend to teach towards the test versus teaching test taking skills, and I think that was the problem for me, again, not really learning those skills versus teaching to the test.

Rose Colored Lens or Blacked Out Lens

As we continued dialoguing, Daniel's frustration became very apparent about the impact of implicit bias exhibited by his white colleagues on Black children. He saw children begin being "conditioned" as a young child themselves. Many times the conversations he had with white teachers is where they claim they don't see color, but in actuality do by many of their responses. He questions their authenticity to want to teach Black kids in the urban setting.

Maybe it's something that has been embedded. The term "cycle", and so it's something that has been embedded since they were younger, and so if you keep hearing the same ... If you keep hearing the same thing all your life, you start to believe it, and then even though you say you don't believe it but subconsciously you do, you do, and so it's that type of conditioning.

You know, even though they say, "I see all people the same and we're all equal," but we sit down and have conversations and the first thing is when you put a color in front of the person, that tells me a lot, so for example, "I saw a Black man, he was behind me," versus, "I saw a man." So when you have that descriptor in front of "man", that tells me ... that says something about your perception.

Exactly, and that part right there, it has a significant impact, I believe, because, again, I think we as professionals, we have to question why are we here? And so sometimes they have a false reason. I'm here to help but at the same time I think their ultimate goal is, "I'm here to get a check, and because I have these programs ..." They have these programs where you teach in these high need areas, they're paying off your

loans and so that's why they go to that, because there's a benefit for them. It benefits them and not really their child.”

“You Might Wanna Think Twice”

Daniel was very aware these biases perpetuated was one the many reasons Black children were repeatedly found to be in trouble. He feels that “discipline should be fair and it should be appropriate,” though many times that is not always his fellow teachers’ beliefs. They looked to him to deal with the behaviors many times. Although they were looking for him to be very strict, he chose the path of empathy.

You know, my experience from, I guess, the discipline ... maybe the disciplinarian role, again, people see me, 6'3", male, Black male, supposed to be this tough disciplinarian, but I'm not. That's not me, because again, to me that just causes more friction at times.

I know it's funny because at one point I was the one being sent children, but then my approach is different, again, than what they expected. And so that changed the whole dynamic. At one point you're going to Mr. Gray class, and again, so they come back and see their child is sitting, playing with my class or doing something with my class. They're included in my class. Teachers didn't like that, because it's like, "I sent them I sent them over here because she wasn't listening." They was like, "Oh, you're not going over there because you have fun over there." I'm like, "It's not about having fun, but again, it's about being appropriate." And again, I think ... I don't know. They had a hard time with that, but they switched that up real quick.” But again, that was at that moment. He or she has calmed down. Then they are aware of what happened, their why, so why would I keep them in this same space, again because that's what keeps them in the same mindset space.

“I Treat Them Like My Own”

Though they didn't care much for his approach to behavior, they would still say that when it's comes to Mr. Gray "He's a teacher who definitely cares about his children, his students, and treats them like they're his ... and treats them like they're his, they're his children." He is well aware of the homes his children come from and steps up whenever needed to make an impact on that child's life regardless if he is asked to or not. He understands the importance of his children having a Black male role model in their lives and has conversations with them around how the power he holds as a teacher can be very skewed in the eyes of children.

Oh, it's good. Again, I think most of my students, again, coming from that single family, single mother, and so I think they looked at me as that male figure and that male role model, and their parents as well, too. So I think it's definitely a good relationship. Again, like all relationships, it takes time to build, and so over time they're like, "I want to go. I want to stay here." So at one point, you know what I'm saying? They'll be like, "Who is this man?" But then over time once we're able to build that relationship, then it's like, "Oh, we're cool, you know what I'm saying? We're cool."

Yes, it(Black masculinity) plays a role, I think, because ... So I'm showing my students that, first and foremost, I'm human like you, and the next ... and that label of race comes second, and so again, yes, I'm a male too. I'm a male, a Black male, but again, most importantly, I'm a human like you, and again, as a teacher, there comes these power struggles. Just because I'm the teacher, you do this, or I say this, but that's not how I operate.

It was very apparent that Daniel has made a great impact as a teacher. Though there was a moment he will never forget that caused him to really feel humble. I could tell by the dropping of his head and the calm tenor of his voice as he shared a story of one of his past experiences with a white student and how his impact was felt beyond the classroom.

I was working at the Early Learning Center, it was the University of Delaware, and so, again, I was the only Black male teacher there and there was one Black female teacher. So I was a preschool teacher, and I'll never forget this, there was a little boy and he was White. And so what happened, one morning his mom came in and dropped him off, right? And so she said, "Can you tell Mr. Gray what you said last night?" And so I'm like, "Ma'am, what happened? What did he say?" So he says, "When I grow up, I want to be just like Mr. Gray," and he said, "I want to be a teacher like Mr. Gray and Brown like him too." So that was a powerful moment for me. He said, "I want to be a teacher just like him, and Brown like him." That Brown part, I was taken back by that."

This was a very profound moment as this child's parents were both professors at the university. This really had him going to immediate reflection and thoughts of how they felt about this statement by their child?

Right, so I can imagine that follow-up conversation, I was like, "Man, to be a fly on the wall with that," I was just curious because that was my mindset too. "I wonder what they said after that? I wonder what they said after that." And they both were professors at the school, so again it's like it was ... Again, I was so curious of what was said after he made that statement. I would never know. I would never know." Yeah, I was like I can never get over that, I can never get over that. It was just like, "Wow."

Is it Possible for you to Separate My Blackness and Maleness?

Experiences like these are rare, though research has spoken about the benefits of Black teachers for white students as well as Black students. Though that doesn't negate the negative experiences of Black teachers with white parents. Daniel began sharing an experience that impacted him in a negative way. I could tell by the change in the pitch in his voice as one that was perplexed by the actions taking place in front of him. It seemed like that administration really didn't want rock the boat and tried to address a situation they said wasn't present, but their actions contradicted that.

A negative experience? Well, probably the same place though, actually. In the same place. Most of the parents who had girls and so at the beginning of the year, their child was on my roster and in like a week or so, they were off my roster. So, the parents made this not complaint but they were worried about their little girl having a male teacher, and then, two, a Black male teacher. And I think, too, because my room didn't have any windows either, right? And so they were like, too, I guess to keep me safe, so I had to move my room so it was more lit up. Yeah, so they're like, "To keep me safe." I'm like, "I'm doing my job, you know? I'm just doing my job."

But yeah, so they moved me right after that. They were like, "People are not complaining but they're a little worried sending their child to your room," so they moved me to a classroom that had more windows. Actually it was a good thing because the room was bigger, so I was happy actually. Yeah, the room was bigger. The word was bigger, yep. It sure was."

I Know My Purpose and you will Not Stop Me

As we begin closing out our conversation, Daniel shared that he has a good relationship with his administration at his current school which is partially the reason he has decided to stay

in the field. “Oh, it's good. It's good. I feel free to reach out with any questions, concerns, and they respond back in a timely manner. Any personal matters, I feel comfortable addressing them, with them.” He played with the idea of becoming a school principal as a new step in his direction in life but found out after beginning school it wasn't for him. His passion for teaching and the continual impact he is making on the lives of his children continues being a driving force for him to continue being a teacher.

Just my passion. Again, I consider this my duty in life, and at one point I enrolled into a program for some type of leadership at GW. So that first class made me realize that I did not want to be a principal. That's not what I envision my future in the field. A teacher, it's okay now, but I do see more, but I'm just not sure what that role is right now. But I do know it's not a principal. I do know that, that for some reason I just ... There's articles and that's what made me aware that that's something that I don't want to do. I think it was just, again, just me really realizing what the actual role of a principal is, and again, that was something that I didn't want to take on.”

I think my impact now is just the joy for children to want to come to school. I want to see my teacher on Saturday. I want to see my teacher on Sunday. You know, it's the school, it's the school, it's the school, and again, I want to see my teacher. And so just that right there, again, I think that right there, I think that's ... You know what I'm saying? That's it right there for sure. That's it.”

Daniel dropped a dime for the next generation of Black young men who decided to enter in the field of education. You could tell by the sharpness of his voice and the directness of his message that he was very serious in what he was about to share.

What do I want them to know that ... You know, it's not easy. It's not easy, and ... Excuse me. It's not easy, but if you truly want to be there, it's easy, and again, I think you have to ... First thing's first, is I think you have to ask yourself, "Do I really want to be a teacher?" And then from there, again, really accepting that, like anything, there will be some ups and downs. There's going to be some ups and downs, but, again, I would just say just hang in there. Just hang in there and just keep your head up. Just keep your head up, because again, it's tough. Again, being in a female-dominated field, again, I think Black male teachers need to know that their actions will speak louder than their physical appearance."

Portrait 2: Robert

Authentically Me

Your ignorance I will not forget
 For you don't understand my internal oppression caused by your outward expression
 that truly inhibits me to be me
 (Darn), another morning I'm entering in shouldering this unspoken fear
 I say (forget) it within, to avoid any type of conflict it may bring
 You already told me of your displeasure and fear
 "Oh, it's gay men who are pedophiles." Or somehow I'm going to influence a child to be gay or
 something like that."
 For you really think I would do that? Maybe because of what you may be holding within?
 (Forget) your apology, it's not needed for I wish you would just understand that your ignorance
 is setting the example for what you children will bring and are you're not helping change a
 narrative that's held in the community we both live in
 Hmm, do you really know what darkness your child may be living within
 Or does it go unnoticed because you choose avoidance instead of acceptance until it's too late
 and it's the end
 Have you not taken note of the many around you who have ended their life because of the
 ridicule within
 How do you think I feel when I can't even share where we've gone this weekend
 You will never know their name, for if you did many more will really show their true colors
 But I Promise this one thing
 You will never break me, for I know who I am in Within
 Never looking for your acceptance or help in changing the narrative,
 for your ignorance speaks louder than any commentator on
 ESPN
 By William White

Another Day Another Impact

It was very interesting to hear about Robert's school. Located in the heart of a major city,
 that's near a huge event space that draws 1,000s of people a day, with high rise public housing
 on one corner and million-dollar homes on the next is the epitome of gentrification. It also made
 me wonder how long the school would last and if the high-rise apartments that's home to many
 of the students would be there in the years to come.

So, my current school has the landscape is pretty urban in that way. It's a mix
 demographically of, I would say there are two or three high rises that are public housing

primarily Black residents and West African immigrants. In the town homes, and row houses, you have primarily white residents who are very affluent. They're probably making 150 and up. So that's kind of the combination. And then we're right on the train line so it's a lot of professionals that are in and out going of our train stop.

As many teachers, Robert's morning routine is one of self-reflection. I could tell by the calmness that overcame his facial features and the softness of his voice. One continuing theme was the motto of being prepared by preparing one's self for success.

I'm at work as soon as the doors are open. I have to get to work very early. Whether I'm driving or taking the train. I'm there before everybody. I like being there when still and quiet. I like to clean my classroom or sometimes I organize something in the morning. I try to spend time actually setting up my physical space and that's a part of my morning routine. It helps me mentally prepare, but I like to be there before everybody. I don't want nobody... I don't need no line at the copier. And that helps me get calm and centered before students.

As he continued, it was great to hear about how students ensure has complete his checklist for the morning that consisted of coffee, breakfast and scripture. This connection instills responsibility to his students and also the trust that's being built by both parties. The students' awareness of making sure their teacher is mentally set for the day is very important. "And Mr. Smith, did you have your coffee?" "Yes." And then the other student comes, "And have you had your breakfast?" "Yes." "Have you read the scripture?" "Yes?"

Money & Power or Impact on Lives?

Though Robert's interest to become a teacher was at an early age, he actually strived to be a lawyer in college. It was very apparent that the draw to the legal field was more to be

socially accepted and not an apparent love for learning law. As he began talking about his journey, he seemed to have to really think to why he actually wanted to be lawyer, when teaching was really his first love, I could tell by his chin pointed to ceiling and him sinking into deep concentration.

There was nothing particular about law school that was attractive to me. It just was more or less the social acceptability of that career path. Like, “Okay, if I pursue law, anyone who has an expectation of that being something “super successful” will be satisfied. I actually wanted to be a teacher for much of my life. But I always tell people that I felt very discouraged from going into the field. I think, most of the adults who I looked up to felt like there were more lucrative career paths, so that's one thing.

This discouragement further distanced his desire to pursue education, but it wouldn't last long. Though Robert decided not pursue education upon graduation, his drive to continue learning led him to working on Capitol Hill in guess what? Education. “I initially didn't pursue it (education) out of college. I wanted to do policy work and worked on the Hill. I gained a passion for policy, and started doing education, housing and financial services as policy work.”

As Robert worked on the hill, he began feeling really disconnected from the constituents he served under his member of Congress. “I remember just feeling like, “I'm really disconnected from the people that I'm helping.” So, I remember saying, “When this job is over, I want something that's more of a direct service.” This disconnection led to Robert really reflecting “How do I get closer to the people I'm serving?” It wasn't just teaching. But teaching was on the short list of ways that I felt like I could really give back and make an impact.” Ultimately teaching is what Robert decided to pursue after his time on the hill. “And from there I

transitioned into teaching. So, teaching ended up being an extension of my experience doing policy.”

Passion Leads to Purpose

This transition for Robert was one the learning curve. He decided not to go through a traditional teacher certification program, “I went through an alternative teaching certification process through The New Teacher Project.” The program seemed to be a very good experience as he began to perk up and smile about his journey and the strengths from the program. He continued his education journey by going back to school and completing his master’s degree.

I always tell people that one of the things that was most helpful was the actual content instruction. Part of the program was learning elementary content and pedagogy. And, I think, that's really important for teachers. Especially, people who didn't go through a school of education to know how the knowledge domains are organized. And that's like reading or literacy, math, science, and social studies. So, in my program, I got a lot of training on that. As well as again, the pedagogy, what are best ways to present that kind of content?” And then I went on, after that program, I got my master's from American.”

Though it was apparent Robert had a good experience in his teacher preparation program, he had a firm understanding of the inequities he would face as a Black man that his white colleagues wouldn’t. Discussion around the intersection of race, gender, and class was one that wasn’t taken up in his programs explicitly, but his program did have discussion of how to be culturally aware of the interactions between students and families.

Well, I feel like, I guess, from a positive perspective, it gave me really critical information about the profession, about being a teacher. There wasn't a lot of explicit talk about race, equity, culture. When I think about my identity as a Black man, that's really

important. Because we know that hiring practices aren't always fair. Promotion isn't always fair within the field. So, it's like knowing that I need to ensure that I have this other knowledge. I need to make sure I check as many of the boxes as are required for the job, I think.” (Long pause-hmmmm) So I feel like my teacher preparation program taught me to identify certain things like cultural practices of my students. So, they would teach me how to say like, take note of the way the parent and the student... their communication patterns. Is it inquiry-based? Is this parent asking their child certain questions? Or are they giving them more declarative statements?

Though Robert felt these practices and lessons were important, he still questioned the authenticity, originality, and position upon which these lessons were grounded in. Having grown up in the area and immersed in the culture from an early lesson empowered his Blackness which are lessons he was well aware his program couldn't teach.

So, my program taught me how to observe those, but I feel like they would never be able to teach me to know that motivation behind that, those instances. So, if I noticed this set of students and families, they interact, they communicate this way, my program isn't going to teach me those motivations. Like, why is that? Where does that come from historically? You know what I mean? So, I think, the nuance of culture specifically, especially Black culture, of African American culture, of culture in DC. And so, I was fortunate to have relatives in DC and since I've been born in DC. So, some of those things, again, I couldn't have been taught those things in the program.

Confidence in Ability Leads to Stability in Self-Identity

This was very important when we look at the intersection of race, gender, and culture. It was apparent Robert is a very confident Black male teacher, who feels that race and gender are

direct indicators of being a great teacher. This is a very important takeaway as some Black male teachers didn't think their race and gender was the reason of their success as Black male teachers.

I have seen amazing teachers from every background. I've also seen awful teachers from every background. I don't know, it's like your race and your gender is not and as much as it's not an automatic pass that you're going to be awesome or automatic indicator. It's also not an automatic disqualifier.”

Thinking of these intersections are very important to talk about because, there will always be a situation good or bad that makes you go into deeper discussion. As Robert continued to sharing, he began sharing with me a very comfortable situation that occurred in his first years of teaching.

So, I was a first-grade teacher, Black male teacher. And just like you said, it was a very white space, and it was also very female dominated. So, for example, we had a spirit week that first year that I was teaching. And one day was pajama day. And I remember telling my boss who was a white female, I was like, “Look at this from the lens of a male teacher. I teach in the primary setting. I don't really feel entirely comfortable in that setting. Whereas I felt that on the one hand is this expectation that I participate in the school culture initiative. But then there's also this reality of how men in primary settings are perceived?”

Robert decided to move forward to participate. “I think, I was fine. And I ended up making a work around I wore pajamas as well as a... I wore a house robe on top of it. So, I was able to participate and feel like I was representing myself well.” Even though he decided to move

forward, he did think about how some things can't be taught to teachers or administrators from a textbook and how very rarely an equity lens is used.

So, there were just things that were overlooked, it's like there are so many nuanced things that aren't necessarily in the textbook of how to teach but it's very real. And then when you design programming like that, and you aren't looking at it through an equity lens. Or am I considering all of my staff members? You get those kinds of issues.”

“You Recruited Me but Left Me When I needed you Most”

I could tell this experience really impacted him with frustration. As he stared down, his voice became stern and he began to draw on the pad of paper in front of him. Robert began to speak about the struggles school administrators have when he is put in tough situations with students and families. When asked if he felt protected, he replied, “not usually”.

Oh, yeah, as a teacher. I think that there may have been times where students have said things that weren't necessarily true. So sometimes students know what to say to get a response out of other adults. Like, “So this teacher hit me.” So that has happened to me before where that students have made statements that were unfounded as a way to divert attention from themselves. And that's always scary. And that's been the case where me and some other... I know colleagues who have had like, “I'm under investigation for this or that.” And that's the scary thing. I think, everybody, when it gets to that point, it's everyone's out to protect themselves. It could be a situation where the school leader or whatever they want to protect their staff member. They want to protect their teacher. But they're also trying to be responsive to a student and family. So sometimes it's hard to do both.

Relationships are Key to Being a Successful Teacher

Even though this situation was very difficult to deal with, he knows it's his relationships with his families that keep him going. As he raises his head, he begins sharing with me how he feels his maleness actually is a strength when building these relationships compared to females. "I have good rapport with students and parents. There's a certain amount of respect that male teachers get almost automatically that sometimes female teachers have to work for a little bit." His relationships with his families show the trust that has established. "Having those relationships intact it's like, "Okay, well, we actually don't need to meet because we talk every other day." We have these one-minute interactions that far outweigh a 30-minute call at the end of the quarter." It was with the smile upon his face that I could tell these were very authentic relationships that have driven him to understand the roles he plays in his students and families' lives. He keeps these relationships close to his heart. He honestly feels he's able to do this because of his southern roots. The connection he had with his students was clear and he shows how excited he becomes when they excel in his class by doing celebratory chants. The space he has provided makes his students feel "safe" to make a mistake. Considering this, it wasn't surprising to see the picture of his student wanting to spend Christmas with him (Figure E1) or do a photo shoot with him (Figure E3).

But with different students, I'm definitely more of like an uncle figure, sometimes a father figure in addition to being their teacher. And then sometimes with parents, I feel like I'm a confidant/counselor. They're going through different things a lot of times it might be a custody issue. So, they want to know what advice I have for them as a co-parent. And they come from a lot of time just from an academic perspective. "So, and so





It's really important to him that we strive to help Black boys thrive in the classroom but shared that many times what we think are positive intentions are actually damaging. This additional internal struggle he's dealt with as a Black male teacher shows the difficulty that comes when really wanting to bring the best out of our Black male students.

I think, sometimes it is like we move from a place of empathy to sympathy. We're now we're feeling sorry for students. And we want to accommodate certain realities. And in our good intentions it's like, "Okay, well, I'm not going to stress you out with this assignment." Or "I know you have a lot on your mind, I don't want you to be worried about this test or assessment." So, we have good intentions a lot of the time but..."

And then there are certain things with our kids, I have to say this, that are out of their control. I have a young lady who doesn't attend a lot of classes, but she's in third grade. So, there's a level of responsibility on the adult part that's not happening. So, I think, to answer your question, a lot of times we don't want to penalize the student for something that's out of their control. When you fail a quarter, but you didn't make the grade for so many reasons that weren't your fault. Like someone wasn't bringing you to school every day. No one's at home to practice this APTT strategy, you know what I mean?

And so, as teachers, we get to the point where it's the end of the quarter, "Do I give this kid an F because that's what they earned? Or now do I curve that grade, because I want to motivate them positively? [Maybe I can fill their bucket with feeling successful in school?]" So, we do things to motivate them and they're not necessarily an authentic reflection of what they know or what they can do.

This point of contention seemed very difficult for him as that smile he once held left his face. You could tell that with the positives and the negatives, you still are seeking that balance to be a pillar in the community, an example for the students, teachers and then trying to be authentic but finding it hard as you understand you're still a Black male and will be viewed different by everybody.

I think, there's still a lot of contexts where I'm encouraged to code switch and I'm always expected to code switch. So, I think, the fact that I do feel the need to change the way I speak. Or think consciously about the way I wear my hair, how I dress. No, that definitely would suggest that no, don't feel like I can be 100% authentically me.

“I Can't be Me, Authentically Me, When I'm Oppressed Within side Me”

It became even more evident as our conversation continued that he couldn't bring his whole authentic self. I asked about how he felt his Black masculinity impacted his experience., He began sharing about the difficulties of being a gay Black male teacher and the responses some of his parents have shared come from pure “ignorance,” though he is more frustrated than mad as hell. He has chosen not to share his sexuality with students even when asked because of their age and the risk he would be taking.

I've had actually, just issues being a gay teacher. I've had parents suggest over the years that they would rather their child have a straight male teacher. It hasn't been a lot of the case but that has come up before.” It's a stereotype that they feel like, “Oh, it's gay men who are pedophiles.” Or somehow I'm going to influence a child to be gay or something like that. It just comes from that same like...It's more like frustrating because it is an

experience I've had growing up and I don't know, I want better for them. Like, "Come on, man. Do better. You got to know better than this, but..."

I think, I would agree that I don't announce my sexuality. I do think that it would present a problem for some students. So, I guess, what I want to say is I do feel that I need to censor myself more than heterosexual teachers. I don't feel comfortable saying, "I went on a date this weekend with a guy." Or if I did have a partner, you know what I'm saying, "This is my boyfriend or my husband." So, I do feel restricted and limited. I don't feel jealous though, but that's definitely a dynamic that exists for, I think, the same gender loving teacher.

As I think, about it, that it is a form of oppression. Because you can't just be open and honest. And granted, I wouldn't want to take my students through the detail. Again, if I were married, I would probably not have my spouse's picture up in my classroom. And that's something that could be... I think, I would make a lot of people uncomfortable or they might feel sad about the fact."

It was at this point I really want to discover more about his experience on being a gay Black male teacher. "If you don't mind, I'd like to speak about this a little more. I wonder what holds you back from being like, "I'm a Black gay man. And this is what I do"? What holds you back?"

I think, about the... it's risk versus reward assessment. And it's just like the potential fallout is so unnecessary. That is certainly something that, I think, a number of students will repeat to their parent. And there's a great risk that the way that it's conveyed or the way that it's received has a different meaning from how I would intend it. So, I just am like, "No, it ain't even worth it." And I've even had students ask me directly and I always

tell them no. Because it's just like, I don't know. I'm not necessarily here to represent a community. So, I don't feel like I need to be an advocate in that moment, in every moment.”

It was evident that's the intersections within Robert's life has shaped his identity, but being his true authentic self with his students was impossible. Though It seemed to be therapeutic for him to begin sharing his experience: his posture straightened with part of the world being taken off his shoulders and his frustrations shared. Currently, many students who identify as part of the LGBTQ + community and especially those who are BIPOC are having difficulty with the acceptance of fellow students and families. This made we wonder if his identity that was being oppressed in the classroom setting, indirectly helped those students who may identify as Queer.

Well, I teach such young students. I can't say that I have. I have one student, Latino male student who was vocal about his same sex attraction. This was third grade. So, he was so out and open with it that I didn't feel like I was necessarily supporting him directly. And then the other students over the years is been a lot of students, but I can't say that I felt that I noticed anybody suppressing themselves. They were pretty much who they were. But I definitely, have stood up for... again, I mentioned earlier I had a lot of bullying issues. And so, I would stand up for a student if they're being made fun of for their sexuality or gender expression or something. Most of it has been appearance.”

Preparing the Next Generation of Black Male Teachers

As we continued our conversation, we started thinking about what it would take to prepare the next generation of Black male teachers. He really wants young Black male teachers to understand that “I guess that no teaching experience is going to be... no two experiences are

going to be the same. So, if they're considering teaching, I would say every grade level, every grade is going to bring a unique experience.” One of the key pieces he would expressed was that “there are a lot of just opportunities for them” outside of the classroom. He understands that many times Black men are “pigeonholed” in the classroom. He expressed that “You're going to be the disciplinarian. You're going to be the authoritative figure in the building. And so sometimes that's how people are. I don't want to be RoboCop or whatever.” It was interesting as earlier he spoke about the ceiling and inequities in job growth, that having this exposure they can be better prepared and stronger self-advocates even with those barriers.

My teacher prep program for Black male educators would consist of a rotating, maybe residency model. Where the candidate or the practitioner works in different job functions within urban education. “So here is a classroom teacher role where you're whatever... responsible for some core content. Here is a culture/dean role and this is what that work entails. This is counseling and social work side of things. And then here is the school leadership.” And I would include that so that those Black male educators can be exposed to other opportunities. And know from experience that either, “I like this. Or I don't like it.” But at least they have an opportunity to get that background.

When asked if he would encourage or want his son to become a teacher “No. Honestly. Make some money. Go make a bag.” He feels one of the biggest reasons many Black men don't enter the field of education is because of the lack of pay in many municipalities. “Yeah. I think, if there was a way for them... if I knew that they were going to be financially independent, yes. But given everything, no.” He also feels this is a direct impact on why many Black people don't enter the profession overall which impacts enrollment in teacher programs. Though with 80% of teacher force being white women, how are they able to go into a profession and make the

minimum? And what drives them to even enter the field of education? One could immediately say white privilege, but I bet that multiple white female teachers would say they aren't as privileged as other white teachers therefore they introduce class status to also mask the understanding of their true privileged of being white. Though I would say white females have the privilege of access to better credit scores, loans, and home purchasing power even without introducing generational wealth as a determining factor.

Yeah, I think so. I think, that's true. But, I think, that's true for why there's just lower enrollment in education programs. It's just harder to survive and thrive today with the price of everything. Cost of living, cost of insurances, cost of education, cost of housing, cost of childcare. So, you really do have to look at career path is going to reduce your struggle chances.

Words from the Goat

In closing, Robert had some closing remarks for why he continues to do what he does, even as he feels one day he will move on.

I have a high level of success for myself. And I don't know that that comes from my Blackness or my maleness that comes from my dad. Who's just like, "Work hard." So, I think, my impact comes more from my work ethic, than my race and gender. "But" I also must say, I do feel proud that I have... I think, being a positive role model and positive representation of what a Black man is and can be for a lot of students. So, I'm really happy that for students who may not have a Black male in their life consistently, that they've at least had time with me to say, "I do know Black men who represent varied experiences and backgrounds."

One, I would say I can't underemphasize just enjoying the work. At the end of the day, I really enjoy teaching. So that's one. I would say just seeing the impact. So, seeing students who reach back out. I got an email this morning from a former student, it was, "Oh, I miss being in your class. You were one of my favorite teachers." So those moments definitely make you want to keep going.

Portrait 3: Demetrius

All Points Bulletin

Black, Male, late 20's-early 30's Heterosexual, Tattoos, Athletic Build, 150 pounds, Black Hair, full beard, Pants sagging, Black hoodie, armed and dangerous, Be on the lookout!!

You're right, I am armed and dangerous,
 Armed with the ancestral knowledge of those who've come before me and the struggle they dealt
 with to help make a better society for me to live in
 Armed with the knowledge
 of how much work I will continually have to put in
 Armed with the knowledge
 to continue countering the narrative society has built about me as a Black Pre-K Teacher
 with the custody of my beautiful daughter beside me
 Armed with the knowledge
 of how to be a father and take care of my family
 Armed with the knowledge
 to help create the next generation of leaders
 Armed with the knowledge
 of continuing to dismantle systemic and institutionalized racism
 Armed with the knowledge
 of the barriers my young students will still have to deal with but will be prepared to deal
 with singlehandedly
 Armed with the knowledge
 to educate my big thinkers in small bodies
 Armed with the knowledge
 to not have high expectations for close minded individuals
 Armed with the knowledge
 to know how dangerous I truly am
 Because as you're worried about my outward appearance, You truly have the wrong fear
 #yougotme(messed)up
 By William White

This is Personal To Me

I would like to introduce Demetrius also known as Dee by most, standing at 5'9, athletic build, curly Black hair, and tattoos that tell a story in itself. When first meeting him, he brings joy and passion like no other to help a brother do his dissertation by sharing his story. He begins our conversation by sharing what his mornings look like on his way to work.

“My alarm goes off at 6:00 am every morning and its up and at’em. I get up and shower first and then I get my daughter up and dressed for the day. We are out of the house no later than 7:30am”. Demetrius shared it takes 20 minutes daily to take his daughter to morning care, and as they travel they have morning conversations instead of usually listening to music. It was very apparent his daughter meant a lot to him. His head drops, his voice becomes somber as he discusses their daily morning conversation they have.

My daughter loves the fact that I coach. So anytime that she can talk about basketball or sports in general, she'll talk about, "Dad, do you remember that fight that we saw, when the guy got hit in the face and then he came back and he ...Just started fighting?" Like she watches that. I mean, if it's me, it's my fault that she's interested in boxing and all that stuff. But that's just because I want her to learn how to protect herself. My Daughter is a very beautiful little girl. That's why I do that to her. We usually just talk about sports. We talk about life. We talk about buying a house.

As Dee continued speaking out his daughter, he is sharing a narrative that many Black men could share but aren't given the space. Many look at Black single fathers as non-existent and therefore are never perceived in a positive light. However, here you have a single Black father who holds custody of his daughter and allows her to see him in a light many children would love to have shining on them. He begins sharing about his daughter's savvy money skills, which leads him to think she has been on this earth before.

My daughter is one of them old souls. She's been here before. I'm willing to bet any amount of money that she has been here before, because she's just that far beyond her time. She'll talk about, " Dad, did you see this house? This house has a sign. Do you think we can get that?"

Right now baby, we can't get that. We don't have enough money for a million dollar house, but it is very nice." But, I tell her that we were just having this conversation before I dropped her off with her mother. I was like, "baby money is not everything". When it comes to purchasing anything, it's about your credit. If I give you a certain amount of money, can I trust you to pay this money back? She was like, "Daddy, I always pay you back.

That's what the bank or the person that is giving you the loan or the money would expect. They can trust you to pay this money back in a certain amount of time. And she was like, 'Oh, okay, so how's your score?' I say it's where it needs to be, 700. This is far from what I thought it would ever be. But when I was doing dumb shit, but it's just like me with that growth, that small conversation right there. It sparks her mind to ask; 'What is credit? What is LLC? Can we have a business? Can we have a phone?' Like she wants to do all of these things and that's this other conversation."

As Dee gets close to his daughter's morning care he wishes his best to her. Once he drops his daughter off, he is flying down the road to get to his classroom. As he is traveling he takes in the ever-changing area his school is located in. With many parts untouched by gentrification, it's a sure sign it won't be long until its affected.

If anybody remembers, but you remember that back then Madison was a predominantly Black neighborhood. It is to a certain extent, but you have your sprinkles of gentrification, definitely setting the setting in. You have your apartment buildings in the middle of the (freaking) street and you have all these white people walking their dogs and shit and you have these little Black kids who on their way to school. And they're just

looking at each other like, huh? There goes to the neighborhood. That's what it looks like to them.”

It's very apparent that even the students that Dee teaches understands how their neighborhood is rapidly changing. He explained one real conversation he had with one of his students he was close with. There was a time he really tried to help her, but she was not open to being helped and he had to step back.

She was one of the real kid that was just like, ‘You have all the gentrification, they just built a whole (freaking) apartment complex that I used to live, on top of the fact that you have another complex here and then you have P street looking the way it is. They're just taking away everything that I knew as a kid.’ I felt her. I really did. What I told her was, that's life. You're not always going to be excited about changes, but that's life change. You change, you walk, you go through it as best as you can, because just as much as you're sitting here, they do not give a fuck about what you think about this neighborhood.

To see kids explain what's going on around them clearly impacts their mental health and stability. As the student said they used to live there, is because the Black people have been pushed to the outskirts of the neighborhood. Gentrification is a practice that is continual. Dee shared that though the violence and poverty isn't as it use to be, it's still present just up the street.

Once you get further up to pushing towards New York Avenue, that's where you see the poverty stricken, separation between like it's cut down the middle damage, from Florida Ave to probably West Virginia or a little bit further up, you have that mixture. It's not until you get closer to now Mount Olive Cemetery, you see that damn this is not going anywhere. Ivy city is still Ivy city.

Once Blair arrives he parks his car and speaks to his kids on the basketball court, “put your jackets on Kendall, Jason, and Trent because if you come around me coughing, we are going to have a real conversation. As Dee continues walking into work, he always spots a group of little girls on the steps. “Hey, Mr. Brown, what's going on?” “Hey, everybody!!” Once safely inside, Blair signs in for the day and heads straight to his classroom. “Once I’m in my classroom, I’m set.

Dee began sharing about what brought him to the field of education. It was apparent it wasn’t what he thought he was going to be doing. As a prominent Black football player at a local HBCU he definitely thought that would be his path, but it wasn’t his purpose. His purpose was introduced to him through his mother as a child. Dee, the son of a teacher, spent a lot of time in different schools with his mother in an urban city on the East coast and it was there he first experienced what it meant to be a teacher.

I think what led me to the field of education was my mother. My mother started off in administration at West Elementary School in Northwest Baltimore, MD. From the time that I can remember probably around four or five years old, I was always myself and my brother were always at this Elementary School. So we saw the behind the scenes, we saw teachers, we interacted with everyone. So we felt as if we were actually kids that went to the school. It wasn't until fast forward probably about four or five years later, maybe around nine, eight or nine years old. My mother went into the classroom at Piney Branch Elementary school in Annapolis, Maryland, where she was helping, where she was teaching special education for special needs. And I think that along with me being at West Elementary, I think that really sparked my interest in education.

It was really fascinating to hear about his experience with his mother, but all of sudden the tone of his voice dropped and he looked straight at me and shared about a powerful experience he observed of his mother in the classroom. It was this moment you could tell Dee was ready to follow in his mother's footsteps in education.

One particular moment was just, like, I was in awe of my mother, was when she was helping two little kids out on just some computer work. And the fact that they had never been on the computers was because of the lack of access to technology. She was just helping them out and the amount of excitement that they had with my mother, just taking the time, explaining to them what these keys do how this program works and then just to see their expression and then have them turn around and teach it to me was just, oh (dang), my mother's bad. I was like (dang) this is crazy. I want to give back to my community. I want to give back somehow. It was just like, I want to help them. I want to push my community forward because we've been held back for so long. It takes young educated brothers as you and myself to really help that next generation along.

Community, access, role model and mentor for those with no other example. Dee began sharing about how he wants to continue being the example for all of those around him. The love he has for his daughter he shares with all children who come into his presence and has the goal to make sure the next generation doesn't make the mistakes he's made in the past and to provide access to opportunities for his Black and Brown children.

So from then on, I've just always been in a position that I want to help that next generation, because my daughter and my future kids are going to benefit from this somehow some way. And my daughter, God bless her. I love her to death. She's five years old. And I just told you around this time, my mother was doing the same thing to

me and bringing me around her community, bringing her me around her kids. I'm doing the same thing to my daughter. And that's making her have this imagination, like, okay, if my dad can, I saw my dad graduate from college, I saw my dad teach seventh and eighth grade kids.

'It's like, what can't my dad do. And he still is the best father to me'. And I just want her to have that sense. And I want all my kids to have that, regardless of where you come from, what you've done, it's all about finishing what you started having a goal first and then finishing that goal all the way to the end, because that's something that I had as a child. I want to be that same person and the same individual that really pushes my community forward and give back to them the way that sometimes it was never given to me.

Dee was provided access to many things other Black children in his time and presently don't have access to because of his athletic talents. It was early when Dee had promising athletic ability in multiple sports which allowed him to attend a prestigious Catholic school compared to public schools in the area. He understood his privilege as a young Black man.

I want to do all of these things that were never afforded to me, even though I was doing, even though I went to a Catholic school, the level of access that I had at that Catholic school. Yeah. We had it, but it wasn't always given to the Black students. So, it was just, I don't want that to be the same case here.”

Dee was very open that during high school he wasn't as invested as he wished he was, but there was a coach that shown interest in and many of the lessons he learned from the coach he took to the classroom, being “stern but fair”.

When Demetrius finished high school he attended an HBCU in Maryland and played football. Though he really wasn't sure what he was going to do afterwards, he knew he wanted to make an impact in his community. He graduated with a degree in child and adolescent Studies (CASE) which usually leads to people becoming a social worker, but he knew that wasn't what he wanted to do.

I said, I've always wanted to give back, even if it was in the classroom, if it was on the field, if it was in my office being some type of mentor, I've always wanted to do that. So, what was funny is I graduated in 2018, I graduated with a bachelors in science CAST. It's a child and adolescent studies and you can embed degree. It's social work, things of that nature. So it all falls under that. It wasn't until I was given an opportunity to come to New Bridge and it was just, wow, do I really want to be a teacher? Is this something that I'm prepared for?

When Dee entered the classroom, he really wasn't sure what he was walking into. Having previous experience as a volunteer at a district school, he noticed quickly this was totally different and he was now in a new ocean without a boat and handed one paddle. He knew that even with so much new surrounding him, he had one goal, which was to be the best teacher he could be first and then learn the what it takes to be a successful teacher.

My mother, she helped me. She guided me to a certain extent. So for my kids my preparation was just, I want to be the best teacher. And I know that's a far, it's not a far-fetched idea, but it's just like, don't put as much pressure on yourself to do that because you want to stress yourself the (heck) out your first year.

During Dee's first year he had the help of his mother, but his principal took him to a standards institute in California to learn about the curriculum and how to apply it. It was here

where he felt not only out of place, but also endured microaggressions fed off of ignorance towards him by fellow teachers in the field.

My principal took me on a Standards Institute in California. That was my first time ever being on an airplane last year. When I went to California, they gave me a whole bunch of information, they sat me in a room, this big (freaking) room I never forget. And I felt this (freaking) big, because it was like this whole room of educators, proven years of educators. And here's this one kid that, and they're even telling me, they're like, 'They sent you here your first year? Why did they do that to you? You don't know what's going on?'

It was really interesting to hear about his interactions at the table where he sat for the conference. It was four females who sat there, two white women from Louisiana and two Black women who were his colleagues from another campus. He explained that he tried to share his thoughts with the two white women, but he was ignored as they kept talking around him.

So, I'm listening to these white girls, 22, 23 years old. And they aren't talking no shit. Yeah. They think that stuff that people want to hear, I'm giving my input, but it's not carrying as much weight. And I think that they were looking at me as if but Why are you here? In that why are you here in a disrespectful way. But what's your purpose of being here? What do you expect to get out of this? So to them, it was more like a challenge more so. And I mean I take that, so when we work, when we would have conversations, I mean, I take your words with grain of salt.

Dee went into deep reflection on that conversation. He momentarily closed his eyes, dropped his voice and clasped his hands on top of the table. He began playing with the pen on the table and sharing how he now looks back on this conversation.

When we would have conversations, I took their words with a grain of salt, but having this conversation with you now and thinking back on it, it was probably one of the most important conversations that I may have had at that conference. If I didn't ask them certain questions, I probably would never found out if I do Whitten Wisdom, a certain type of way I can reach this level of reading skill for one of my students. I was able to pull a lot of stuff and I still talk to both of those young ladies to this day, through email. Not since pandemic, but I had a relationship with them still.

Though Dee had a different conversation with the two white women he did have positive interactions with his fellow colleagues. He was happy to meet the other two women from his school district as they were very happy to offer any help he needed.

So they were more like, hey, do you need any help? Is there anything that you're not understanding? And I'm like, no, I'm good. But if I do have any questions, I'll come to you. And I actually did come to them a few times within that week, because that's how it was a week span conference.

As we talked, it was very apparent he was overwhelmed at the institute by the dropping of his head and deepening of his voice, but he was determined to take this opportunity to digest what he was able to even while dealing with those around him who continued to questioned his existence at the conference when he quickly raised his head to continue sharing his takeaways and responded “And I'm just like, I hear you.”

As Dee and I closed out talking about the standards institute, it was apparent he had certain emotions about being sent to the conference so early in his career, though he was so happy to have had the opportunity. You could tell from the excitement in his voice and the lit

smile upon his face that it was an experience he would never forget, especially being his first time on a plane.

Impact on the Community and Beyond

Back at school Dee continued building relationships with parents. This hasn't gone unnoticed in the community. Demetrius is committed to being an advocate for his students and going beyond the call of duty to be an example of what means to be a Black male teacher.

I think that I've made a valiant effort. The fight isn't over, the fight is never going to be over until all of my kids that I teach, that I've taught, have surpassed me. So that part of me is all... And that's just my ultimate, I need to do this. And I know it's not farfetched, it's not impossible, but it weighs heavy on you. It's just like, how much can I take? So I think that I have in some shape or form, I think that I have really been an instrumental piece to have served my community.”

Dee's community sometimes seems caught off guard by a Black male preschool teacher and former middle school humanities teacher. He persists in building community beyond their expectations. In the era of Covid-19, Demetrius wants to make sure his pre-k class of the community the school is grounded in even from a Zoom lens. It was really interesting to hear of an activity he and his now co-teacher completed and their interactions with community members.

They're shocked. I can tell you off of some of the reactions. Even when we were doing our community walk, not too long ago, we had like guys just in front of the store, in front of your local convenience store just like, 'What are you all doing?' They may have thought that we were filming them. No, we were just showing our kids the neighborhood. 'That's dope, what school is this again? I like that, I liked that. That's dope, that's dope. Make sure you take them to this spot so they can see the playground and everything.'

Thank you. So I think that they look at it as inspirational. I know a lot of the fathers that are in my class, they commend myself and Ms. Smith every time, because we work in such a way that you can't.... If your child is not interacting, or if your child isn't talking at all with us, then it's something else that we need to be discussing. We need to have some one-on-one session or something. That's how engaging we make it. We don't mute the kids until, probably, we'll we don't never mute our kids to be honest with you, unless we hear some foul stuff going on in the background, but that's out of our control.

As Demetrius continued talking about his interactions with his students, he shared a very touching conversation he had with two of his young Black kings in his pre-k4 classroom. They were discussing different jobs in the community, but their answers made him really look at the impact he was making as a Black male teacher. From their interactions in the classroom and the visual representations of him with his children (Figure E5) you could tell he has a bond with his students and they trust him.

So, and this was right around the time that we were talking about community. I have two young Black boys in my class, more, but these two young Black boys, we were going over community jobs. And when you think of community, a lot of kids run to, I want to be a police officer, I want to be a firefighter, I want to deal with something in being a football player, something like that. But two of my kids said that they want to be a pre-K teacher. It was like somebody just, you know the little emoji when your head is exploding? It felt like a (freaking) nuclear bomb just went off in my brain because I don't... (Snap) I told you this from jump I remember my mother doing all of these things, and that weighing heavy on what I wanted to accomplish. But the only difference is that's my mother, I'm the teacher.

And for them at that age to say, I want to be a pre-K teacher or any type of teacher, it was just so, so fucking... It elevated me to a different level of appreciating the teacher that I had and what my mother taught me, what they did for me. I'm opening doors, I'm giving these kids the keys to these doors and they're walking through themselves. And it ain't like what it used to be when everything is spoon-fed. So these kids are taking it with no regards because they want that information. So when they said that to me, Will, it was just like, Oh (snap)! Here we go. I can't let them down. I got to be the best version of what I am as a teacher for them. Because when I pass that torch to them, they got to keep that flame, they got to pass on that flame to the next generation, they have to.

Figure E5

When called upon, the student's face lit up!!

Description of Picture: Holding hands- his smile is bright, all the names on the picture, birds in the air, and glasses on the IA

Teacher Conversation- Teacher Prompt: What are we doing?

Student: We walking to the movies.

Teacher: "I'm so happy to go with you we will get popcorn and something to drink?"

The child shakes their head in agreeance and a large smile.

It goes to your Dissertation like, there is a market, there is a lane for us as Black male teachers, strong Black male teachers to say the least. I definitely feel as though anybody that sets foot in this profession, you got to have a certain age. You got to have a certain toughness because you're going to be met with that as soon as you meet your kids.

It's possible. It's possible. Anything else you, I can't give anybody a blueprint, it goes back to your own remedies. Your doctor tells you what's was going on with you. So it's only for you, made for you specifically for you. If you go into this doctor's office and you go in with a fake, well not a fake, but if you go in with recommendations from someone else or some symptoms that you're having, that you're diagnosed, you're diagnosing yourself, it's just like, what the (heck) is going on. But if this is specifically for you, I would just say, make this a broad statement. Being a Black male teacher is possible. I can't give you the layout because we all teach differently, but I can (dang) sure say it's possible. If you want to change your community, do you want to change your community? If yes, then you have to be that change.” If this is not what you really want to do, whole heartrendingly, then you don't need to get into it. If you don't want to impact kids, this is not the field for you, you need to think about another profession.

Portrait 4: A Portrait of Principal Leadership

Are You Really Prepared?

Dear Black Male Teacher,

I'm excited to offer you a position in my school, but there are several ask from me

You must be Present, Consistent, Relational, Authentic, Committed, and Loyal

I know teaching is new to you, but I want you to know I Hold High Expectations for you

I'm aware of how the outside world views you, but within these school doors I got your back

Know if you need anything please let me know, know I will call you out when your right and

when your wrong, I want you to be the epitome of what Black Excellence manifest in teaching,

I know you will get along with the children, but don't lose sight of the goal which is to help them

to grow Academically as well as Socially, know there will be parents who will find interest as

you will be their child's first Black male teacher, but know you a teacher fir st, I wish you well

and can't wait to begin our year together, enjoy your summer break.

Signed,

Unapologetically Your Principal of Color

"Been Needed"

I sat down for interviews with three elementary principals. Each offered their perspectives on the role of Black male teachers in school. This portrait of leadership represents their priorities around hiring, relationships, humility, and making a difference.

Recruitment and Hiring

It was very apparent that the three principals feel Black male teachers are needed and wanted in their school communities. One principal felt that "they would be an asset" to schools.

Therefore, it wasn't surprising to hear their intentionality around recruiting Black men, "I think like it has been a priority for me. And so, I've just been very conscious of it every recruiting season." Ebony shared their unique approach of being from the community and sharing with Black men the impact they could make as teachers in the school.

I hire I have my own like network and pipeline of like, people, I think being a (Bostonian) has its benefits, right. Um, I was educated in the Boston School District, you know, I have lots of associates, business associates, and colleagues and friends and you know, that are in education, or there are several people who I know that they would be an asset to education, and I often get them to, you know, become career changers and think about, you know, what, it would be like to have a job where you know you're not just going for the pay, you're going for the outcome, right. And so it's like an income versus outcome situation. And so it's like, I have been very successful into very successful at, like, getting African American males to come over to (Brook School District) and, you know, work for me and not just take on the description, the position description, but to like, think about their passion, and in understand, like, how they can actually embed that particular skill set into, like, the learning community.

Though they understand the importance of Black male teachers, they also were very aware of the shortage in the teaching pool. They also understand the bias central office has when determining who would be offered interviews at one of their schools. One principal shared the damage that can happen when bias is introduced in the process of hiring a Black male teacher.

First, let's just say that you have 10 applications that come in, you're going to look at how many of them a man and then you know, look at how many of them are black man. And then sometimes, unfortunately, based on the bias of the person reviewing the file, we'll

(Black men) go to the top, because black men are needed in school. What happens though, is that because they're, they're being looked at for, Oh, I got this rough position, I got this tough grade or my school is 99% Black students. This, you hired them just because they look like they can fit the bill. But when they get in there, test scores don't change though culture may change. The academic trajectory for the kids doesn't change. And so I think like you have to just make it very, very clear that you are getting a gift and having a black male educator, but you will have to learn you will have to show him how to actually become a great black male teacher.

Relationships and Academics are Equally Important

These principals know the importance of Black male teachers and feel that one of the biggest wins of having Black male teachers was being role models and father figures to their students and especially their Black boys. "It's important to have black Male teachers, and just black male staff in the building that students form healthy relationship, much different from what they see, just in the community or what's being reported in the media." "An opportunity to open the eyes of children who don't really have a consistent male in their life that they can either learn from and look up to, or just have a male supporting their next steps." It was also very apparent that their impact is felt in the homes of the students they serve.

They have extra strong relationships with families. And I think again, it's because of that authenticity piece. My black male teachers, you know, like, well dab it up at dismissal with the parents. They come to them to talk about like, Oh, this is happening in someone else's class. They I think have an extra strong relationship.

The group was very open about their feelings for the opportunity to have Black male teachers, but spoke about how many times what Black males excel in relationship building

masks their lack of “instructional chops” and become “instructional powerhouses”. They found that the best way was “real time coaching” to help them become the best they can be. They feel it’s better to lead with an empathic approach rather than a “micromanaging” approach which will lead to “trust”.

All teachers need coaching, but Black male educators often rely heavily on relationships, and rely heavily on just my presence alone can be enough, when in essence, it's not, um, you can't just show up and be black and think that the standards will be mastered, and the children will learn and love you, you have to show up with that same presence and actually give them something meaningful through content and through planning and through just good instruction. And I think that where I have spent most of my time with black men that I have hired, is that 90% of their need is not relationships and coach relationships and community building. It's more so how do you become a “instructional powerhouse.” strong educator.

It was interesting hearing about their approach to support Black male teachers in their schools through coaching and having high expectations for them in the classroom. Though they shared “I just wonder if how many people who aren't black leaders would do the same work for black male teachers?” They are well aware that many of their colleagues don’t support their Black male teachers as they collectively do. They don’t dwell, though, on what they aren’t doing but on what they can do. They know it’s very important to build strong relationship to retain their teachers, as well. The keywords that came from our conversations were “honesty,” “transparency,” “trust,” and “support.” Though only one principal shared their intentionality of bringing their best Black male teachers out the classroom.

I'm just honest. And I'm extremely transparent. And I know that's something that many men require men like upfront and honest conversation. I think Furthermore, being a black man. "I trust them, like the basis of my relationships with all my folks is trust, like I trust, you're going to do good work. And I'm going to, like support you and your performance. I set a pretty strong example and promoting my a kindergarten teacher to Dean of Students to AP, and who is now applying for the principalship when I depart after this year. So I think that like kind of model has shown my belief in black male educators."

In the words of Kendrick Lamar "Be Humble Sit Down Be Humble Sit Down"

Though only one principal shared about how they have brought a Black male teacher out the classroom, they shared they would like to bring out more. It seemed as another theme was on the horizon as Blackness and maleness became the topic of conversation among the principals. It seemed that many of their Black male teachers feel just because they are Black males, they feel entitled for opportunities outside the classroom. This was very interesting as they began sharing their personal experiences.

I think it's a mindset piece., I think for my teachers who are kind of like average, I need them to recognize, just because you're a Black male teacher, in early childhood, and Middle School, wherever, doesn't make you exceptional, like your work makes you exceptional. And so it is great and fantastic that you are in the classroom, and you are being this role model. But what are you doing while you're in the classroom, your data is average, like you're not moving kids at a rate faster than anyone else. And so if you want the prestige and the esteem and the accolades, like, then your data has to back it up.

Sometimes they think they feel like it should just be handed to them without having the knowledge. And I know you've probably come across this in your research,

like, sometimes black men in education are promoted because they are black men in education, not because they're necessarily qualified. And I think sometimes, one of mine is like, well, I should get this job just because like, I am a great representative of black men in education, like, yeah, you're a good teacher, but there's a lot more you can do, and there are better teachers in my building. So I don't know if I have like, why I can pinpoint one disadvantage, but I think like, each of them kind of has their own flaws

The principals shared that they provide a safe environment for their Black male teachers where their teachers can make mistakes and grow. They understand that it's already difficult to be a Black man and how society views them.

I've made it a safe environment for a number of reasons. Number one, that I allow everyone to speak their truth. Everyone contributes to the learning environment, in his or her own way. And so I've created a space where African American males can feel comfortable missing the mark, but speaking their truth on why they missed the mark and gaining insight from their peers on how to make the mark. And so it's not only safe in terms of like intellect, and what it is that you need to learn to be in front of students effectively, it's safe in terms of like physical and mental security.

It was very refreshing how principals were intentional about creating safe spaces for their Black male teachers. Though they spoke briefly about being more intentional on trying to minimize them being asked to deal with "challenging behaviors". They understood how they are perceived by their colleagues as disciplinarians, but they also are aware of the one-on-one conversations a Black male teacher can have with a Black boy that a white woman can't.

It's usually the teacher like real talk, I'm gonna get on your level and talk to you the way your mama does. And, like, be real with you and not have this, like, super professional

conversation that I the principal would have with you. Yeah. I think as females or white teachers, I think, we think that the boys aren't going to listen to us. I think they listen. And like, take to heart what a black male teacher has to say, because they see themselves in it. And oftentimes, like, the conversation that they have is like, Look, I was in your shoes. This is what I did. This is what I had to do to change, you know, like, so they can relate on a completely different level?

You Can Make a Difference

It became even more apparent of the power that Black males bring to the classroom, but understand why more Black men don't consider teaching. One of the principals felt it goes beyond just monetary and working with children, but the traumatic experience of being students themselves.

But I think it's not even more about money. But I think that men who were boys have not had the most exciting and the best learning experience. It wasn't fun. It wasn't exciting, it wasn't really engaging. The teacher didn't understand me, I'm a visual learner, I can't take the lecture like little boys often have such painstaking, early elementary, middle and high school experiences where they are turned off from learning. And if learning is not fun and engaging, that is going to put like a mark on them. And they're like, Oh, that's the last thing I want that, that that whole elementary to high school experience, sometimes prohibit many of them from even going to college, because it's like, I just can't take any more of this. And they don't often get a chance to see learning done from a point where it's really exciting. Um, you know, it can provide you with so many opportunities, it should be engaging, it should be thought provoking. You know, it's they don't often walk away with that, you know,

Knowing this information, they strive to keep and grow the Black male teachers they currently employ. They found it hilarious that many leaders feel the simplest thing is really complicated “treating people like they’re humans.” It was also important to the principals to show up for the overall school community and show their gratitude.

I think we have the highest retention rate, like we people just enjoy working at the building. I mean, I, I treat people like adults, um, but I also provide a lot of support. Um, and I try to let everyone know how much they mean to me as an employee, but also how much they mean to the kids, like the kids can always shower them with the love and appreciation that they do, but they would like to sometimes, because they don't even have the words. They don't have the capacity. They don't have, you know, money to buy little trinkets. So I take that on for the kids. You know, I and I represent the kids. When I need to represent students. I represent families when I need to represent families and I represent staff when I need to represent staff. That's my job.

As conversations came to a close, I asked each to comment on what they felt the key components of a Black male teaching institute would be. The three key themes of all conversations were the importance of understanding their identity, deconstructing standards, and instruction. It was very evident they’ve worked with and coached Black male teachers and understand the environments they are entering in are very white. Black male teachers must be prepared to face situations they have not in the past may have dealt with or possibly being retraumatized of past situations. They must be willing to grow and learn to be the best Black male teachers for their students, colleagues and school community.

Chapter 5

Discussion

In this study, I explored the impact of white supremacy in educational spaces on Black male teachers. This study provides insights into how Black male teachers experience and navigate intersecting racialized and gendered expectations in educational systems. Gathering these expectations of my participants allowed me to discover ways to better recruit, retain and grow Black male teachers. This data informs university teacher preparation programs and school districts on how to better support Black male teachers and make spaces that are conducive to their learning and mental health.

The men willingly shared very key parts of their lives with me, a Black male researcher and former teacher, in a movement of solidarity and community-building with a group of teachers who are woefully underrepresented in the workforce. They also shared their stories to push back on those who would see them only for their maleness and their Blackness in educational spaces.” In this paper several themes occurred across the portraits (1) Journey into the Profession, (2) Teacher Preparation, (3) Countering the Disciplinary Narrative, (4) Building Relationships, and (5) Feeling Safe in the School Environment. In this section, I will situate these themes within the existing literature, critique the limitations of my own research, and identify promising areas for future research with Black male teachers. I will conclude with recommendations for practice and policy to strengthen the teaching profession.

Journey into the Profession

Each Black male teacher shared a different story of their journey into the field of education, but they all shared a certainty early in life of the direction they wanted to take. Their

shared purpose and calling to become Early Childhood Education teachers are linked directly to constructs of Black Masculinity Theory (Jackson, 2006). Each man experienced Jackson's concepts of "struggle, community, achievement, independence, and recognition (p.134)" as they navigated their entry into the teaching profession. Simultaneously, they each brought together their gendered and racialized experiences to create the kind of counternarratives sought by Critical Race theorists (Delgado, 2005).

Daniel, for example, sought to counter the narrative of who belonged in early childhood education. He saw that most early childhood teachers of Black children were white, and he felt personal responsibility to change that narrative in his community. Robert sought to counter the narrative of who succeeds in his community. As his community encouraged him to find a high-pay, high-status career outside of education, he solidified his goals of becoming a teacher and re-defining Black, male achievement in his school and community. This internal struggle between one's goals and aspirations and outside pressure was experienced by all the men and influenced the ways they balanced independence and community. Dee, for example, was drawn by his mother's example into the field of education, but the calling from his community to work in the school eventually cemented his decision. His desire and struggle to create change in his community by elevating his students' achievements beyond his classroom is a powerful merger of all the tenets of Black Masculinity theory.

Though these three Black men had different journeys into the classroom, they collectively were driven to teach to touch the lives of children. Though Black male teachers are consistently seen only valuable as disciplinarians Bristol & Mentor (2018), these Black male teachers refused this biased narrative by striving to be proficient as educators first. This aspect of the men's journey was also reflected in the principal's perspectives. Several principles noted

their commitment to building pipelines of teachers from their own personal and professional networks. They imagined the ways they help spark careers in education among mid-career changers and young adults, and they called upon aspects of Black Masculinity theory in these discussions. As one principal noted, “[think about what] it would be like to have a job where you know you're not just going for the pay, you're going for the outcome.” Principals saw the passion of Black male teachers for their communities as an asset that would drive healthy learning communities. Although racism is woven into the fabric of American schooling (Taylor et al., 2016), the power of Black male teachers and principal allies can shift the narratives around who is seen as a teacher in early childhood spaces.

Teacher Preparation Program Experience

Black Masculinity Theory sheds a great deal of light on Black men’s journey to become teachers, and their experiences in teacher preparation programs can also be analyzed through the lens of BMT and CRT. Daniel and Robert had very different experiences in their preparation programs, and these differences can be directly attributed to concepts of community and spaces designed for Black men. Daniel began his preparation at an HBCU where he felt he was very well prepared to be a teacher. He suffered no racism while there, but that changed when he decided to continue his masters education at a PWI. In this new setting, he was consistently asked if he was in the right class. This environment was not as welcoming as his HBCU experience, but he credits his professors with helping him achieve. Robert, on the other hand, chose to complete an alternative route to teacher certification. He did not speak about experiencing any racism in this program, though he expressed the program’s intent around teaching him how to observe relationships between parents and students. He felt that the true audience for these observations was white teachers who had little knowledge of Black children

and families. Both teachers felt that they were prepared to teach in the classroom once finished and stressed their programs' importance on how to move students. Both teachers, though, regretted the lack of culturally and linguistically responsive language and practices.

Principals echoed some parts of the teachers' sentiments about preparation, but they argued contradicted others. In the principal interviews, few explicitly mentioned the importance of teacher preparation programs. In contrast, principals focused on the work they needed to do to prepare Black male teachers for the job. One principal described the "gift" of having Black male teachers in the building, but said, "you will have to learn, you will have to show him how to actually become a great black male teacher." Other principals described the coaching needed to help Black male teachers become "instructional powerhouses." In contrast to the emphasis teachers put on their pre-service training, principals seemed to prioritize the on-the-job learning that happens in community at the school.

Countering the Disciplinarian Narrative

In keeping with principals' desire for "instructional powerhouses," teachers consistently identified the importance of strong instructional skills. Each Black male teacher exemplified the excellence they held for their students. This is consistent with existing research on teachers' expectations for Black students. White teachers have lower expectations than do Black students (Gerhenson et al., 2017). which drives lower achievement and widens the opportunity gap. The Black male teachers in this study were a true testament to how Black children can thrive in schools, but this was not always easy for the teachers. Each of them described struggling with the roles their schools expected of them in terms of student learning and discipline. Consistent with previous research in which Black male teachers, in particular, are called upon as disciplinarians

Bristol & Mentor (2018), the three teachers in this study had to actively resist these biased notions of Black and masculine roles.

Daniel, for example, actively sought joy instead of discipline. When teachers sent children to him for behavioral concerns, he defied their expectations and spent enjoyable time with the children. Likewise, Dee's students understood him being stern but fair. He recognizes the difficult lives his children live and instead of being penalizing he is empathetic towards their situations. Dee's Black female co-teachers have not viewed his approach as harsh enough, though they themselves have received criticism by students for treating them less than. Though Dee understands how people would like him to act towards children, his goal is to rewrite the narrative and show the possibilities in a less harsh approach.

Administrators were well aware of how the Black male teachers were consistently viewed by their colleagues, but they strove to change this narrative by providing support for Black men to achieve in the classrooms (Bristol & Mentor 2018). Coaching was the theme by administrators for Black male teachers to be successful in their craft. Dee never attended a teacher preparation program or alternative certification route, but his administrator saw potential within him to be a teacher. Dee credited his success, in part, to his administrator's decision to send him to one of the best standards institutes in the country. There he was surrounded by amazing, experienced teachers in the field. Though he felt alienated and the experience likely triggered the imposter syndrome experienced by many professionals of color Griffin et al. (2014), he understood the importance for growth.

Building Relationships

The Black male teachers represented in the portraits know the importance of having strong relationships with their students, families and colleagues. They own the fact that children

view them as uncles, fathers, and role models. They are aware of the lack of fathers in many of their children's lives, and they fulfill that role regardless. They understand the importance for Black children of having a Black man in their lives. It was especially important to Dee that he set the example being a father himself and showing students around him that he treats them as he treats his daughter. Daniel also shared examples of the ways Black male role models influence children. It was heartwarming, for example, to hear of Daniel's impact on the young white boy in his classroom who not only wanted to be his Black teacher but also wanted brown skin. It made you really wonder, though, what was the parents' response to their son? This young white boy looked at his teacher as a positive role model. While society may only view his teacher as a Black man, this example shows there is hope in society for future generations.

Relationships were also evident through children's artwork. Despite having never physically met their teachers due to the ongoing pandemic and remote learning, the students' drawings showed clear and wonderful connections with their teachers. Robert's connections with his student was very clear as they drew him in informal, relational, and imaginative ways: while in a photoshoot (Figure E3), going for a car drive (Figure E2), and spending Christmas together (Figure E1). Dee's impact on his students was felt as I viewed the pictures drawn by his students. The most impactful picture would be (Figure E8) in which his student not only drew himself and Dee in the picture, but included his father. The conversation that ensued was that he and his father had beards in the picture, but Dee would only have a chin. This was not only hilarious, but it also sends a message that he wants to be an image of his father.

Administrators felt that the relationships between their Black male teachers and the families was very important for the school culture. Black male teachers are able to reach the families in a different capacity than administrators, as families view the principals as an authority

figure. One Administrator shared that because she is bi-racial and white passing, families would share different situations taking place in the building with the Black male teacher and not her. This was very beneficial in making sure her building was a safe environment for her students, but made me wonder is it a safe space for Black male teachers. Not all administrators saw relationships as strength. One administrator cautioned, for example, that many Black male teachers' relationship building skills covered their weaknesses of being strong educators. That administrator cautioned that if other administrators are not willing to help create strong teachers then they are not doing any benefits for the teacher or students.

Feeling Safe in the School Environment

One consistent theme was safety within the school for Black male teachers. Each Black male teacher spoke about how they do not feel safe in some sort of way within the building. One consistent fear was being lied about by a student for an incident and not feeling administration would not support them. They feared administrators would only listen to the child and family to save themselves publicly in the situation. Walker et al. (2019) suggested that it is the responsibility of school administrators to create a safe environment for their Black male teachers, but there continues to be evidence that this is not the case for many men.

Administrators in this study all feel they provide a secure environment for their teachers but are aware that incidents can and will occur. It was interesting to learn how Daniel's principal had actually moved his entire classroom because it lacked windows. The principal in this situation could have been actually trying to protect Daniel, so he couldn't be accused of anything occurring in the classroom. It raises questions, though, about belonging and security in the building: was a white female teacher moved into that classroom? Why are the same safety concerns not shared about teachers with white or feminine identities?

When looking at this beyond the risk of false accusations, administrators need to be aware of the bias other colleagues may exhibit towards Black male teachers. Walker et al. (2019) expressed how Black male teachers' relationships with colleagues can impact opportunities outside the classroom. Administrators need to encourage and build an environment that is conducive for everyone's growth, including recognizing racial bias (Chin et al., 2020). One principal noted that they create environments in which "everyone can speak their truths." But what happens when one teacher's "truth" is oppressive or re-opens trauma? It was not clear how administrators go about creating such spaces, but this work is essential to help counter the impact of the stereotypes of Black male teachers (Walker et al., 2019).

Applying an Intersectional Lens

Throughout this study the intersections of race and gender on teachers' experiences were clear. This study applied the BMT and CRT lenses to the experiences of Black male teachers, but additional theoretical lenses could be useful in future analyses. For example, Robert shared his experiences as a Black gay man; his experiences may be more deeply understood by applying Queer Theory lenses (Bracho et al., 2020). Intersectional identities in predominantly female fields may also be understood by applying Black Feminist theories (Nayak, 2015) to the structures and practices of schools within society. Finally, each of the men in this study identified as able-bodied. Future research should use DisCrit (Annamma et al., 2018) to expand upon notions of ability, well-being, and care justice in educational spaces. It is unclear how the experiences of disabled Black men would differ from those reported here.

Limitations

This study took place during a global pandemic which caused many limitations. One of the participants fell ill during the study and was unable to complete the classroom observation and child drawing protocol. Two of the three one-on-one interviews with Black male teachers were completed at agreed upon public locations with safety measures in place. With the safety measures in place, it was difficult to read all angles of body movement by the participant. Upon request, the third participant's interview took place via Zoom, which inhibited my ability to capture additional actions and emotions exhibited by the Black male teacher. All three of the school administrators interviews took place using Zoom.

Secondly, due to Covid-19 school closures, I was unable to physically visit schools and capture the essence of the classrooms and school environments in person. Therefore, the two classroom observations were completed using Zoom during regular synchronous online instruction. Lastly, the two teachers who were able to complete the child drawing protocol did so independently of the research; this had been planned to occur during in-person observations. Of the two, I was able to observe one in real time and capture the children explaining their pictures. These explanations are provided as captions with the pictures. I was unable to capture any additional documentation related to child drawings for the second teacher. In addition, the child drawings should be interpreted with caution due to e-learning arrangements. It is not clear what role, if any, parents played in their children's art. Anecdotally, one parent was involved (Figure 9) and provided a fist bump for the drawing. Future research, in less exceptional circumstances, should focus on more precise drawing procedures.

Finally, this research is not intended to generalize beyond the three teachers represented in this study. The snowball sampling procedure resulted in a relatively diverse pool of educators,

but there are many aspects of Black masculinity not represented here. For example, this research is not expected to generalize to the experiences of transgender Black male teachers. Furthermore, this research is limited to the specific aspects of Black identity represented by these three men. It is not clear how their experiences may differ from the experiences of African or Caribbean men living in the United States, for example. Furthermore, all men were born in the United States and spoke English as their first language. It is unclear how this research would generalize to immigrant or multi-lingual identities. Finally, all participants were public school employees, and this represents a relatively privileged position in schooling. Future research should examine the experiences of early childhood educators in private or charter schools, Head Start, or community childcare programs. The certification, funding, and infrastructure differences across these educational settings would provide additional insights on the ways race and gender influence educators' experience in different facets of the U.S. education system.

Recommendations

My first recommendation is to ensure teacher education preparation programs are creating safe environments for Black male students. To make these environments safe, mandatory yearly implicit bias trainings need to occur alongside policies with consequences in place for those who create a toxic learning environment. The curriculum within these teacher education programs need to incorporate culturally responsive teaching practices. This should happen in collaboration with racially diverse school districts that have adopted anti-racist and decolonizing practices (Trinder et al., 2020). Not only will this ensure that the teacher education curriculum is relevant and grounded in communities, it will help districts adequately prepare to receive Black male teachers upon graduation.

School districts need to ensure that Black male teachers' work environments are safe spaces for Black male teachers to grow as educators and not disciplinarians. The additional tax placed upon Black male teachers for mentorship and service (Burrows, 2016) needs to be adequately compensated for duties outside their contractual obligations. Barriers foreseen by the school district or community need to be addressed and a commitment to dismantling them in an adequate timeline needs to be given. Intergenerational trauma is one such barrier that school districts and communities should be prepared to address. In keeping with Bettina Love's (2019) calls for systemic change. School districts should provide on-site, fully-paid mental health services for Black male teachers. Teacher coaches who are also Black men, need to be assigned to work with the Black male teachers for the first 3 years of teaching. If the current district does not have those coaches, they should seek consultant services so that the Black male teacher can have the necessary mentoring to be successful. These coaches should work alongside the school principal to ensure the Black male teacher is being given the tools to be successful and advance in their careers and earn tenure.

Implications for Future Research

For future research, I plan to be more intentional on asking about the sexual identities of the Black male teachers. This is important, as research automatically assumes all Black male teachers identify as heterosexual. These portraits will then allow others who share a similar identity an understanding of how one is to navigate situations differently than their colleagues. It also will allow me to more fully explore the ways intersectional identities are expressed or oppressed at school. Next it is essential that researchers examine the experiences of Black male teachers long term. A longitudinal study that follows a cohort of Black male teachers from their teacher programs to entering in the workforce would be valuable for exploring barriers men

come across and how they navigate those spaces. As a result of this study, I also became more aware of the Black men who play important non-certified roles in schools. These important roles as paraprofessionals and instructional assistants are a promising avenue to the teaching profession, but they tend to be under-paid, demanding, and low status positions. In future research, I would like to explore the experiences of Black male instructional assistants in early learning settings. This research could not only help the field understand what brings men to the educational field, but it would help Black men launch their trajectory into the teacher profession. As was made clear by the teachers in the current study, mentorship and role models are essential for seeing one's self as a teacher. Future research with this important population could help the next generation of teachers get the help, hope and guidance they need to encourage them into lifelong careers in the field.

Related to supporting the next generation of educators, the field should look to the ways an entrepreneurial lens can encourage Black men to enter and stay in the educational field. Entrepreneurship is not commonly discussed in the educational field, and when it is discussed it is usually focused on charter schools. Entrepreneurship is an important avenue for strengthening intergenerational wealth in Black communities, so further research of the creation of community schools that are co-owned by the teachers and state-supported could be a driving force in education and become safe spaces for Black and Brown children. In early childhood, entrepreneurship is particularly promising: the wide range of early childhood program types makes it possible to develop and operate small businesses that serve children and families outside of the school system. There is also a range of possibilities around curriculum development and other services required to offer culturally sustaining school experiences for Black boys and men. It's also important to draw from the success of Historically Black Colleges

and Universities (HBCUS) in their production of teachers. When looking how entrepreneurship is possible, it's important that we see how grow your own programs can be a direct pipeline in schools created in the community.

Future research should also consider the ways predominantly white institutions (PWIs) could partner with HBCUs. This could be a mechanism to financially support HBCU programs while building research that benefits Black students and scholars. This needs to be done intentionally and not in a harmful manner. PWIs must understand their positionality when going into the work. Those students from the community who choose to attend a teacher preparatory program at an HBCU should receive a partial scholarship from the PWI and the state the student is from. The students' degree and credentials would be issued jointly from both institutions, and graduate degree matriculation agreements would ensure placement in graduate programs and school placement programs across the state or region.

Implications for Policy

This study offers several implications for policy. First, the teachers and administrators in this study are still experiencing the generational impacts of Brown vs. Board of Education. They remain in largely segregated, under-funded schools. The federal government needs to address the historical impact of Brown vs. Board of Education on the teacher workforce. This can be done by investing in grow your own programs, school leadership pipelines that will allow more Black teachers to leave the classroom with minimal debt, 6-year college scholarships which give the flexibility to earn both a bachelor's degree and graduate degree in education, and down payment assistance for Black teachers who want to purchase a home within their school district boundaries. This needs to be done first to begin the healing of generational trauma on Black people. Next, the current Administration needs to commit funding to states to diversify the

teacher workforce and hold states accountable for the funds committed. This must be accomplished alongside specific policy recommendations for teacher preparation that prioritize anti-racist and de-colonizing pedagogies. Given the impact of HBCUs on several of the teachers in this study, HBCU teacher preparation programs should be lifted up, fully funded, and recognized for their long-term impact on Black communities. Federal grants should be allocated specifically for HBCUs to build programs that recruit and retain Black scholars in education, and these programs should emphasize the aspects of community wealth that will continue building Black communities (e.g., study abroad opportunities, financial literacy, networking, entrepreneurship, philanthropy). Lastly the federal government needs to incentivize innovation and community power in school design. Funds should be earmarked specifically for a return to community schools led by Black leaders. Specific benchmarks should be set not just around academic achievements but mental health, family well-being, home ownership, and family wealth in communities.

Conclusion

As this work was very close to my heart to complete, it is more of a testament to those Black male teachers who continue to serve their communities as teachers. To have heart to heart conversations and their trust in me to share their stories in a way that reflects their trajectory during a pandemic was a blessing. These conversations between the Black male teachers and myself became a healing time, a time to reflect on what it means to be a Black male teacher.

My hope is that there is a young Black male teacher who can feed from this knowledge and continue to strive in the field of education. In order to change the narratives, voices of Black male teachers must be listened to and allowed platforms for all to hear. This research builds on the legacy of Black researchers before me. I am committed to building community for and with

Black male teachers around the country. This work represents the first in what I hope will be a long line of transformative research serving Black men and boys.

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Appendices

Appendix A : Observation Protocol

University of Washington-College of Education

Topic: Understanding the experiences of Black Male Teachers

Researcher : A University of Washington doctoral (Ph.D.) student.

Goals:

- 1) Examine the experiences of early childhood (P-3) Black male teachers.
- 2) Discover ways to recruit, grow and retain Black male teachers in school districts.
- 3) Develop recommendations and tools for teacher preparation programs to be prepared.

Introductions: Thank you for allowing me here today to observe your experiences as a Black male teacher. I am William White a 4th year PhD student at the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington. In my study, I am seeking to learn about your journey becoming a classroom teacher and as a current teacher today. I am conducting observations as a part of my data collection with Black male teachers throughout the United States. I will be observing your classroom environment, lesson delivery, student interactions, family interactions and also interactions between you and colleagues. Please proceed to hold class as authentically as you would even though I know my presence may interfere. COVID 19 Adjustment: I understand that you are currently holding class via online and I will record the interactions as observed in written form.

The purpose of this study is to draw on the experiences of Black male teachers in hopes to encourage other Black men to become early childhood teachers, inform colleges/universities on how to improve their teacher preparation programs to support Black males, and also help school districts on how best to prepare to recruit, grow and retain Black male teachers.

You have probably noticed that I'm taking notes via my laptop. The purpose of this is to be able to capture the essence of your classroom so that we can look more closely at the information later. The notes recorded today will be summarized and direct quotes may be used. These summaries of the findings will be written in a way that protects your privacy and ensures confidentiality of both you and your students. I will not report any information by name or in any way that identifies you.

Date: _____

Observation Start Time: _____

Observation End Time: _____

School Setting: _____

Total number of students: _____ Boys _____ Girls _____ They/Them _____

Total number of students present: _____ Boys _____ Girls _____ They/Them _____

Race of students: Black/African American _____

African _____

Caribbean _____

White _____

Middle Eastern _____

Other ethnic identities not accounted for: _____

Number of adults present: _____ Men _____ Women _____ They/Them _____

Roles of Adults in the room:

General Education Teachers _____

Paraprofessionals _____

Special Education Teachers _____

ESL/Bilingual Teachers _____

Administrators _____

Related Service Providers _____

Family Members _____

Instruction Delivery:

Instruction delivered by general education teacher _____

Instruction delivered by ESL/bilingual education teacher _____

Instruction delivered by special education teacher _____

Instruction delivered collaboratively by general and ESL/bilingual education teachers _____

Instruction delivered collaboratively by general and special education teachers _____

Instruction delivered by paraprofessional _____

Instruction delivered by related service provider _____

Schedule of Activities

Key:

Large Group Instruction-LG	Language Arts-LA
Small Group Instruction-SM	Math-MA
Independent Work-IW	Science-SC
1:1 Instruction-1	Social Studies-SS
Circle Time-CT	Social Emotional Learning-SEL
Other will be notated	

Activity	Start time	End Time	Total # Minutes	Notes
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Positive teacher praise will be recorded verbatim as well as any language that is nurturer driven. Verbatim notes of interactions with adults who enter the room will be recorded as well. COVID-19 Adjustment: These interactions will be captured via the online format i.e. Zoom/Google Classroom used by the school district.

Appendix B

Visual Data Collection Protocol

University of Washington-College of Education

Topic: Understanding the experiences of Black Male Teachers

Researcher : A University of Washington doctoral (Ph.D.) student.

Goals:

- 1) Examine the experiences of early childhood (P-3) Black male teachers.
- 2) Discover ways to recruit, grow and retain Black male teachers in school districts.
- 3) Develop recommendations and tools for teacher preparation programs to be prepared.

Introduction to students will be done by participating teacher.

- 1) Teacher gets class attention.
- 2) Teacher will explain Mr. Whites presence and task for the day:

Today, we have a visitor. His name is Mr. White and he is visiting us all the way from Seattle, Washington (Teacher will show students on map distance between Seattle and their home school). He is here to look at how he can better support teachers like me. He is very interested in how you and I work together. In order to help Mr. White see this, you will draw pictures of me and you together on paper. Covid-19 Prompt: I know many of us have not had the opportunity to be in the classroom this year together , but draw a picture of what is something that comes to mind that you would like to do with me when we are back together again.

I want you to the best you can. You can use crayons, markers or whatever you have available to draw with. I'm excited to see what you come up with. Are there any questions? If not, let's begin drawing!!!

Teacher will check in as they normally would.

I will record in my notes any statements children make as they draw the pictures on pad of paper labeled with numbers or identifying factors so they can be attached to picture drawn.

Ex: Check this out Mr. Tyler, this is you and I riding bikes together. This could be inferred as the child enjoys or looks forward to spending time with the teacher. Facial expressions and voice reactions will be recorded. Students not engaged in the activity will be recorded as well. No engagement could mean the student could be reflecting on how their time with the teacher is similar to time they spend with somebody else special. It is imperative this data is collected.

At the conclusion, the teacher ask if anybody wants to share their pictures. This exercise is voluntary, but responses will be recorded to help decipher meanings of art from kids.

Once completed, teacher will collect drawings and place in envelope if in school setting. Covid-19 procedure for data collection: If online instruction is taking place, teacher will take a picture over the internet using a camera phone and send those to the researcher. If the teacher chooses to do this as a part of a work packet to be completed at the end of the week, instructions will be included at the top of a workshop developed by researcher.

Name _____

Date _____

Directions: Draw a picture of you and your teacher. You can draw as much as you want or as little as you want. I can't wait to see what you create.

Appendix C

School Administration Interview Protocol

University of Washington-College of Education

Topic: Understanding the experiences of Black Male Teachers

Researcher : A University of Washington doctoral (Ph.D.) student.

Goals:

- 1) Examine the experiences of early childhood (P-3) Black male teachers.
- 2) Discover ways to recruit, grow and retain Black male teachers in school districts.
- 3) Develop recommendations and tools for teacher preparation programs to be prepared

Introductions: Thank you for coming here today to share your experiences as an administrator of a Black male teacher. I am William White a 4th year PhD student at the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington. In my study, I am seeking to learn about your views of the affordances and constraints of having Black male teachers. I am conducting interviews with administrators of Black male teachers throughout the United States. Drawing on your experiences, I would like your honest opinions about your daily interactions, expectations and views of Black male teachers.

The purpose of this study is to draw on the experiences of Black male teachers in hopes to encourage other Black men to become early childhood teachers, inform colleges/universities on how to improve their teacher preparation programs to support Black males, and also help school districts on how best to prepare to recruit, grow and retain Black male teachers.

You have probably noticed that I have a recorder to capture our discussion. The purpose of the recording is to be able to transcribe or write down the conversations so that we can look more closely at the information later. I will ask you prior to recording if this is okay with you, and at any point if you'd like me to turn off the recorder please let me know. Names will appear on initial transcripts but will be changed to a pseudonym once transcription is completed. The ideas you share here today will be summarized and direct quotes will be used. These summaries of the findings will be written in a way that protects your privacy and ensures confidentiality. I will not report any information by name or in any way that identifies you.

The recorder is now being turned on..

Hello, my name is William White and today I will be conducting an interview to learn about administrators experience of having Black male teachers.

Can you please state your name, race, place of employment and length of time in current role?

Thank you.

Do you give me permission to record this interview with the understanding at any point you would like to stop recording the recorder will be turned off?

Thank you.

Over the hour and half to two hours, I will ask you some questions related to your journey to become a teacher and now as a current teacher. These questions are intended to start a conversation. Feel free to respond directly to my questions. Do you have any questions before we get started ?

Let's Begin...

Journey to Becoming a Principal

1. What was your journey to becoming a principal?

Probe: Were you a classroom teacher before becoming a principal? If so, how long?

2. How long have you currently been in your current position?

Probe: What drew you to becoming a principal at your current school?

3. When you first arrived, did you have any Black male teachers?

Probe: If not, how were you able to recruit a Black male teacher ?

Relationships and Expectations of Black Male Teachers

4. How is your relationship with your Black male teacher?
5. What words would you use to describe your Black male teacher(s)?
6. What do you feel are affordances of having a Black male teacher?
7. What do you feel are constraints of having a Black male teacher?
8. Do you hold different expectations for your Black male teachers versus your female teachers? If so why?
9. Do you feel colleagues of your Black male teachers hold certain expectations? If so, what are they are?

10. Have you witnessed or heard of your Black male teachers being called to deal with the behavior of children of fellow teachers?

Probe: Have you called on your Black male teacher to deal with the behavior of a student that wasn't theirs?

11. What do you feel a Black man brings to a classroom that a Black or White woman can't?

12. Do you feel that your school is a safe place for Black males to teacher? If so, how have you made this a safe environment?

13. What are difficulties you've seen or feel Black male teachers experience? Why do you feel that way?

14. How are the relationships between your Black male teachers and their colleagues?

15. How are the relationships between your Black male teachers and the families?

16. What type of impact do you feel your Black male teacher has on the school community?

17. Have you been successful at retaining Black male teachers in your school?

Probe: What practices have you instituted to successfully retain Black male teachers?

18. If you were creating a teacher training program for Black male teachers , what would it consist of?

19. Why do you feel there aren't more Black male teachers?

Probe: Do you or the district have any initiatives to draw more Black men to the classroom?

20. Is there anything I haven't asked that you would like to cover before ending our interview?

Thank you very much for your participation in our interview today. I will be emailing you within the week a transcription of our interview to make sure we captured everything shared today. Thank you once again. This ends the recording of the interview.

Appendix D

Black Male Teacher Interview Protocol

University of Washington-College of Education

Topic: Understanding the experiences of Black Male Teachers

Researcher : A University of Washington doctoral (Ph.D.) student.

Goals:

- 1) Examine the experiences of early childhood (P-3) Black male teachers.
- 2) Discover ways to recruit, grow and retain Black male teachers in school districts.
- 3) Develop recommendations and tools for teacher preparation programs to be prepared

Introductions: Thank you for coming here today to share your experiences as a Black male teacher. I am William White a 4th year PhD student at the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington. In my study, I am seeking to learn about your journey becoming a classroom teacher and as a current teacher today. I am conducting interviews with Black male teachers throughout the United States. Drawing on your experiences, I would like your honest opinions about your journey to become a teacher and now as a teacher.

The purpose of this study is to draw on the experiences of Black male teachers in hopes to encourage other Black men to become early childhood teachers, inform colleges/universities on how to improve their teacher preparation programs to support Black males, and also help school districts on how best to prepare to recruit, grow and retain Black male teachers.

You have probably noticed that we have a recorder to capture our discussion. The purpose of the recording is to be able to transcribe or write down the conversations so that we can look more closely at the information later. I will ask you prior to recording if this is okay with you, and at any point if you'd like me to turn off the recorder please let me know. Names will appear on initial transcripts but will be changed to a pseudonym once transcription is completed. The ideas you share here today will be summarized and direct quotes will be used. These summaries of the findings will be written in a way that protects your privacy and ensures confidentiality. I will not report any information by name or in any way that identifies you.

The recorder is now being turned on..

Hello, my name is William White and today I will be conducting an interview to learn about Black male teachers experience.

Can you please state your name, age, race, and current place of employment?

Thank you.

Do you give me permission to record this interview with the understanding at any point you would like to stop recording the recorder will be turned off?

Thank you.

Over the hour and half to two hours, I will ask you some questions related to your journey to become a teacher and now as a current teacher. These questions are intended to start a conversation. Feel free to respond directly to my questions. Do you have any questions before we get started ?

Let's Begin...

Part 1: Becoming a Teacher

1. When you think back to first wanting to become a teacher, what was it that ultimately led you to the field of education?

Probe: Was there a person, event or experience that led you to become a teacher?

Probe: What led you to choose to teach early childhood education?

2. Can you tell me about your teacher preparation?

Probe: What made you choose that route to become a teacher? (Reason: Gloria Ladson-Billings referenced how many Black students choose alternative routes compared to traditional teacher routes- Hip Hop Ed Remix

Probe: Did you attend a Historically Black College or University or a Predominately White Institute?

3. In what ways do you feel your teacher education training program prepared you to be a Black male teacher?
4. What are some things you feel couldn't be taught in a teacher preparation program that you quickly had to learn to be successful? (looking for culturally relevant practices) (classroom management)
5. What outside of formalized training helped prepare you to be a teacher?

6. If you were given the opportunity to create a teacher preparation program, what would you envision it to look like for future Black male educators?
7. When you began your first year as a classroom teacher, did you feel fully prepared ?

Probe: What do you feel was missing for you to be prepared? Types of instruction? Assessments? Diversity? Expectations?

Now, I would like to learn more about the school you currently work at, and the community it's located in. Using portraiture methodology, it enables us the ability to bring our reader along for the ride and experience what you do on a daily basis as a Black man. This is important because it provides additional context and authenticity for our reader to connect to your story.

Ride to work:

8. If I was a passenger in your car ride to work, can you describe what I would see, hear and even smell?

Probe: What are some ways you prepare for the school day as you are on your drive? Do you listen to music or a podcast? If so what kind ?

9. How does a school morning look like for you ?
10. How does the school day flow for you?
11. Can you provide the make-up of the community where the school is situated?

Probe: How would you help somebody visualize what they would see if they we're coming to the visit the school?

Part 2: Your Role in the School

12. What are the expectations in your school around discipline?
13. What are the roles that you play as a Black male teacher?
14. What would your current colleagues say about you as a teacher?

15. How are your relationships with your colleagues and administration?
16. As a Black male, how is your relationship with your students?
17. How is your relationship with the parents of the students you serve?

Part 3: Thriving as a Black male teacher

18. Do you feel your Black masculinity has impacted your experience in your school?
19. Do you feel you can be your authentic self as a Black male teacher? (Mental health, Black tax, double Dubois)

Probe: Have you ever been told you need to stop being yourself by administration or colleagues? (Looking for examples that may have been viewed as toxic masculinity or fear)

20. As a Black male in your school, how do you feel that plays into your role as a teacher?
21. What are some positive experiences you've had thus far teaching as a Black male?

Probe: Thinking about those you've shared, which one of those made the most impact on your life? Why?

Probe: How did this impact your classroom experiences?

22. What are some negative experiences you had teaching as a Black male?

Probe: Have you ever received a complaint from a parent? If so, do you mind sharing that experience?

Probe: Have you ever been reprimanded by your administration?

Probe: Have you ever been approached by a colleague for something they felt you did wrong?

23. What are some factors that have driven you to stay in the classroom?

Probe: Did anybody or a certain experience play a key role in you staying in the classroom?

24. Do you feel you've made an impact in the classroom because you are a Black male?

25. How does your local community view you as a Black male teacher?
26. Do you feel you've made an impact in your community? If so, how and why?
27. What would you want young Black men to know about being a teacher?
28. Probe: Would you recommend this profession to your son? Why or Why not?
29. Is there anything you haven't mentioned that was a key for you to stay in the teaching field? If time is allotted, the following protocol will be followed which directly addresses the impact of Covid-19 on Black male teachers teaching online. If time is not allotted, the protocol will be completed at a later date agreed on by the researcher and the Black male teacher.

Covid-19 Additional Questions for teachers conducting online learning:

30. Since you have started distance learning, what are the constraints and affordances for you to do your job effectively?
31. Do you feel your school is equitably providing education to your student population? Probe: If not, why? What would you change?
32. What impact of Covid-19 have you observed on your Black and Brown students?
33. How has distance learning impacted your mental health? Probe: Does your administration have the same expectations or more expectations now that you are doing distance learning?
34. How has teaching virtually impacted your day to day responsibilities in your home? Probe: Have you had additional responsibilities with family or home that's impacted your effectiveness teaching?
35. Does your school administration have different expectations than your female colleagues?
36. Have you been consulted on the decision to re-open school or stay virtual?
37. How have you developed or maintained relationships with your colleagues?
38. Have you been successful in building community with your new students and families? If so, how?
39. Are you still required to be observed by administration during distance learning? If so, how are they measured and used ?
40. What platform are you using for distance learning? Were you provided training to make the switch?
41. Do you feel it's more complicated to do early childhood education instruction online compare to higher grades? If so, why?
42. What types of classroom rules do you have in place for online instruction? How do you enforce them?
43. How do you think the children feel having to do distance learning?
44. How involved are the parents in your online instruction for your students? How important do you feel their involvement is for successful distance learning?
45. What are improvements you feel need to happen to make distance learning better?
46. If there was one word to describe distance learning in your eyes, what would it be?







Appendix F: Participant Consent Form

“Understanding the experience of Black Male Teachers”

Investigator: William L. White
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Investigator’s Statement

I am asking you to be in a research study that I am completing as part of my doctoral coursework at the University of Washington. The purpose of this consent form is to give you all the information you will need to help you decide whether or not to be in the study. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what I would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called “informed consent.” I will give you a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore the experience of black male teachers, specifically what led them to pursue a career in teaching, and what contributed to their decision to stay in the classroom.

PROCEDURES

If you choose to be in this study, I would like to interview you for 90-120 minutes. With your permission, I would like to audio record using Zoom for your interview so that I can have an accurate record of our conversation. This recording will be transcribed. Only I will have access to the original recordings, which will be kept in a secure location. Two years after the completion of study the audio recordings will be destroyed. If you would like a copy of the transcript of the interview, I will gladly provide you with one.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

