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## A Narrative Inquiry: What Does It Mean to Be a Black Male Teacher?

Nathaniel Marner

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## A Narrative Inquiry: What Does It Mean to Be a Black Male Teacher?

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Running head: BLACK MALE TEACHER

A Narrative Inquiry: What Does It Mean to Be a Black Male Teacher?

Nathaniel Marner

Submitted for the partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education

Molloy College

2021



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

The dissertation of **Nathaniel Marnier** entitled: ***A Narrative Inquiry: What Does It Mean to Be a Black Male Teacher?*** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the School of Education and Human Services has been read and approved by the Committee:

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Date: March 22, 2021

**Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my family.

### Abstract

Nationwide, only 2% of K-12 teachers in the United States are Black males. As student demographics are shifting, more Black male teachers are needed in urban schools as well as in suburban settings (where this research took place). Research has shown that when Black students see examples of same-race teacher role models in schools, it increases student outcomes and influences future aspirations. Therefore, my narrative research study examined the stories of Black male educators in suburban elementary and middle schools with mostly students of color. Stemming from my own story of why I became a teacher, my motivation for this topic was to discover (a) why Black males became teachers in a White female-dominated profession and (b) what unique role Black males believed they played in their classroom and school community. Based on in-depth interviews with seven Black male educators, findings revealed that the participants aspired to help people before they became teachers. All the participants had either a person or event that influenced them to become teachers. A noteworthy finding is that only three of the seven participants had a Black male teacher during their high school and college years. The remaining four participants never had a Black male teacher. Another main finding included the Black male presence, which focused on how the participants reported setting a positive tone in the classroom and creating an engaging learning environment. Although the participants never used the term *culturally sustaining pedagogy*, they all said they infused cultural elements into their daily lessons to enhance students' racial identity and promote learning. The participants valued building rapport and relationships with students. These relationships extended outside the classroom, where participants gave students meaningful advice for their future. The participants took pride in being positive role models for their

students, even as some of their colleagues and administrators viewed them as disciplinarians. This study's findings have implications for increasing the number of teacher preparation programs for Black males, providing incentives for Black males to become teachers, and offering culturally sustaining pedagogy professional development for teachers who teach Black students.

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I would also like to thank all of my cohort members and my committee members: Dr. Allison Roda, Dr. Andrea Honigsfeld, Dr. Mark James, and Dr. Janice Kelly. These individuals assisted in bringing my vision to life, along with Dr. Andrea Silverstein. They have truly motivated and inspired me to complete this task, and I am very appreciative.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

As a Black male working in a New York suburban public school where the majority of the students are Black, I was one of the recognized 2% of Black male teachers in the United States (Bristol & Goings, 2019; Bryan & Milton-Williams, 2017; El-Mekki, 2018; Milner, 2016; Pabon, 2016). This statistic made me an outlier in the field of education. I represented one of a few Black male educators who had the privilege of teaching, motivating, and inspiring students, particularly Black male students, daily at my Long Island elementary school. I am currently an elementary school administrator. For the purpose of this study, the definition of a Black male teacher is anyone who identified as Black and male, including African Americans, Africans, Caribbean, and Canadians. Knowing that over 76% of teachers are White (Boucher, 2016; Goldenberg, 2014), the unfortunate reality is that many Black students will not have a Black teacher or a Black male teacher to look up to as a role model during their entire educational career.

Indeed, similar statistics existed when I attended school during my K-12 years. While reflecting on my own educational background, I remembered that the first time I had a Black male teacher was in college. Coincidentally, he taught Black history. Professor Jones (pseudonym) taught with a passion that not only inspired the Black students in the classroom but also all of his students. This was the first time I became aware of a workshop model as a student. Professor Jones had us work in groups most of the time. We discussed many topics such as slavery, the Civil War, and Civil Rights. We organized our thoughts as a group and created anchor charts on the given topic. Then we presented what we learned to the class. After our presentation,

Professor Jones clarified and elaborated on the topic before assigning us a project that reinforced our learning. This pedagogy is reflective of a *culturally sustaining pedagogy*, which offers these benefits, according to Milner (2005):

Students of color need to encounter and experience a curriculum that highlights, showcases, and speaks from the point of view of the life experiences and contributions of people of color, women, and other marginalized groups, not just those of White mainstream. (p. 392)

When I was a sixth-grade teacher, almost all of the students in the building knew my name and the grade that I taught. I often wondered if this is because I was a male teacher or a Black teacher. Regardless, I made sure that I taught and treated all students as if they were my own, just like Professor Jones did when I took his class.

My desire to become a teacher came directly from Professor Jones, as he played a critical role in my life, even though it was for a brief period. The sole reason I became a teacher was to help students understand the importance of getting an education at an early age. I always respected my teachers and enjoyed school. I often received good grades and knew that I wanted to pursue a career that allowed me to help people. However, Professor Jones was the teacher that made me realize my capacity to become a highly respected teacher. Seeing an individual who looked like me in an esteemed role teaching Black students inspired me to do the same. I hoped that the students in my classroom, as well as those whom I came in contact with through various events and activities inside and outside of school, would look at me and say to themselves, 'I will finish high school, graduate from college, and become a teacher someday just like Mr. Marner.'

In my former position as a teacher, knowing that there were not many people who looked like me within the school or district, I proudly took the responsibility of ensuring that my

students received the best education possible. Similar to Bell (2007) and Lewis' (2013) findings, some of my students did not have male role models. This is why I took it upon myself to help guide students not only in the classroom but also in life.

There are a few researchers whose findings showed that teacher-student racial matching does not have an influence on student learning (Boucher, 2016; Cooper, 2003). Yet, most research has shown the opposite scenario, that it is possible for academic performance to increase by matching a student with a teacher who shares the same racial and cultural backgrounds (Dee, 2005; Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015). According to Dee (2005), a teacher is considered a role model for students based on one's racial identity. Therefore, the original design of my study was to examine Black male educators' perceptions of their influence on Black male students. However, as described in more detail in Chapter 4, my findings indicated that Black male educators felt they had an influence on all students, not just Black males.

### **Problem Statement**

It is critical for Black students to have at least one Black teacher, particularly during their upper elementary and lower middle school years (Gladwell, 2017); yet most Black students do not have access to this opportunity because of the dearth of Black male educators (Milner & Howard, 2004). According to Gladwell (2017), Black students were 39% more likely to complete high school if they had at least one Black teacher from third grade to eighth grade.

Researchers have also found a disparity in academic performance between Black and White students. Johnson (2019) found that "Black children are, on average, two grade levels behind White children in terms of academic achievement; and children in the poorest districts are, on average, four grade levels behind those in the wealthiest districts" (p. 3). In addition, Black male students were three times more likely to be suspended from school compared to

White students (Cholewa, Hall, Babcock, & Smith, 2018; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Gregory Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Noguera, 2003). The connection exists between lower academic achievement and disproportionate discipline rates for Black students and the negative perception of Black males in society. According to Noguera (2003),

All of the most important quality-of-life indicators suggest that African American males are in deep trouble. They lead the nation in homicides, both as victims and perpetrators, and in what observers regard as an alarming trend, they now have the fastest growing rate for suicide. For the past several years, Black males have been contracting HIV and AIDS at a faster rate than any other segment of the population and their incarceration, conviction, and arrest rates have been at the top of the charts in most states for some time. Even as babies, Black males have the highest probability of dying in the first year of life, and as they grow older they face the unfortunate reality of being the only group in the United States experiencing a decline in life expectancy. In the labor market, they are the least likely to be hired and in many cities, the most likely to be unemployed. (pp. 431-432)

This negative perception of Black males in society has translated to some teachers viewing Black students as lazy, violent, less innocent, and more culpable than other students (Quinn, 2017; Sheftall et al., 2016). These negative stereotypes and discrimination against Black students lead to depression and higher rates of suicide in young Black males (Sheftall et al., 2016).

Warren (2017) suggested that Black male teachers play a significant role in educating students of color. Warren also indicated that Black male teachers could reverse some of these negative academic and social-emotional trends. Many Black male teachers teach using culturally

relevant strategies (Bristol, 2015b; Bryan & Milton-Williams, 2017; Emdin, 2013). According to Klopfenstein (2005), Black male teachers set forth rigorous goals and had higher expectations for Black male students, which helped foster positive relationships between Black male teachers and Black male students and positively impacted the learning process (Emdin, 2013). Overall, there was a belief that Black male teachers could better relate to the experiences of Black male students (Bristol, 2015b). Many students developed an additional influence academically when there was a racial and gender match between teachers and students (Dee, 2004). Although research suggested that the gender of a teacher did not make much of a difference during the early elementary school years, it was a significant factor as children became older (Miller, 2018).

The problem is that there is a lack of Black male teachers in the field (Bristol & Goings, 2019; Bryan & Milton-Williams, 2017; El-Mekki, 2018; Milner, 2016; Pabon, 2016). Research has found that some males might not choose to enter into teaching because there is a stigma surrounding teaching as women's work (Stewart, Coombs, & Burston, 2016), and some males compared teachers to having similar roles as caregivers (Petersen, 2014). Another reason for the dearth of Black male teachers is the perspective that people had of Black males in schools, which was that of disciplinarians (Brown, 2012). Goings and Bianco (2016) noted that Black male students chose to pursue other career opportunities other than teaching because they left high school with a negative view of teaching. This example illustrates the importance of having Black male teachers in the classroom to inspire the leaders of tomorrow (Warren, 2017).

The New York State Education Department (NYSED, 2019) has adopted the Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework, which included the recommendation to recruit and retain diverse teachers. In addition, NYSED has partnered with Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities to increase diversity in the

teaching force. While there are many efforts to increase the number of Black male teachers, a struggle continues to exist to increase the national percentage of Black male teachers (Bell, 2017; Bryan & Milton-Williams, 2017; Ingersoll & May, 2011). Some outreach programs have implemented focus on raising the numbers of Black male teachers in urban schools. These programs include the *Black Males to the Blackboard* initiative (Bristol, 2015b), *Pathways to Teaching* (Bryan & Milton-Williams, 2017), and the *My Brother's Keeper* initiative (Obama, 2014). Miller (2018) found that increasing the diversity of teachers within schools could influence student performance and the perception of schools. Ultimately, more Black male teachers are needed in schools with a large number of Black students (Warren, 2017), not only in urban schools but also in suburban settings where this research took place.

Therefore, my study examined the perceived influence Black male educators have on their students. Stemming from my own story of why I became a teacher, my motivation for this topic was to discover (a) why Black males became teachers in a White female-dominated profession and (b) what unique role Black males believed they played in the academic and social-emotional development of students of color (if at all). It is hoped that understanding this phenomenon from the Black male teachers in this study will decrease stereotypes about Black male educators and increase diversity in the teaching profession.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study incorporated three frameworks: critical race theory (CRT), culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP), and culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP). These three lenses assisted me in topic development, the review of the literature, and the study's narrative research design.

#### **Critical Race Theory**

Throughout the development of this study, the core topic has always centered on race. CRT used the role of race and law to assess people within the context of everyday life (Hernández 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1998, 1999; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). According to Sablan (2019, p. 180), the tenets of CRT include the following:

- “Racism, race, and its intersections (with gender, class, etc.) are an endemic part of society.
- CRT challenges dominant frameworks and ideologies that are White centered or White supremacist in origin.
- Scholarship works toward social justice, including the empowerment of oppressed groups and elimination of racism and poverty.
- The experiential knowledge of people of color is a legitimate way of understanding the world, such as through storytelling.
- CRT is inter- or transdisciplinary.”

Through Black male educators’ perspectives, I looked at the ways in which they believed the match of teacher-student race and gender (Singer, 2016) can influence the academic and socio-emotional development of students. One aspect of my study was to examine the role of race and racism that my participants may have experienced. In a female-dominated profession, my research looked to explore and identify Black male teachers’ contributions to students of color. Later, I will discuss ways my participants used their knowledge of being Black males to provide students with real-life experiences that will benefit them long after they graduate high school and college. This study seeks to add to the body of literature regarding Black male teachers’ perceived influence on students of color.

### **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**



CRP developed by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995a) provided a framework for me when I was a teacher. Ladson-Billings indicated that students were most successful academically when teachers upheld their cultural norms and confronted the status quo through the growth of their critical consciousness. Ladson-Billings (1995b) examined exemplary teachers of Black students and found that they viewed themselves as part of the community, believed that they were giving back to the community by teaching the students who reside there, and understood that all students have the potential for academic success. The teachers in her study came from different racial backgrounds and all “met the aforementioned criteria of helping their students to be academically successful, culturally competent, and socio-politically critical” (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, pp. 477-478).

Another tenet of CRP is to provide more access to culturally relevant texts. According to the Culturally Responsive–Sustaining Education Framework, showcasing students’ cultures positively in the classroom brings about a positive perception of the school, and students’ empowerment increases when they learn innovative materials in a rigorous way (New York State Education Department, 2019). King (2017) and King and Brown (2014) analyzed how some textbooks often portrayed Blacks as foolish, childlike, and simple minded. As scholars were unsatisfied with the content, portrayal, and lack of knowledge regarding Blacks included in these textbooks, some began creating their own books to depict an accurate account of information (Brown & Brown, 2010). Unless referring to slavery, the Civil War, or racial injustices, textbooks excluded Blacks (King, 2010).

Brown and Brown (2011) found that discourses of racial injustices exist in the context of the school curriculum. In the past, authors who included Blacks in the discussion would only minimally state the history of slavery and racial violence. Therefore, the actual history presented

was partial, misleading, and biased (Brown & Brown, 2010). King (2010) found that “it was common in these textbooks to underscore Black persons as inferior and second-class citizens” (p. 2). If individuals do not fully understand history, especially pertaining to their own culture, it becomes impossible for them to grow and produce change. When Black students read and gained a full understanding of those who share similar racial, cultural, gender, and ethnic backgrounds, it provides them with a sense of empowerment, consciousness, and understanding (Milner, 2005). This gives Black students an appreciation as they become empowered when making real-world connections that enhance their understanding of history, similar to how Professor Jones inspired me when he designed his lessons in a culturally relevant manner. The Culturally Responsive–Sustaining Education Framework states that “culturally responsive education is about teaching the students in front of you” (New York State Education Department, 2019, p.13). This is what Professor Jones did as he built relationships with many of his students.

### **Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy**

The introduction of CRP came about in an effort to enhance the educational tools for Blacks. Gloria Ladson-Billings developed CRP in response to create methods to educate Black youths. The search to find ample information was difficult as the sources were lacking (Ladson-Billings, 2014). As more tools were needed to accomplish this, researchers Paris and Alim (2014) sought a new path by extending cultural relevant pedagogy. This new framework came to be known as cultural sustaining pedagogy (CSP). Paris (2012) introduced CSP, and some schools integrated it into classroom settings. The goal of CSP is to advance the education of schools toward a community that utilizes diverse and cultural practices in the classroom (Alim & Paris, 2017). CSP aims to provide a language and culture to youths that supports diversity.

### **Purpose and Significance of the Study**

The purpose of my study was to tell the stories of Black male teachers' journeys in the field of education and their perceived influence on Black male students' achievement and socio-emotional development in the classroom. These influences included but were not limited to Black male students' academic growth, socio-emotional learning, and decreasing the number of suspensions for Black male students. The literature that supported the rationale of increasing the numbers of Black male teachers in third grade through eighth grade includes the following:

1. Black males' perception of school could be altered just by seeing a Black male teacher in the classroom. Having Black male teachers in the classroom positioned as role models could influence students, mainly boys of color (Bell, 2017; Cushman, 2008; Henry, 2017; Lewis, 2013; Warren, 2017).
2. Black male teachers have advocated for Black students (Fant, 2017), and this situation leads students to be successful in the classroom.
3. Black male teachers provided a sense of racial and cultural pride (Mentor, 2016). Successful Black male teachers connected the classroom instruction to the lives and experiences of Black students (Bristol, 2014; Foster, 1994).

While there has been research on the importance of increasing the number of Black male teachers and increasing the academic performance of Black male students, my research had a slightly different focus. The goal of my study was to focus on the narratives of Black male teachers in suburban school settings who are currently in the teaching field. It is critical to hear their perspectives since 92% of teachers on Long Island are White (Bressen, 2019). I analyzed the stories that a select group of Black male educators told about teaching, inspiring, and mentoring their Black male students. My study centered around Black male teachers' perceived influences on Black male students and whether they positively influenced the academic

performance and the socio-emotional development of their students through certain behaviors, rituals, routines, expectations, and practices inside and outside of the classroom.

### **Research Questions**

This study's central question was "How do Black male 3rd-8th grade teachers from Long Island school districts perceive their influence on students' academic and social-emotional development?" The sub-questions used to answer the primary research question included:

1. What influenced this group of Black male teachers to go into the teaching field?
  - 1a. What challenges or barriers do Black male educators experience in the teaching profession?
2. What stories do Black male teachers share of their lived experience teaching in majority Black and Latinx schools with mostly White female faculty?
3. How do Black male teachers perceive that their race and gender influence relationships with students of color?
  - 3a. How do those relationships relate to academics and behavior?
4. What teaching practices do Black male teachers find most effective when teaching students of color? How do those practices relate (or not) to CRT and CRP?

### **Research Methods and Design**

Qualitative approaches had a profound impact on the design of this study. After considering a few qualitative designs (phenomenology and ethnography), I started thinking about how I became a classroom teacher. Reflecting on my journey and story, I often wondered if other Black male teachers had similar stories. This sparked an interest in implementing the Narrative Inquiry Design. When thinking about the term narrative, there is an expectation that a story is

involved. Knowing that there are only a handful of Black male teachers (2% nationally), I focus my study on understanding each participant's experiences.

To examine the perceived influences that Black male teachers had on their racially diverse students, I implemented a qualitative approach using the narrative inquiry design. I used social constructivism to analyze my participant's perspectives as I examined their situations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). I aimed to determine the meaning of the participant's experiences through the lens of social constructivism (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I interpreted the data received to locate themes based on their lived stories and experiences. I selected narrative design because it aligned with the nature of CRT's counter-storytelling tenet about giving a voice to individuals who typically remain silent. Many people have used storytelling to share information from generation to generation. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), this prominence on storytelling is known as a narrative inquiry design.

In the 1990s, the phenomenon called "narrative inquiry design" started making a name for itself in the field of education (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This was important in highlighting the lived experiences of many individuals (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). I used narrative inquiry, inviting the Black male teachers participating in this study to share their stories and offering them the platform (James, 2007) to describe the work they engage in daily.

My study participants were seven Black male teachers who work in Long Island school districts in New York State. Two of the seven participants attended college intending to become a classroom teacher. Five of the seven participants took alternate paths that led them to become teachers. These Black male teachers shared their stories and experiences in a 60-120-minute interview. The interviews started in January 2020 and concluded in March 2020. While none of

the participants expressed interest in becoming school administrators, they have taken on the leadership role in mentoring students and staff members.

### **Data Analysis and Trustworthiness**

Data analysis was continuous as I collected data. I immediately completed field memos after each interview. I transcribed the interviews by uploading the audio recordings to Rev.com. I reviewed the written transcript while listening to the audio recording. Codes and themes were developed based on my research using Dedoose as I conducted an in-depth analysis. Initially, I documented all of the themes for participants individually. Then, I reviewed to see if there were any commonalities between the participants. After coming to a determination, I created a table displaying how the codes were transformed into themes (see Figure 1 in Chapter 4). Then, I had to review the transcripts again and color-coded the interviews to match the emerging themes. This process repeated until I completed Chapter Four.

To ensure the interview data's validity, I offered members an opportunity to review the data by member checking. I cross-referenced my interviews and field notes. However, a third-party, Dr. Amy (pseudonym), who works in the Xavier (pseudonym) school district with five of the seven participants for most of their careers, read my study. Dr. Amy offered input, mainly with Chapters Four and Five on the participants' work experience.

### **Context and Setting of the Study and Participants**

Most Black male students live in low socio-economic areas, reflected in the high level of school segregation across Long Island, New York (Reardon, 2019). Because of the negative effects of racial isolation and concentrated poverty, many Black students have not always experienced the same academic success as other Black students who attended private school or Black students who attended public school in higher socio-economic areas, with a mix of White,

Latinx, or Asian students (Bell, 2017). However, having exposure to Black male teachers could motivate Black male students to graduate from high school and possibly attend college (Gladwell, 2017).

I conducted this study across a selected sample of Long Island school districts. The criteria I used to purposefully select the districts included emailing many of the superintendents. Within my email, I explained my study's context and asked if their particular districts had any Black male classroom teachers who worked in the district. In addition to emailing the superintendents, I reached out to my network of doctoral program professors and graduate students at Molloy College. I sent an email explaining my study and checking if they know anyone interested in participating in this study. When I received news that there were some Black male teachers in certain districts, I contacted the superintendent's office of those respective districts to ask for permission to conduct my study and to contact those teachers. One of the schools selected for this study is in the Howard School District, which consists of mostly Black and Asian students. This school enrolls around 550 students in grades kindergarten through six. Most of the teachers in this district are White women. I interviewed one of the only two Black male educators in this district. The other school districts included in this study were the Morehouse School District and the Xavier School District. The Morehouse and Xavier School Districts' population are mainly Blacks and Latinx students.

When selecting the participants for this study, I used the following criteria: identification as Black males, currently worked in a kindergarten through eighth-grade setting, and taught a core subject (K-5 general education, or 6-8 math, English, science, or social studies). Finally, the most critical component of this research involved the participants sharing their stories and life

experiences as Black male students, reasons they became teachers, and their current experiences teaching students of color.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

I assumed that all of the participants answered the questions truthfully during the duration of this study. When designing this study, there were a few challenges that potentially limited this study. One limitation was the lack of Black teachers in a school settings, which meant that I had only a few participants to analyze and examine the role that these Black male teachers had on students of color. The smaller numbers of Black male teachers limited possible participation. Therefore, I considered the Black male teachers as participants if they had students of color in their classes. Finally, because this study took place on Long Island, New York, the findings do not represent Black male teachers in the remaining parts of the world as it is only specific to where the study took place.

When designing this study, there were a few challenges that limited this study. One limitation of this study was the lack of primarily Black and Latinx school districts, which limited the participation of Black male teachers. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), participants could have embellished portions of their stories, which might be a possible limitation. However, I expected that all of the participants presented truthful information during the interviews, and I reported their stories as told to me.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

- Black Male Teacher – The Black male teacher represented a male figure who identified himself as Black. He may have been from the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, Africa, or Europe. There are differences among the Black males in regard to the country of origin (Dee, 2004).



- Critical Race Theory – This theory states that racism is the norm and provides the framework for the lack of accomplishment and achievement among Black males (Howard, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2017).
- Culturally Relevant – This refers to a technique used to deliver instruction related to the student’s cultural, racial, and ethnic identities (Bryan & Milton-Williams, 2017; Parsons & Wall, 2011).
- Culturally Sustaining – This refers to infusing a student’s cultural practices with classroom lessons and activities (Alim & Paris, 2017).
- Narrative Inquiry – The analysis of the narrative focuses on the investigation of the story, according to an individual’s perspective (Riessman, 1993).
- Role Model – An individual who possesses quality behavior and demeanor that are esteemed or emulated (Cushman, 2008).
- Storytelling – This is the framework of race expressed through a person’s comprehension, emotions, and analyses of events (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

### **Conclusion**

Through a carefully designed qualitative study, I discovered themes related to the reported academic and social-emotional influences that Black male teachers had on students. By identifying those themes, I add valuable new insights to the growing body of research surrounding this topic. In addition, as research on the topic of Black male teachers continues to grow, I hope that this study will allow people to hear the voices and stories of Black male educators and increase the number of Black males entering the teaching field.

The next chapter focuses on the literature that sets the groundwork for my research. The literature review better shapes my argument based on the work by other researchers (Warren,

Bristol, Emdin, Ladson-Billings, among others). I draw attention to the need for more Black male teachers while bringing awareness to the effect that the shortages of Black male teachers have on students of color.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

As described in Chapter 1, there is a growing need in schools to increase and retain Black male teachers because of the disproportionate number of White female teachers (Bradley, 2000). The National Center for Educational Statistics (2021) reported there were approximately 3.3 million teachers in the 2017-2018 school year. Of those, White females represented 76% of the teaching field. This racial imbalance of the teaching force must change to mirror the growing diversity of the public-school student population (Harrison & Clark, 2016). While 17% of students in New York State are Black, it is alarming that only 8% of teachers are Black (Education Trust, 2019). In this chapter, I have reviewed the research that has established the importance of having a Black male teacher, particularly for Black male students.

Not only do schools need more racially diverse educators to represent the nation's diverse population, but the literature suggested that Black male teachers have a significant influence on Black boys (Warren, 2017). Thomas and Warren (2017) indicated that the presence of a Black male educator in the classroom allows them to connect with Black boys in ways that other teachers are not able to do (e.g., their race, gender, and cultural identities; Brooms, 2018). For example, de Zeeuw et al. (2014) found that female teachers interpreted specific behaviors from male students as challenging and unsafe.

Within my study, I refer to the participants as "Black males." However, in this study, the term "Black males" or "Black male teachers" represents men of color who identify as Black from all over the world, including the United States, Africa, Canada, the Caribbean, and European countries. Although I classified Black males as a homogeneous category, I realize that

there is significant diversity within the label. Some of the participants took pride in their cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Research has shown emerging attitudes based on cultural and ethnic backgrounds as well as immigrant status. For example, Head and Thompson (2017) mentioned that Black Americans and Black Caribbeans have different views on distress, discrimination, religion, anger, and emotional support in schools. Head and Thompson studied whether or not discrimination-related anger formed more distress on Black Americans compared to Caribbean Black Americans. They also examined if support from religious leaders reduced distress. This study's findings indicated that Caribbean Black Americans showed lower discrimination-related anger levels than Black Americans, as religious support was a contributing factor. According to Waters (1999), "While many White conservatives blame the culture of African Americans for their failures in the economy, the experiences of the West Indians show that even 'good culture' is no match for racial discrimination" (p. 8).

People from other races and ethnicities in the US tend to group Black Americans and Caribbeans together. Waters' (1999) study focused on the attitudes and status of Caribbean immigrants who live in the United States. Waters interviewed 59 people from the Caribbean, 83 immigrant children, 27 Black Americans, 25 White Americans, and 6 immigrant coworkers. The findings from the interviews indicated that the Caribbean culture is different from the Black American culture. Waters (1999) found that Black Caribbeans had a particular mind-set regarding employment compared to those who were Native Born (Waters, 1999). Black immigrants tended to separate themselves from native-born Black Americans as they want people from other races and cultures to know that they are not the same (Waters, 1999). Black Caribbeans viewed themselves as a higher class compared to Black Americans. Conversely,

Waters found that Black Americans worked hard to provide for their families, like any other racial group. However, while living in a society divided by race and socioeconomic status, many Black Americans chose to work at a young age to help support their families instead of continuing their education (Bauermeister, 2009). If Black Americans decided to enter the workforce at an early age rather than continuing their education, they limited themselves to the type of job they worked. This impacted my study, as individuals who decided not to attend college could not pursue a career in education, making my sample size smaller.

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature on the benefits of having a Black male teacher for Black male students (Bristol, 2015b; Emdin, 2016; Warren, 2017). Some studies have shown how the race and gender of a teacher was not a factor when teaching Black students (Boucher, 2016; Moore & Michael, 2017). For example, Boucher (2016) illustrated that effective White teachers tried to become familiar with the Black community to connect with students and form relationships. The White teachers in Boucher's study successfully modified their instruction for students in the classrooms based on information they gathered from the community and society (Boucher, 2016). While I do not dispute the success that some White teachers have with Black students in Boucher's study and many others (Coleman, 2007; Cooper, 2003), my study explored the unique qualities and contributions Black male teachers provide to Black male students because of the connection between race and gender.

In this literature review, I first describe the frameworks of CRT, CRP, and CSP. I used these frameworks as a lens when conducting my study with Black male teachers and their perceptions regarding the influence they believed they had on Black male students in the classroom. Next, I examined the literature that related to my study by including the following topics: (a) recruitment of Black male teachers, (b) reasons for the shortage of Black male

educators, (c) student views of Black male teachers as role models, and (d) students' expectation of Black male teachers. Based on the literature, some of these topics connected in several ways while others remained independent.

Based on the review of the literature, there was evidence of the limited number of Black male teachers throughout education. While the literature supported the need for Black male teachers, I came across limited research that specifically focused on them at the 3rd-8th grade level. My study focused on how Black male school teachers in grades K-8 perceived their role and influence on the achievement of Black male students and behavior in Long Island school districts.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

CRT was the first framework I used to find possible answers to my research questions. CRT uses the role of race and law to assess people within the context of everyday life. CRT was used in similar studies, such as Gloria Ladson-Billings' "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education" (1995), H. Richard Milner's "African American Males in Urban Schools: No Excuses-Teach and Empower" (2007), and Carl E. James' "Students 'at Risk': Stereotypes and the Schooling of Black Boys" (2012).

Gloria Ladson-Billings introduced CRP, which was the second framework used to conduct this study. She wanted to understand how instructional practices could better relate to Black students (Ladson-Billings, 1995a) because she believed that students from different cultures would have the opportunity to be successful academically. CRP acknowledges the significance of the lived experience by groups of people in understanding the world (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Paris and Alim (2012) coined the term *culturally sustaining pedagogy* after building on Gloria Ladson-Billings' CRP.

Although many of the researchers have used CRT, CSP, or CSP (or a combination) when conducting variations of this study, I focused on implementing all three frameworks. Each of these frameworks are strong enough to infuse into this study separately. However, I chose to combine all three frameworks because they represent in my mind what is happening in classrooms across the country. This is important as my study adds to the body of work on Black male teachers at the K-8 level.

### **Critical Race Theory**

According to Milner (2008), the philosophers of CRT wanted to change policies and laws that reflected racism to particular groups of people, such as Blacks. Singer (2016) noted how researchers used CRT to analyze and study race in educational settings toward Black males. Because of the role of race, scholars such as Gloria Ladson-Billings, Travis Bristol, H. Richard Milner, Chezare Warren, and Christopher Emdin continue to research and bring awareness to improving the educational performance of Black students. This analysis of CRT provides detailed information regarding male teachers, reasons for the male teacher shortage, the recruitment of male teachers, teacher–student relationships, male teachers as role models, teacher expectations, and White teachers’ view on teaching Black students.

Gloria Ladson-Billings published ground-breaking articles that brought awareness to CRT with such works as “Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education” (1995), “Just What is Critical Race Theory and What’s it Doing in a Nice Field Like Education?” (1998), and “Fighting for Our Lives: Preparing Teachers to Teach African American Students” (2000). Ladson-Billings (1995a, 1998) examined the role that race played in education. She continued to bring awareness of how to teach Black students (Ladson-Billings, 2000, 2017). Her work

illustrated the importance of creating a sense of trust between teachers, parents, and the Black community (Ladson-Billings, 2000).

Ladson-Billings (2017) conducted a three-year study to identify what happened in schools and classrooms where teachers experience success in teaching Black students. During this study, Ladson-Billings (2017) communicated with parents outside of school hours to identify the teachers who were successfully teaching Black students. The parents who spoke to Ladson-Billings (2017) noted that these teachers encouraged students to embrace who they were and have pride in their backgrounds. These teachers also incorporated students' backgrounds and culture into the curriculum.

When speaking about CRT, I noted that racial categories have changed over the years, with one component being consistent, Black and White (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT was the framework commonly used since many of the teachers of Black students identified as White. Storytelling was an essential element as it related to CRT (Ladson-Billings, 1998, 1999), as it enhanced understanding, emotions, and interpretation (Ladson-Billings, 1998) of individual experiences as a way to express the importance of race. In 1998, Ladson-Billings provided the following anecdote that inspires her work:

One White woman shared a personal experience of going into a neighborhood supermarket, having her items rung up by the cashier, and discovering that she did not have her checkbook. The cashier told her she could take her groceries and bring back the check later. When she related this story to an African American male friend, he told her that was an example of privilege she enjoyed because she was White. Her White property was collateral against the cart full of groceries. She insisted that this was the store's good neighbor policy and the same thing



would have happened to him. Determined to show his friend that their life experiences were qualitatively different, the young man went shopping a few days later and pretended to have left his checkbook. The young woman was standing off to the side observing the interaction. The same cashier, who had been pointed out by the woman as the “neighborly one,” told the young African American man that he could push the grocery item to the side while he went home to get his checkbook. The White woman was shocked as the African American male gave her a knowing look. (p. 16)

This anecdote explicitly showed the strength of racism, gender bias, and discrimination in society. Society had mixed feelings when talking about race. There were some Whites whose primary goal was to erase, ignore, and discredit the contributions made by Blacks by believing in Anti-Blackness (Warren, 2017). In contrast, some individuals believed the structure of society favored Whites and that Black people, and other people of color, must work extra hard to live a decent life as opposed to Whites (Allen, 2015).

Scholars noted that there is a wide utilization of CRT in the field of education (James, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998, 1999, 2016; Milner, 2017). This is significant because there is a strong representation of Whites at all levels of education and a small percentage of Blacks, particularly Black males (Cooper, 2003; Douglas, 2008). This led to bias when decisions about instruction, curriculum, assessments, discipline, and funding were made (Harrison & Clark, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Additionally, most of the curriculum did not represent the Black culture and ignored Blacks’ contributions (Bell, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2000).

In a study conducted in Canada, James (2012) used CRT and cultural analysis to show how teachers and community members often stereotype, label, and categorize Black Canadian

male students (e.g., immigrants, fatherless, athletes, troublemakers, and underachievers) based on the culture of these students. Because of stereotypes and labeling, James found that teachers and community members have low expectations for Black Canadian male students. James (2012) concluded that Black male students would struggle educationally as long as stereotyping is present. Leonardo (2016) argued that race was a categorizing principle that divides people based on identity, class, background, and gender. Tatum (2013) stated, “Racial prejudice when combined with social power—access to social, cultural, and economic resources and decision-making—leads to the institutionalization of racist policies and practices” (p. 66).

The role of racial representation in a classroom is critical because Black students are more likely to finish high school and attend college if they have at least one Black teacher from 3rd through 8th grade (Gladwell, 2017). Black male students need to see several representations of Black teachers in their school and classroom, just as White, Asian, and Latinx students should see teachers representing their race (Yarnell & Bohrnstedt, 2018). Students who see various representations of their race gain a sense of assurance that those teachers understand them and relate to them in a way that teachers of different races might not be able to.

According to Toldson (2013), Black male teachers provided value to an educational institution and enhanced the education of all students notwithstanding race and gender. However, Black male teachers faced several challenges and obstacles when trying to obtain a teaching position or working with staff and students of different races. These challenges have sometimes discouraged Blacks from becoming teachers or continuing on to be teachers (Bell, 2017). Emdin (2016) recalled from his years of schooling how teachers automatically displayed a notion that students must conform to the teacher’s instructional style, which caused students to struggle.

Furthermore, the position of power and privilege that some teachers demonstrate upon students can discourage students from wanting to become teachers themselves.

### **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

CRP refers to educating students using cultural norms (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). CRP can increase student performance when the instruction is centered around student cultures (Hefflin, 2002). When integrating students' cultures within the school system, teachers are engaged in culturally relevant teaching (Howard, 2001). It is important to have curricula that are culturally relevant as many curricula within the school systems do not reflect an accurate depiction of Black history (Ladson-Billings, 1998),

It is also important for teachers to re-evaluate their beliefs and delivery regarding classroom instruction when teaching students of color (Leonard, Napp, & Adeleke, 2009). Leonard et al. conducted a study to determine the influence of CRP on African-American students' academic success. The study's focus was to determine if Black students performed better when teachers used CRP. In a district composed of predominately Black students, when teachers utilize CRP, Black students had more academic success than other Black students who did not receive that form of instruction.

CRP is a framework that allows teachers to review and reflect on their instructional techniques in a way that will allow them to effectively teach Black students (Seriki & Brown, 2017). Therefore, it is vitally important in pre-service training to educate future teachers to educate the increasingly diverse students in U.S. schools using CRP (Howard, 2003). There is much concern regarding the increase in students' diverse backgrounds while the demographics of teachers remain stagnant (Allen et al., 2017; Howard, 2003). Teachers who engage in CRP usually reflect on their positionality and how they influence the students in front of them

(Howard, 2003). Howard stated that a key factor that teachers adopted when becoming culturally relevant was to engage in critical reflection. When a teacher examines how race, culture, and social class mold students' understanding and learning, students can display a high level of understanding (Howard, 2003).

### **Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy**

Gloria Ladson-Billings developed CRP because when she began searching for literature about successfully educating Black students, she was disappointed to find limited sources (Ladson-Billings, 2014). As mentioned in the previous section, Ladson-Billings (1995a) wanted to relate education to the students' needs and their cultural norms in the classroom. CRP provided students with educational opportunities by encouraging equality within different racial and ethnic communities (Paris & Alim, 2014). However, Paris and Alim (2014) thought that it would be beneficial to advance CRP one step further. The term *culturally sustaining pedagogy* was brought to prominence by Paris (2012). Paris and Alim (2014) stated that we must make changes to the “White, middle class, linguistic, literate, and cultural skills” (p. 89) taught in schools, as it is no longer relevant. They argued that we must modify the structure of opportunity to reflect a diverse society.

The domination of European-American teaching practices designed for European-American students (Gay, 2009; Paris & Alim, 2014) represents the past. Professional development should prepare teachers to embrace cultural diversity in school curriculums (Gay, 2009). Gay (2013) stated that learning experiences of students should connect to their diverse life experiences. According to Gay, this would promote educational excellence and equity by embracing students' diverse backgrounds (2013). Paris (2012) stated that CSP intended to “perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literature, and cultural pluralism as part of the

democratic project of schooling” (p. 95). The purpose of CSP is to reimagine schools as communities that will utilize diverse, cultural practices in the classroom focused on the students (Alim & Paris, 2017).

There are advantages and disadvantages of using CRT, CRP, and CSP as frameworks. One of the advantages of using these frameworks is that it spotlights the perception of Black male teachers. Brockenbrough (2015) noted that many Black males are perceived by their peers in education as authoritarians and disciplinarians because of movies such as “*Lean on Me*” or television shows like *The Bernie Mac Show*. This brings attention to something known as “White Privilege.” According to Vaught (2009), White privilege is the “human commodification positioned Whiteness as the only form of humanity and Blackness as delimiting the boundaries of White property” (p. 548). There has been more focus on White Privilege since the post-Obama presidency.

The disadvantages of using these frameworks include Blacks having a perception that everything is about race. Although the topic of White Privilege is alive and well, there are Blacks who achieved many significant accomplishments in light of racism. Former President Barack Obama, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Thurgood Marshall, Rosa Parks, Michael Jordan, Oprah Winfrey, and Lebron James are just a few of many who have achieved high levels of success.

### **Literature Review**

The organization of the literature review is divided into two major themes: (1) effective teaching strategies for Black male students and (2) teacher–student racial/ethnic matching versus mismatching. Concerns about the lack of Black male teachers, particularly in schools with a significant number of Black students, have resulted in a growing body of research (Moore, 2013; Warren, 2013). The research highlighted the importance of Black teachers in Black communities

and schools (Bristol, 2015a; Meidl, 2019; Warren, 2017). Second, the literature examined the impact of Black male teachers on male students of color (Brown, 2019; Bryan, & Milton-Williams, 2017; Warren, 2017). Finally, studies have examined programs to recruit and retain male teachers of color to the field of education (Bristol, 2018; Bryan & Milton-Williams, 2017; Meidl, 2019).

### **Effective Teaching Strategies for Black Male Students**

According to Foster (1994), successful Black teachers implemented the Black community's cultural and social elements. It was also important to note that Black teachers have high expectations for Black students academically (Irvine, 2003). Many Black males who enter the teaching field do so to become change agents (Brown, 2009; Foster, 1994). Emdin (2013) has documented that when teaching Black male students, the teacher must be able to identify and relate to those students both in and out of the classroom. When teachers communicate with students, the exchanges must be meaningful and relatable (Thomas & Warren, 2017). According to Emdin (2013), these meaningful discussions enhance teachers' understanding of Black male students' culture and allow them to relate classroom instruction to their students' everyday lives.

An effective teacher's role is to modify instruction to meet the needs of students while recognizing and accepting any differences between the teacher and students (Emdin, 2013, 2016). One example of this potential mismatch between the teacher and student, culturally and generationally, is Hip-Hop music. Love (2014) wondered "how educators can explore their own race and gender perceptions to conform the daily classroom injustices toward young Black males" (p. 293). According to Love (2014), many people who are not Black tend to view Hip-Hop as a culture that is severely hostile because of their lack of understanding. As mentioned previously, Emdin embraces Hip-Hop education and recommends teachers who are unfamiliar

with it to understand better the lifestyle and the people who embrace it. Emdin (2013, 2016) mentions how Hip-Hop represents many components of being Black, such as culture, language, style, and a way of life that captivates Black students.

In Emdin's (2016) book, he discussed how teachers must approach teaching and learning in nontraditional ways to improve their effectiveness. Emdin reflected on his own classroom experiences as a Black male teacher. Feeling unappreciated, he focused on an alternative way to teaching and learning in urban classroom settings. Putting students first, Emdin shared his experiences as a student and teacher to inspire others to teach teachers successfully. He noted in particular that White teachers who do not understand the behavior or culture of Black students may feel uncomfortable when teaching Black students. Emdin opened up and expressed that teachers need to connect to students in academic and cultural capacities. Emdin (2016) emphasized that students must relate and apply what they learned to their communities and the real world. He criticized teacher preparation programs as it does not emphasize connecting with students. Emdin stressed the importance of connecting the students' communities to their academic learning. He concluded that teachers should try to empower students. Teachers should believe in their students if they want them to become successful academically and avoid disgruntled teachers who negatively view education transformation.

Warren (2017) detailed the experiences of 17 young Black males who attended Urban Prep Charter Academy for Young Men (an all-boys high school in the South Side of Chicago) and their path to college. Warren recognized the importance of the cultural strengths of young Black males. He noted the value of infusing aspects from the Black community into the education of Black males. Warren further stressed how these Black males do not need to be "fixed," but educational institutions need to be reformed.

Warren's (2017) goals were to describe Urban Prep's design and evaluate practices through the Black males who attended the school. He examined factors that contributed to Black male students becoming "successful Black men." Finally, Warren examined the school environment and the factors that led to positive identity development and positive academic outcomes. One reason Black male teachers entered the teaching field was to inspire the future leaders of tomorrow (Warren, 2017). These Black male teachers tried to instill a particular work ethic that students can utilize to become successful in the future.

### **Initiatives to Increase the Number of Black Male Teachers**

Several authors noted that only 2% of U.S. public school teachers are Black males (Bristol & Goings, 2019; Bryan & Milton-Williams, 2017; Milner, 2016; Pabon, 2016). In New York State, there is not a single Latino or Black teacher in one third of all schools, and nearly 200,000 Latino and Black students attend schools with 0-1 teachers with the same race or same ethnicity (Education Trust, 2017). Therefore, the majority of Black students learn from White teachers in the US and in New York (Allen, 2015; Goldenberg, 2013). It is important for children to have and experience a diverse group of teachers from a variety of races and ethnicities. Therefore, there is a growing need to increase, recruit, and retain Black male teachers (Bell, 2017; Bryan & Milton-Williams, 2017; Ingersoll & May, 2011; Pabon et al., 2011; Toldson, 2013), particularly in schools with a high percentage of Black students (Warren, 2017). Typically, students are not familiar with seeing male educators or male educators of color in elementary education (Gamble & Wilkins, 1997). The lack of Black male teachers is value laden because male students of color typically do not see a successful representation of men who look like them on a daily basis in schools. This lack of teacher representation creates a self-fulfilling prophecy in which students of color might not view teaching as a career choice for them.



### **Recruiting Black Males for Teacher Education Programs**

One strategy to improve the lack of representation in the teaching field is to recruit and support Black male teachers in teacher education programs. There have been teacher programs that reach out to young Black males for recruitment purposes. Colleges are willing to recruit Black males to enter teacher education programs. However, the problem remains that many young Black males are not graduating from high school or college (Bell, 2010, 2014). Bell (2014) conducted a study in North Carolina, examining the dropout rate for Black male students. Bell concluded that 26% of the Black males who participated in his study dropped out of high school due to academic factors. Bell (2014) stated the reasons for these young men not finishing high school varied from the academics being too rigorous to not liking their teachers. Graves (2010) noticed a higher expectation of success for Black female students than Black male students academically as students advance to higher grades.

Colleges and universities need to recruit potential Black male teachers from an early age. By introducing Black male high school students to possible teaching careers, recruiters may be able to draw more Black male students to the field of education. This is why this study is important and valuable, as there must be a strong push to increase the number of Black male teachers.

The U.S. Department of Education (2016) found that the highest enrollments for Black students in teacher preparation programs were in New York, Virginia, North Carolina, Arizona, and Texas. This data prompted President Barack Obama to introduce the *Black Males to the Blackboard* initiative, which aimed to increase the number of Black male teachers (Bristol, 2015b). Another initiative called *Pathways to Teaching* offered high school students (and Black males) possibilities to explore teaching as a future career (Bryan & Milton-Williams, 2017). In

the *Pathways to Teaching* program, students applied the strategies taught to provide instruction in ways that are culturally relevant (Bryan & Milton-Williams, 2017).

President Obama also launched the *My Brother's Keeper* initiative. This initiative connected boys and young men of color and provided guidance so that they can attend college or find a quality job (Obama, 2014). The creation of mentorships and networks allowed people to support Black boys and young men within the *My Brother's Keeper* initiative (Obama, 2014). Teacher preparation is crucial when discussing ways to effectively educate Black students, particularly Black males (Ladson-Billings, 2000).

In conclusion, this section highlighted the concerns about the limited number of Black male teachers in schools and efforts to recruit more. The first theme showcased effective strategies for teaching Black male students. The next theme will examine the reasons for the shortage of Black male teachers.

### **Reasons for the Shortage of Black Male Teachers**

There is a gap in the research focusing on why there is a lack of Black male teachers at the elementary level in particular. The elementary education years are very critical developmentally in which students are becoming independent and spend the majority of their day away from their parents (Benner & Crosnoe, 2011; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2002). The teacher plays an important role when not only teaching students but also modeling them to become better individuals. However, it is rare to walk into an elementary school and see men teaching (Stewart et al., 2016), even though many administrators have concluded that there is a need for male teachers in elementary schools. McGrath and Sinclair conducted a survey and semi-structured interviews in Australia of 97 parents and 184 sixth graders. There was a mix of boys, girls, mothers, and fathers. The results indicated that there is a

need for more male teachers in primary schools. The findings also showed that parents and students viewed having added benefits for boys and girls. Particularly in schools with a high percentage of Black students, there is a need for Black male teachers (Warren, 2017). Black students refer to Black male teachers as role models (Bell, 2017) as there is a connection between Black male teachers and Black students (Klopfenstein, 2005).

The problem is that there are Black males who do not have a positive perception of the school. In Meidl's (2019) study, he interviewed 23 people ranging from students to community leaders that worked with Black men. Meidl wanted to understand the challenges of recruiting Black males to early childhood education. He found that the participants in his study did not see Black males in the classroom, and there were not many Black men talking about pursuing careers in education. Participants in this study felt that many teachers labeled Black students, thus causing Black students to have a negative perception of the school. Some males believe that teaching in the younger grades is often considered a job solely for women. According to Petersen (2014), a few people believe that the male perception of teaching younger grades is a caregiver or a nanny. According to Stewart et al. (2016), many males thought teaching is a female profession as there is a stigma that people view male teachers as sensitive and soft.

Goings and Bianco (2016) found that Black students avoid becoming teachers because they have an undesirable view of teaching and school while they are still in high school. From a young age, some Black male students develop negative feelings toward schooling (Palmer et al., 2009) due to their negative experiences with teachers, being labeled as inferior, and being continually punished for their behavior (Bryan & Milton Williams 2017; Emdin, 2016).

Other reasons that some men gave for not pursuing a teaching career is because of the working conditions and salary. Han et al. (2018) mentioned how class sizes, the number of

teaching hours, and the demands of the job were critical factors individuals consider when deciding to become a teacher. Males also avoid the education profession because of the low salaries (Gamble & Wilkins, 1997; Graham & Erwin, 2011). Research from Allegretto and Tojerow (2014) showed that teachers' salaries were not comparable to other professions. The notion of motivation for becoming a teacher will be addressed in subsequent chapters of this study.

Although the goal is to recruit more Black male teachers, the reality is that many Black males choose careers other than teaching. Emdin (2010) asked many young Black males what they wanted to be when they grew up, and the typical response received was a professional from the Hip-Hop culture, such as an athlete, entertainer, or musician (Emdin, 2010). James (2016) discussed how sports had a major influence on young Blacks, as professional organizations such as the NBA and NFL consist primarily of Black athletes.

In summary, this section highlighted the fact that there is a shortage of Black male teachers. Second, this section emphasized why Black males opt out of choosing careers in education. Major reasons for why Black males search for alternative jobs is that they do not see Black males in the profession and they have negative experiences in schools.

### **Teacher-Student Racial/Ethnic Matching Versus Mismatching**

According to Education Trust–New York (2019), Black students represented 15.9% of the student population while Black teachers represented 7.7% of the teaching force in New York State. Also, 9% of Black students did not have a teacher who shared the same race and ethnicity. While that number is alarming, Education Trust–New York (2019) also reported that only 8% of Black students had only one teacher of the same race and ethnicity in the state.

There is a debate in the literature regarding the benefits of teacher-student racial matching. Critics argue that all teachers should enter the classroom prepared to teach Black students. For example, Boucher (2016) claimed that great teachers build partnerships and bonds with their students while the best teachers will go above and beyond for their students. Boucher (2016) argued that there is no relationship between gender and race when defining good teaching. The best teachers build relationships with their students because they look at their students as their own children (Boucher, 2016). According to Cooper (2003), when White teachers are teaching Black students, there is a theory that “(a) individual teachers can be vital forces in schools and individual classrooms, and (b) an understanding of what a community values in its teachers is essential to effective teaching” (p. 414).

In addition, researchers like Love (2014) found that many non-Black teachers were quick to come to conclusions about Black male students based on stereotypes, assumptions, and fear. Love (2014) stated that some of these preconceptions are “based on the way a student walks, talks, and articulates their culture can be viewed through a deficient lens” (p. 294). These conclusions limit Blacks from succeeding in the classroom and life. This is why education should be reformed (Love, 2014) and there must be an increase in the number of Black male teachers.

The next section presents major sub-themes, which include these items: (a) benefits of positive relationships with students, (b) teacher-student gender match, (c) racial identity development, (d) Black male teachers serving as role models, and (e) the perception of Black male students.

### **Benefits of Positive Relationships with Students**

In the past, power and authority defined the relationship between students and teachers (Petersen, 2014). A more contemporary understanding is that students must feel comfortable and trust that teachers have their best interests in mind. If teachers want to educate Black males and increase their academic achievement, then they must place their belief in Black male students (Warren, 2016). Emdin (2016) noted teachers must connect students' lives and communities into the learning process.

When students become acclimated to school, it is essential for them to develop healthy relationships with teachers (Spilt et al., 2012). Positive relationships between teachers and students are critical for students to achieve academic success. According to Warren (2017), when young men were privy to having several Black male teachers, those teachers provided the extra motivation that the students needed to succeed: "High expectations for Black boys must never be compromised based on perceptions of their supposed lack of engagement or resilience in school" (Howard et al., 2016, p. 3). Having high expectations for students helped motivate young Black men to want to succeed in higher education (Warren, 2016).

Klopfenstein (2005) suggested that teachers who share the same culture as students tend to take pride in guiding Black students to become better individuals: "Black teachers may have higher expectations for and interact more positively with black students than other teachers, thereby increasing the motivation and self-esteem Black students need to take on the challenge of rigorous coursework" (p. 417). This research focused on how the importance of positive relationships with male teachers of color enhance the educational experience for Black students.

### **Teacher-Student Gender Match**

As racial matching found, research on teacher-student gender match also has mixed results. Some research found that gender matching was not found to play a role in academic

success. For example, Winters et al. (2013) conducted a study and collected data over a five-year period from middle and high school public school students. These public-school students were preparing for a test. This study examined whether student achievement was affected in any way as students interacted with teachers of different genders. The results from this study indicated that pairing teachers and students based on gender had no effect on academic achievement. In this same study, a very small effect was noted regarding academic achievement when matching students to a female teacher. However, having a teacher of the same gender could be beneficial to students as they can serve as role models (Winters et al., 2013). In a similar study conducted by Split et al. (2012) in which 649 elementary school teachers participated, 182 of those teachers were males. Of the 1,493 students who participated, only 685 of those students were boys. The results showed that female teachers had better relationships with students compared to male teachers, which means that gender did not play a role in the outcome (Split et al., 2012).

In contrast, having a teacher that matches the gender of the student was found to be very pivotal to a student's success. Egalite and Kisida (2018) showed there was a racial and gender connection with students' classroom experiences. Their study used data from six school districts to determine if matching teachers and students proved to be successful. It was evident that matching students and teachers with the same or similar demographics proved to benefit students. There were positive outcomes in attitudes and academic perceptions. Their results also showed that gender matching was consistent in elementary and middle school, while the racial background was more consistent in middle school. Dee (2007) conducted a study involving middle school students. Although Dee examined the test scores of these students, he included teacher and student perceptions of one another. Dee noted that student achievement was improved when placing students with a teacher of the same gender. This study also indicated an

increase in test scores when the teacher's perception of student performance was high and when students were engaged with the focus area taught by the teacher.

### **Racial Identity Development**

There has been a tremendous focus on the role that racial identity plays in Black youth's lives regarding their comfort, academic achievement, and future outcomes as students become older (Zirkel & Johnson, 2016). Murray et al. (2012) found a negative connotation for Black racial identity, including being accused of "acting White" or being perceived as "not Black enough," which can lead to increasing levels of anxiety (Murray et al., 2012). However, according to Zirkel and Johnson (2016), some teachers associated a strong positive Black identity as being "dangerous," which can cause Black students not to focus on their academics (2016). In a study conducted by Butler-Barnes et al. (2019), Black youth reported examples of racial discrimination from their teachers that included being dissuaded from joining advanced classes, receiving harsh discipline, receiving unwarranted lower grades than expected, and not being included in social activities.

As Black students begin to form their identity, they must have positive Black role models who represent their culture in the school setting, curriculum, and society as a whole (Milton-Williams & Bryan, 2017). According to Zirkel and Johnson (2016), it was the purpose of their research to explore the correlation of the strong, positive Black identity and education. The authors found that having positive examples of Black people presented to Black students helped them have a favorable educational view. This would also erase the negative stigmas as it pertains to gaining an education.

Loyd and Williams (2017) found that racial identity formation begins in a young person as soon as they recognize their place in society. This is where schools have to take responsibility



for racial identity formation. Butler-Barnes et al. (2019) conducted a study that showed a direct correlation between school-based racial discrimination and the association with racial identity for Black students. In a study by Chavous et al. (2008), the authors studied adolescent boys and girls in grades 8 and 11 to examine the connection between racial identity and racial discrimination and outcomes for academic engagement for boys and girls. The findings from this study indicated discriminatory differences in children in the classroom based on gender.

### **Black Male Teachers Serving as Role Models**

Black male teachers can serve as important role models to Black students (Bell, 2017; Lewis, 2013). A role model is a high-quality person who exhibits appropriate behavior for others to follow (Cushman, 2008). According to Klopfenstein (2005) and Bristol (2018), Black students may learn more about a particular subject when taught by Black teachers. Klopfenstein (2005) found that Black male teachers understood and related to Black students (particularly boys) in a way that other teachers did not.

It is crucial that students have exposure to male teachers of color (Dee 2005) beginning at the elementary level. Some Black students may not have many positive examples of male role models at home (Warren, 2017; Yarnell & Bohrnstedt, 2018). Cushman (2008) mentioned how important it is for principals to hire additional male teachers because boys must have contact with male role models. Due to some factors out of their control, some students might only see successful Black males in a school setting (Cushman, 2008).

Black students are motivated to see a Black male teacher at school. Many students view them with admiration and respect (Warren, 2017). Students are very impressionable at the elementary school level. Just the presence of a male teacher of color who believes in all students could change the tone of a classroom and school (Warren, 2017).

Some teachers experience challenges reaching every student, especially Black male students (Davis, 2003). According to de Zeeuw et al. (2014), many female teachers associated the actions and behaviors of male students as challenging. These behaviors and actions categorized by female teachers caused a decrease in male students' motivation to learn. Some teachers were quick to blame Black students for not understanding the material before reflecting on their instructional practices and teaching methodologies (Brooms, 2018). Warren (2017) implied that educational institutions must be reimagined and incorporate the lives and communities of Black males within schools.

### **Perception of Black Male Students**

Research has found that some teachers tend to label Black male students as defiant, rude, disrespectful, and disobedient (Allen, 2015; James, 2012). White teachers sometimes misinterpreted Black students' actions because they cannot relate to, or understand, the cultural norms of Black students (Cushman, 2018; Warren, 2017). Yet, in a study conducted by Lindsay and Hart (2017), findings showed that when Black students are educated by Black teachers, there was a decrease in the number of reported disciplinary incidents involving Black students. Black teachers tend to understand Black students culturally, academically, socially, and emotionally and can tap into these aspects when teaching Black students (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Lindsay & Hart, 2017; Yarnell & Bohrnstedt, 2018).

Brown (2012) also noted that Black male teachers are often positioned by school leadership to punish, control, and discipline Black male students who are disproportionately referred for discipline infractions. This has led to an unfortunate increase of detentions and suspensions at higher rates compared to their peers.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, this literature review provided the benefits of having Black male teachers in the classroom. This chapter specified not only how Black male teachers are necessary for Black male students but also how Black male teachers are necessary for all students to reduce stereotypes. There was a focus on the shortages of Black male teachers. Due to the shortage of Black male teachers, several programs and initiatives are in place for the recruitment of young Black males to potentially become teachers. Major roadblocks in attracting more Black males into the teaching field are (1) not seeing Black males as teachers and (2) not having positive experiences in schools.

My study is important and timely because it adds to the body of literature that supports the dire need to increase and support Black male teachers at the K-8 level. This research also examined the possible contributions that Black male teachers made in the lives and educational trajectories of Black male students. Given what is already known based on the literature, there is a need for my qualitative study to analyze and examine the perceived impacts of Black male educators on their students' academic and social-emotional development within a K-8 classroom setting by sharing their stories and inspiring future Black male students to enter the teaching profession.

### Chapter 3

#### Research Methods

As stated in previous chapters, my study focuses on the dire need for more Black male teachers in the field of education. Research indicated that it was truly necessary to have Black male teachers represented in the classrooms, particularly to teach Black male students (Goings & Bianco, 2006; Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010; Warren, 2017). However, most Black students do not have access to Black male teachers because they represent only 2% of the teaching force (Bryan, Milton Williams, 2017; Milner, 2016; Pabon, 2016). There were many reasons for this underrepresentation, including the fact that teachers are over-worked and underpaid (Goings & Bianco, 2006) and that Black males often have negative perceptions of school (Meidl, 2019). Regardless, generations of Black male students did not have the opportunity to be educated by a Black male teacher, which also influenced who enters the teaching profession and who does not.

While some suburban schools have a substantial number of Black students, the teaching staff are mostly White female teachers (Mangino & Levy, 2019). The research literature in Chapter 2 included reasons for the lack of Black male teachers, recruiting Black male teachers, and the positive academic and social-emotional benefits of matching Black male students with Black male teachers. This research was designed to have dual roles within the context of this body of work. First, my research increases awareness about the importance of having more Black male teachers in the K-8 school setting. Second, my research illuminates why Black male teachers at the K-8 grade level are needed for all students' academic and social-emotional success.

Using CRT, CRP, and CSP, this study examines stories of why the participating Black male teachers chose a teaching career and how their presence in the classroom impacts the

academic and social-emotional success of students in their class(es). This chapter outlines the purpose of this study, research questions, design, research context, research participants, the process for data collection, data analysis procedures, and the ethical considerations.

### **Significance for Research**

Growing up, I recalled having many great teachers. These teachers stood out in different ways. Thinking about my former teachers, I realized that I had only one Black male teacher from elementary school to graduate school. I had Black coaches and gym teachers throughout the years. I also had one White male teacher in high school who taught math. Although I always enjoyed math growing up, this teacher made it fun and easy to understand. However, as explained in Chapter 1, I had my first Black male teacher (Professor Jones) while pursuing my bachelor's degree. He taught Foundations of African American Studies. He was an excellent teacher and he wanted the best for all of his students. Professor Jones inspired me to be a teacher. I had two other Black male teachers while working on my administrative certifications, one of whom is my mentor. As Warren (2013) stated, "Education needs more Black male professors, school board members, administrators, and advocates in positions of influence speaking on behalf of young people everywhere" (p. 197). Warren's quote is vital because the teachers in the classroom should reflect our students and society's diverse nature.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this narrative research study is to understand and tell the stories of why a group of seven Black male teachers entered the teaching profession, and their perceived influences on students in their 3rd-grade through 8th-grade classrooms. I also examine if Black male teachers perceive themselves as role models and how that role has contributed to positive teacher/student relationships.

## **Research Questions**

The following research question guides this study: How did a select group of third grade through eighth-grade Black male teachers from Long Island school districts perceive their influence on students' academic and social-emotional development? The sub-questions used to answer the primary research question includes the following:

1. What influenced this group of Black male teachers to go into the teaching field?
  - 1a. What challenges or barriers do Black male educators experience in the teaching profession?
2. What stories do Black male teachers share of their lived experience teaching in majority Black and Latinx schools with mostly White female faculty?
3. How do Black male teachers perceive that their race and gender influence relationships with students of color?
  - 3a. How do those relationships relate to academics and behavior?
4. What teaching practices do Black male teachers find most effective when teaching students of color? How do those practices relate (or not) to CRT and CRP?

## **Research Methods**

The methods are organized into eight major components: (1) worldview, (2) narrative inquiry design, (3) school sites, (4) participants, (5) role of the researcher, (6) data collection procedures, (7) data analysis, and (8) ethical considerations. These components serve as a guideline for conducting this study. The first two components serve as a basis for selecting the narrative inquiry design. The third and fourth components represent the sample selection and context of the study. The fifth component explores my role within the process of the study. The sixth and seventh components outline the process that I utilize to complete the study and analyze

the data once it is received. Finally, the eighth component explains the standards to uphold the integrity of this study.

Qualitative approaches inspire the design of this study. After much consideration, I believe the qualitative research design is the most effective way to understand Black male teachers' perceived influence on Black male students. Through the use of a qualitative design, I gain further insight into the possible influence (if any) that Black male teachers believe they had on Black male students and all students.

### **Worldview**

I selected social constructivism for this study because the focus is on the participants' multiple views as I analyze and examine their current circumstances (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Social constructivism aims to determine the meaning of people's experiences and their situations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Constructivists take an open-ended approach toward interpreting the information received for the benefit of improving society (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Within the context of this research, I report the experiences of the participants and explore the information to identify common themes regarding what was experienced in their educational background and professional life.

### **The Narrative Inquiry Design**

Narrative inquiry became prominent in 1990 (Clandinin, 2013), as it was a collaboration between the researcher and the participants to tell a mutual story as the research proceeds (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Narratives placed emphasis on human experiences: "First-person accounts of experience constitute the narrative 'text' of this research approach" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 34). Interviews, autobiographies, and life histories are some of the reasons for collecting and analyzing narratives

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The narratives were told in chronological order (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Riessman (1993),

Narrative analysis takes as its object of investigation the story itself. I limit discussion here to first-person accounts by respondents of their experience, putting aside other kinds of accounts (e.g., our descriptions of what happened in the field and other researcher narrativizations, including the “master narratives” of theory). The purpose is to see how respondents in interviews impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives. (pp. 1-2)

This description is essential because it represents the focal point of what narrative research is. By conducting a narrative study, I seek to identify commonalities that will potentially add to the increasing body of research supporting the increase in the number of Black male teachers and the benefits of having them educate students in grades 3 through 8.

### **The Importance of Making Meaning Through Storytelling**

I explore and explain the perceptions of the Black male teachers who participated in this study: (1) to learn about their paths and possible influences into the field of education, (2) to analyze the role of race and gender when relating to students, and (3) to examine the impact of culturally relevant practices. Klehr (2012) stated,

Quantitative and statistical data can provide useful insight into areas of student skill mastery and indicate important subgroup trends, areas that are important to school reform efforts and often motivate teachers toward deeper inquiry. Qualitative methods offer a strong complement to numerical measures, allowing one to more comprehensively study how teaching and learning happen in dynamic classroom contexts. (p. 123)



James (2007) stated that narrative inquiry can provide teachers with a platform to engage in dialogue about their practice and let the world hear their voices.

### **School Sites**

There are many large urban school districts located in the Northeast region of the United States. Unlike urban schools, many suburban schools consist of multiple local school districts. Each town is zoned and has a separate school district governed by their own Board of Education. According to Finchi (2014), housing discrimination is the reason why there are so many segregated districts with concentrations of Black and Latinx low-income students. Unfortunately, because of housing discrimination, only 3% of Black students and 5% of Latinx students are able to attend high-performing schools (Ross, 2017). Ross also noted that many Blacks between the ages of 16 to 24 were not in school. This led to a smaller percentage of Blacks receiving a quality education and finding employment.

For this study, I selected three Long Island school districts where at least 35% of the student population is Black. The increase of Latinx students in historically Black communities had an influence in selected districts for this study. After researching information about each district's student population, sending out emails to superintendents, principals, teachers, professors, and colleagues (using my available network), I made a final selection of districts that fit the criteria that I had set forth. These school districts were the Howard school district, the Morehouse school district, and the Xavier school district (pseudonyms).

Howard represents a diverse school district. The families living in this school district are from more than 100 countries. As many residents come from different parts of the world, there are more than 60 different languages and dialects spoken in this district. While many of the students in Howard are Black, the teaching staff consist of mainly White women.

Morehouse signifies a school district that consists of mostly Black and Latinx students. It is a small district that celebrates the history of Black and Latinx people. The district has close to 300 teachers, and about a third, or 100 teachers, represent people of color. While there is a large number of teachers who are Black, most of the Black teachers are women.

Xavier exemplifies another school district in which the student population is primarily Black and Latinx. About 600 teachers work in the district, and nearly 100 of those teachers are Black. Similar to the Morehouse district, most of the Black teachers are women.

### **Participants**

It was a challenge to find participants for this study. Many of the Black male teachers that I found worked in middle and high schools. For example, during an initial meeting with the superintendent of the Howard Public Schools, he stated that he could recommend only two possible participants for my study. These were two Black male teachers who work in a district where White women represent the majority of the teaching staff, even though the students are primarily Black. The selection of the participants was guided by the following criteria: (a) Black male, (b) working in a kindergarten to eighth-grade setting, (c) willing to share stories and life experiences as a Black male student, and (d) a current educator of Black male students.

### **Role of the Researcher**

Since I am a former Black male elementary school teacher, it put me in a unique position when conducting this study. I was curious to listen to and learn from the participants about their personal experiences as both Black male students and Black male teachers and compare their stories with my own.

The first task was to seek the study's approval from Molloy College's Institutional Review Board (IRB; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Once the College approved the IRB (see

Appendix A), I took it to the superintendent of the Howard School District. I emailed the superintendents of the Morehouse School District and the Xavier School District. I engaged in an additional discussion with each superintendent, reintroducing my study and updating the superintendents of the changes that had taken place since our previous meetings. To be granted access to conduct this study in each school district, the superintendents and the Board of Education approved the IRB. Then, I contacted the seven participants based on the superintendent's recommendations and arranged interviews with each of the participants. The participants received a list of possible dates to conduct the interview. The dates ranged from January 2020 to March 2020. The participants chose a date indicating their availability. The date selected by the participants allowed me to organize the interview schedule. The interviews took place at a location that was suitable for the participants.

After I coordinated the interviews, I met with each participant individually and began the interview process. Before each interview, I had audio-recording devices of an iPhone, iPad, and a MacBook Air. I have obtained permission from the participants to record the interviews. During the recording of the interviews, I asked questions and listened intently to the participants while taking notes. The interview questions focused on the educational background of my participants. These questions allowed the participants to reflect on the experiences they had while attending school themselves. I asked if my participants were fortunate to have a Black male teacher during those years. Then, my interview focused on the participants' teaching experiences in their classrooms as Black male teachers.

I sent the audio recordings of the interviews to Rev.com to be transcribed. Interviews lasted between 60 and 120 minutes. The transcriptions were reviewed again upon receipt of the

completed version from Rev.com. The process continued until the completion of all the interviews.

### **Interview Protocol**

I adopted the interview protocol from Seidman's (2013) book, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), "the interview is used to gather descriptive data in the subjects' own words so that the researcher can develop insight on how subjects interpret some piece of the world" (p. 103). Dilley (2000) suggested that the questions from an interview should lead the participant on a journey. While listening to the stories and experiences of the participants, I documented all of the information they shared in my fieldnotes, including any nonverbal communication.

After completing each interview, I immediately wrote a fieldwork memo within 12 to 24 hours. These memos allowed me to reflect on the interview and document the information from my perspective that may or may not have been present during the recording. During the audio recording, it was impossible to pick up on the participants' facial expression or body language. The memos allowed me to document such movement or expression that enhanced the explanation or interpretation of particular instances that took place during this study.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Once all of the interviews were transcribed verbatim on Rev.com, I began to analyze the information and note emerging themes. Data analysis was an intricate component of this study. It was so important that it began during the process of data collection. During this stage, I began to interpret the information using the *Dedoose* software and classified various components into several different themes by writing analytic memos. Once all of the themes were classified into

different components, I moved onto the study's next stages and began to document the analysis and results in Chapter Four.

### **Ethical Considerations**

I followed the guidelines outlined in Molloy College's IRB. To protect the identities of each participant as well as his place of employment, I used pseudonyms. Those who participated in this study signed a letter of consent. This consent form adhered to the code of ethics. This study was strictly voluntarily as the participants were expected to be as truthful as possible. According to Seidman (2013),

The interviewer's work of making contact, establishing access, selecting participants, setting up interviewing arrangements, seeking informed consent, interviewing participants, managing the relationship between interviewer and participant, and working with and sharing the words that result from interviewing, can be done according to each task's internal logic and done "well and right."

Doing good work is a process in which the methodology and ethics of the work overlap. (p. 140)

Participants confirmed their consent to take part in this study. They received a letter that described the study and stated the purpose of the study. The participants who agreed to the terms signed a letter of consent that assured them that all information was completely confidential and that I had permission to audio-tape the interview.

At no time were the participants' names disclosed during any portion of this study. Pseudonyms were used to represent each participant. Finally, all of the data collected from this study was safely stored and password protected, making sure that the information is password protected to keep all identities and information confidential.

### **Strategies to Ensure Trustworthiness**

There were a few strategies used to ensure the validity of this study. First, I engaged in member checking, asking the participants to review the transcript from the interviews. By reviewing the transcripts, participants had the opportunity to read everything they communicated to me during the interview process. The participants had the opportunity to read the transcript and findings to indicate that the description of the experiences I described were accurate. To ensure that my study was reliable, I engaged in triangulation. The literature recommends using multiple methods when collecting data to guarantee validity in triangulation (Carter et al., 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The investigator triangulation process involved experts, including my co-investigator, engaging in peer review, analyzing, and examining my study repeatedly throughout the entire process until it was completed. I completed memos (fieldnotes) following each interview as well as the interview transcripts. In the process, I re-examined my field notes taken from the interview sessions. The field notes helped add understanding as I reflected on the conversations.

### **Conclusion**

There is a significant amount of literature that supported the benefits of Black male students having Black male teachers in the classroom. However, a majority of the literature that I came across focused on students in middle school, high school, and college. I believe that it is important to bring attention to the Black male teachers and the important work that they complete daily at the kindergarten through eighth-grade level. The best way that I can showcase the work that these Black male teachers do is to have them tell their stories. My goal was to tell the stories of my participants' journeys in education and their perceived influence on Black male students' achievement and socio-emotional development. I reviewed all of the data (interview

transcripts, audio recordings, and memos) collected for this study for clarification purposes. The review of the data allowed me to document any notes or questions.

This study was based on the research design, location of this research study, participants, data collection, and data analysis. The research design mentioned in this chapter outlined a detailed description that could hopefully be adopted in any region of the world when it comes to the benefits of having more Black male teachers. In the next chapter, the participants will be introduced and a further analysis and description of the data will be discussed.

## Chapter 4

### Results

This qualitative narrative study aimed to explore Black Male teachers' perceived influences on students. This chapter will answer my research questions using data from the interviews that I conducted with seven Black males who are currently teaching in a kindergarten through eighth-grade setting. I aimed to provide a voice to seven Black male educators in Long Island school districts with mostly Black and Latinx students. Although I have read many studies focusing on Black male teachers (Bristol, 2020; Brown, 2011; Hayes et al., 2014; Lynn, 2006; Warren, 2020), my goal was to tell these Black male teachers' stories regarding teaching, inspiring, and mentoring their students. Research suggests that Black students will have a greater chance of graduating from college if they have at least one Black teacher between third and eighth grade (Edutopia, 2020; Gladwell, 2017). This study helps to explain why Black male teachers matter qualitatively.

I examined each participant's story in this study and analyzed them as a whole to identify common themes. Each of the participants were provided pseudonyms for their names and place of employment. The participants and I met at a location of their choosing for an audio-taped, face-to-face, 60-120-minute interview. After completing the interview, I immediately wrote field note memos outlining what occurred during the interview. I then had the interviews transcribed on Rev.com. After locating the codes, I initially analyzed the transcriptions on *Dedoose*, through the lens of CRT and CRP. After analyzing the data multiple times, I began to interpret the data through the lens of CSP and identify themes and findings.

### Chapter Overview



I divided this chapter into two parts. Part One introduces each participant and explains his journey or path into education. Part Two examines the Black male presence in a school setting. This section provides evidence to demonstrate how these Black male teachers perceive the role that their race, culture, and gender identity play on their students, their colleagues, and the larger school community. Within these findings, I examine the importance of building trust and rapport while analyzing each participant's personal experiences. Then I summarize the entire chapter based on the major findings and themes presented.

### **Research Questions and Summary of Findings**

This study examined seven Black male educators' journeys, from being students in the classroom to their transition into becoming a classroom teacher. My dissertation also allows these Black males to reflect on their initial schooling and teaching career to offer advice to future Black males who aspire to become educators. This study also investigated the perceived influence of teachers' race and gender when teaching students of color. I want to clarify and emphasize that the questions I posed to participants were directed for them to answer regarding their Black male students. I did receive answers from participants that reflected Black male students, students of color, and all students. Please note that when I received answers that stated "students of color," it reflected the non-White students that included both genders. The participants who answered "all students" included students from different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds that were not gender specific.

The major findings in my study were that the Black male teacher presence in schools and classrooms matters because it provides all students with access to positive role models and opportunities to learn in culturally responsive ways. In many ways, having a Black teacher also dispels negative racial stereotypes about Black people and their culture. Meanwhile, their

presence can also present Black male teachers with challenges because of how other teachers and administrators view their role in the school community.

- 1) Most of the Black male teachers did not initially choose a teaching career. They went into the profession because of their mentor's influence or an impactful experience working with children. Only two of the seven participants majored in teacher education initially.
- 2) Black male teachers believed their presence mattered for their students' positive racial identity development, confidence, behavior, and potential.
- 3) Black male teachers reported teaching elements of CSP, even though they did not use that label. Developing positive relationships and connecting with students' culture were viewed as positive strategies to increase academic engagement and to prepare students for what they will experience in the real world.
- 4) Black male teachers believed that most of their colleagues and administrators viewed them as disciplinarians. At the same time, the absence of Black male teachers in their respective schools created a greater expectation for them to be positive role models for their students and to dispel negative stereotypes.

### **Codes Transformed into Themes**

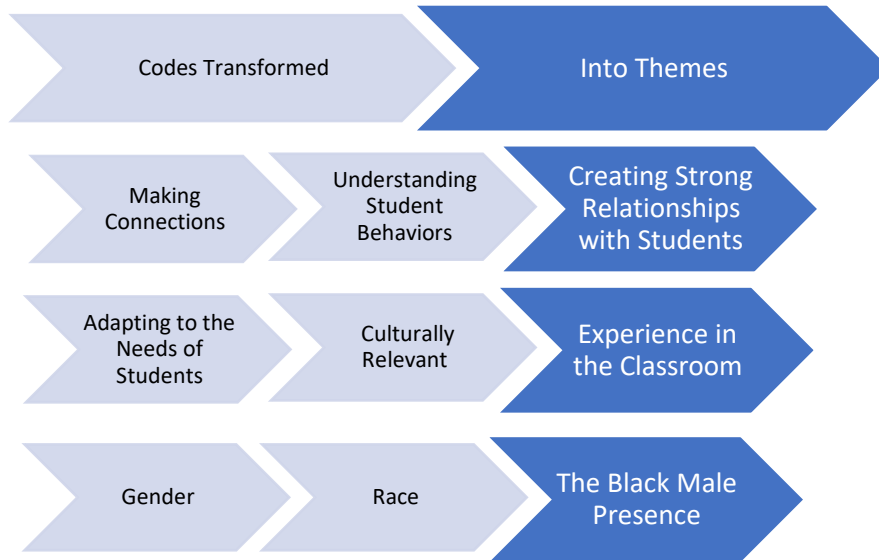


Figure 1. Visual of the Codes from the Interviews Transformed into Themes

Before coding the interviews, I aligned each of the interview questions with the research questions. I then proceeded to code all of the interviews. While coding the interviews, I looked through the lens of CRT and CRP. As I read through the interviews in *Dedoose*, I began to color-code the critical themes. Examples of some of the codes included making connections, understanding student behaviors, adapting to the needs of students, culturally relevant, and gender and race. Based on those codes, I was able to develop three themes that best described the data I found. Those themes included creating strong relationships with students, experience in the classroom, and the Black male presence.

The next section introduces each of the participants. During their introductions, I use their words to narrate each of the participants' journey to become classroom teachers. I also introduce and provide meaning to what I conceptualized as the Black male presence and CSP. While most of the participating teachers did not use these specific terms during the interviews, I found that these were common cross-cutting themes when analyzing all of the transcripts.

### Part One - Becoming a Black Male Teacher

In this chapter, I begin by reviewing the journey each of the participants took to become a teacher. The different journeys shaped them to be the educators they are today. As stated in Chapter 2, students are not accustomed to seeing Black male teachers (Gamble & Wilkins, 1997). Nationally, only 2% of educators are Black males (Bryan & Milton-Williams, 2017; Milner, 2016; Pabon, 2016). Therefore, this study gives a voice to the experiences of a very small subset of teachers in the nation, as well as in the Long Island region chosen for this study.

I purposefully selected individuals who currently work in either an elementary school ( $n = 3$ ) or middle school ( $n = 4$ ). Much of the research on Black male educators are at the high school and higher education levels. The participants' years of teaching experience varied between 4 and 25 years. It was difficult to find Black male educators because of the low numbers represented in kindergarten through eighth grades; however, I utilized my social networks and found teachers in three school districts, including Xavier, Howard, and Morehouse.

Table 1

*Participants' Name, Employment, Grade Level, and Content Specialty*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>School District</b>	<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Content Specialty</b>
Anthony Morris	Jamaican	Xavier	Middle School	Math
Brian Smith	African American	Xavier	Elementary	All Subjects
Jason Brown	Jamaican	Xavier	Middle School	Science
Mark Williams	Jamaican	Xavier	Middle School	History
Steven West	African American	Xavier	Elementary	All Subjects
Shawn Jones	Haitian	Howard	Elementary	All Subjects

Terrance Green	African American	Morehouse	Middle School	Social Studies
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*Note:* The demographics were rounded to protect confidentiality.

Five of the participants work in the Xavier School District, which has a student population that is mostly Black (40%) and Latinx (60%). Similar to all of the districts participating in this study, the teaching staff is primarily women. While there are several schools in the district, Xavier employs almost 600 teachers, and close to 100 of those teachers are Black women. Approximately, 20% of the student population are English Language Learners and approximately 8% represent Students with Disabilities. (I rounded up the numbers to protect confidentiality.)

Shawn works in the Howard School District, which is racially diverse. While most of the families who live in the district are Black (40%) and Latinx (30%), there are also Asian (20%) and White (6%) families, too. This district employs about 340 teachers: 85.2% of the teachers are White, 8.5% of the teachers are Black, and 3.5% of the teachers are Latinx. The Howard School District enrolls students who come from at least 100 different countries, and around 60% of students are considered economically disadvantaged. English is considered a second or third language in many of these families. (I rounded up the numbers to protect confidentiality.)

Terrance works in the Morehouse School District, which comprises mostly Black and Latinx students and 60% to 70% are economically disadvantaged. Within this district, 33% of teachers are Black (NYSED, 2018). There is even a small number of male teachers working in the district. The Morehouse School District prides itself on celebrating Black and Latinx history.

This section addresses the first research question, “What influenced this group of Black male teachers to go into the teaching field?” and “What challenges or barriers do Black male educators experience in the teaching profession?” The main finding in this section was that

teaching was not the first choice for five out of seven teachers (71%). These same five participants, Anthony, Brian, Jason, Shawn, and Terrance had a person or experience that inspired them to pursue teaching after they had degrees in other fields. Most of the teachers had aspirations of helping people and making a difference; however, it did not initially involve being in a classroom. Only two of the participants, Steven and Mark, went to college and majored in education for their undergraduate degree. Six of the seven participants said they wanted to become a role model and make a difference in young people's lives.

One of the interesting findings from this study is that only three of the seven participants had a Black male teacher during their educational journey. Terrance and Mark had their first Black male teacher while attending high school. Shawn had his Black male teacher while attending college. The remaining four participants had never had a Black male teacher during their time in school.

There was a fascinating finding based on the participants' experiences of getting into the teaching profession. While some of the teachers experienced challenges getting a teaching job, others were offered jobs whether they wanted it or not. Brian and Jason were fortunate to receive a job based on knowing someone who was currently employed. Shawn and Anthony were fortunate to receive a phone call immediately upon applying for a teaching position. Some participants, such as Steven, had a difficult time getting a job. It was not until he decided to search in other districts that he received a job. Steven believed that race played a role in not receiving his initial full-time teaching assignment.

### **Anthony's Journey into Education**

Anthony is currently an eighth-grade math teacher in the Xavier School District. He has taught for 29 years as a math teacher. Anthony immigrated from Jamaica. While attending school

in Jamaica, Anthony recalled that he was expected to follow the school rules. Anthony said that his parents were very strict and they would not tolerate any misbehavior. According to Anthony, the school system in Jamaica is different from the United States. Throughout the course of the interview, Anthony did not indicate if he had a Black male teacher while attending school.

Anthony came to the United States when he was in high school. He mentioned many positive and some negative aspects regarding his educational experiences. However, he only drew the positives aspects as that is what kept him focused. Members of Anthony's family were teachers. While thinking about a future career, Anthony decided that he was going to give teaching a try.

It is interesting to note that initially, teaching was not Anthony's first choice. One of those main factors he did not want to become a teacher included salary. Anthony could not foresee how he could support his family on a teacher's salary. In my interview with Anthony, he stated the following:

Well, so I was leaning towards going to corporate. It's not that I didn't want to [go into teaching]. One of the main things was income. If I was going to provide, I have to think outside the box, how can I make enough money to provide for a family if I'm going to have a family? Teachers weren't making a lot of money.

Initially, Anthony started to pursue other aspirations. He was interested in working in the corporate world. Then eventually, his plans would change, as he described:

I actually started an MBA program and I deviated from that and got into teaching because of my coach in college. Because I came here, I ran track, I paid for my tuition, and he was saying, 'Hey man, you know, I'm teaching, I'm doing this,' and I said, 'yeah.' And I thought about it way before, and so I got back involved with it. You know what I mean?

Because before I came here, there was this school back home [in Jamaica] I went to Michael College. Went there, and that was a teaching college, and I proceeded to continue here.

Anthony started to pursue teaching at Michael College (pseudonym). While pursuing education, something changed within Anthony. He began to think about the advantages and disadvantages of becoming a teacher. To determine if he would enjoy a teaching career, Anthony became a substitute teacher while finishing his degree. He explained:

If you look at it professionally, teachers were always at the bottom of the pole in terms of income. So I had to make a decision to say, 'Hey, I'm going to make a difference with this'. And that's...I really got back into it. I came here. While in college, I was subbing at Xavier. And that kind of just, even though I've interviewed for a couple of corporate jobs and stuff at the time, I was subbing. While I was subbing, one of the teachers at Xavier got hurt, and I had a long-term assignment, and I really got into it again.

Anthony's parents could not afford to send him to college. He was fortunate that he received a full scholarship from being involved with track and field. That allowed Anthony to complete college in two years. Going to school during the four winter and summer sessions, Anthony was able to earn a bachelor's degree and a master's degree without owing any money. One of his greatest motivators was Booker T. Washington. He recalled reading a book about Booker T. Washington while in Jamaica and becoming inspired. He related the book years later to coming to America and saying to himself, "I can do that."

### **Brian's Journey into Education**

Brian is a Black male who currently teaches fifth grade in the Xavier School District. Even though the elementary school departmentalizes their fifth graders' classes, Brian only



teaches English Language Arts, science, and social studies. He started as a teaching assistant and has been a teacher for seven years. Brian has only taught on Long Island during his tenure as a teacher.

Reflecting on his educational journey, Brian recalled having Black teachers, but he did not recall have a Black male teacher. It is interesting to note that Brian attended a Historically Black College and University in North Carolina. He initially obtained his degree in marketing and finance. While this Historically Black College and University is known to be a college for teacher education, Brian did not desire to become a teacher:

I did my undergrad at a Historically Black college in North Carolina. When I was there, I did marketing and finance. And what's interesting – this HBCU is actually a teacher's college. It started off as a teacher's college, but I was not interested in teaching. I had no mindset of becoming a teacher at all.

After graduating from college, Brian worked in several fields. He started in the entertainment industry, where he worked for several years. Afterward, he owned a company that focused on professional hair care (hair oil). After experiencing burnout, Brian started a performing arts school with his ex-girlfriend on Long Island before changing his career to teaching.

Brian truly enjoyed working at his performing arts school as he worked closely with children. During the time at this school, an elementary school principal reached out to Brian about possibly working in an elementary school as a substitute teacher for technology.

Lincoln (pseudonym) had a technology teacher or computer teacher permanent sub position open. And she [the principal] asked me, 'I think you would be great for this.' It's

just until the end of the school year' ... she said 'but I've seen you work with children. You're amazing'.

Brian turned down the request and did not take the position as a substitute technology teacher. It was during this time that Brian started mentoring young Black men who were networking engineers. Brian would help these young men get engineering contracts. It was part of the deal that Brian would take 15% should the young man receive a contract. While working with his networking company, Brian was approached again by the principal about possibly working in an elementary school.

She said, 'All you need is your bachelor's degree. It doesn't matter what it is in; just try it out.' I said "No." So probably the next week, someone from that school, she must have told someone, and they called me, she gave them my number. I was like, 'I'm not interested, that's not what I do.' And, then listen, 'just another Black man in the classroom would just be great just for presence wise.' Listen, I'm not interested in it.

Then the very next week, somebody else called.

Despite all of the attempts, Brian was not interested in working in a school setting. This principal was persistent and continue to contact Brian because he fit the type of teacher that this principal wanted, even though he was not a teacher. This was one of the downsides of being a Black male as he was continuously approached for a job that he did not initially want. After being asked several times, Brian decided that he would go in for one day just to take a look to see what the position entailed. While taking a tour of the building and the possible classroom, Brian was impressed with what he had observed.

I went to just come in and just look. So, when I went there, they had a whole Mac computer lab. That's all they had was MacBook's. And, I was—this is interesting

because you would not think a place like Lincoln would have that level of technology—so, I sat in and just watched the teacher that was there and how he was interacting with them. And the kids were talking to me the whole time. I was only going for an hour, and I ended up staying there literally all day. So, I was like, ‘Wow, this is pretty cool.’ It was fun...went back home thought about it, so then I wind up telling them, ‘Listen, I’ll come do it.’

After spending the day at the school, Brian fell in love with the possible opportunity presented to him. When the day was over, he spoke with the principal, who was eager to have him work. Brian was encouraged to get his teaching assistant license. The principal explained to Brian that the position did not pay much. However, it was perfect for him because he could still work his other jobs to supplement his income.

### **Jason’s Journey into Education**

Jason, a Jamaican male, has over 20 years of teaching experience in middle and high school. Beginning his career in 1994, Jason became certified in biology and general sciences. He has served in many different roles, including working in an alternative setting, classroom teacher, and discipline office supervisor. In addition to working under these roles, Jason worked under a grant program to promote students’ college readiness. Much of his experience has been exclusive to Long Island. Jason received his bachelor’s degree in biology from Jackson University (pseudonym), in New York. After receiving his initial degree, he obtained a master’s degree in school counseling.

While reflecting on his educational years, Jason did not have a Black teacher or male school teacher in elementary school. He only recalled having a Black gym teacher in elementary school. Jason had his first Black male teacher, Mr. Ford, in middle school. According to Jason,

Mr. Ford was “a phenomenal guy.” Jason felt a connection with Mr. Ford and his two Black male high school teachers, Mr. Rock and Mr. Jackson. He stated that “they were easy to talk to and had very high expectations, and they didn’t really play around.” Although Jason could not recall his other teachers, these three individuals had a profound impact on him.

Mr. Ford, Mr. Rock, and Mr. Jackson had a positive influence on Jason; however, it did not influence him enough to become a teacher. Becoming an educator was a Plan B to Jason. Although he was a biology major, Jason had hopes of going to medical school. During that time, Jason was not interested in the coursework and he was not motivated. Many of his science courses focused on the memorization of material. He was disappointed that many of his courses did not involve hands-on material. Because of these factors, Jason did not perform well on the medical school admission test and he started to look for an alternative:

I continued with the study of bio until about my junior year, and then once I hit my junior year and I had taken the MCATs, the medical school admission test, and I didn’t perform well, started to look for Plan B.

Still trying to pursue his dreams, Jason volunteered at a local hospital. He spent most of his time in the pediatric ward. Jason enjoyed working with the kids and started to think of a possible career path, as he explained:

I was resistant to going through the process of trying to get into medical school, so I think Plan B immediately became Plan A once I realized medical school was for those people who are not—or at least it’s how I believed—were not socially motivated. I’m a very social person. I want to talk. I want to be out there. I like a performance aspect of things. Jason started to become drawn to education as he was a thoughtful person who was socially motivated. During this time, Jason began to take some education classes. This was a complete

contrast from what he had studied previously. Jason started to perform better in his education classes as opposed to his biology classes. While in school, Jason was offered a teaching position from one of his fraternity brothers. Jason worked in New York City's Department of Education for two years. He then received a job in the Hampton (pseudonym) school district for another two years before arriving at Xavier. Jason has worked with the Xavier school district since the late 1990s.

### **Mark's Journey into Education**

Mark is of Jamaican descent who has worked in the field of education since 2012. He began as a sub for the district, and this is his fourth year in his current assignment as an eighth-grade history teacher in the Xavier School District. Mark knows the district very well as he attended high school in the Xavier School District. He thought that this was a unique perspective since he is a Black male teacher and was able to return to the district where he went to school to give back to the students. It is interesting to note that Mark did have a Black male teacher while attending the Xavier School District. Mr. Brown (pseudonym) was Mark's physics teacher in high school. He grew up in a West Indian household in which his Jamaican mother raised him. Mark's mother emphasized the importance of education since she did not have a college degree. Mark did not always perform to the best of his abilities, but his mother continued to push him. Mark struggled while in school; at one point, the school almost retained him for a second time. Although he did not have a passion for school, Mark did have an interest in history.

Mark admired men like Malcolm X and Shawn Ley and also started to learn more about African kingdoms like Ghana. This was a turning point for Mark. Learning about these inspirational figures and kingdoms, Mark started to improve in his academic settings. He received better grades, which led him to take Advanced Placement courses. He also started to

read scriptures as he came from a religious family. In high school, he started with a 60 average. That average started to gradually increase to an 80, 89, and then 92.

After graduating from a local community college, Mark enrolled in the teacher education program at a university in the New York area. One of the driving factors for enrolling at this university was that it was culturally diverse. It was at this university where Mark began to learn about the methodology of teaching. Toward the end of high school and at the local community college, Mark started to succeed academically, and he soon realized the rigor of this university's curriculum. Immediately, Mark had to stop working so that he could maintain his academics.

Once the course subject area classwork was completed, it was time for student teaching. Initially, Mark was excited as he worked with another Black male. However, Mark had a challenging student teaching experience with this teacher. His cooperating teacher was a teaching fellow who transitioned into teaching from another career and had less than four years of teaching experience:

While I rock with our people and I'm for Black empowerment and pan-Africanism, what I quickly learned is that not everybody that looks like you are for you. So, with this guy, it's not that he was a bad guy, he almost drove me out of the profession. Because my thing was, I did not have confidence. But he did not have the experience necessary to detect that...I meet the guy, and one of the first things that happened that turned me off was there was a series of misunderstandings. There was another teacher who was White. I was in a room; I was just following him around. I'm just trying to understand what's going on. He left, and I was still there before leaving. A few days later, I've noticed that the spirit was off. And, he said that the lady thought that I stole something out of her

purse. I'm like, what, hell, no. I have a code of honor, I don't steal. That's my thing. I don't do that.

That was the first incident of racial discrimination that happened to Mark during his student teaching experience. This incident had Mark question how people perceived him.

Although he felt uncomfortable, he continued to show up without saying a word to his student-teacher advisor:

So, he started to compare me to other student teachers. He said, 'the other student teacher, he jumped right in there'. I responded, 'I'm not the other student teacher.' So, I'm a very sensitive type...I'm leading the "Do Now," my first time up there; the kids are...these are high school kids. He's in the back. I pointed to a sign, and he interrupted me in the lesson, 'Why did you point over there?' I froze, and the kids, they just started laughing at me. That was it for the remainder of the semester. I was like, I'm done.

Mark was truly embarrassed and did not know how to respond. His confidence was at an all-time low, and he did not have the motivation to continue teaching. In addition to embarrassing him in front of the students, Mark overheard this teacher talking about him to colleagues:

I heard him leaning over to another teacher and saying, 'You see, why can't he be like all the others?' And, I heard him say that, and at that time it was like...and then he was talking about me to the other teachers... 'I'm looking for a reason to believe in you.' But, and then he stopped me, and he said, 'Yeah, no, I'm just playing around, right?' And the secretary was there, and then she said very sternly, 'No, you weren't.' So that let me know, you're already talking about me. You're bashing me in front of these White people. So at that time, I was like, no, I was looking into becoming a lawyer then. I don't know when I say spiritual, there was something that would not let me give up.

Mark was so upset with that experience and with things happening in his personal life. He started looking into being a lawyer. However, he refused to quit after that negative experience. Listening to his mother and a family friend who was a retired teacher from Jamaica encouraged Mark to finish his degree. He completed the second half of his student teaching with a different teacher. Mark had a completely different experience. This person took the time to explain things to Mark. Slowly but surely, Mark's confidence began to grow.

When Mark completed student teaching, Mark was offered a teaching job in Manhattan. According to Mark, he wanted to make a difference after reading a report on the Black male dropout rate where 50% of Black males do not graduate high school. Wanting to be in an environment where he makes a difference, he applied for a job in the Xavier school district as a substitute teacher.

After being a substitute teacher, Mark received a job as a classroom teacher. During this time, he focused on not only mastering the curriculum but also becoming familiar with the observation rubric. Mark focused on one domain at a time of the rubric to improve his craft.

### **Steven's Journey into Education**

Steven is a fifth-grade teacher who works in the Xavier School District. Steven is a Black male who was born and raised in the Long Island area. He went through the public school system 30 minutes away from the Xavier School District and did not have a Black male teacher during the time he attended public school. Upon graduating from a local high school, Steven went to a university in South Carolina. At this university, Steven majored in sociology while pursuing a minor in psychology.



After receiving his sociology degree, Steven began working as a teacher's assistant. Another veteran teacher started to realize that Steven had a good relationship with students, and this teacher challenged Steven to further his education and become a classroom teacher.

I enrolled in [Northern University, pseudonym], where I did an elementary education with special education degree, so that was the dual certificate program, and I graduated there, I want to say 2013.

After graduating with his master's degree, Steven continued to work as a teacher's assistant. Wanting to put his degree to use, Steven applied for a teaching position when it became available. However, Steven did not receive any full-time teaching positions:

I wanted to give back to my community that I grew up in, but also what I realized is that in a sense not being able to land a job was primarily, I think, due to race.

Although Steven was ready for a teaching position, he still continued to work as a teaching assistant in the Bell Aire School District (pseudonym). According to Steven, there was only one Black teacher in the school and the rest of the teachers were White. There were even some Latinx and Black teacher's assistants. While working as a teacher's assistant, he would often serve as a substitute for other teachers. Some of these other teachers would recommend Steven to the principal to have him cover their classrooms:

Obviously, you still know you have a job to do, but you don't walk into that building feeling as confident as you could be and feeling as secure, because you know, just for example, in that situation when my Caucasian counterpart where the teacher, my mentor, she's telling the principal about me, 'Hey, give him these opportunities, give him these opportunities.' She's [the principal] saying no. You know, like she's saying, 'He's a TA. He should only be in that TA role.' When it's like, 'Well, hey, he has his master's, I trust

this kid when I have to go up to IEP meetings and do all of these other things to take charge of my classroom. He knows my classroom almost just as good as I do, and I trust him doing everything, and I'm going to give him those opportunities. You know why? Because he's earned them, he earned my respect, and I taught him how to do it.'

Despite having some of his colleagues recommend Steven for placements, the principal elected to bring in other people to fill the position. This bothered Steven, as this was the district where he attended school:

And that's where I felt like... 'Does she not like me?' 'Was it the color of my skin?' I don't know what the issue was, but I just know that I felt like if I was a different race, I probably would have been afforded that opportunity and not denied it.

After experiencing this case of racial discrimination, the final straw came when eight pregnant teachers prepared to take a leave of absence in the Bell Aire School District (pseudonym). When it was time to fill their positions, Steven remained excluded from the conversation. The principal did not contact Steven about any of these available positions:

We had like eight women who were pregnant, 'We'd rather go on leave replacements.' And she could've said, 'Hey, you're going on leave replacements. I want you to work here. Take one of these leave replacements, and then you're going to build.' Nothing happened. When I went into her office, and I had resigned, I said, 'Hey, I got my master's, I've got to go and move on to bigger and better things.' I was hoping that she would say, 'Hey, I might have a replacement position; do you want to take one?' She just said, 'Good luck out there. It's very hard to get a job.'

Steven went on to apply for other positions. He would eventually receive job offers for the next school year. Steven chose to accept a job offer at a New York City school. However, just before the school year began, he received a call from his former principal:

September comes, two days before schools about to start; it happens. The principal calls me and says, 'I have these leave replacements. Do you want to take them?' At that moment, I'm wanting to burn no bridges, so I just said, 'Thank you for thinking about me, but no thank you. I got a job.' And her whole reply was, 'You got a job? Where at? You got your own classroom?' 'Yeah, I got a job. Yeah, I got my own classroom.'

Steven went to work at this New York City school. During this time, he was able to apply the strategies that he was taught in college and from watching other teachers as an assistant. This experience led to Steven eventually returning to Long Island and receiving a job in the Xavier School District.

### **Shawn Jones' Journey into Education**

Shawn is a Haitian American who is currently a sixth-grade teacher in an elementary school. Although Shawn teaches all subjects, he is predominantly a math teacher and he teaches English Language Arts for one period each day. His parents were born and raised in the country of Haiti. Shawn attended public schools until sixth grade in a town in Long Island. From there, Shawn transferred to a different school district for middle school and attended a predominantly White high school. He did not have a Black male teacher until his time in college.

Shawn obtained his Bachelor of Science from Baker's University (pseudonym). He majored in political science with a concentration in global affairs. During his time in college, Shawn connected with a Black teacher named Professor Richard (pseudonym). This was the first time that Shawn bonded with one of his teachers. Shawn continued to work at a camp while he

was attending college. His parents wanted him to receive a college degree because they believed it would provide Shawn with additional opportunities that he may not have if he did not graduate from college.

Shawn's teaching journey began when he left Baker's University. Initially, he was a political science major with a concentration in global affairs:

The goal was to be a lawyer. To be a lawyer and to go into global politics. That was my passion. And, at the time it was post 9/11, there was a lot. Global politics was just so open. I speak three languages, and people were into that. So, I was a Resident Assistant (RA). And, as an RA, I had to figure out what I was going to do next. So, I started to apply for Resident Director (RD) jobs because I didn't know how I was going to pay for the next move, for law school. I started to apply for RD jobs just to give myself a year to figure out the next step, to take the bar.

Shawn received three job offers. These offers were located in Boston, Connecticut, and in New York. Franklin University (pseudonym) accepted Shawn into their law program. Subsequently, at the same time, he took the job offer to be a resident director at Franklin University. When Shawn moved into Franklin, he was called into an emergency meeting:

When I first started, my first day I moved into Franklin, I got my apartment, I'm like really excited. I'm living on campus. And the first day we have a staff meeting, my first staff meeting. And they called like an emergency staff meeting to tell us that the board had just decided they're no longer paying for law school. So, three of us were there for the law school. And everyone's like, 'Oh. Well, I have no money to pay for law school, and you don't have time to apply for loans.' So, the law school allowed us to defer our entrance for up to a year so you could start in the fall.

This was not the plan that Shawn envisioned. However, he continued to work at a sleepaway camp during his time in college. He began working at this camp at the age of 16. As he was coming closer to graduation, Shawn had a conversation with the owner of the camp:

I started as an assistant counselor, and I became really close with the owners. I worked for them in the summer. I would go up and train. They owned a sleepaway camp, and they asked me to go train the sleepaway camp counselors in the summers. So, I would do all this leadership stuff for them. And, the owner, when I was getting close to graduating college and I hadn't really fine-tuned my plan, when I told him I wanted to take a year and figure myself out, he was like, 'I don't know why you're not teaching. You're amazing with kids.' He's like, 'You're ridiculously amazing with the kids. It's silly.' And he called my mom. I swear to you, he called my mom.

After the owner of the camp called Shawn's mother, he sat down and had a serious conversation with her about his future career. While Shawn still had aspirations of becoming an attorney, his mother wanted him to consider the possibility of becoming an educator. His mother stated, "You've been at this camp since you were 16 for a reason. You're one of the few people that made it through four years of college and went back to the camp every summer." He reminisced:

Every summer I got the bigger group, or I got the tougher group. One year I was a mentor counselor. My job was genuinely to mentor new counselors, and I would walk into groups and just take over a group for a week. And, he's like, 'You're phenomenal with kids.' And, I was a fourth-grade counselor. And, then when I was a mentor counselor, I was all over, like all over camp. Younger kids, older kids. And they kept pumping this idea. And when this all happened with [Franklin University], the guys here were like, 'You can stay up to three months just to re-figure your life out. If you decide to

leave, we're going to give you three months. We ask you to work for three months but interviewing and stuff like that.'

Reflecting on his time spent at the camp and thinking about what his mother had to say, Shawn started to listen closely as he tried to figure out what career path he should take. While he still had a passion for completing the law program, the reality was that teaching might be a better option for Shawn.

I remember talking to my mom, and my mom was like, 'Maybe this is God sending you a sign that you should try to take some teaching classes.' I still had credits. They paid for every other school. So, she's like, 'Don't just sit there and do nothing.' She's like, 'Stay there. Tell them you'll stay there for a year. In a year, we'll figure out if law school's the right thing.' She's like, 'But in this year, start your grad classes.' So I took non-matriculated grad classes in the fall for education. And I took the non-matriculated. I got like a 4.0. I felt good again; I felt like me again.

Shawn continued his education at Franklin University. However, he did not continue in the law program; instead, he pursued education as his background. After graduating with a master's degree in education, Shawn began to apply for jobs. Immediately, he received a call for an interview for a middle school in New York City. This was the only interview Shawn went on, and he received the job offer.

I went on one interview, got a job offer right away, [in Queens]. I was like, 'They got me.' I was like, 'I got a job, mom, it's fine.' I don't know. And, everything just seemed to work out. And, like I said, I've always been good with kids. It's like the one thing that I've always been a natural.

Excited to land his first teaching job, Shawn was eager to start this position. While his certification was kindergarten to sixth grade, this New York City school needed a middle school math teacher. Because the administrators liked Shawn, they allowed him to teach one sixth-grade class as a way to allow him to work within his license. Shawn continued to work in the New York City's Department of Education until he was excessed after his second year.

My principal called me in, the union rep was there, my AP (assistant principal) was there. I guess some of the teacher aides who were close to the principal. We had a very tight-knit school. We'd go to happy hour together. My principal was very cool, and she'd have parties at the end of the year at her house. She was in tears. Because people were getting excessed, we knew it.

After the year ended, Shawn only went on one other interview, and this was for the Howard school district. Shawn interviewed for and received a job from the superintendent. Shawn was also excited to work for a Black superintendent.

### **Terrance's Journey into Education**

He has been a social studies teacher for almost 20 years. While most of his experience is in a suburban school district in New York, he spent two years teaching in the New York City Department of Education and two years teaching in New Jersey. Terrance identifies as a Black male with a Caribbean background. His father is from Trinidad, and his mother is from the Bahamas. However, according to Terrance, his parents made sure that he was born in the United States because they did not want Terrance to have to worry about citizenship problems.

He attended Hunter High School (pseudonym) in New York City and eventually the school expelled him because of fighting. Although he went to school in New York City,

Terrance did attend school for a few years in the Bahamas. It was a big adjustment for Terrance after going to school in the Bahamas and then returning to the United States.

Terrance has a unique perspective as he attended school both in the United States and in the Bahamas. He stated:

School, especially high school, was one big blur. I've got to tell you something, though. Going to school in the Caribbean and coming here was an adjustment because in the Caribbean, everyone's Black, everyone. The Prime Minister, the bum, the teacher, everyone is Black, and you can actually go weeks without seeing a White person. To see a White person, you had to go into the tourist part. But where I lived, they're all Black people. To go from that to come to school here and most of the teachers are White, that's an adjustment.

The early years of Terrance's education had a profound impact on him in regard to race.

Attending schools in different countries opened Terrance's eyes to the racism that exists in certain parts of the world:

I think that a lot of my early years of education in the Caribbean, I think it affected me because in America, you quickly learn that White people are better because you grew up in a situation where White people are always on the top, and Black people are always on the bottom. That's just how you grow up. But coming from the Caribbean where everyone's Black, you don't have that psychological impediment.

Terrance attended Brown State College (pseudonym) and graduated there with a bachelor's degree. According to Terrance, this degree did not provide the opportunities he expected. One of the first jobs he received was working for Blockbuster Video. He also worked for local



newspapers; however, they did not pay very much. Terrance had another interview with WPIX. That same night, rapper Tupac Shakur died:

That night, Tupac had just died. It was the night that Tupac died. I remember listening to the radio and everybody was talking about it. I mean they were talking about this guy like Dr. King had just been assassinated, and I'm like, 'what's going on here?' I'm like, because he said a lot of negative things. He called women b\*t\*hes, thug life. I mean he had some positive, but he had a lot of negative stuff, too; a lot of negative stuff. I'm like, what's going on? It hit me, we are so desperate for role models that we will turn anybody into a hero whether they qualify or not. I said, there is a deficit among positive male role models. Something just came over me; just go into teaching. So I went to the local high school, Western Urban High School, and decided to be a substitute teacher.

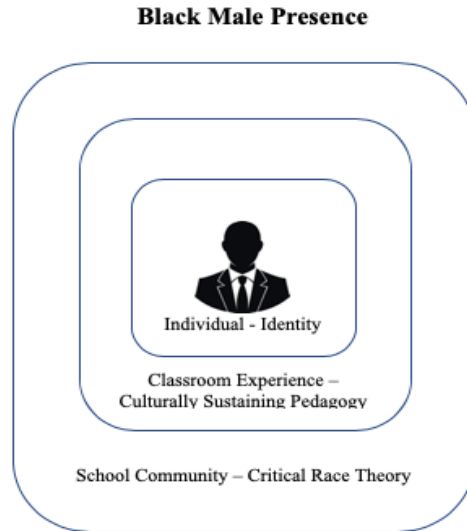
This was the moment that Terrance decided to become a teacher. He wanted to become a positive role model for young Black people.

In summary, this section provided brief introductions to the participants' journeys into the teaching field. The section noted that two of the participants, Mark and Steven, were the only two Black males that initially attended college to become teachers. The remaining participants had an experience with a mentor or with children that motivated them to pursue teaching as a possible career. All of the participants wanted to inspire young people, which aligns with the literature (Warren, 2017). In Part Two, I illustrate how these Black male teachers perceived the role of race, culture, and gender identity in their teaching practice, and how they believed it influenced how students, colleagues, and the school community viewed them.

## **Part Two - The Black Male Presence**

The Black male presence was a pervasive theme that arose in the coding of each transcript. I reread each of the transcripts and realized that although many of the stories were different, they all related in terms of teaching experiences. The term *Black male presence* may convey various meanings and interpretations; however, in this study, I conceptualized Black male presence in the same way as Warren (2017), who found that having the presence of a Black male teacher changes the tone of a classroom and school. A Black male teacher in a classroom and school presents a positive tone by allowing students to have a role model that looks like them and encourages them to have aspirations to be successful.

Six of the seven participants stated that most of the school community had a complimentary view of having Black male educators in the school. Participants felt that their colleagues saw them as positive role models for Black students in their schools. Additionally, this image of a role model was how all Black male teachers wanted to be viewed by their colleagues and the students they taught, especially in schools where most students were students of color. In contrast, Terrance was the only participant who felt that people did not truly value a Black male teacher's presence. Terrance believed that even some Black students, parents, and administrators had racial stereotypes about White teachers as providing a better quality of education.



*Figure 2.* Visual representation of the Black male presence

This part is divided into three major components. In the first section, *Black Male Teachers Matter*, I examine the perceived influence of having a Black male teacher in the classroom, especially because their presence in the teaching field is so rare. I show why the focal teachers believed their presence mattered for their students’ positive racial identity development, confidence, behavior, and potential, particularly for Black male students. The second section, *Practicing CSP*, focuses on how the focal Black male teachers infuse CSP in their classroom. The interview data illustrate how they set up the classroom environment and built relationships with students. The final section, *How Others View the Black Male Teacher’s Role in Schools*, show the role of these Black male teachers in the larger school community through the lens of CRT (refer to Figure 2 above). This section examines how the teachers believed others perceived their role in the school.

### **Black Male Teachers Matter**

This section summarizes how and why the Black male presence in education matters from the participant’s point of view. According to the literature, it is imperative that Black male

students see representations of teachers of color in their classrooms (Yarnell & Bohrnstedt, 2018). The literature also states that Black males add value to an educational organization (Toldson, 2013), as they provide a sense of motivation for Black students to succeed (Warren, 2017). The Black male presence adds a key element of racial identity.

### ***Black Males Can Be Role Models, Too***

Since the participants were one of a few Black teachers in their schools, they felt an additional responsibility to put forth the best person that they could be. To do this, these teachers acted as role models by dressing professionally, modeling acceptable behavior, providing assistance to those in need, and understanding people on a personal level. Jason stated, “It’s rare that you will see them (Black male teachers) in those core four subjects being educators.” Anthony specified that his students said they “never had a Black male teaching them...in math.” Brian mentioned that when he first started teaching, “There were no Black male teachers. However, there were a couple of Black teaching assistants.”

The focal teachers also expressed that because students never had a Black male teacher before, they did not know what to expect. The teachers in this study believed that having a Black male in the classroom inspired Black students to do their best. They said that the Black male teacher presence helps students build confidence in their abilities by setting high expectations and providing structure for appropriate behavior if students have academic insecurities or family issues outside of school. It even teaches students how to act in predominantly White spaces. In other words, these teachers knew how to relate to their students and understood their struggles.

For example, Anthony recalled that there were not many teachers of color when he started working in the Xavier School District. He also noted that there were not many people of color employed in the district. Before coming to the Xavier School District, he spent a few years

working in New York City's Department of Education. Looking for a change, he decided to apply for teaching jobs on Long Island. It was interesting that he, along with two of his friends, received telephone calls from the Xavier School District. As the Xavier School District was trying to diversify its staff, they contacted Anthony and his two friends and asked if they knew of individuals looking for teaching positions.

Once hired, Anthony and his two friends taught in the same building. At that time, it was unheard of to have three Black male teachers working in the same building. They were able to have a profound impact on the school and students. During this time, Anthony recalled when ninth grade was part of middle school. These three men connected with students and helped build their confidence. Anthony's two friends have long since retired, but the impact left on students was priceless.

As Anthony reflected on first being hired as a teacher, he recalled his experience being mainly positive. However, some students looked at him and said, "Hey, are you a real math teacher?" Anthony believed he received this comment because many of the students had never had a Black male math teacher. After a while, the students started to say, "Hey man, you are the first Black male math teacher that I ever had." So Anthony took it upon himself to be a positive role model for his Black students.

Shawn also believed that he played a pivotal role in being there for his students as a Black male teacher. Since he is the only Black male teacher in his school, he is able to be a positive Black male that students can look up to. For some students, he may also represent a temporary father figure. He explained,

I can give you an example right now. I have a [Black] student in my class right now whose father is in jail for murder. And that kid used to come late to school every day. I

was on him. His mom came for a parent-teacher conference and talked about his father and how it affects him.

Shawn tried to comfort the family but still expressed his expectations for the child. After this conversation was over, Shawn took it upon himself to make sure that the student had what he needed to succeed. He made sure to provide the student with structure while in school; he sent home messages to the student's mother via text and the Remind™ app. Shawn said he knew how much pressure that family must have felt. While there are factors outside of the classroom that distracted the student from his studies, Shawn made it his goal to develop a sense of intrinsic motivation for this student.

Shawn also had a student that was on the opposite end. This was another Black male student who had all of the potential in the world. He was an outstanding athlete, extremely smart, handsome, and popular. However, he was not fully applying himself as he worked below his ability level. It became Shawn's goal to push him and take him to the next level.

According to Shawn, it is imperative to be a good role model for students. Shawn informs his students on what it takes to be a good person and how to live in a society that already looks at you a certain way. He models how to behave in situations that consist of "being a Black guy around a crowd of White people, as well as being a Black guy in a crowd of Black people." Shawn tells his students, "It doesn't matter the crowd that you are in front of; you need to be the best human being possible." He also teaches students how to "fit in various crowds."

Shawn was a Black male who attended an all-White school. He teaches at a predominantly Black school in which he relates to the community as a fellow Haitian who also speaks Creole. Shawn was everybody's "Black" friend. Shawn is teaching students how to be 'multicultural navigators,' defined by Carter (2005) as "individuals who harvest the cultural

resources both from their own ethnic or racial heritages and from the opportunities provided outside of their communities” (p. 17). Carter found that the most successful Black students were those who could adapt to dominant and nondominant culture systems.

Another teacher that strove to be a positive role model was Brian, who said that he achieved this by dressing as a true professional at work. He would wear a suit and tie along with dress shoes to work. A superintendent told him that as a Black man, you have to show the utmost professionalism; it is what the children in the district need to see. Oftentimes, Brian explained that he receives compliments on his appearance at work from both teachers and students.

Brian also believed that this professional attire makes an impact on student behavior in his classroom. He explained that other teachers will send so-called “difficult students” to talk to him, or some students have been switched into his classroom permanently. However, Brian said that these students act respectfully when they are around him:

So last year, I had two [Black] students in particular that ended up coming into my classroom. One was in third grade. I had to keep him for the last two months of school. He was just causing...he was just having a lot of aggressive, violent behaviors. I got him...I didn't have that issue anymore.

This third-grade student that Brian was referencing had issues cursing at White teachers and saying inappropriate things to them. The assistant principal arranged an inter-visitation where the students would meet with Brian periodically because she believed he would be a positive influence for these students. The third-grade student began to show a side of himself that other teachers did not see. He was actually happy to meet with Brian as he began to open up about many of his insecurities. The student admitted that he cannot read well and had difficulties with

certain activities and assignments. This student felt that the people in his class were laughing at him. However, he felt comfortable with Brian and looked up to him.

Another example of being a role model came from Steven. He said he loves teaching in the Xavier School District because it is a predominantly Black school. Steven has worked in other districts where he has felt like an outcast because of his skin color. During that time, he felt isolated and alone, as Steven did not have much in common with the people there. According to Steven, there is a mix of people of color in his current district.

Steven also takes his role as a Black male teacher very seriously. Being one of two Black male teachers in his school, Steven often relates his experiences when wondering how students feel in situations. He often remembered how his father was not around when he was growing up. Steven explained that this is why he feels it is important to have Black male figures that students can admire. These Black male figures can also provide guidance in moments that may be difficult for students to understand, such as how to behave in certain situations, how society looks at them, and explain the changes happening to their bodies and emotions.

Steven told a story of how his principal had a vision: He wanted all of the students in the school to have a male teacher before graduation. This is a unique experience as there are six fifth-grade teachers in this school who are all men, except for one woman. It is a diverse group of teachers consisting of Black, Latinx, and White male teachers. Since the fifth grade is departmentalized, all of the students have the opportunity to have all of the teachers on the grade level as a result of switching classes. Steven said it is a wonderful working environment as the male presence is dominant at the fifth-grade level. He truly believed that parents and students appreciated having male teachers at that grade level.



Because Brian demonstrated a good rapport with students, he said that his colleagues tended to ask him for favors, particularly with students “having trouble” in class. Brian recalled a teacher having difficulty with her students. During this time, his principal suggested that Brian mentor a White teacher:

She'd been there for like 12, 13 years, and she was just saying how the last two years was just so hard for her. Her students were not listening, and it felt like she doesn't have any management.

Being a team player, Brian offered to have this teacher's students join his class of students.

Although he did not feel that he was doing anything special, he wanted to understand why the Black students, in particular, were not listening to his White colleague. He explained:

I didn't have that issue in my room...But, again, it's just my interaction with them (referring to the Black students). My mindset is just very different (from the White woman teacher). I was telling her, and I said, 'How about I come in, and we'll do like three days a week where I'll bring my class into yours? We'll do morning meetings to kind of set the tone for the day. And each one of my students will be a mentor for one of your students.' And, I had two boys that were going to be a mentor for this other student.

Brian wanted the students in his class to mentor this young man because he believed it would have a lasting impact. Brian thought that if he mentored this student directly, this student would act up purposely so that his teacher would send him to Brian's class. The difference between this White teacher that he mentored and himself was that Brian accepts his students for how they are and tries to get to know them personally to understand why certain behaviors occur. According to Brian, the other teacher did not know why her students acted a certain way with her. However,

he thought it was a difference in relating culturally to students and creating a relationship with them.

### ***Benefits of Teacher-Student Racial Matching***

This section illuminates the benefits of matching teachers with students who share the same racial and ethnic backgrounds. I show the positive identity of these teachers as their purpose within the classroom evolves. Most of the participants went from choosing an alternative career path, to becoming a teacher based on an influential person or experience, to potentially become a staple of the school. I discuss how these teachers promote a positive racial identity by using their racial background, being a mentor to students, and gaining their students' trust.

For example, Steven feels that his race is a tremendous benefit because students feel that they can identify with him. He believes that Black students can relate to him, which will allow them to listen to his story and say, "Well, you know, he's just like me." Steven said if he taught at a predominantly White school, the students there would not relate to him being a Black male teacher. He stated, "I could teach them curriculum, but there's nothing else outside of the curriculum I will teach them." Although what Steven said might sound short sighted, I believe what Steven meant was that there is something additional that he could teach Black students, especially from a cultural aspect. Steven wants to make a difference and believes that he would have a better chance when teaching in a predominantly Black school district.

Mark uses his race as an advantage when dealing with Black male students. He read an article referring to Black males getting suspended at higher rates than other students. Mark realized that students tend to misbehave when they are not understood. Mark has had a few students who acted out during his teaching tenure. This prompted Mark to develop a program that would address the issue of suspension. Although Mark mentors groups of Black and Latinx

students collectively, he also mentors students on a one-to-one basis. Recently, he mentored a student who would often act out in the school. Through the power of his mentoring program, Mark saw a decline in discipline referrals.

Another example showing the benefits of teacher-student racial matching came from Jason. He believes his race and gender have a positive influence in regard to his relationship with his students. He believes his race and gender influenced social-emotional learning and social-emotional progression. This is because Jason noticed that all the students (especially his Black students) are buying into his mantra of being a realist and having a positive attitude. He mentors students on how to make the right choices in both the classroom and in life. He makes time for students, even when they make bad choices. According to Jason, if a student makes a poor decision, he pulls that student to the side, asks where we can go from here, and helps guide that student to make a right decision. Although his mantra helps students make the right choices in life, it also opened students up to make the right choices academically. He keeps an open line of communication with students and parents. Jason's goal is to have his students make the right choices so that their lives will be easier and better than those who preceded them.

Finally, as students begin to trust the teacher, Steven recalled that he was able to offer them sound advice that would be beneficial outside of the classroom. He offered advice that could potentially save students' lives as he takes pride in talking to students and creating valuable learning opportunities. He provided the example of reminding students never to accept a ride from a stranger. He stressed the importance of making the right decisions. This is critical because one wrong decision could possibly impact a student's life, whether the decision may result in death or going to prison. He wants his students to be able to continually make the right decision because it can potentially be a "life-saving, life-changing, or life-ending situation."

In contrast to the other participants, Terrance, who works for the Morehouse School District, felt that Black educators are not valued enough. He stated that all men want respect. He also mentioned that Black men require respect. According to Terrance, he feels that there is a certain lack of value from the Black community about being educated. He also feels that, to some extent, being Black detracts from his (Terrance's) value. Terrance asked the question, "Would there ever be a situation where you have an all-White school and 75 percent of the teachers are Black?" Terrance then asked, "Would that go unnoticed?" He answered, "Absolutely not," meaning that there are and will continue to be schools comprised of Black students who are taught by all or majority White teachers. However, there will never be a school comprised of White students taught by all or majority Black teachers.

In conclusion, this section provided examples of the importance of Black male teachers' presence in the classroom. This section looked at how these participants are viewed as role models by their students. Shawn stated how he had to be a positive example since the father of one of his students was in jail. Brian mentioned how he dressed in a suit and tie to show students what it is like being a professional. This section also explored the benefits of connecting teachers and students together based on their race. Based on the teachers' interviews, students of color identified with their Black male teachers. Mark even started a program that allowed him to mentor Black and Latinx male students. Jason created a mantra for his students while Steven offered his students advice to benefit them in the real world. These teachers felt they had an added responsibility to be positive role models and to help develop the racial identity in their students. This is partly because the Black male teachers did not want students, parents, or other educators to have a negative stereotype about them.

### **Practicing Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy**

This section illustrates how these teachers reported infusing CSP in their classrooms. As mentioned earlier, the participants in this study did not use the term CSP. However, I found that their stated practices were aligned with this philosophy. Indeed, the focal teachers used differentiated instruction, got to know students on a personal level, provided real-world examples, offered a culturally relevant curriculum, and infused student culture into their lessons.

According to Alim and Paris (2017), the culture of students must be addressed in schools and infused in the curriculum. It was important for these Black male teachers to naturally build strong relationships with their students. Likewise, it was imperative that the participants infused students' culture into their pedagogy when teaching their respective curriculums.

### *Differentiated Instruction*

Differentiated instruction is aligned with CSP because it takes an integrated approach to address the educational needs of students. For example, Brian said he understands that there is no particular way to teach all students. He stated, "You have to differentiate your instruction, and at times, individualize instruction." He recalled how students would come to fifth grade and have problems with conventions, vocabulary, decoding, or just reading and writing. While conversing with other teachers, he realized that many of them just went with the flow and did not take the time to address these needs; their concern was to get through the curriculum. So Brian began the year by focusing on one task, such as conventions. Brian incorporated conventions in all of his lessons because in the past, many of his students did not have a complete understanding of how conventions worked. He provided students with examples to meet them at their current level. Brian analyzed the data he received to determine his next steps. He explained the data to administrators and parents. It was sometimes frustrating to Brian because some of his colleagues were more concerned about getting through the curriculum instead of improving the students'

overall understanding of a topic or skill. This, he said, was evident as students were coming to fifth grade, not understanding skills they should have mastered in the second grade.

Similar to Brian, Mark also understood the importance of differentiating instruction. This was important to Mark as he wanted to level the playing field for his students. When giving assignments, creating competitions, or giving different responsibilities, Mark wanted all students to have a chance to participate and succeed. Mark stated that there were many teachers who “do not give their all” when teaching, which he believed is “so unfair” to students. According to Mark, some of those teachers were just “collecting a check” and it is unfortunate. Mark recalled a report that stated 50% of Black males did not graduate high school. This inspired Mark to find ways to try and decrease this number. He noted that no one gave up on him, and he is not willing to give up on his students as he continues to find new and innovative approaches to teach them.

### *Getting to Know Students on a Personal Level*

It is a concern to many in the teaching field how schools address students’ diverse needs. According to Zoch (2017), June (a teacher in Zoch’s study) mentioned how getting to know her students helped her become successful in the classroom, which led to building trust and empathizing with the students’ experience. Knowing that students are very tech savvy, Anthony tells students immediately that he has seven siblings and that he is the first in his family to attend and graduate from college. He tells students that he comes from a strict family and even explained his experience of walking 12 miles to school in Jamaica:

I tell them—I say, “Man, I lived 12 miles away. There’s only one bus. If I miss the bus, I got to walk to school. If I miss the bus coming home, I got to walk home. Sometimes I get home like 12 (midnight), but I still go out the next morning. I lived on a farm. I got to wake up at five in the morning and be ready for school.”

As Anthony reminisced about teaching summer school, he recalled a young man being very angry. Anthony had a sense that he was going to do something that he might regret. So Anthony immediately put the chalk down and asked security to come into the room. He stepped outside and spoke to the young man, realizing that he needed to cool off. He advises that teachers should always be prepared to give students love and support. Giving them an opportunity to express how they feel will increase the likelihood of a positive outcome.

Shawn noted that on the first day of school, he always shows a PowerPoint introducing who he is to students:

The first day of school, I show a PowerPoint. The PowerPoint explains who I am, the expectations for the year, and where we are going as a class. I also take them on a tour of the classroom. This acts as a motivational tool.

In addition to the PowerPoint, the class brainstorms some goals that they will have for the year. Shawn noted that this activity tends to motivate students, as students want to be in his classroom. Shawn provided the following example of students who want to be in his class:

A lot of my kids will tell you that they like to be in my room. They have fun. They want to learn. We often do a math lesson, a whole math lesson for an hour and 15 minutes. They're like, "It's over?" I'm like, "Maybe I'm doing something right." Or maybe we'll sit at the back table and I watch kids walking around helping each other, working around, but I'm working with the group at the back table. It's a structure, but there is some freedom to be who you are.

Shawn described that he takes pride in having an organized and structured classroom inclusive to all of his students.

### ***Developing Student Relationships***

All of the participants valued the importance of building relationships with students. However, they each built relationships in different ways. Terrance has had some positive and antagonistic relationships with Black students. As a result, he has seen both ends of the spectrum. Terrance mentioned that there are just some students who look forward to having a Black male teacher. While some students respect Black male teachers, others see a Black male teacher as a threat or challenge. Mark, on the other hand, took several avenues when connecting with students. He combined certain aspects of his interests and tried to match them with the interests of students. Other times, Mark looked at what children needed and tried his best to meet their needs. There were times when students in Mark's class acted out. In preparation to limit certain behaviors, Mark took it upon himself to provide students with stress balls. This allowed students to eliminate some of their frustrations without exhibiting negative behavioral patterns.

Anthony said he wanted to make a difference especially in young students of color. There were many times that Anthony saw young Black boys who did not have direction. From Anthony's experience, many of these young Black boys have never heard positive things about someone who looked like them. Anthony took a step back and began to build trust within these students of color. Anthony said to his students:

'Hey, I'm a real person here. My job is fundamental, getting you from point A to B. I want to take you places you can't take yourself.' And I'm constantly self-developing and reassuring students that the pain and the difference that they have, it's okay.

For example, Anthony believed that you have to model good behavior to gain students' trust and then build relationships that go beyond the classroom. He stated,

They have to see you do the walk before they say, okay, I trust you, and you just have to do the best in building a relationship with them. And, there are other outside issues that



are of concern. You can see marked differences between a young man, especially male students, where there is support system at home versus just the female when there's just a single mom who's not strong... So they look at you like, 'Who are you, man?' They have never heard positive stuff about someone that looks like me when you are telling them what to do. And so it becomes a challenge where you have to step back and say, 'All right, now we have to hang the carrot, build a friend, get on the best foot.' It's an interesting relationship where they just don't trust who you are, and it takes a while to get there.

When Anthony made the statement "just a single mom who's not strong," it comes across as a stereotype. I do not believe that he was intentionally categorizing all single mothers as weak. I think what he meant was that he could make a bigger impact on Black and Latinx male students who might have a lack of a male presence at home.

Anthony said he would greet every student who entered his classroom. He often asked them how they were doing and greeted them with a fist bump. Anthony would often talk to his students in ways that would prepare them for life in the real world:

I can always advise them just to tell your parents to start saving for college, so it's not so hard when it's time to go. And, I also encourage kids to look for money [for college].

There is a lot of academic money out there. I said, 'I have friends who are teaching in colleges, and they tell me kids are not applying enough for that.'

Similar to Anthony, Jason mentioned that part of his ability to develop strong relationships with his students stems from the fact that he chose to show more of himself from a personal aspect and not just the teacher's aspect. Jason shared stories about himself and his past experiences to teach students what they should do. Doing this allowed Jason's students to feel

very comfortable with him, and so they were able to relate. According to Jason, this made him the “cool teacher” from the students’ perspective. Although he was still stern and would not allow certain behaviors to take place, students respected Jason and felt that they could communicate with him about school-related and non–school-related issues.

When Jason first began teaching, he was one of two Black males who were classroom teachers. The other Black males in the building were physical education teachers and health teachers:

It’s like very few times you will see Black male teachers. In a high school, you will see more, but for core subjects [English, math, science, and social studies], it’s rare that you will see them in those four core subjects being educators. You find more of us in math and science than anything else; more math, but I definitely have a positive influence on male students, especially because I go out of my way to reach out to them, to have conversations [with students]. I say hello to everybody. I give pounds, fist bumps to everybody. I hug everybody. Sometimes all little kids need is acknowledgement. That’s very important. They need to be acknowledged.

Jason noted that there were times that students might not initially appreciate the efforts. However, it makes a lasting impression, and they tend to remember the efforts. He went on to explain:

There are instances that you can visually see the effects and there are moments that you will not be able to tell if you are having an impact on a student. On a consistent basis, because I’ve been doing this so long, I bump into these kids who say, ‘Your conversations with me helped me out. You showed me you cared.’ I coached a step team for about 14 years, and they’re always reaching out to me. It was mostly girls, but ‘You

encouraged me to do this, and you always spoke to me, and I was able to speak to you, and I look at you as a father figure.'

Jason received much recognition for his efforts. He always saw students after they graduated from school. Some of his previous students were working at Toys R Us, a department store in the mall, or at a local restaurant. While the students have grown into young adults, the one thing that did not change was the appreciation they had for their teacher:

I established relationships with kids that they couldn't necessarily do because their being with me wasn't viewed as a punitive thing. Even when I was a school disciplinarian, it wasn't viewed as punitive. They appreciated my presence, so I've always been asked to talk to different kids about different things because maybe the message would sound different coming from me.

This experience that Jason had was a prime example of how important it is for students to see and interact with teachers who resemble their race or gender and consider a father figure.

Related to the theme of building student relationships, Mark told a story about an alternative school where he used to work. He explained that this school housed many of the students who had disciplinary issues. Mark worked at the school for about a year and a half. He said that it was one of the best places where he has ever worked. Mark noted that many of the students did not care about academic subjects. He stated that the best way to get through to these students was to relate the subjects to their everyday lives. In a short time, students started to appreciate what Mark was doing. Mark realized that these students needed attention because they were not getting it anywhere else. Even when students started returning to their regular school, they acted out deliberately just to return to this alternative school. Mark mentioned that these

students wanted to return to the alternative school because they felt that he was someone who cared about them.

Shawn's story about the first time he started teaching in Far Rockaway was a prime example of building relationships. He described the students as not being very trusting of many people in the school. On the first day of school, Shawn welcomed all of the students in the classroom. Once everyone settled down, Shawn introduced himself and informed students that he was going to teach them math this year. After Shawn gave a brief introduction, a student named Shamika (pseudonym) said out loud, "F\*\*k you and f\*\*k math." Being a brand-new teacher, Shawn had to make the mature decision quickly. He remembered his time in graduate school, when a professor said, "There's going to be moments that define you." So Shawn looked at Shamika, went to the back of the class, opened up the closet, and said, "Am I being punked? Is Ashton Kutcher in here?" Some of the kids laughed, and in that short moment, Shawn was able to regain control of the situation.

Shawn said that he carefully spoke to the student after class. Shawn said to her, "Listen, if you could say that on the first day, it's not your first time saying anything like this." Shawn continued to keep his eye on the student. However, as the days passed, their relationship changed. The student did not demonstrate any hostility toward Shawn. In fact, she was able to relate to him. Shawn learned a lot from this student. He also noted that throughout her life, no one believed in her. She was a Black student and not many adults spent the time to get to know her. By building a relationship with this student, her behavior improved in addition to her academic performance.

Every year on the first day of school, Steven tells his students of color that "I was just like you guys." While some other students may look puzzled, shocked, or confused, Steven

explained his similarities with his students. Steven described his interest in sports and video games. The point of telling students this information is for Steven to understand the students' perspective. To help students succeed and progress further, he said that you have to help them succeed in their present moment.

Throughout Steven's interview, I noticed the common theme of the importance of building relationships. During each of the interview questions, Steven was able to pinpoint the aspect of positive relationships. He focused on relationships that existed between students and adults:

The more relationships that you build—and I feel like they get it, like when you win the student—you win in the classroom. That's what you want to be able to do as a teacher is win the student. I feel like when kids know that you're there for them, like I said, when they're there for you or when you're there for them and you're in their corner, they take their work much more seriously.

He went on to say that it is not only essential to develop that relationship with students; you must also develop that relationship with their parents. Students must see that the teacher and parent have a harmonious working relationship. This will help students to feel supported at all times.

When Anthony tries to relate to students, his goal is to build a relationship that would better prepare them for life. Whether advising students to apply for college or read a book, Anthony is trying to ensure that all students reach their potential:

One of the things that stands out in terms of getting them is explaining to them simple stuff like, 'Hey man, success is a set of stairs. You've got to take one step at a time. It's not an elevator.'

Anthony encouraged students to take baby steps. He emphasized the importance of controlling their actions and taking control of their minds. He often asked students how they felt and their thought process to gain a better understanding of them:

That's always been my mantra this year. Can you be the boss of your mind today? 'What do you mean?' 'What do I mean?' 'Oh, I've got to think about what I do.' I say, 'Yep, there you go. Are you helping somebody in your thinking? Are you offending someone? What is it you're doing?' Be the boss of your mind, and after a while now, if I see some of them in the hallway, 'I got you. Be the boss of your mind.'

Mark also realized that there are students who just need a break. Sometimes the curriculum was too difficult for them, or they are thinking about something completely unrelated to school. Middle school students may struggle with biological changes, making it difficult to navigate situations. As a result, Mark allows students to take breaks during lessons. Students are free to stretch their legs or are allowed to get a drink of water. He explained,

What I learned from the guy that got me the job—he said, 'Listen bro, you're not teaching robots. You're teaching human beings with feelings (referring to the students). Sometimes we need to read the energy of the class. If the energy is not where the kids are, stop the lesson, talk to them.'

According to Terrance, some students are going to perform well in the classroom and then there are students who are going to struggle. This is going to happen whether there is a Black male teacher in the room or not:

A lot of our kids...they work for teachers that they do like. Teachers that they don't like, they don't work for them. So it's almost like, 'I don't like you, so I'm not going to do my work.'

This is a mindset that Terrance believes to be harming students. “It doesn’t matter if you like the teacher or not. It is your job to gain the necessary knowledge that you would need to succeed later on. You are not hurting the teacher if you are not learning in the classroom. You are only hurting yourself.”

Mark is a person who takes great pride to ensure that students have what they need. At some point, he realized the importance of creating a program for the young men in his school.

I said, ‘Alright, I’m going to create something for Black and Hispanic boys. I don’t know what it is. Well, I’m going to start mentoring.’ They had a mentorship program where you were supposed to pick one, I picked damn near 15 of them. So I said, ‘This is what I’m going to do.’

As he reflected on his experiences in college, he noted that there were so few Black and Latinx men represented. He noted that there were not many people who looked like him in higher education. His goal for proposing this mentoring program was to help prepare Black and Latinx boys for the future.

Likewise, Anthony felt that it was crucial to build a rapport with all students. He was very creative in his actions and that allowed them to develop trust in Anthony:

Well, one of the things I do is I make note of kids’ birthdays. On special occasion, if they do something special and they work toward it, I will slip a coupon or something in there and say, ‘Hey man, you did a fine job with helping students in class.’

Giving students positive praise was important to Anthony, as he has worked in different districts and remembered that some of these young men (students) were very angry and even wanted to fight adults. To prevent these possible scenarios, Anthony made it his objective to reach out to his students. There was a time in which he purchased gifts for students. That is because some of

the students had no one at home that would purchase things for them, and he wanted to show students that he cared.

In comparison to Mark, Shawn, and Anthony, Steven tries to go out of his way to build relationships in and out of the classroom. He wants students to succeed in all areas of life. He believes that you have to go out of your way, and in some respects, out of your comfort zone, to really get to know students. He said that you may also have to open up by allowing students to see a side of you outside of your teacher role. Steven found that this strategy is a way to build connections and trust:

I think it's important to me because you realize that a lot of kids, they might not have had those figures in their lives, or whatever, that were going to help them reach that next level of their potential.

Steven makes a point to go onto the basketball court during his free time to interact with students. He talks about the current video games that interest them. He tries to tap into what is popular in their worlds and make connections within the classroom. This is important to Steven because his father was not around when he was growing up. So he tries to provide students with a positive example of a Black male figure that they could view as a role model.

Terrance recommended that teachers just be themselves. You should not pretend to be someone else. Students can read through it easily. Also, Terrance recommended that people provide opportunities for students to talk and get to know the teacher. If students feel comfortable talking to the teachers, that would eliminate many future problems. Terrance provides students with opportunities to get to know him outside of the classroom before and after school as well as during his free periods. During that time, he builds most of his relationships, whether they are personal or academic.



*Offering a Culturally Relevant Curriculum*

Blacks have sacrificed a great deal and made significant contributions for the advancement of all people. Many of the history books and school curriculums do not reflect Blacks in a positive view. Many teachers do not teach what Blacks have gone through and continue to go through. According to Wilhelm (1994), there were efforts to delegitimize the existence of Black history, civilization, and beliefs in U.S. society. Wilhelm stated that “Almost 70 years later, the official curriculum of many U.S. public schools’ sanctions only selected elements of African-American history and culture” (p. 217). A culturally relevant curriculum focuses on integrating students’ cultures into school curricula. King and Brown (2014) and King (2017) analyzed how the portrayal of Black in textbooks included them as being foolish, childlike, and simple. Milner (2005) stated:

Students of color need to encounter and experience a curriculum that highlights, showcases, and speaks from the point of view of the life experiences and contributions of people of color, women, and other marginalized groups, not just those of White mainstream. (p. 392)

Being a middle school science teacher, Jason tried his best to relate his science lessons to his students. He speaks about Black adventures. He even has students do a project on Black inventors. However, it is important that he always integrates Black scientists into the curriculum. Jason did note that at times, it was extremely difficult. He tries his best to make sure that students see people who look like them involved in the topic they study.

Steven believes his primary role is to teach math and science for his grade. He already understands there will be students who completely understand the concepts and those who will have difficulty with the material. His focus is on how to get them to succeed. Steven knows that

all students have potential. His primary job is to find a way to tap into that potential and bring out the best in his students. When Steven teaches, he tries to find moments while teaching curriculum concepts to integrate real-life components.

### *Connecting to Students' Culture*

Anthony found it important to meet the needs of the students in his classroom. He believes that it is his personal obligation. Coming from a West Indian background, Anthony would like all of his students to feel included. He explained,

I know there's some ways to go from a cultural point in terms of relating examples and the questions you ask. Because when a child lives an experience, it's easy for them to relate real-life application with that as opposed to something that is. They either see on television or they just heard that, and so that's part of that.

Anthony has a personal interest in ensuring that all students succeed no matter their race, socioeconomic, or cultural background. To Anthony, it is rewarding when he makes a difference in a student's life, especially from a cultural point. Coming from a different culture, Anthony tried to relate much of his content to the cultures of the students in his classroom.

While reflecting on his career in education, Brian reminisced about the first student he worked with on a one-on-one basis while he was a teacher's assistant. This Haitian student left Haiti to live with his father and stepmother in the United States. The father was in and out of the picture, so the stepmother helped raise this child. The student had a history of acting out in school and at home. He was not able to read. The staff had a negative perception of this young man. Getting to know him, Brian realized that this student was a fanatic football fan. So Brian approached the teacher (who was a White woman) and asked if he could work with the child individually using football-related concepts. The teacher agreed. From this moment on, Brian

would teach the student math using football statistics. He would go to ESPN at NFL.com to teach this student how to read. As Brian was able to relate to the student, the behavior problems started to diminish. Brian was the first person who took the time to get to know this student. This experience led Brian to continue his education so that he could become a classroom teacher and have his own classroom one day.

In his later years to improve his pedagogy as a classroom teacher, Brian recalled visiting Columbia University's Teacher College for their Summer Institute courses. During that time, he sat in and listened to a dynamic speaker by the name of Dr. Chris Emdin. Brian was so inspired to hear how Dr. Emdin related hip-hop to students' everyday learning. At that moment, Brian was excited and eager to transform his lessons to relate to his students. To stay current with education, Brian attended conferences and read academic journal articles by Chris Emdin, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Travis Bristol, among others.

Brian started a Poetry Slam in his classroom. This Poetry Slam was going to mimic Def Comedy Jam and Def Poetry Jam. It was an exciting way to get students interested in poetry. He invited the principal and assistant principal to watch his students recite poetry. After the initial classroom event, this became an annual school-wide assembly in which invited parents watched students perform their poems. Brian hosted the events before having a coworker cohost with him:

The kids love it, and the kids just really do such an amazing job. They write their own poems, we just tell them whatever style you want to use, this is your format, this is the rubric of how you're going to be judged, but you are responsible for writing your own poem. We don't go back and edit it, or coach it, or anything. We just let them...we just let them have fun. The audience goes crazy. So it really brings all of these different cultures

and backgrounds together. It's just a really nice event. So like I said, last year, it was standing room only again.

Brian put together a little biography for each of the students before they took the stage to perform their poem. He arranged to have three judges. And there were 20 contestants who volunteered to participate in this event. The host asked the audience literary questions dealing with poetry, figurative language, and many poetic devices. They handed out prizes to those who answered the questions correctly.

Technology is an evolving phenomenon that tends to shape society and the classroom. Mark is a teacher who has embraced using technology in the classroom. For example, Mark uses a popular program called Kahoot™. If students need to use a cellphone to log onto Kahoot, then that is allowed. In addition to letting students use technology in the class, Mark understands that for students to be most productive within a classroom setting, they must feel comfortable. If students walk into his classroom hungry, he will allow them to eat as long as they bring food. If they do not, he directs them to go to their locker or the vending machine to get a snack. According to Mark, if a student is hungry or tired, they will not focus on the lessons.

Closely related, Jason stated that his tone influences his pedagogical decision making with his students. He completely understands the dynamics of his students' neighborhoods. He is essentially from the same areas as these students. Jason works extra hard to make sure that his students stand out and are not disregarded.

Shawn takes his experience as a Haitian American teacher and incorporates that into his lessons and routines. He provides them with advice in a caring and appropriate way. For example, Shawn is the Model United Nations coordinator for his school. His students tend to

arrive late to events. Many of Shawn's students are also Haitian. In efforts to relate to his students, Shawn used his family when providing them with scenarios:

I always say to the model UN kids, because a lot of them are minorities, and I say, 'Listen. We end at 5:00.' Or, 'This starts at 6:15. If your family is like my family and they show up late to everything, everything, it doesn't matter what you do. And Haitian people, we are the worst.' I do a whole thing. I say, 'You need to tell your parents 15 minutes earlier than when you have to be there.'

The students in his class truly appreciate this message because they can relate. Shawn mentioned he is fortunate to have real-life conversations with his students. He also realized that as a Black male, there were just certain things that you could not say. However, he is very cautious and wants to make sure that he does everything possible for his students.

In society, there is a push for social justice and valuing different cultures. Brian personally values everyone's culture, but most importantly, he values people. It does not matter where you come from; it is important to understand that cultures have a significant role in this world that everyone should take seriously. Brian had serious thoughts in regard to teaching history in the classroom:

What can we do in the classroom so that we do not keep teaching injustices? What we have to teach as history is through the lens of an oppressor, a white racist oppressor. So therefore, we cannot keep teaching that because we're not educating our children correctly. We have to teach so that they have a better view on what's going on in their real world.

Brian strongly believes that all sides of an issue should be taught to students. This allows people to sit down, put all facts together, and hear the stories and events to engage in a serious

discussion. Students are coming to this country from all over the world that do not fully know their history, according to Brian. He tries his best to bring in their cultural history so they feel included in the conversation.

When Shawn first started teaching, he implemented the *Beat the Streets* program within the school for students. *Beat the Streets* is a New York City Wrestling Program geared toward the urban youth. It helps students develop perseverance, determination, and discipline to reach their full potential. It consists of both seventh-grade and eighth-grade male students. Those students traveled around the city with Shawn. Students bonded during this program with him and they improved their wrestling skills, behavior, and academic progress in the classroom.

Mark took a similar approach as he made a new connection with students inadvertently by incorporating Dragon Ball Z (a popular TV show and video game) in his classroom routine:

I'm a big Dragon Ball Z fan. The kids loved that. So I remember they were coming in, and I said, 'Guys, we're going to have a new rule. We're going to test something out. You will receive 10 points if you're quiet while I take attendance.' What I have learned, especially as a martial artist, everything has a rhythm to it. And, if you open a classroom, 'stop talking, stop talking, stop talking,' that same energy is going to be in the classroom.

Implementing Dragon Ball Z was a method that Mark used to relate with his students. Mark used this point system to create a healthy competitive environment with the students and himself. Sometimes that competition extended between classes and grade levels.

In summary, this part focused on the experience of the participants in the classroom as it related to connecting to students' race, culture, and gender. The teachers' believed that having a Black male teacher was an added benefit for students, similar to what Warren (2017) found. These seven Black male teachers were role models and developed relationships with their

students. Getting to know students on a personal level helped the teachers build a connection with them. This connection allowed teachers to implement CSP in their lessons and differentiate students' instruction. These teachers were able to tell personal stories that resonated with students while having them learn at the same time. The stories provided students with real-world examples that supported and enhanced the learning atmosphere.

Additionally, incorporating students' culture into lessons and activities was considered a successful strategy for the Black male teachers. Although the participants did not use the term CSP, their culture was infused into their lessons. This was done by relating cultural points to the questions they asked students. In addition, these teachers provided examples of content to their students' culture in their classrooms when it related to the curriculum. Brian created an event modeled after Def Comedy Jam and Def Poetry Jam to teach poetry and the literary devices. Shawn strengthened his relationship with students by providing advice as a Haitian American. Mark implemented the popular Dragon Ball Z television show and video game into his routines. According to the research, Black students will have more success when their learning is related to their daily cultural experiences (Alim & Paris, 2017; Hefflin, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). These teachers implemented programs and activities built on each individual's culture in the classrooms, which strengthened their relationship with students and fostered a positive classroom environment. The teachers reported that they did not focus on disciplining students for certain behaviors. The focus was to understand their students and provide them with a model of appropriate behavior. This led to a desire from students to impress their teachers. In turn, students were very respectful when in the presence of these Black male teachers.

### **How Others View the Black Male Teacher's Role in Schools**

In this section, using CRT, I show how the Black male teachers in this study believed parents, colleagues, and administrators, viewed their role in schools. The perception from their colleagues ranged from disciplinarian to Black supremacist. While these labels sound like stereotypes, this was how their colleagues viewed the participants, whether it was intentionally or inadvertently. Jason's colleagues questioned his work ethic. They looked at him as a person who had nothing to do because of how he spent his free time. Some coworkers viewed Terrance as a Black supremacist based on the content he was teaching. Regardless of the reason, all of the participants' colleagues had an opinion of these Black male teachers.

### ***How Other Teachers Viewed the Black Male Presence***

From the perspectives of the focal teachers, I describe how they believed others viewed them. According to the literature in Chapter 2, Black male teachers are positioned to not only discipline students of color for negative behavior but to punish and control them as well (Brown, 2012). For example, as mentioned in Part 2, Mark was sent to an alternative school where there were students with serious behavior problems:

When it comes to discipline, they send the kids there; some of them, they just get kicked out...“What are we doing to try to relate to these kids?’ ‘Why are they getting sent here?’ Some of them would love that attention because they may not get much attention at home. They would do things deliberately at the high school to get sent back. And they eventually did...I spent about a year and a half there. I loved it there. I loved when they'd call me there.

Jason actually worked as a school disciplinarian during his tenure as a teacher.



Even when I was a school disciplinarian, it wasn't viewed as punitive. They appreciated my presence, so I've always been asked to talk to different kids about different things because maybe the message would sound different coming from me.

A few people viewed Brian as a disciplinarian. Brian's colleagues and administrators asked Brian to watch "those students" who were acting up.

'Do me a favor—can you just take them?' But, it's funny because it happened to me again...I thought they were looking because at first it was like, 'Well, you could discipline them.' And then it became, I realized it was, 'No, you have a way to have a relationship with them.'

Anthony is working with a predominantly White teaching staff who are teaching many Black students. While his colleagues do not disrespect him, Anthony does notice a pattern; he is continually getting what the White teachers perceive as the most "challenging" students in his class. Although he accepts this, Anthony's colleagues are getting more students who perform on grade level. Initially, it bothered Anthony because everyone is getting paid to teach students; however, he appreciated working with all students.

When Steven first entered teaching, he believed that his race and gender played a role in how his peers perceived him. Steven recalls his former school hiring leave replacements but not considering him. He believes it was largely due to his gender and race. He also believed the other teachers considered him an expert when it came to Black students only. If a Black student is having behavioral problems, then the perception is, "If I talk to him, I'll be able to help him out, versus if a White teacher talks to him, it's not going to really work. That is primarily because of my race, versus if it was another teacher, it might not have been able to help."

Shawn believes that his peers think he is someone who is not afraid to speak his mind. He thinks that everyone likes him and he is seen in a positive manner. He also believes that the perception is that his students do well because Shawn is a Black teacher. A few times he has heard the comment, “We’ve got to put this kid in your class because they need a strong male role model.” While there are not many males in his building, Shawn is the only Black male in his building. Overall, Shawn believes that teachers view him as “just Shawn” and does not think that race is a factor.

Brian’s presence in a school building with mostly White female educators was “felt” by his students and parents. According to Brian, his students and parents were happy to have a Black male teacher. The literature states there are not many Black male classroom teachers at the elementary level (Gamble & Wilkins, 1997). When he first started working in the Xavier School District, there were no Black male educators in his building. There were Black teachers’ assistants but no Black male teachers. The majority of teachers were White women and a few Black women.

Working in the Xavier School District, Brian reflected that Black parents tended to appreciate the fact that their child may potentially have a Black male teacher:

There were some parents that come to me and was, ‘My child was so happy when they knew they were going to have you because they said they never had a Black man before.’

But they already knew who I was because again, I could walk through my building and every Black student will say hi to me, walk up to me—Latino, Black, it doesn’t matter.

Brian attributed the fact that all of the students interact with him because he takes time to speak to them and get to know them even before their placement in his classroom. Brian takes his role seriously as a Black male educator and has huge expectations for all students in his class,

beginning on the first day of school. Brian's biggest expectation is that students give their best each day. If students put their best efforts forward, Brian could coach them through the areas that are unclear to their understanding in order for them to reach their maximum potential.

Brian noted that there is a perception of him from the other students. Many of the students will speak to Anthony while they are in other grades. However, they do not know what to expect when they have Anthony as a teacher. It is because of this that many students are reluctant when they first enter Anthony's class. Some students are outgoing immediately, while others are reserved until they feel comfortable with Anthony:

So, the Black male students, I either get two ends of the spectrum. Either I'm afraid to show who I am and take chances in front of people. And then I have the other ones that are like, I'm going to try to show off as much as I can. I don't have anything in between. According to Brian, usually the reserved students are the ones that initially shine around the end of March, beginning of April. Brian even noted that if he could find a way to have these students come out of their shell earlier in the year, he could possibly get so much more out of them. This is why he is motivated and encourage the students throughout the year, so they can reach their full potential.

There are moments when Brian does not know if his peers view him positively or not because he is usually by himself. Brian has the respect of his administrator because of his work ethic and his willingness to continually improve. However, he is unsure of how fellow teachers view him. He only speaks to a small group of people as they all have similar thought patterns. Brian recalled a moment when he gave a staff presentation after school. Many of the White teachers took offense to it as Brian was quoting from the book, "The History of America, 1492 to Present" written by a White historian.

I'm reading that excerpt because I was explaining this is about what's culturally destructive. If you don't know this part of the history and you're teaching that Columbus was this great person that discovered the Americas, et cetera, et cetera, you're being destructive to the people that suffered and to all of these children that are sitting in front because you're continuing to send them out into the world, perpetuating these lies that they've been told, thinking that it's true.

One of the White teachers was irate, according to Brian, because many of the White teachers felt that there was a situation of reverse racism. These teachers were very upset. This is when Brian first discovered that there might have been some systemic racism in the building. This was new to him, as all he wanted to do was quote the research and bring awareness to a topic.

Mark recalled that there was an experience he had overcome when he was first hired as a teacher. When Mark first started teaching, he tried to get to know everyone in a professional manner. This was uncomfortable for Mark as he is a naturally quiet person. Mark would briefly greet people before continuing on his way. To Mark's surprise, a female teacher accused him of being a womanizer. The principal at the time spoke to Mark and asked him if he had an interest in any of the teachers. Mark replied, "No." Shocked by this accusation, Mark spoke to his friend, a security guard at the school during that time, and he informed Mark of the person who reported this to the principal. He had merely engaged in a brief conversation with her and she told the principal that he was making passes at her. Shocked and upset, Mark stated that he was not making passes, and to another point, she is married. He realized that life is unfair for Black men working around women because of the open possibility of misinterpretation of events. This is the primary reason that Mark continues to stay to himself. Many of his colleagues today think that Mark is anti-social when in reality, he does not want to put himself in that position again.

When Jason initially interviewed for a teaching position, he did not understand the committee's questions. Jason recalled that the principal commented that they liked his stature. Jason took that to mean that they liked the fact that he was "big and Black." Despite his lack of classroom experience, Jason received the position as a teacher in the New York City Department of Education. He did not enter into education the traditional way. This experience was the beginning of Jason's teaching career. He started teaching in the early 1990s in the New York City Department of Education. Jason then transferred to a different school district on Long Island before teaching in the Xavier School District. Jason has remained in this district since the late 1990s.

Jason takes his role as a Black male educator very seriously, as everything stands out. He reflected that "Some things may be within your control while others may be outside of your control." He continued,

As a Black male educator, you stick out like a sore thumb, so you have to quickly assess what the tone of your building is, what your building culture is, and sort of fit in because there are not too many like you. There are not too many like you. There are a lot of White males, a lot of White females. There's a lot of Black females, but Black men, not so much.

Because of the lack of Black men within a school setting, there is an increased responsibility for them to go out of their way to reach out to students. Jason believes that he has a positive influence on Black males. This is mainly because, as mentioned earlier, he goes out of his way to build relationships and engage in conversations with his students.

The perception of Jason from his peers is that he has plenty of free time. This interpretation is because when other teachers are on their prep periods or lunch breaks, they are

grading papers and planning lessons. When Jason has a prep period or lunch, he talks to students and gets to know them. He is using his time for office hours as extra help sessions for the students. Jason views himself as an asset to the school and continues to support the students in all ways possible regardless of what his colleagues think. Many other teachers are assuming things about Jason because he is Black. The perception is Jason should go with the flow, just as the rest of the teachers do. However, Jason stated that he would continue to do what is right, regardless of what the majority of the teachers are doing.

Many of the teachers perceive Terrance as a person who is a “Black supremacist.” They look at him as someone who is very outgoing, intelligent, and someone who is going to challenge administration. They have this view of Terrance because he is not afraid to hide his blackness:

I don't give a f\*\*k about White fragility, and as Black people, we are programmed to really be concerned and care about what White people think. I don't give a shit about White people...I feel that you could be proud to be Irish, you could be proud to be Latino, but the perception is if you're proud to be Black, then that's a problem.

He recalled when teaching a Black history class that the expectation was for him to talk about Rosa Parks and then Martin Luther King Jr. However, he was discussing topics outside of Rosa Parks and Dr. King. He began to focus on the subconscious of the self-hatred. Many of the White teachers felt uncomfortable, and many administrators were not in full support. After this, he was not allowed to teach this class the following year. Terrance never once criticized White people throughout that period of history in the classroom. However, he did praise Black people, and that made many people uncomfortable.

### *Parental Appreciation of the Black Male Presence*

In this part of the findings, I address how there is an appreciation from Black parents for matching a student and teacher based on race because of the cultural connection. Research states that teachers tend to better guide students toward academic success when they are of the same culture (Klopfenstein, 2005). In addition, I examine how certain students are positioned to have Black teachers by administrators. As mentioned in Chapter 2, White teachers do not always fully understand the Black culture, which can cause them to misinterpret Black students' behavior (Cushman, 2018; Warren, 2017).

Shawn believed that communication is not only critical when meeting with students but key when meeting with parents. Many parents feel comfortable speaking with Shawn, not only because he is a Black male teacher but also because he is a Haitian American who speaks Creole. Many of his students and parents are of Haitian descent, as he explained,

When I meet with Haitian parents, not just Haitian parents, but I mean predominantly Haitian. But I speak with Haitian parents in Creole, and they're talking to me, and they're like so happy that a Haitian man is teaching them. Do you know what I mean? It's special. And even any parent comes in, like minority parents come in and they're just happy. Spanish. Spanish people look at me, and they think I'm Spanish. And then they're like, 'Whatever, man. This guy, he's fine with me.' Caribbean. All the Caribbean families come in like, 'This guy's Caribbean.' Muslim families come in like, 'This guy's brown.' They feel at ease.

It is just as crucial to build relationships with families as it is with students. Knowing the family dynamic is critical to help teachers relate to students. This allows teachers to bring into the classroom those cultural aspects and relate it to the pedagogy. According to Shawn, the parents in the Howard School District are happy that their children have a teacher who looks like them.

The parents are comfortable with Shawn because they can speak their native Creole language with him. The parents are unable to speak Creole with the other teachers. Speaking Creole to parents is essential to Shawn as it makes them feel appreciative of him and at ease.

When Mark first entered the field of education, his former physics teacher mentored him. His former physics teacher, Mr. Brown (pseudonym), was a Black male. He prepared him for the interview. This teacher had an impact on Mark, and he wanted to replicate that for his students. They shared a bond as they both had Jamaican parents.

Mark felt very fortunate to be a Black male teacher working under a Black Male principal. In addition to working for a Black male principal, he said, “the icing on the cake is being able to teach Black students.” He described his students by saying “I loved them, because these are my kids that look like me.” In addition, Mark stated,

Coming back to your community to teach, especially the Black males is a unique thing.

And, I’m not coming back to join anything, I’m coming back to create and build. Because how are we as a people...look at all of this stuff that is happening to Black and Hispanic boys.

Mark recalled that he has not written a student discipline referral since his first year of teaching. Brian uses his role as a Black male teacher to channel students’ energy into creating a committee, called “The Road to Manhood.” In this committee, students engaged in exercises that required them to state how they would respond in various situations. This committee provided Mark an opportunity to mentor these young men and explain their role as a male. Since there is a lack of role models, this program’s design was to help change the culture of the school and provide positive examples for male students.

### ***Negative Perceptions of Having a Black Male Teacher***



While most of the focal teachers felt that students benefited from having a Black male teacher, one teacher said that students do not seem to care. For example, Terrance believed it is important to have strong representation of people who look like the student population. He is one of three Black male teachers in his school. He recalled that when he was a student and had a Black male teacher, it meant a lot to him. On the other hand, although Terrance takes his role as a Black male teacher seriously, he does not think that it particularly matters to today's students. He recalled being disrespected from students, and the majority of the time, it was from Black students. Terrance would reflect and think, is it him? He wondered why Black students would disrespect a Black teacher, more particularly a Black male teacher:

Every time that I have really been cursed out and really been disrespected, it's 99% of the time from Black students. So now I have to ask myself, 'Is that just coincidence? Is it just me?' And, I've asked other Black teachers the same question, and they come up with the same result that every single time they'd been disrespected, like really disrespected, it has been by Black students.

Terrance believed that students have too much power. When he went to school, Terrance said, "The teacher would say sit down, shut up, turn to page 262, answer questions one to five." Regardless of the approach, he and his peers all went to school. Many of them graduated from college. Terrance thinks that some practices should return to former traditional instructional practices.

Terrance also mentioned that he feels Black parents want their children in classes with White teachers. He said there is a belief that a White teacher can offer a higher quality of education than a Black teacher:

I feel that there are Black parents that when they walk into class, and they see that White teacher, they feel like my child is probably getting a better education, which is why they don't challenge it. That's just how I feel about it.

In summary, I examined the role that race played when these Black male teachers reflected on how their colleagues viewed them. Steve, Mark, Shawn, and Jason believed that their race and gender was a positive influence to students. However, while these Black male participants had wonderful experiences with students, race was not always a positive factor when engaging with colleagues and administrators. Jason mentioned that Black male teachers have an increased responsibility in schools because the field is limited by having so few of them as teachers. Therefore, the Black males who are currently working as teachers stand out immediately.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter presented sections that represented the major findings of this study. Race was a key element found in this qualitative study in both a positive and negative aspect. Many of the teachers felt that race was a benefit when teaching Black students as those students were able to connect with the teachers. These teachers used race to their advantage and not only taught students academically but also mentored them along the way, providing them with knowledge that would benefit students in their everyday decision making. Terrance was the only teacher who believed that race was not a benefit as, according to him, students, parents, and administrators "valued" White teachers more.

In contrast, many of these teachers had a negative experience with race as it related to other teachers and administrators. According to Steven, White teachers viewed him as the expert on "Black" students as they would bring all of the Black students with "behavioral issues" to him. Furthermore, Mark would be accused of being a womanizer just by engaging in

conversation with a female colleague. Jason explained how he was hired for his first teaching job without any experience because he was “big and Black.” Steven reported that he was not even considered for a job by his previous administration because he was Black. While these teachers had positive experiences with race when teaching students, they did not have the same positive experiences dealing with adults who work in a school setting.

These Black male teachers tried to impart lessons on their students of color about being Black in a White supremacist society. Terrance tried to teach the students in his Black history class the importance of Black history outside of the familiar area of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, Rosa Parks. He believed many White teachers in his school felt uncomfortable discussing this. Steven provided his students with advice regarding the realization of being Black in America. He discussed the importance of making the right decisions because one wrong decision could change a child’s life forever. That one decision, if severe enough, may even result in jail time or death. Jason pulled students to the side and spoke with them one on one, fostering positive social-emotional progression and encouraging them to make the right decisions. All of the participants believed in creating valuable learning opportunities for all students while using real-life examples such as declining rides from strangers, the benefits of continuing education, and modeling how to behave in certain situations.

These teachers also had to fight against negative stereotypes from the White teachers and administrators in their schools. They had to fight against being viewed as a disciplinarian. Shawn, Mark, Jason, and Brian explicitly stated they had to address student behaviors, whether it was in their classroom or from other teachers. The participants also had to fight the perception of being lazy. Jason provided the example that the perception from his colleagues is he has plenty of free time. Most importantly, these Black male teachers had to fight the perception that they are

only good enough to teach Black male students. One important finding was that in their responses to the interview questions, the teachers would often refer to all students benefiting from the Black male teacher presence, not just their Black male students.

These participants said they did internalize some of the stereotypes about them. While it bothered them internally, many participants did not let it show as they continued to do what was right for the students. Mark, who is naturally a quiet person, was so hurt by the accusations that he decided to just stay to himself. According to Mark, his colleagues believe he is anti-social, which his fine with him. Brian was shocked when his colleagues believed that he was pushing a pro-Black agenda in “The History of America, 1942 to Present” during a professional development session when, in reality, he was presenting on the research. While this was hurtful to Brian, he continued to put students first, which has gained the respect from the administration in his building. When it comes to students, these teachers see color, race, gender, and culture as beneficial aspects in their classrooms. These teachers do not ignore these factors. They embrace them and incorporate them into their everyday teaching. They all stress to their students that everyone is different and everyone should be accepted and embraced as they are.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion**

This chapter includes a summary of the research conducted and key findings from the study related to the literature. I briefly summarize the previous chapters by stating the problem, purpose statement, methodology, research questions, and findings. I also discuss how the findings are related to the literature, unexpected findings, limitations of this study, and recommendations for future research to advance this study further.

### **Summary of the Study**

In my study, I examined the narratives of seven Black male educators and their perceived influence on students of color. These educators all work in suburban school districts on Long Island with a substantial number of Black students. I strove to uncover why the participants entered the field of education. I examined how this group of educators used their teaching approaches to benefit all students (Black and Latinx) in their classroom. I found that these educators wanted to dispel negative racial stereotypes of being one of a few—if not the only—Black male teachers in their school.

### **Overview of the Dissertation**

In Chapter One, I introduced my positionality and explained how my first Black male teacher, Professor Jones, inspired me to become an educator. I also provided the context for this study and presented the background regarding Black male teachers. I investigated the role Black male teachers play when educating students of color in a culturally sustaining manner. Chapter Two reviewed the literature focusing on Black males and their importance to Black male students. I applied the theoretical framework of CRT to my study to understand the importance of race in a profession dominated by White women. I also applied CRP to demonstrate how

infusing cultural components into classroom instruction can increase Black students' academic performance. In Chapter Three, I outlined how I conducted this qualitative study in detail. I explained how the narrative design was the best option for this study after contemplating other methods. The narrative design allowed me to conduct in-depth interviews with each of the participants. I analyzed and developed themes from the participants' responses. In Chapter Four, I analyzed the participants' stories from their interviews and discussed the significant findings that emerged using the frameworks of CRT and CSP.

### **Problem**

Gladwell (2017) stated that it is vital for Black students to have at least one Black teacher by the end of elementary school or the beginning of middle school. By having a Black teacher between grades three through eight, Black students may have a greater chance of graduating from high school (Gladwell, 2017). Yet, according to Bressen (2019), 92% of Long Island's public school teachers are White. In two-thirds of public schools located on Long Island, there is not a single Black teacher (Bressen, 2019). This means that a Black teacher does not educate most Long Island students during their academic years from elementary school through high school, which is quite alarming.

Research has consistently found that Black male teachers work hard to promote a positive perception regarding Black male students' academic successes and social-emotional trends (Ladson-Billings 1995a; Leonard et al. 2009; Warren, 2017). These teachers infused CRP into their lessons to help close racial achievement and opportunity gaps in education and decrease the high disciplinary rates of Black students (Bristol, 2015b; Emdin, 2013). Black male teachers were found to set high expectations for their students of color (Emdin, 2013; Klopenstein, 2005). For example, Emdin's (2013) study showed that having high expectations helped develop

positive relationships between students of color and teachers that profoundly impacted students' learning process. While much is known about the importance of being exposed to a Black male educator, particularly for students of color in urban school districts, less is known about the influence of Black male teachers in suburban school districts. This study focused on the stories of Black male teachers and their experiences in school and journeys into education. Moreover, this study focused on teachers' perceptions of their influence on the academic achievement and socio-emotional development of students of color.

### **Research Questions**

My study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What influenced this group of Black male teachers to go into the teaching field?
  - 1a. What challenges or barriers do Black male educators experience in the teaching profession?
2. What stories do Black male teachers share of their lived experience teaching in majority Black and Latinx schools with mostly White female faculty?
3. How do Black male teachers perceive that their race and gender influence relationships with students of color?
  - 3a. How do those relationships relate to academics and behavior?
4. What teaching practices do Black male teachers find most effective when teaching students of color? How do those practices relate (or not) to CRT and CRP?

### **Review of the Methodology**

I answered these research questions using narrative inquiry design. Engaging in a worldview that focused on social constructivism, I interviewed each participant asking in-depth questions about their educational background, teaching experiences, current practices, and

relationships with students. This approach allowed me to tell the stories in the participants' own words to convey their lived experiences as Black male educators.

Data collection began in January 2020 and completed in March 2020. Interviews were conducted face to face and ranged from 60 to 120 minutes. Upon the completion of each interview, I wrote field memos reflecting on the interview experience that included specific nonverbal expressions the participants made during the interview that I could not recall by reviewing the transcript. I transcribed the interviews verbatim using Rev.com. I analyzed the data between March 2020 and August 2020. I developed codes and themes while examining the data to answer the research questions.

### **Discussion of Findings**

There is much to learn from this study on what it means to be a Black male educator in suburban schools with mostly Black and Latinx students and a predominantly White female faculty. There are two main findings in this study with a few sub-findings. The first main finding answered the question of why these Black males became teachers. First, the Black male participants had aspirations of helping people before they became teachers. All of the participants had either a person or event that influenced them to become teachers. The second main finding included the Black Male Presence, which focused on how a Black male teacher can set a positive tone in the classroom and create an engaging learning environment. This finding showed the role of race, culture, and gender in the classroom and broader school community that was broken down into three sub-findings: (1) Black Male Teachers Matter, (2) CSP, and (3) How the School Community Viewed the Role of the Black Male Teacher. The participants in this study instilled cultural components into their daily lessons to enhance each student's racial identity and promote learning. The participants valued building rapport and relationships with



students. These relationships extended outside the classroom, where participants gave students meaningful advice to make them better individuals.

### **Findings Related to the Literature**

Prior research stated there is a shortage of Black male teachers at all academic levels, as Black males represent 2% of teachers in the United States (Bristol & Goings, 2019; Bryan & Milton-Williams, 2017; Milner, 2016). One-third (or 1,644) of the 5,426 schools in New York do not have a Black or Latino teacher (Education Trust, 2017). While school administrators understand the need for hiring Black male teachers (McGrath & Sinclair, 2013), the problem is the lack of Black males pursuing teaching as a career choice.

Much of the literature discussed reasons that Black males choose to pursue alternative careers. Some of the reasons that Black males do not enter the teaching field include a negative high school experience (Goings & Bianco, 2016), being labeled as a disciplinarian (Brown, 2012), and low salaries (Gamble & Wilkins, 1997; Graham & Erwin, 2011). My study adds to the literature surrounding Black male teachers. The participants in this study specifically stated the circumstances they were faced with, which influenced them to become teachers. In the interviews, the participants expressed the reasons for entering the field of education. Five of the seven participants stated that teaching was not their first choice. In the words of Jason, “Teaching was Plan B.” Knowing that many of the Black males in this study did not pursue the field of education in the early years of college confirms there is plenty of work needed to recruit more Black male teachers. The participants discussed the factors that led them to become teachers. Each of the participants had a person or experience outside of education that made them pursue education as a career choice. A noteworthy finding is that only three of the participants had a Black male teacher during their high school and college years. The remaining four

participants never had a Black male teacher. The participants' reasons for pursuing a teaching career provides a contrast to much of the literature that expressed that Black males make alternate career choices for salary reasons.

### **The Black Male Presence**

The Black male presence was a significant contribution and finding in my study. This finding focused on how the participants saw themselves and the importance of the Black male teacher. The Black male presence also focused on the participants' classroom experience and interactions/relationships with students. The final aspect of the Black male presence examined the larger school community's perception of the participants.

The findings from this research indicated that students viewed these Black male teachers as role models. Based on the interviews, the participants were pleased to be role models for their students. The participants reported that they had to set positive examples for their students. These participants took pride in dressing professionally as they wanted to provide their students with a visual that people who look like them can be successful. In addition to wearing professional attire, the participants modeled appropriate behavior and developed strong relationships with students. The participants spoke to students to inquire why they made certain decisions. They would be the voice of reason and explain to students the pros and cons of that decision before asking students what they should have done differently. The school community, particularly the building administration, perceived Black males to be an integral part of the school community.

This research extends the literature that currently exists. The participants in my study confirmed that teachers of the same gender could serve as role models to students (Winters et al., 2013). Black males are considered precious role models for their students (Bell, 2017). The participants in this study took pride in being a positive example for their students. One of the key

takeaways from this theme is that the participants believed that students may not have a male role model at home. To overcompensate for the potential lack of male role models, these participants ensured that students would have access to a positive Black role model in school.

### **Racial Identities**

Racial identity is an understanding of an individual or the society in which they live (Miller, 2002). Racial identity is an essential concept for all students, particularly Black students, because of the lack of Black male teachers. Black students are labeled based on Black stereotypes when, in reality, some Black students do not have a positive role model who will help shape their racial identity. A key finding was that racial identity among Black students explains why we need the Black male representation in the classroom. During the elementary and middle school years, Black students must have many examples to develop their own racial identity in a positive manner (Loyd & Williams, 2017). Throughout this study, the participants used their experiences to inspire students in the hopes of building a positive racial identity.

Black male teachers in this study used their presence, curriculum, interactions, and teaching to promote racial identity (Zirkel & Johnson, 2016) and prepare students for the real world. Seeing a Black male in an authority role as a teacher for the first time helped encourage positive racial identity in students. For example, Shawn stated that it was important for him to be a good role model for his students since society already has an unfavorable view of Black people.

This study adds to the literature as the participants focused on developing positive racial identities for their students. The data analysis showed a trend that Black male educators want to inspire their students and develop future leaders of tomorrow (Warren, 2017). They want their students to understand that it is acceptable to be smart, enjoy school, and receive good grades.

Similar to the teachers in Graves' (2010) study, my participants said they had high expectations for their students. The participants worked hard to eliminate the negative perception of them from colleagues and turn the school into a place that students can enjoy. As a former Black male elementary school teacher myself, I was not surprised that the participants attempted to infuse elements of students' everyday lives so they could receive a quality education. As Anthony said, he wanted the students to be in control of their minds.

### **Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy**

The seven Black male educators used the knowledge gained from their relationships with students to enhance their teaching practice. Five of the seven Black male teachers stated that they related their lessons to the Black students' real-life experiences and cultures in their classrooms. The findings indicated that these participants used their race to their advantage and applied aspects of CSP without directly using the term or being aware of its existence. It was evident that the teachers fostered a positive learning environment through the use of CSP.

Various researchers have mentioned that teachers must modify their lessons and permeate aspects of students' lives and culture into their lessons (Emdin 2013, 2016; Leonard et al., 2009). According to the participants in this study, the impact of CSP was what students truly appreciated. Participants believed that students enjoyed having a Black male teacher and engaging in lessons that were relatable to them. The elementary school participants (Brian, Shawn, and Steven) noted that their students never had a Black male teacher prior to being in their class. Therefore, having an individual to relate to and who combined aspects of their everyday lives into lessons and advice was extremely meaningful to them. All of the participants gave students advice, suggestions, and recommendations that extended outside of the classroom. As stated in Chapter Four, Shawn made suggestions to his students from a Haitian American

perspective. Steven gave advice to students from a Black male perspective, and Brian infused Black cultural elements into creative events for the entire school. It is critical that teachers consider the varied needs of culturally and racially diverse students. According to Paris and Alim (2014), the future of CSP must demand outcomes that are not limited to White middle-class norms.

Within the literature review, I discussed how CRP was defined by Ladson-Billings (1994) as teaching that strengthens students' academic, social, and emotional experiences by infusing cultural elements to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes. This was the groundwork for what would become CSP. Indeed, CSP was a consistent theme identified by all of the participants. While the participants did not name CSP per se, they did describe it in detail. According to Emdin (2016), teachers must connect students' lives and their communities when engaging in the learning process. Jet et al. (2015) stated that successful teachers infuse CRP throughout lessons and they relate their lessons to the community and to their students' experiences.

### **How the School Community Viewed the Role of the Black Male Teacher**

Race is an important topic in today's society. With the recent deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, David McAtee, and other Blacks that took place in 2020 and prior years, there has been racial tension across the United States that has resulted in protests to demand equality, justice, and freedom for Black people. In this study, I found that all of the participants had experienced a race-related incident at one time in their professional educational careers. Whether it was from a colleague's perceived notions or not being considered for possible positions, the issue of race continues to exist in the teaching profession. While experiencing racism, these

teachers said that they ignored specific comments made by their colleagues, and they kept their focus on educating the students.

While this issue of race was a finding, it was infused in all of this study's components and ended up being a significant contribution to this study. The Black male presence is centered around the components of race and gender. What mattered to the participants was how race played a role in the school setting.

This study pinpoints some underlying issues involving race in great detail through the lens of CRT. According to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), CRT helped people understand the role of race in education. The goal of CRT was to encourage diversity while bringing attention to the racial and cultural injustices. Related to this study, these participants were one of a few—if not the only—Black male educators in their school. Given this setting, these participants had an obligation to do their job well. The participants felt a strong responsibility to be role models, infuse CRP, and build relationships with students that might have been lacking from other teachers. They worked extra hard for colleagues not to view them with the common racial stereotypes. An example of this in Chapter Four was when Jason noted how his co-workers have a certain view of him just because he spends his lunch prepping with his students. The perception was that Jason was lazy because he refused to work with his colleagues during his lunch period, when in actuality, he believed his students mattered more.

During the interview process, the Black male teachers noted the importance of building trust and rapport with their Black and Latinx students. This was a primary goal for all of the participants. This notion was supported by Jackson (2019), as he stated that the key to connecting with Black and Latinx students begins with building strong relationships. According to Jet, Stinson, and Williams (2015), teachers who developed relationships and had high

expectations for students were the most influential. Jackson (2019) described Black and Latino males as stubborn and not trusting people; however, if teachers open up to them, Black and Latino male students will eventually open up. All of the participants in this study pointed out ways that they develop relationships with their students. It was because of these relationships that these teachers rarely had student behavioral concerns.

Some of the developed relationships transferred to outside of the classroom. Jason would see some of his former students in their work environments. Those students were thrilled to see him, as they appreciated having Jason as their teacher. Some of the students admitted to Jason that he is like a father figure to them. The participants were committed to building relationships. Steven built relationships by attending student activities such as sports games, performances, and competitions outside of the school day. The literature states that it is crucial to build relationships between teachers, students, and the community (Bryan, 2005). Many Black males are cautious about trusting people (Rhodes, 2017). The teachers in this study were deliberate when developing trust. Some of the participants greeted students in the halls before the start of class. Jason, Brian, Anthony, and Shawn opened up to students by allowing them to see more of who they are outside of school.

### **Preparing Students for Long-Term Success**

The study's findings will contribute to the ever-growing body of literature published about the importance of attracting and hiring more Black males in education for students' long-term academic success. Researchers such as Warren (2013, 2016, 2017, 2020), Bristol (2014, 2015, 2020), Jackson (2019), and Howard (2014) are continuously bringing awareness to the dire need for Black male teachers in our school systems for the purpose of inspiring more Black students to attend college.

Consequently, some participants in this research study spoke about preparing students for college. They invested in academic learning for each of their students and wanted to leave a lasting impression that students could use as a blueprint to become successful later in life. My study contributes to the research by having the participants see themselves as more than teachers. The Black male presence matters because Black students and students of color need role models to emulate and admire. The Black male teachers in this study enjoyed being role models for their students.

In summary, this section provided examples of how this study's findings were related to the literature. The Black male teachers in this study were instrumental in the development of racial identity for students. Students were encouraged to take pride in who they are (Ladson-Billings, 2017). Race and culture seemed to be more important factors than gender when teachers spoke about the importance of developing student identity, how they connected with students and their families, and their role in being a positive role model in each student's lives. The teachers used their presence, interactions, and the curriculum to enhance instruction. These participants taught in ways that were culturally sustaining to connect the curriculum to students' everyday lives (Emdin, 2016). Most importantly, the participants presented themselves in a professional manner to the entire school community in hopes of erasing the negative stereotypes regarding Black males.

### **Contributions to Theory**

CRT was a framework used in this study to investigate race in an educational setting. Ladson-Billings (1995a, 1998) was one of the pioneers who studied race in schools. One of the focal points centered around how to teach Black students (2017). Below, I explain how I interpreted the data and findings using this theory.



### **Critical Race Theory**

The findings of this research support the theory of critical race, which is prevalent in schools. There was an emphasis on issues surrounding race in the interviews with the study participants. Throughout this study, critical race was woven throughout the literature and participants' experiences. There were incidents where the Black male participants in this study were labeled as disciplinarians due to colleagues sending students to their rooms for behavioral outbursts that their mostly White colleagues could not control.

Administrators began to notice these Black male teachers' strengths, which focused on their ability to relate and connect with their Black and Latinx students. This caused some administrative teams to capitalize on the strength of their Black male teachers and begin mentorship programs. The Black male teachers explained to their colleagues how they would handle students in certain situations. For example, Jason was always asked to speak to different students as "the message would sound different" coming from him. In other words, Jason's colleagues wanted the Black teacher to talk to the Black student when there was a behavior issue. While Black students benefited from conversing with the Black teacher, it did not give the other teachers a reason to want to improve their classroom management, as they relied on the Black teacher to take care of the students who demonstrated what White teachers saw as behavioral problems.

### **Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy**

CSP was the third framework used in this study. Django Paris (2012) is one of the researchers who brought CSP to the forefront of education, which he identified as infusing the student's language and culture in lessons to increase achievement. The data showed that the teachers in this study were instilling parts of this framework into their lessons. Even though

many of the participants seemingly had never heard of CSP, they were naturally able to relate classroom activities to real-life experiences to promote more student interest and engagement. According to Gay (2009), professional development is needed so teachers can effectively understand students' diverse learning experiences.

### **Surprising Findings**

While all of my research questions were posed to ask about Black male students specifically, six of the seven participants did not focus only on Black males. The participants responded to my questions by focusing on all of their students. I believed this is because they wanted to dispel society's anti-blackness and the negative perception of Black males. The participants in this study had a tremendous responsibility to be role models. They focused on setting a positive example for everyone in their presence, regardless of race and gender. This was a significant revelation since the entire design of this research focused on Black male teachers' perceived influence on Black male students. When developing this study, I placed a strong emphasis on gender (Black male teachers and Black male students), but in much of my data, gender was not a finding.

Another surprising finding in my research was the reasons that the participants entered the teaching field. Based on the current research, many Black males choose to pursue careers outside of education. Even with all of the initiatives currently available to attract more Black males as teachers—New York City Men's Teach, My Brother's Keeper, and Pathways to Teaching—there is still a shortage of Black male teachers across the United States. Knowing that there are only 2% of Black male teachers in the United States, I was under the impression that the Black males currently in education made an explicit decision to pursue educational careers. However, that was not the case for the seven teachers included in this study. When I made up my

mind to become a teacher, I could not imagine working in another career. It was my goal to be an example for my students (particularly Black males). This was my ultimate goal as I know many Black males who did not complete college, and I attribute that to them not having a teacher during their academic years who resembled them.

Indeed, many of the participants in this study initially pursued alternative careers. They pursued other professions in the entertainment industry, medical field, and law before realizing that those careers were not for them. Only two participants went to college to specifically become teachers during their undergraduate degree. This was an unforeseen finding because all of the participants noted how they wanted to help people and better their community. An unexpected finding was that all participants had an influential person or situation that led them to become teachers.

### **Recommendations**

The findings in my study warrants that I put forth the following recommendations for future research and policy. First, I would suggest increasing the number of teacher preparation programs that would intentionally attract additional Black men into the teaching field. Second, I recommend a signing bonus to Black male teachers who work in high-needs schools. This concept would be similar to the New York City Teaching Fellows. Finally, I believe the teachers in this study would benefit from a Black male teacher affinity group.

#### **Increase the Number of Teacher Preparation Programs**

There must be a stronger outreach to recruit Black male educators into the teaching profession. Some Black males tend to shy away from education based on their negative experiences going through school (Bryan & Milton Williams, 2017; Emdin, 2016). These experiences include being disciplined more harshly than their classmates, finding the academic

content unrelatable to their culture and history, and having difficulty receiving good grades. Many Black males do not have positive school experiences. Furthermore, it is because of this narrative that there needs to be a more intense outreach to recruit young men of color to become educators.

There needs to be an increased number of teacher preparation programs available to prospective Black male teachers. Colleges should do outreach to Black male students in high school in the hopes of creating additional opportunities to come to campus and learn about the program from current students and professors. Having focused teacher preparation programs on diversity, social justice, and equity could help attract and encourage Black males to pursue careers as teachers. Having these programs would expand Black males' options for school choices.

### **Providing Incentives for Black Male Teachers**

Many men do not think that they can make a sufficient living based on a teaching salary (Gamble & Wilkins, 1997; Graham & Erwin, 2011). To attract more males into the teaching field, there could be some sort of incentive for them. Offering all teachers a bonus or a stipend when becoming a teacher, particularly when they choose to teach in a high-needs school, may attract additional males to pursue the field of education. Other incentives could include housing stipends in the school community, student loan forgiveness, or simply raising teacher salaries across the board. This is important because Black males may feel that the salary they would make teaching is not comparable to the salaries they could earn in alternate careers.

### **Affinity Group for Black Male Teachers**

To represent 2% of Black male teachers across the country, there needs to be a national support group for Black male teachers with local branches in all 50 states. Similar to a fraternity,

Black male educators must connect with one another. While there are a few organizations available, they are limited because they only work with the teachers in their local area, or many Black male educators do not know that those organizations exist. Having a national support group would allow Black male teachers to connect across the country to share ideas, offer support, and advice.

### **Professional Development for White Teachers Educating Black Students**

The reality is that White teachers are teaching the majority of Black students across the country. We cannot wait for additional Black teachers to enter the profession, as an action is needed now. According to Hilaire (2020), White colleagues need to support Black people. This requires White people to make an effort to understand Black people as individuals and the communities they come from. I am recommending that schools and preparation programs provide culturally sustaining professional development for teachers. These teachers should become allies for Black teachers and students of color and be taught how to teach in a culturally sustaining way. I found that White teachers are using Black teachers in inappropriate ways, mainly as a disciplinarian. They would send their students of color who made poor behavioral choices to the Black male teachers. Providing professional development that is culturally sustaining may help some White teachers better understand their Black students.

### **Recommendations for Future Studies**

There are a few recommendations for future studies that I believe will extend my research. One recommendation would be to extend this study and incorporate classroom observations. The observations would allow the observer to view the techniques and strategies that the participants mentioned and compare them to the participant's descriptions of the activities. Other recommendations include the possible belief that White teachers offer a higher

quality of education, the isolation of Black male teachers, and Black male teachers' perception of Black male students in predominantly White schools.

### **A Belief That White Teachers Offer a Higher Quality of Education**

In reviewing the data from this study, Terrance stated that he felt that there was a belief among Black parents, students, and administrators that White teachers can offer Black children a better education compared to Black teachers. While my study focused on teachers' perceptions, it would be beneficial to incorporate students and parents into future research. It would add to the literature to learn from their perspective, who offers a higher quality of education and why.

### **Being Isolated from Other Black Teachers**

Many participants had experienced isolation from their colleagues, as they did not have many interests in common. Brian noted that his colleagues accused him of infusing a pro-Black agenda during a professional development session. In reality, he presented current research that would enhance practices for the majority of Black students who make up the school district. Terrance taught a Black history course to students, which upset his White colleagues. He did not teach students only about Dr. King, Rosa Parks, Harriet Tubman, or the traditional Blacks whom society refers to when teaching Black history. Instead, his course focused on the subconscious of self-hatred and death by lethal integration (which focused on uplifting Black people). Taking offense to the content covered in this class, his White colleagues viewed Terrance as a Black supremacist. These are two examples of how these participants felt isolated from their peers because they did not follow the status quo. It would be beneficial to learn who these Black male educators turn to for advice in a situation like this. It must be difficult, especially if you're the only person in your school setting. Understanding what these teachers do in a time of need will help those Black male educators who are in the same position.

### **Black Males in Predominantly White Schools**

Finally, I would recommend that future researchers examine Black male teachers' perceptions of students of color in districts with a population consisting of primarily White students. Much of the research examined how Black male teachers worked with or influenced students in majority Black and Latinx districts. It would be interesting to determine if the school environment influences how Black male teachers teach and interact with Black students.

Beyond the public school setting, taking this same concept into a private school setting would be quite interesting, especially knowing that some private schools accept students based on their grades and behavior. It would be noteworthy to document the perceptions of Black male teachers' influence on students of color when academics and behaviors are more controlled.

### **Conclusions**

The Black male teachers in this study tried to create a perception that did not involve racial stereotypes. I found that these teachers strove to be positive role models for their students. These Black male teachers knew people were watching them, but they relished these moments as opportunities to show their students how they should carry themselves inside and outside of school. The participants wanted to dispel the negative stereotypes that Black males face in society.

In this study, the participants dressed professionally every day, modeled appropriate behavior, and provided students with meaningful advice that would benefit students in school and society. These participants used their identities as Black males to mentor students and prepare them for the real world. Anthony offered students financial advice that would benefit them when paying for college. Steven emphasized to students how one wrong choice could alter their lives. Mark organized a group to mentor Black and Latinx boys. All of the participants took

the time to know students on a personal level. They looked at their students as individuals. They had a vested interest in their success, in and out of the classroom.

### **Leaving a Lasting Impression**

All of the participants said they wanted to leave a lasting impression on their students. When it comes to how his students of color will remember him, Anthony hopes that they will remember how much he encouraged them. Anthony wants his students to reflect on how hard he works for them. He also would like for them to never forget that they are in control of their minds.

One of the most critical components for Brian is for his students of color to remember him as a person who believes in them. Brian wanted his students to be great at whatever they want to do. Brian explained to his students that he had changed his major a few times before graduation. He used that example to inform his students that they should try their best at whatever they want to do.

Jason would like for his students of color to remember him as someone who cares. When they reflect on Jason, he would like them to think, “He taught me something. He taught me some life lessons. He was honest with us. He was frank with us. He didn’t pull any punches with us. He told us like it was. He respected me.”

Mark would like for his students to remember him as a relatable teacher. He recalled that not all teachers care about students’ best interests, even from his experience. According to Mark, some of his teachers said they supported him. However, these teachers did not have his best interests at heart. Mark wants his students to know that he truly understands and cares for them. He wants his students to remember that it takes hard work and dedication to be successful.



Shawn would like for his students of color to remember him as fair and caring—an overall good person. When time passes and these students think about their elementary school experience, they may not remember some of the material covered. Still, they will remember how a person made them feel. Shawn would like his students to refer to him as a fair person who treated everyone with respect. Shawn stated that it is not easy being Black in today's society, and it is not easy coming from a different country. Shawn fell into both of those categories and believed that he is more understanding because of his experiences.

Steven would like his students to remember him as a hard-working teacher who always took the time to educate them and talk to them about life. When students reflect, he would like for them to think: "Hey, we always knew Steven, and he was a cool teacher, and he always had my back. That's a big one: He always had my back."

Terrance wants his Black students to remember him as someone who spoke the truth. He wants them to know that he is an independent thinker. Terrance reflects that many people think that society should dictate what people can and cannot do. He wants his students to remember him as someone who is proud to be Black and who cared. He is a teacher who works hard to make sure that his students succeed.

### **Advice to Future Black Male Teachers**

In the hopes of inspiring future Black male teachers, Anthony would advise them to continue reading and using their experiences for self-development. Anthony reflected on the vitality to build relationships and interact with students. It is important to remember there is no fast track to success, as you must take one step at a time.

The advice that Brian would give to future Black male teachers is for them to become more familiar with the youth and their community's culture. Teachers should immerse

themselves in the culture before walking into the classroom. Future teachers should find a level of humility since students come from different dynamics.

Jason would advise future teachers of color to allow students to see them for who they are. He noted that this might be difficult because a lot of Black men do not come into education as a first choice. This is typically an alternative plan for many Black men, according to Jason. There is a tremendous amount of responsibility that comes with being a Black male teacher. Many Black males do not go to or graduate from college as it is. When entering into education, they are not looking to make a high income. Many enter into education with the hopes of becoming an administrator, since that will be the opportunity that would allow them to make more money. Moreover, Jason mentioned there is an additional responsibility for being an educated Black male. Knowing the facts, the people who enter this field should positively influence their students so they can aspire them to achieve their dreams.

Mark would recommend that any Black man who would like to become a teacher to do it because they care. Do it because there are young Black people who need them. Mark reflected if this is something you care about, then master that craft. Many people have a negative opinion about teaching because of the money, workload, and mental and physical energy required to be a teacher.

Shawn would advise future Black male teachers to not get caught up in race. He believes the message can get skewed if that becomes the premise of one's teaching. He teaches students to be good people, regardless of their race or ethnic background, and he would like people to understand that everyone should teach students to become better people. There are people from different races, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds all across this country. Teaching is not about being Black or White; it is about making people better. If we become better people, then the

world will be a little happier, and the misconceptions and perceptions of what it is to be a Black male would disappear.

Steven's advice to future Black male teachers would be to get to know the students. He believes that plays a significant role in teaching. He also believes that when a teacher shows an interest in students' learning, an educator's impact on their lives will be made clear.

Terrance advises that future Black male teachers be aware they may encounter some challenges. Terrance mentioned that society positions Black students not to succeed. According to Terrance, students' socioeconomic status should not matter. Black male teachers should stand up for what is right when teaching students and not care whether or not it is a popular decision.

In conclusion, the participants were all Black male teachers who took their job seriously. Despite the relationships these educators may have with their colleagues or administrators, their goal is to provide a well-rounded education for the students who sit in their classrooms. Their focus was on ensuring that students are better individuals and to achieve the best possible academic outcomes. These teachers focused on developing students' racial identity, relating the curriculum to their everyday experiences, building strong relationships with their students, and minimizing the negative stereotypes surrounding Black males.

Despite being a small representative of a national teaching population, these participants offered advice to future Black male educators to succeed in their classrooms. Some of the advice included familiarizing oneself with the community's culture, continuing with self-development, and most importantly, knowing the students. This advice helped the participants in this study become successful in teaching their students. After reviewing the findings of this study, it is clear that Black male teachers matter. They matter to Black male students, Black students, and to all students.

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## Appendix A

### IRB Approval Letter



**Institutional Review Board**  
1000 Hempstead Avenue  
Rockville Centre, NY 11571  
[www.molloy.edu](http://www.molloy.edu)

Tel. 516.323.3711

**Date:** January 6, 2020  
**To:** Dr. Allison Roda and Nathaniel Marner  
**From:** Patricia Eckardt, Ph.D., RN, FAAN  
Chair, Molloy College Institutional Review Board

**SUBJECT: MOLLOY IRB REVIEW AND DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS**  
**Study Title: A Narrative Inquiry into Black Male Teachers' Perceived Influences on Black Male Students.**  
**Approved: January 6, 2020**  
**Approval No: 13111518-1211**

Dear Dr. Roda and Mr. Marner:

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Molloy College has reviewed the above-mentioned research proposal and determined that this proposal is exempt.

It is considered an **EXEMPT category 45 CFR 46.104(2)(2)** per the requirements of Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regulations for the protection of human subjects.

As per **45 CFR 46.115(b) and 21 CFR 56.115(b)** require that all IRB records be retained for at least 3 years, and records relating to research which is conducted be retained for at least 3 years after completion of the research.

Please note that as Principal Investigator (PI), it is your responsibility to be CITI Certified in both the Responsible Conduct of Research and Human Subjects Research and to submit the evidence in order to conduct your research.

Remember, all consents and recruitment flyers for any research protocol need to have Molloy IRB dated stamps of approval. To obtain the official stamp, please contact Ms. Gina Nedelka ([gnedelka@molloy.edu](mailto:gnedelka@molloy.edu)) to arrange a time to meet with her in her office in Kellenberg-Room 009. You will bring one clean consent (of each consent and/or assent) and any recruitment flyers to the meeting with Ms. Nedelka for IRB dated stamp of approval. You then make copies of stamped materials and use those copies for recruiting and consenting.

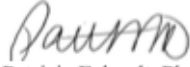
You may proceed with your research. Please submit a report to the committee at the conclusion of your project.

This acknowledgement expires within three years- unless there is a change to the protocol.

However, the IRB requires an annual ongoing report of your exempt protocol (the application for ongoing/continuing review) is available on the IRB webpage.

If there is a proposed change to the protocol, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to inform the Molloy College IRB of any requested changes before implementation. A change in the research may change the project from EXEMPT status and requires prior communication with the IRB.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patricia Eckardt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P".

Patricia Eckardt, Ph.D., RN

**Appendix B: Interview Protocol****Interviewer:** \_\_\_\_\_**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_**Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_**Setting:** \_\_\_\_\_**Introduction**

- 1) Please state your name, current position and experience in education.

**Educational Background**

- 1) Tell me about your educational background and experience.

Probe: Where did you attend school?

Probe: How would you describe your educational experience? Positive and negative?

- 2) Can you share a story that would signify your most memorable experience as a student?

- 3) Who was your favorite teacher and why?

Probe: Race and gender of teacher?

Probe: Connection to Black history?

Probe: Positive role model and relationship with students?

- 4) What, if anything, would you change about your educational experiences and why?

**Teaching History**

- 1) Tell me about why you became a teacher?

Probe: What path did you take to become a teacher?

Probe: Did you have a particular teacher or mentor that inspired you to become a teacher?

- 2) Was it important to you to teach Black students? Why or why not?

Probe: How long have you been a teacher? How long have you worked in this school/district?

Probe: Did you feel prepared to teach Black students? Why or why not?

**Current Practices**

- 1) Tell me about your current teaching assignment.

Probe: What grade/subject do you teach? How long have you been teaching this particular grade/subject?

- 2) How does your knowledge of Black male students influence your teaching (pedagogical decision making)?

Probe: What teaching practices, routines, rituals, behaviors do you find most effective when teaching Black male students?

Probe: What culturally relevant texts do you include in your classroom, or curriculum?

Probe: What cultural norms/tools and language do you include to help Black students in school and society?

Probe: Describe how you would develop student's critical consciousness?

- 3) Imagine I was an administrator at your school, what would I see during a typical day in your classroom?

Probe: Group work, centers, teacher-led or student-centered, art/music, culturally responsive, real-world connections, Hip-Hop?

**Relationships**

- 1) Tell me about the relationship you have with the Black male students in your classroom.

Probe: Describe the process of building relationships.

Probe: Why is it important to build strong teacher-student relationships?

- 2) How do you perceive that your race and gender influence relationships with Black male students?

- 3) How do those relationships relate to academics and social-emotional learning (behavior, engagement, empowerment, sense of racial and cultural pride)?

### **Race and Gender**

- 1) Do you believe that your race and gender have an influence in terms of how administrators, other teachers, and students perceive you?

Probe: Are you an advocate for Black students? Role model?

### **Reflection**

- 1) What are the most significant experiences you have had during your teaching experience?
- 2) How do you want your Black male students to remember you?
- 3) Why did you choose to share your story in this study?

Probe: Which parts of this study did you find most appealing? Why?

Probe: If you were approached, would you volunteer to participate in this study again?

Why or why not?

### **Grand Tour Question**

- 1) What advice would you give to other Black male educators who teach Black male students?
- 2) Would you like to share any additional stories regarding your educational experiences and current teaching practices that were not included previously? Are there any questions that I should have asked but didn't ask?