

I DON'T WANNA TEACH NO MORE:
EVERYDAY STRUGGLES AND STEREOTYPES OF THE BLACK MALE
EDUCATOR MISUNDERSTOOD

by

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Date May 22, 2019

Presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education in
Teachers College, Columbia University

2019

ABSTRACT

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Joseph DeWayne Mathews

This is a study of teacher pushout among Black male educators. In particular, this study examines experiences that prompted Black male teachers to resign or be terminated from teaching positions with the goal of exploring contributing factors to Black male teacher turnover. Drawing from the pushout stories of 9 Black male educators, this study found that Black male teachers experienced pushout in three phases: 1) the Reason – characterized by idealistic and hopeful feelings about being a change agent in the lives of students, 2) the Reality – characterized by various turning points that made it clear that the teaching positions these teachers were in might be less than ideal, and 3) the Removal – characterized by a steady escalation of negative events and interactions that eventually led to their pushout (through firing or resignation). Within these phases, several themes emerged. During the Reason phase, participants reported feeling a sense of responsibility to teach and mentor disadvantaged students – particularly Black males, love for teaching, and a sense of calling to teach. The Reality phase was characterized by pressure to conform to the expectation of masculinity suppression or overexpression depending on

the needs and desires of co-workers and administration, limitations on creativity, and pressure to go along with policies and practices that participants felt were unethical or ineffective. Finally, the Removal phase was characterized by a culmination event that resulted in a move to another school or out of the field of education entirely. This dissertation builds on research about teacher turnover and identifies teacher pushout, a specific phenomenon within teacher turnover. Further, this study examines pushout among Black males.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To every young person out there dreaming of making it in this world but being told that you do not have what it takes, this dissertation is for you. To all the educators giving of yourself and answering the call to teach, you too are my heroes and heroes to so many others.

To my brothers Anthony, EJ, Lil Man, Terry, and Brock and to my sisters Joe, Kim and Scooter: very few people know what it was like being the poorest kids in the neighborhood. Together we lived through the cold and dark nights when our electricity was cut off and the food in the refrigerator was limited, but we had more love in our family than anyone else and that love guided us through.

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents Thelma, Willie, Eddie, and Ruthetta. You all sacrificed and prayed for me from childhood to adulthood. I would not be the man I am today if it were not for you. I also dedicate this dissertation to my late nephew Steven.

To Joe Kinzer and Jim Patterson: your late sons Joey and Chris were my best friends and I will forever cherish the brotherhood we shared.

To the main women in my life, Ronneal, Journey, and Freedom: thank you for being there for me while I was out on the road working to make a difference in the world. I thank Ronneal for helping me to discover that I was so much more than just a football player in undergrad.

I would like to thank Dr. Hope Leichter, Dr. Susan Recchia, Dr. Tom Rock and Dr. William Baldwin for believing in me when I showed up to Teachers College looking

for an opportunity to change my life. Thank you to my mentor, comrade, dear friend and brother Dr. Cornel West. Going from watching you on TV speaking on panels as a young man looking for direction to joining you on those panels was the highlight of my academic and intellectual life.

Special thanks to my dissertation committee members that challenged my research while encouraging me to be bold. Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz, Dr. Dirck Roosevelt, Dr. Christopher Emdin, and Dr Ernest Morrell - without your guidance and encouragement through this process this manuscript would not be possible.

JDM

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BACKGROUND

The study presented in the following pages is unique in that it examines the experiences of Black male teachers, who only make up 2% of the teaching workforce. Previous work in this area has studied Black male teachers in the context of their disciplinary practices and expectations (Brockenbrough, 2015; Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010), teaching philosophies (Brown, 2009; Lynn, 2006; Lynn & Jennings, 2009), and motivations to teach (Brown & Butty, 1999; Chmelynski, 2006). Some quantitative research has examined the mobility of Black men in and out of the teaching profession (Ingersol & May, 2011; Kirby, Berends, & Naftel, 1999). The present work is a first look at some of the reasons why Black men are motivated to teach but also what drives them to leave. The phenomenon of teacher pushout among Black males has not been specifically examined through qualitative inquiry. While teacher turnover and teacher firing have been studied, there is a gap in the literature where teacher pushout is concerned. It is important to distinguish between teachers who choose move between schools, teachers who leave the profession to earn more money or to retire, and teachers who leave their positions because they have been pushed out because of their teaching philosophies and approaches or due to inhospitable teaching environments. This is important because it is possible that through small changes in school policy and culture, these people can be retained through affirmation and nurturing to become effective teachers and advocates for the most vulnerable students in our nation's schools.

It is also important to provide some foregrounding to this study because it includes a specific group of men – masculine presenting Black male teachers. While not

initially intended, masculinity emerged as a salient and recurring theme in this study. As such, I feel that it is important to address it directly by providing definitions and context.

White Supremacist Constructions of Black Masculinity

Often without noticing, we absorb the racist belief that Black people are fitting targets for everybody's anger. We are closest to each other, and it is easier to vent fury upon each other than upon our enemies. — Audre Lorde

This study includes 9 participants but I would posit that it really includes 10. I am an educator in a similar position as the participants. I have an immense love for teaching but I have also experienced pushout. I am a Black male who has at times been the only or one of a few other Black men in my school. In addition, I feel that my presentation as a masculine Black male has complicated my position within the field of education. I am providing this section as a way of grounding this research in an understanding of what I mean when I discuss masculinity throughout this dissertation. Throughout this document, when I use the term masculinity, I am applying the following definition: “a set of attributes, behaviors, and roles associated with boys and men. As a social construct, it is distinct from the definition of the male biological sex (and sexual orientation). Standards of manliness or masculinity vary across different cultures and historical periods.” In addition, this study distinguishes Black masculinity as a separate expression of masculinity that takes the unique experiences of Black men as racialized, stigmatized and oppressed people into account when considering why and how Black men perform and express masculinity in the ways they do.

A lot of the research depicts Black masculinity as a strictly negative construct that needs to be changed, redefined, and sanctioned. While critical examination of any social construct is merited, Black masculinity has been maligned in ways that have made it seem as though Black men who display masculine traits are beyond redemption. According to Abby Ferber (2007), the white supremacist construction of Black masculinity includes the following traits: “a continued emphasis on Black bodies as inherently aggressive, hypersexual, and violent; concern with taming and controlling Black males; inequality depicted as a product of a deficient Black culture; and the naturalization of White supremacy and White male superiority.” This construction has permeated American society and has driven how Black men are treated and perceived within society for centuries. It has also been internalized within the Black community, which has a paradoxical relationship with Black men and Black masculinity (Cooper, 2006; Jefferson, 2008; Ladson Billings, 2011). For example, because Black men have the lowest life expectancy, the highest incarceration and murder rates, and the worst health outcomes, we tend to feel a need to rally for and protect Black men. On the other hand, when we are not rallying for an end to the mistreatment of Black men we are denigrating them for their perceived faults and shortcomings. We are projecting the negative stereotypes of the broader society onto them and normalizing the idea that they are “fitting targets for everybody’s anger.” I assert that this is a result of internalized white supremacist constructions of Black masculinity that fail to nuance Black men in ways that offer us humanity and complexity.

In his work on Black masculinity, Franklin R. Cooper (2006) presents the idea of “bipolar Black masculinity.” In essence, bipolar Black masculinity asserts that White

society has separated Black men – particularly heterosexual Black men – into two categories: Bad Black Men and Good Black Men. Bad Black Men are inherently criminal, violent and hypersexual. By default, all Black men fall into this category unless they “distance themselves from Blackness and associate with white norms.” Black men are incentivized to pursue the Good Black Man image in order to avoid the Bad Black Man image, but this is an illusion because Black men will never be offered the same privilege as White men. Instead, they are seduced into accepting White supremacist constructions of Black masculinity through the offer of “the right to subordinate others as compensation for [their] own subordination.” This is because White supremacy requires hierarchy and subordination and cannot exist without creating ranking systems, even among its designated subordinates. I present this work to emphasize my earlier point that rather than self-defining Black masculinity, many Black men, and indeed many Black women have simply accepted White supremacist definitions of Black masculinity. In order to dismantle this reality, we need to begin to identify and consider the concept of masculine diversity. I define this term as: self-definition of the meaning and enactment of what it means to be masculine. This includes the right to determine ones own definition of masculinity and the acceptance of various presentations of masculinity whether or not they fit into those that have previously been defined and traditionally held. In other words, masculinity looks different for everyone and as long as it presents itself in healthy ways that are not destructive they should be accepted, understood and embraced.

In the context of education, and particularly in the context of this study, many Black men express the feeling that when they enter the classroom, other people have already projected narrow, restrictive and damaging views of masculinity onto them. They

feel that these projections limit their ability to be effective teachers and contributing professionals. According to Brockenbrough's research, Black men have been cast as authoritative father figures who are ideal disciplinarians for predominantly Black schools. In his study of 11 Black male teachers, 5 of the men found the expectation of serving as disciplinarian stressful and frustrating. It should be noted that not all Black male teachers view this role prescription negatively. In fact, in Travis Bristol's study of 27 Black male teachers, some of the men viewed being called upon to assist with behavioral issues as a sign that they had influence and the respect of students and colleagues. Rather than diminishing the point that Black men should not be automatically assigned specific roles, these findings reinforce the fact that Black men and Black masculinity are diverse. Not all Black men will feel comfortable being placed in particular roles, and like anyone else, they should be given the opportunity to express themselves as individuals.

As Cooper asserts, one way to begin to redefine Black masculinity and change the way that it is perceived is to employ intersectionality, a concept formed by Black feminism. Defined in 1989 by law professor and social theorist Kimberle Crenshaw, intersectionality is "the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage." It is usually applied to multiply subordinated groups such a women who are also Black or of color or men who are gay and also of color. In his work, Frank Cooper makes the case for including heterosexual Black men in this concept because excluding them actually makes them more vulnerable to the whims of white supremacy which offers certain Black men access to the "privilege" of subordinating other groups such as Black women and children in exchange for their silence,

assimilation, and complicity in white supremacy. This is damaging to communities of color and to Black men, because while Black men are being offered this “consolation prize” they are not offered real opportunities and access, but rather, still experience subordination and oppression no matter how “good” they are willing to be as defined by broader white society. According to Cooper:

Extending intersectionality theory to heterosexual black men is justifiable when we consider the shared interests of the multiply and singly subordinated in defeating the Western epistemological system of the scaling of bodies. The scaling of bodies is the assumption that we must rank identity characteristics against a (white) norm and organize society according to those hierarchies.

He later asserts that while some might reject the application of intersectionality to a singly subordinated group such as heterosexual Black men, he supports the use of this construct as a means of “recognizing the shared interests of the multiply and singly subordinated in destroying the system of the scaling of bodies.” In other words, it is a way of providing understanding of the ways that Black men are defined as one of two extremes, either “good” or “bad” with very little nuance or complexity. Intersectionality allows for the Black and masculine to be understood in terms of the common subordination that they experience from white Western society and opens the space for Black men to find common ground with the multiply subordinated and therefore resist this subordination alongside those who have common oppressors. I believe that it also frees heterosexual Black men from oppressive definitions of masculinity and manhood that are often held by Black communities but only benefit systems of white supremacy.

In her work on Black masculinity, Gloria Ladson Billings (2011), discusses the love/hate relationship that America has with Black men. On one hand, Black men are viewed as dangerous and repulsive while they are simultaneously viewed as appealing

and seductive. People around the world attempt to mimic the speech patterns, dress, and overall presentation of Black men while fearing and reviling them at the same time. She also asserts that when Black men do manage to attain high achievements, they are seen as exceptions to the rule who are somehow special and not “really Black” – in other words, they have achieved the status of Good Black Man as described by Cooper and are therefore ‘safe’ to love, accept and emulate. She also discusses the phenomenon of teachers and school systems vacillating between treating Black boys like babies and expecting them to be men. I posit that this phenomenon does not end in childhood, but indeed, through my own experiences and from the data obtained in this study, I find that Black men in education are caught in this same paradox. One example of this phenomenon is being “called to the office” by principals, Heads of School, and other administrators. I recount several instances where I was called to the office to be chastised and reprimanded. In addition, seven of the nine men in this study share similar stories where they were “called to the principal’s office” one or more times.

The research of Ladson Billings and many others further justifies the application of intersectionality to Black males. Black men truly do exist in a space where Black + male does not equal Black male. The intersection of race and gender for Black men equals something entirely different than those two identities alone. Being Black and male in America is a unique positionality that not only intersects, but when the two are combined they make something totally different. Something other than Black and something other than male. From being considered either good or bad (or simultaneously good and bad) to being treated like a boy while being held to the standards of a man,

Black men and boys have a difficult road to travel in schools and other educational settings.

I am saying all of this to say that Black male educators enter into schools with a lot of baggage. For some, just by virtue of their presence in these spaces they either pose a threat (Bad Black Man) or are automatically placed in the “Good Black Man” box which, while on the surface may seem to be positive, can be a suffocating and limiting place to be. By understanding Black masculinity in a broader context and giving men the freedom to truly self-define, to truly be allies, and to truly be a part of the important work of growing our communities and educating children, we make schools and communities safer and more inclusive spaces for everyone.

The Role and Background of the Researcher

In qualitative research, reflexivity is the process of examining one’s own experiences, views and perspectives and being attentive to how these factors play a role in the research being conducted. This is particularly important because in qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument. The validity of the findings of qualitative inquiry requires that the researcher is constantly reflecting and questioning how their positions affect the research.

Firstly, I think it bears noting that I am approaching this research as a heterosexual Black male who has experienced being an educator from this position and through this lens. I have also had many experiences with being pushed out of education on various occasions. I believe that many of these experiences are a result of my identity

as a cisgender heterosexual Black man who is masculine presenting. While this is my position and the interpretation of my experiences are definitely colored by this position, I also recognize that other people, including other heterosexual Black men, have pushout experiences that do not mirror my own. I recognize that queer Black men will have unique experiences with oppression within educational spaces that will be different from my own. Their experiences and perspectives are valid and their voices are needed. While my work specifically focused on the voices of masculine presenting Black men, this is an intentional attempt to understand the experiences of educators in this position and not an act of violence or marginalization of other voices and perspectives. Because much of the literature on Black masculinity is conducted from the perspective of marginalized groups, my intention is to shed light on a phenomenon that is not often discussed and to lovingly offer new approaches to understanding and viewing Black male educators who enter the profession and are perceived as outwardly masculine. No one was marginalized or excluded because of their sexual orientation. . Rather than masking my experiences and my identity, I am being transparent about who I am and how I am positioned in this work. Particularly, my multiple identities as an athlete, husband, father, friend, professional, scholar, artist, son and so much more are present throughout the entire study. I am the tenth participant in this study. My stories and experiences do not take precedence over the others, but are included as additional data. As such, I think that it is important to share some of my own experiences up front so that the reader understands the context in which I am presenting this work.

In the following section I am providing a brief auto-ethnographic examination of my experiences as an athlete. I also discuss how these experiences differ from common

narratives about sports. In addition, I outline some of my own experiences with pushout as both a teacher and administrator in both public and charter schools. This information will provide a clearer picture of the lens through which I interpret the research findings and serve as a reminder for me to make sure that the views and perspectives of the research subjects in this study are their own.

Love and Hip Hop

*Considered a fool 'cause I dropped out of high school
Stereotypes of a black male misunderstood
And it's still all good
And if you don't know, now you know
-The Notorious B.I.G.*

Because I was a star athlete in middle school and high school, I was allowed to attend the affluent, predominantly white school across town. I played multiple sports and excelled in all of them, but it was not “all good.” Along with the supposed greater opportunity I was being given to attend a ‘better school’, I also received daily doses of racism, discrimination, and cultural misunderstanding. Research over the past couple of decades has framed hip-hop as an effective means of therapy and an effective teaching tool for urban youth (Allen, 2005; Emdin, Adjapong, & Levy, 2016; Morrell, 2002), but when I was growing up, hip-hop was a problem. A social ill to be eradicated. For me, hip-hop was a lifeline in a hostile world. When I heard all of the “boo’s” coming from the stands in the all-white gymnasium during my wrestling matches throughout rural Oklahoma, my refuge was hip-hop. When I was the homecoming king but was advised not to kiss the white homecoming queen in front of nearly all-white audience or suffer the

consequences, hip-hop was my refuge. Hip hop was a safe space for me when teachers punished me more harshly than my white peers for the same infractions. Infractions that sometimes were just me being me – hip hop. It was the place I would visit when I put my headphones on to block out the racism and the hatred.

Eventually, I dropped out of high school because I felt like I was being intellectually and emotionally abused. The predominantly white school I attended was not culturally responsive and was not meeting my unique needs as a Black male. A lot of people were not surprised that I dropped out. They did not expect me to succeed in the first place. But hip-hop gave me hope that I would make it in spite of everything that seemed to be working against me. And although hip-hop was/is not perfect, I was able to find comfort, empowerment, knowledge of self, kinship and camaraderie with other Black males who were also struggling to find their place in the world. According to Christopher Emdin, “Hip-hop, a culture with roots in alienation from an existing mould, offers a space of solace for students who are not allowed to participate fully in schools.” For me, hip-hop was this “place of solace.” Like so many other young people, I understood what NWA meant when they shouted “F*ck the police!”, because I was routinely pulled over and harassed on the white side of town where I attended school. They told me I had “made it” by being allowed to attend this school, but despite having ‘made it’ I was never really given full access to the privileges of my white peers. To some degree, my attendance at that school removed some of the support, access and acceptance among my Black peers in my own neighborhood. As Cooper asserts in his work on bipolar Black masculinity, even though I was being given the opportunity to obtain the status of ‘Good Black Man’, I still was not and would never be white. Because

of this, hip-hop was an important bridge back to my community and an important way for me to be validated when I felt that my masculinity and pride in my culture were under attack. As previously referenced, Gloria Ladson Billings in her analysis of America's love/hate relationship with Black men, the teachers, administrators and coaches loved what I did for the reputation of the school in the arena of sports. They did not love the part of me that was hip-hop. They often used that love that I had for hip-hop as a justification for mistreatment and sanction. They felt the need to control and suppress that part of me. Even as a an adult and a teacher, there was still a real sense that principals, teachers and other administrators felt the need to control and sanction the hip-hop in me. The confidence, the outward displays of masculinity, my unapologetic tendency to hold my head high and speak my mind. This was feared, unwelcome and unacceptable.

The title of this dissertation is a nod to the Notorious B.I.G.s iconic song, *Everyday Struggle*. The first thing he says is "I don't wanna live no more." I know that throughout my life, especially in my adolescence and early adulthood, this sentiment resonated with me. Because of the constant racism and discrimination, the fact the men, Black men in particular are often discouraged from openly expressing feelings and emotions, I internalized a lot of my frustration and became depressed. As an educator being called to the office brought back so many memories of the treatment that I received in school. The constant reprimands, the persistent scrutiny, the admonishments to be 'less masculine' while at the same time encouraging me to display stereotypical masculine traits that did not feel natural or healthy drove me to the point that "I didn't wanna teach no more." More than one participant in this study alluded to experiencing depression and anxiety as a result of inhospitable teaching environments. To go from not feeling free as

an adolescent to still not feeling free as an adult is depressing. As an educator, I once again turned to hip-hop for hope, for language, and for therapy.

I know that hip-hop is not perfect. As I have matured, I recognize that the very thing I sought refuge in also made me more of a target for racist violence. In the 90s when I was in school, so called “gangster rap” was in the mainstream and this is what people knew and understood hip-hop to be. The element of hip-hop that dripped with misogyny and violence is what people heard and essentially what they assumed about all of hip-hop and by extension what they assumed about all Black males and Black masculinity. But beneath the surface where most people do not look, there was beauty in hearing my experiences reflected in music made by people who look like me. If sports were my safe space, then hip-hop was my therapy and a beacon of light when there was so much darkness in my life. If sports equipped me with discipline, determination and nurturing that fueled my desire to teach and nurture others, then hip-hop gave me the language, the swag and the tools to do it.

Love and Football

In feminist theory, there has been much research on the importance of safe spaces for women who often have legitimate of fear violence from men in both public and private spaces. I would like to offer the idea that safe spaces are also important for Black men who face the fear of physical and emotional violence from society, from police, and indeed from other Black men. Let me explain further. Black men are the most incarcerated, disproportionately experience police violence, and are more likely to be

murdered than any other group of people. Indeed, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), homicide is the 5th leading cause of death for Black men. Despite these statistical realities, when Black men try to create safe spaces where they can bond and heal, it is often perceived as toxic and discriminatory against women. It is as if some people believe that there is no place for men to gather out of the presence of women that is not dysfunctional. The space behind the curtain of male sports most often occurs outside the purview of the female gaze and female supervision, sanction and control. Why is it that this fact evokes fear, anxiety and mistrust? Why can't it be that men, particularly Black men need spaces to just be with one another? Renee Spencer found (2007) that Black male adult/adolescent mentoring relationships provided "close and enduring emotional connections" and "safe space for vulnerability and emotional support." I trust women. I trust them when they say they need safe spaces where they can fully be themselves without fear of violence, abuse, and objectification. I would respectfully request trust in the fact that Black men need safe spaces to be with one another and be fully human. In their work on safe spaces for women, Lewis, Sharp, Remnant and Redpath (2015) found that safe spaces for women provided "safety from routine risk and disparagement [and] safety to express one's full personhood." For me, and for many other young Black men, sports have been that safe space. While sports have often been framed as the center for toxic masculinity, homophobia, and patriarchy, my experiences with sports have been very different than the ones portrayed in the media and in academia.

From a very young age, I loved sports. I played baseball, I was a wrestler, I participated in martial arts and boxing, and I ran track. But most of all, I loved football.

Football provided a unique sense of belonging that I didn't get anywhere else. In the popular imagination, football locker rooms are places of debasement, vulgarity, toxicity and violence. In my experience, the football locker room was a place of complete acceptance. It was the one place that I could be who I was. Completely. I did not have to hide there and I knew I would not be judged. . I will not romanticize these spaces as places where there was no toxicity. That would be disingenuous. However, I want to provide a perspective different from the one that posits that there is *only* toxicity. Like any other space where humans gather, sports are imperfect and complex. This is not unique to places where men gather. It is a fact of spaces where humans gather, and indeed, men are human. Despite the imperfection, I can recall times where I cried about things I experienced out in the world and received comfort and solace from team members. I got advice, encouragement, and experienced true friendship. I learned that there was more than one way to be a man. Many of the men I built relationships with in this space were not just athletes. They were scholars and artists. Later, when I played as an adult in college and overseas in Oulu, Finland, these men were partners, husbands, fathers, and friends. They were complete, complex human beings, and in a world that often seems uncomfortable when men don't fit in and remain in pre-defined boxes, we took refuge in each other in the locker room My experiences in sports undergirded my desire to be a nurturer from a very young age. I wanted to provide the nurturing that I had received as a young man to other children, young Black males in particular. The tears I was able to cry, the hugs I gave and received, the words of encouragement, the life lessons, and the advice. All of these things that I was given through my participation in sports are what drove me to become an educator.

These factors are also what drove me to do this research. Over the years, I have spoken to so many male teachers, many of whom have presentations of manhood that are considered more ‘macho’ or ‘masculine’. What I found in these conversations is that these men were struggling in the field. They were being told to conform or leave. They were being told that the way they moved in the world was wrong. Like myself, many of these men were former athletes who perceived themselves as loving, kind, and smart. When they entered into education, they were either told to “tone it down” when they were too “strong” or confident or they were being told to “turn it up” when they did not display the stereotypical expressions of masculinity that their appearance suggested they should. If they were “too soft” they were essentially told to “man up”. Scare the kids. Demand respect. Be “the man”. When they were “too stern” they were being told to be more nurturing, more “kid-friendly”, and less “harsh”. Imagine the confusion that these men and myself experienced when we realized that people did not view us as nurturers when all of our lives, we had experienced a sense of nurturing that encouraged us to enter education in the first place. Imagine the cognitive dissonance that we experienced when we were told that the very thing that gave us the resilience and strength to persevere despite living in world that despised our presence and our very lives was not acceptable. Imagine being told to relearn how to show love and affection. Imagine being told that you don’t know how to love properly because you do not show love in narrowly defined ways. This is what many of the men I have spoken to over the years were experiencing. It is confusing and it is painful.

This study is a first step in giving voice to Black men in education who love children and love teaching but often feel out of place in this space. It is a first step in

giving men who grapple with having a passion for working in a field that is often does not welcome their presence and often does not feel like a safe space for them to be fully human. It is an opportunity for educators, schools, and school systems to consider the idea of ‘masculine diversity’. That is, to consider that idea that masculinity is an individually defined art form that looks different for every person. My masculinity includes athleticism, a love for competition, and physicality. It also includes a love for nurturing others, a love for teaching children, love and respect for women along with recognition for their equality and their right to live in a world free from discrimination and oppression. It includes an artistic side, a love for music, poetry, and an immense appreciation for nature. It is my own unique recipe that has been forged through my relationships, my educational experiences, spending summers on an East Texas farm listening to the colorful stories of my grandfather and living in ‘the hood’ where Black men and boys were routinely murdered and sports were often our only refuge. If you try to take away or suppress any of these elements of what makes me who I am you are essentially trying to suppress my right to be whole. While some might find my athleticism problematic or threatening, I would counter that with the fact that my participation in sports literally saved my life. My participation in sports, which many people are uncomfortable with, is the only reason that I am able to be the scholar, the nurturer, the artist, the father, and the husband that I am. Without sports, I would not be a researcher and an academic because I never would have gone to college. I never would have learned the life skills that gave me discipline and perseverance. I would likely be dead or incarcerated. Allowing space for men to have the freedom of self-definition is essential to our survival. Allowing us to define what it means to be masculine is

necessary for our growth. Understanding this need for self-definition is the one of the things that must happen to remedy the shortage of Black men, whose voices are needed in field of education. Coming to this understanding will help school systems and administrators prevent men from having pushout experiences like the ones I have experienced over the years and have outlined below.

My First Pushout Experience

While working in Chicago at a Southside elementary school, I opened the side door for the lower grade students to go home. As students walked outside and began to play, I witnessed two police officers jump out of a parked police car and pull out their nightsticks to get them to go home. The students began running away, screaming, and crying. The officers laughed and drove to the other side of the building. Observing this behavior from afar I decided to follow the officers to the other side of the building. This is where I witnessed them slamming one of my 3rd grade students onto the hood of their car, putting him in handcuffs and then into the back of the police car. As the other students began to crowd around I walked up to ask the officers why was he being arrested. They replied that he was not being compliant. I then explained to them that because he was on school grounds when they told him to stop hanging out, this matter should be handled by the school and that they were out of compliance by slamming the kid on the police car, putting him in handcuffs and arresting him without any notification to school administrators. They told me to stay out of it or I would be arrested for interfering, but I felt that staying and advocating for my eight-year-old student was the

right thing to do so I chose to continue questioning the officers for their mistreatment and unlawful brutality and detainment of a minor on school grounds.

As the police and I were engaged in a disagreement over the treatment of my student, the Vice Principal walked out to see what was going on. After a short private conversation with the officers, she asked me to go inside. I walked away and the police drove off with my student. The next morning, I walked into the building and the talk of the school amongst students was about how Mr. Mathews stood up to the police. Students were inspired by my act of courage and advocacy for them, but before I could reach my classroom I was called to the principal's office where I was told I was being let go because "we need the police to protect us." I was not allowed to say goodbye to my students and my termination was effective immediately. The school was an 'at will' school, meaning I had no recourse. I was escorted out of the building and asked not to return.

Pushed Out – Again

While working at a now closed charter school in Ward 8 of Washington, DC as Dean of Students, I really started to feel that I had found my calling. Being outside of the classroom gave me the opportunity to implement programs and policies that helped to shape school culture and engage disengaged students. I worked with my principal to develop a unique program that would improve school culture and increase school spirit. In the morning, the whole school would gather and sing, "Lovely Day" and students would be beaming as they went to their first period class. Friday's were "Free Style Friday's" where students could sing, rap, read poetry or engage in other forms of creative

expression. I used my connection with a friend at Black Entertainment Television (BET) to take a group of kids to visit the headquarters and learn more about the behind-the-scenes aspects of the network's programming. Later that year, I took a group of students to New York to see a taping of 106 & Park. I loved my job. My principal was supportive of the work I was doing. The students loved seeing how what they were learning in school was connected with careers in music, television, and sports.

The problem – the supportive principal that hired me was pushed out of his position at the end of my first school year (his story is included in this study). When I returned for the second year, the new principal was not as eager to support some of my “unorthodox” methods. She did not understand how students visiting BET headquarters was connected to raising grades, and more importantly, test scores. She did not see how singing “Lovely Day” in the morning was associated with engaging students in the educational process. By the end of the first semester, I was let go in favor of a new, more traditional Dean. When I saw some of my former students in the community, they told me that there had been an increase in fighting and suspensions and that they didn't like being at the school anymore. About a year later the school was closed for a number of reasons, including a decrease in test scores, grades, and enrollment, and an increase in disciplinary problems after the implementation of more stern policies. I wonder now if the new principal understands the connection between students enjoying school and student performance.

Dean of Students

My final time working at a school was as a Dean of Students at an Elementary Charter School in New York City. The school was predominantly Black and Hispanic and overwhelmingly poor. Many of our students lived in one of three area homeless shelters in the surrounding neighborhood. When I first started at the school, it seemed very promising, but shortly after the school year began, the principal started to question my methods. I was there to be a disciplinarian and an “enforcer” and if the students liked me I would not be effective in this role. One day, a student said, “I love you Mr. Mathews!” I said, “I love you too!” The principal overheard this exchange and told me not to let it happen again.

My biggest issue in my position was the expectation that I enforce the dress code in a way that I thought was unethical. As I stated, many of our students lived in the local homeless shelters. Because of this, I was unwilling to suspend students for not wearing solid black shoes or belts. Many of them wore the cheap black canvas shoes with white soles because that is what their family could afford or what the local school uniform drive had provided. After much pressure to speak angrily to students and to remain silent when other teachers and administrators mistreated students and made them cry, I decided that I needed to resign. I could not change my philosophy about how students should be treated and the school was not willing to change its philosophy either. I left this position and decided that my talents were best used in other ways, including consulting, training, and speaking. This time, I was not only pushed out a school but out of working in schools as a teacher or administrator altogether.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Teacher turnover is a growing problem for schools in the United States. When effective teachers leave schools, this can create gaps in knowledge transfer and instability for students. Because of this, decreasing teacher turnover is an important issue to address to improve education and student outcomes, particularly in struggling schools. Multiple studies have highlighted the importance of Black male educators, particularly for Black male students. There is some evidence that the presence of Black males in primary and secondary schools improves Black male student educational achievement (Lynn, Johnson, & Hassan, 1999; Motley, 1999). These factors underscore the importance of increasing Black male teacher recruitment and retention. The study described in the following chapters seeks to examine one minimally examined phenomena within teacher turnover – teacher pushout, particularly, the pushout experiences of Black male educators. According to the National Clearinghouse of Supportive School Discipline (NCSSD), pushout is defined as:

practices that contribute to students dropping out. These include unwelcoming and uncaring school environments and over-reliance on zero tolerance school policies that push students out of school. Historically, factors (e.g., suspension, expulsions, systemic inequality) that result in school pushout have disproportionately impacted students of color, students from low-income families, LGBT students and students in the juvenile justice and alternative education settings.

For the purposes of this study, pushout refers to practices that contribute to Black male teachers leaving or being forced out of their positions due to “unwelcoming and uncaring school environments”. In the case of teacher pushout, these practices include being expected to enforce school policies that disproportionately impact vulnerable students, being placed in the position of being the disciplinarian and enforcer using tactics that are harsh and punitive, lack of administrative support, limited autonomy as it relates to curriculum and student interaction, over-reliance on testing and ‘teaching to the test’, inadequate compensation, overwork, and other stressful working conditions. It is important to examine teacher pushout of Black males as a separate phenomenon to gain an understanding of the policies within schools and school systems that can lead to high rates turnover among this already underrepresented group within the teaching workforce. These policies and practices can then be examined and reformed which may lead to the retaining of Black male teachers who might remain in the profession given more welcoming and supportive teaching environments.

This introductory chapter will begin with an overview of teacher turnover trends within both public and charter schools, then I will discuss how these trends apply to and affect Black men in particular. I will also provide a rationale for the study which is a qualitative examination of teacher pushout among Black male teachers in public and charter schools. It is important to understand current trends in order to understand how these quantitative trends are reflected in the stories told by the people behind the numbers.

Teacher Turnover Trends and Statistics

Nationally, teacher turnover rates have been steadily rising for nearly four decades. In the 2011-12 school year, over 270,000 left the teaching profession. A little over half of teachers who left the profession reported that the workload and working conditions in their new position was more manageable than teaching (U.S Department of Education, 2014). Teacher turnover is a significant problem in high poverty schools where teachers are 50% more likely to leave than in wealthier schools (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2012). High teacher turnover in high poverty schools means that students in these schools are much more likely to experience constantly fluctuating staffing, inexperienced teachers, and inconsistent curriculum and knowledge transfer (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor, & Wheeler, 2007; Hanushek et al., 2004; Ingersoll, 2001; Sanders & Rivers, 1996).

Research has shown that high teacher turnover has detrimental effects on the educational process of students for various reasons. Teachers with higher educational attainment tend to leave more often than those with lower educational attainment, presumably because they have other options outside of the education field (Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002; Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple, & Olsen, 1991; Podgursky, Monroe, & Watson, 2004). In addition, high attrition rates of new teachers who are most often replaced by other new teachers, mean that students have a lower chance of being exposed to experienced, veteran teachers (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004; McCaffrey, Lockwood, Koretz, & Hamilton, 2003). This also means that new teachers have less exposure to potential mentors.

While research has consistently shown that teacher turnover is higher in low income schools with high concentrations of students (and teachers) of color, the interpretation of this finding has not been quite as consistent. Some researchers interpret this finding to mean that teachers prefer to teach in wealthier, whiter schools (Boyd et al., 2005; Carroll et al., 2000; Scafidi et al., 2007). Others have found that rather than leaving schools because of high numbers of poor students of color, they are leaving because of poor working conditions characterized by lack of administrative and institutional support, lack of autonomy, and lack of resources (Allensworth et al., 2009; Johnson, Kraft & Papay, 2012). While some turnover is to be expected and possibly even beneficial, studies show that when teacher turnover happens at high rates, this can have an adverse impact on student achievement and learning.

High Poverty vs. Low Poverty Schools

While national statistics on teacher turnover reveal that about 16% of teachers leave their positions per year (about half of those leave the profession entirely), what is masked by viewing these statistics in the aggregate is the picture of turnover in high poverty schools. As an example, the Shranker Institute found that in the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), a disproportionate number of teachers who leave are from high poverty schools. Specifically, approximately 38.4% of teachers leave their positions in high poverty schools with 32.4% of these teachers leaving the teaching profession altogether. Conversely, in low poverty schools, only 17% left their position with only 13.2% leaving teaching (Arcaira et al., 2013). Multiple studies have asserted that high teacher turnover can have a detrimental effect on student learning outcomes

(Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013; Simon & Johnson, 2015). Further, 2012-13 data from the National Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS) found that while 21% of teachers from schools with 75-100% of students receiving reduced or free lunch either left teaching or moved to another school, only 12.8% of teachers from schools with 0-34% of such students left or moved. The impact of high teacher turnover can have a larger, disparate impact on poor, minority schools (Achinstein et al., 2010; Allensworth et al., 2009; Balu, Beteille, & Loeb, 2009; Guin, 2004; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson et al., 2005; Ronfeldt et al., 2013).

Public School vs. Charter Schools

Multiple studies have found that teacher turnover is higher in charter schools than in public schools. Data from the 2008-2009 Teacher Follow Up Survey (TFS) showed that average teacher turnover was about 15% in traditional public schools compared to 24% in charter schools (Keigher, 2010). What is less clear is why the rates of teacher attrition are higher in charter schools. In a 2014 study of charter school teacher turnover, Torres found that after controlling for all other factors, teacher perceptions of student disciplinary practices were the greatest predictor of teacher turnover in charter schools. The Shranker Institute asserts that the higher turnover rate in charter schools is due the fact that charter schools tend to hire younger, more inexperienced teachers who leave teaching at higher rates regardless of school type. According to the Shranker Institute, “if there is more overall churn in charter schools, this may simply be a result of the demographics of the teaching force or other factors, rather than any direct effect of charter schools *per se* (e.g., more difficult working conditions).” Despite this, the

referenced report also found that even after controlling for other factors, including teacher age and experience, the rate of teacher turnover in charter schools was still 33% higher than in public schools (Newton, Rivero, Fuller, & Dauter, 2011). Whatever the reasons for higher turnover this has the potential to have an adverse impact on the students who attend them.

Rationale for this Study

This qualitative multiple case study is needed for several reasons. While teacher turnover is one of the most studied and discussed phenomena in educational research, most of the data does not specifically address teacher turnover among Black males. Moreover, these studies do not examine pushout specifically, which is an important piece of understanding the reasons for turnover. Without qualitative inquiry, it is difficult to understand the underlying factors that contribute to teacher turnover. Further, it is difficult to explore turnover beyond broad categories such as, “stayers”, “movers”, and “leavers”. Those teachers who have been pushed out of their teaching positions for various reasons will be placed in the category of “mover” or “leaver”, but someone who is pushed out is not qualitatively the same as someone who retires, voluntarily takes another position, or leaves the profession to earn more money or have more professional autonomy. In addition to a shortage of inquiry regarding turnover of minority teachers overall, there is also limited research on the specific form of turnover – teacher pushout – among Black males who are the least represented in the teacher workforce. Thus, the main goal of this study was to illuminate and explore the stories of Black male teachers

who have been pushed out of their position. Their voices will help to better understand an important issue that may have strong implications for Black male teacher retention and school policy. This study focused specifically on Black male teachers in primary and secondary education who have experienced pushout. There is a focus on Black male teachers because there is a critical shortage of Black teachers in the United States. While research indicates that students of color, particularly Black students have better outcomes when they have interaction with at least one Black teacher (Oates, GLSC, 2003; Pigott & Cowen, 2000), Black male teachers have higher turnover rates and appear to be more likely to leave the teaching profession than other groups (ASI, 2015).

This qualitative study examined the stories of 9 Black male teachers who have been pushed out of their teaching position. Black male teachers who have taught in both public and charter schools were recruited to participate in 60-90 minute interviews designed to capture the stories that led to them being pushed out. The interviews were semi-structured to allow for narrative and storytelling beyond the constraints of the questions included in the protocol. Participants were encouraged to share specific stories and detailed events that ultimately led to their pushout. Collectively, these stories were coded for recurring themes to form a cohesive narrative about the ways in which Black male teachers leave their positions or the profession altogether. These stories and themes are important as they can provide valuable information that could potentially help schools to change policies and practices that create high teacher turnover and make it difficult to retain dedicated and qualified Black male teachers. This study also includes autoethnographic vignettes that supplement and provide more context to the stories provided by the men in this study

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Part I: Education Policy and the Decline of Black Teachers in America's Classrooms

The following section will provide historical context of the current state of education, particularly, it will provide context to the current turnover and pushout environment for Black teachers and Teacher of Color (ToCs). It is imperative to understand the historical events and policies which have led to a decline in the number of Black teachers. These policies and practices have had the effect of making teaching less appealing for Black teachers, making teaching a more difficult profession to enter and a less hospitable profession to remain in. These historical events, policies and practices have also created environments that are theoretically more conducive to the phenomenon under examination in this study, teacher pushout. While some studies discussed in this section focus on Black teachers specifically, many include Black teachers in the broader category with ToCs. This will be mentioned where this is the case.

Teaching While Black in America: From Brown v. Board of Education to Race to the Top

Beginning in the early 1860s, teaching was one of the most prestigious professions for Black people, particularly Black women. Post slavery, because of school segregation, there was a pressing need for Black teachers to educate the nations Black

children. Black schools also served the very important role of imparting community and cultural norms, and teachers were expected to play a role in the communities that they served. Teaching was one of the few paths to the middle class for Black professionals and was therefore an appealing career option for Black people looking for a way forward in the face of newly granted freedom (Butler, 1974; Fairclough, 2004).

As the racial politics of the nation have evolved, there have been several programs and pieces of legislation that have contributed to the evolution of the teaching profession for Black people and the nation. This section explores four major events that have contributed to this evolution and resulted in the decrease in the number of Black teachers in America. These events are: 1) U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 2) the Teach for America Corps, 3) No Child Left Behind, and 4) Race to the Top.

Brown v. Board of Education (1954). The historic supreme court case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* 347 U.S. 483 (1954) established that the segregation of Black and White students was unconstitutional. From the point of the passing of this law, states were expected to begin the process of integrating schools. Unfortunately, *Brown* also led to large scale firing of Black teachers. According to Hudson and Holmes (1994), in 1954, there were approximately 82,000 Black teachers responsible for the education of the nation's 2 million Black students. By 1964, a decade after *Brown*, over 38,000 Black teachers had lost their positions. As of 2012, the most recent year for which data were available, Black teachers only represented 7% of the teaching workforce while the percentage of Black students was 16% (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

The steady decline of Black teachers and educators in the years since school desegregation has been attributed to several factors: 1) the unwillingness of White parents to have their children educated by Black teachers. This is particularly significant because the onus of desegregation was placed on Black communities and schools when it came to bussing of children to formerly White schools and the subsequent closing of Black schools (Tillman, 2004), 2) the unintended perception that Black schools, and by extension Black teachers, were somehow inferior to White schools. This perception was created, in part by the insistence that Black children were being shortchanged and receiving inferior education due to segregation and the insistence that integrating Black students into White schools (not vice versa) would remedy this injustice, 3) the decline in opportunities and prestige of the teaching profession for Black people resulting in the a 66% decline in the number of Black students majoring in education between 1975 and 1985 alone (Hudson & Holmes, 1994).

The impact of *Brown* on both students and educators cannot be fully calculated because of inadequate record-keeping in the wake of the decision (Ethridge, 1979). What can be determined is that school desegregation led to widespread firing of Black teachers and educators, which also led to real and perceived instability of teaching as a profession for Black people (Madkins, 2011). It also led to the decline in the prestige of teaching for Black communities and an increase in the stigmatization of Black teachers as incompetent professionals (Shaw, 1996). In the years since *Brown v. Board of Education*, there has been a steady decline in the number of Black teachers in the education pipeline and an increase in the disproportionate representation of Black teachers vs. Black students in schools across the nation. According to Foster (1996), 50% of Black

professionals were teachers in the first half of the century. In the second half of the century, this number significantly decreased as Black teachers were displaced as a result of school integration (Irvine, 1988).

Teach for America (1990). Another initiative that has a generally positive image but is also believed to have had unintended negative consequences on the Black teacher workforce is Teacher for America (TFA), which is based on the 1989 undergraduate thesis of Wendy Kopp, and founded in 1990. The program recruits recent college graduates to teach in underprivileged urban and rural communities for a service period of two years. The inaugural class sent 500 TFA Corps members into schools in New York, North Carolina, Louisiana, Georgia, and Los Angeles (Dobbie & Fryer, 2015). Today, TFA has over 50,000 members and alumni who have taught more than 10 million students in 36 states and the District of Columbia (Raymond & Fletcher, 2002; Dobbie & Fryer, 2015; TFA, 2015).

Since its inception, TFA has received much criticism for sending young adults with upper middle-class backgrounds into communities that they are unfamiliar with after only 5 weeks of training. This training consists of co-teaching summer school classes with veteran teachers. Other critiques that have been leveled against the organization are that while the students served by TFA are 90% children of color, the most recent TFA Annual Report (2015) states that teaching recruits are 39% people of color. To be fair, in the teaching workforce as a whole, 83% of teachers are white, meaning that TFA is more diverse than the teaching workforce at large. However, as research indicates, having racial parity does not necessarily result in improved student outcomes. As TFA is becoming one of the largest suppliers of new teachers in the United States, the most

important consideration is whether TFA recruits are truly prepared to meet the unique needs of students of color in disadvantaged communities. A related factor that many state is problematic about the TFA paradigm is that rather than fill vacancies in high need areas, novice TFA teachers are replacing veteran teachers of color. These individuals are unlikely to stay in the classroom beyond their two-year commitment and often use TFA as a stepping-stone to leadership positions in education and policy. Additionally, assessments of the effectiveness of TFA estimate that teachers from the program are, at best, no more effective than non-TFA teachers, with no significant improvement in overall student achievement (Backes & Hansen, 2015; Heilig & Jez, 2014).

As it relates to the impact of TFAs impact on Black teachers in particular, several studies have indicated that the program has had a negative impact on Black teachers in general and Black non-TFA teachers in particular. In a critical policy analysis of TFAs impact on the Black teaching workforce, White (2016) asserted that through its two-pronged approach of educational reform both inside and outside of the classroom, TFA has both bolstered diversity through increased efforts to recruit Teachers of Color (ToCs) while simultaneously undermining diversity through the support of punitive policies that destabilize the schools where Black teachers work. Teach for America and its key partners and stakeholders have been on record for supporting neo-liberal reform policies that emphasize top down managerial styles and individual accountability without consideration of socio-cultural context. These reforms include: 1) high stakes testing with teacher and school accountability based on test scores, 2) market-based initiatives such as school choice and competition, 3) merit-based pay structures based on test scores, and 4) attacks on Teacher's Unions (Lipman, 2011; Kretchmar, Sondel, & Ferrare, 2014). These

reforms “neglect the expertise of seasoned teachers, grassroots community organizations, and many parent advocacy groups.” (Scott, 2011, p. 588). In addition, they often ignore addressing systems of inequality in favor of focusing on strict individual accountability for teachers and students (Harvey, 2005; Lipman, 2011).

Other critiques of the program contend that TFA is a classic case of “interest convergence”, meaning that the program exists as a means to primarily benefit the interests of its majority White recruits (Veltri, 2010; Lapayese, Aldana, & Lara, 2014). These benefits include the immediate economic benefits including salary, scholarships, and signing bonuses as well as future economic benefits associated with positive perceptions of service to “poor children”, fee waivers for graduate school applications, priority admission to various graduate school programs, and increased understanding of race and racism (albeit superficial). In their counter-story study of 15 former TFA teachers of color, Lapayese et al. (2014), found that many TFA alumni of color felt that the education about race was “Racism 101” and served only to benefit White teachers while ignoring and avoiding deep discussions about the impacts of racism and White privilege which made White recruits uncomfortable. According to participants, White TFA members were not pushed or expected to critically examine themselves and potential biases that they may have about students of color, which further disadvantages the very students they are expected to “help”. Ultimately, several participants felt that for many White TFA members, helping students was not the ultimate goal, rather, they were there to bolster their resumes for future career endeavors and often felt that the “hardship” they were expected to endure in urban classrooms may not be worth it in the end. Many participants also found the two-year commitment disturbing and felt that

displacing committed teachers for those who only planned to teach for a short period only served to further destabilize urban schools.

Many of the ideologies discussed tend to disproportionately lead to firing of teachers and administrators, school closings and turn-around efforts in urban schools, where Black teachers are most likely to teach. The reforms and policies informed by these ideologies disproportionately lead to the termination and push-out of Black teachers, thereby diminishing the existing Black teacher workforce while replacing them with Black teachers who have come through the TFA pipeline and are more likely to subscribe to and perpetuate ideologies that adversely impact Black veteran teachers. According to White (2016), this is the paradox created by TFAs push for diversity coupled with a policy and reform agenda that disproportionately impact teachers from diverse backgrounds.

No Child Left Behind (2001). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) was the reauthorization bill for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). The ESEA was an important aspect of President Lyndon B. Johnson's war on poverty, whose goal was to distribute funds to schools and school districts with high rates of students living in poverty. Since 1965, ESEA has been reauthorized by subsequent presidents every 4-6 years, usually under a new name and with new provisions added to fit the educational policy agenda of the current administration. NCLB was signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2001, and included as new provisions: 1) increased testing requirement for states which include annual testing of all students in grades 3-8, once in grades 10-12, and 2) setting Annual Yearly Progress goals (AYP) for students with particular emphasis on students from low income backgrounds, racial/ethnic

minorities, and English language learners (Linn, Baker, and Betebener, 2002; Rudalevige, 2003).

As outlined in extant research, one of the (un) intended consequences of NCLB was the further exacerbation of educational inequity in the most vulnerable schools in the United States. The primary mechanism of this increased inequity is increased pressure to improve performance in already struggling schools with few if any material and financial supports to make such improvements (Fusarelli, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Dee & Jacobs, 2010). Another potential unintended consequence of NCLB is that many people have asserted that by basing school performance on improved test scores that narrowly focus on math and English, students are actually learning less in other areas such as science and social studies. In addition, it is extremely difficult for schools to meet Adequate Yearly Progress goals because rather than measuring increases in scores, schools are expected to meet set thresholds and do not get recognized for relative improvement on tests, even if these improvements are significant compared to previous years. Often, failure to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals resulted in sanctions against schools including being targeted for school closure and school turnaround efforts, which include the firing of teachers and staff, decreases in funding for already under resourced schools, and school takeover by the state or charter schools. Many posit that the goals set forth by NCLB are less of a measure of school progress and more a measure of social inequity and poverty (Hirsch, 2007b). This is not a big stretch given that performance on standardized tests improves as poverty increases (Au, 2016; Boaler, 2003).

In studies of the impact of NCLB on education in Texas and New York, Hursh (2004, 2007a, 2007b) found that schools went to extreme measures to avoid sanction from the federal government because of a failure to meet AYP goals. For example, in Houston, TX, it was found that after the passage of NCLB, there was a significant increase in 9th grade retention (the year before tests were given) as well as significant increases in the number of children placed in Special Education (where tests are given but not counted). The increased retention had another unintended consequence – increased dropout rates. These schools were also found to be covering up dropout increases by saying that students had left to attend alternative schools or to take the GED. This was not accurate, but the pressure to meet unrealistic goals made many administrators feel like they didn't have a choice in the matter. No doubt, such measures lead to increased pressure on teachers and decreased job security and job satisfaction. Given that the Black teachers are more likely to work in urban schools that experience the highest rates of inequity (US Department of Education, 2016), NCLB's impact on Black teachers cannot be underestimated. In an environment already primed for the seeds of neo-liberal education reform, NCLB further cemented a trajectory that would make it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain ToCs, particularly Black teachers.

Race to the Top (2009). Race to the Top (RTTT) is a competitive grant program created by an executive order by President Barack Obama. After Congress failed to immediately reauthorize ESEA in 2008 (Mcguinn, 2014). Established as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), RTTT provided \$4.35 billion to encourage innovation and reform in the following areas: 1) turning around low-achieving schools, 2) improving standards and assessments, 3) improving use and collection of

data, 4) increasing effectiveness and equity and teacher distribution. In three phases, 18 states and the District of Columbia were awarded \$4.1 billion. Many of the key tenets of RTTT are ones that have been proven through research to have an adverse impact on teacher diversity. While NCLB was much maligned, much less anger has been targeted toward RTTT. This is interesting because if anything, RTTT doubled down on NCLBs in teacher compensation and school funding to high-stakes standardized testing. School administrators and teachers are highly incentivized to “teach to the test” because their very livelihoods are linked to children’s performance on these tests (Tanner, 2013). For example, increasing the emphasis on standards and assessments as a way to determine school success and teacher effectiveness has been shown to decrease teacher autonomy, one of the key factors in the attrition of TOCs (Haberman, 2005; Ingersoll, 2007; Ingersoll & May, 2011; Renzulli, Parrott, & Beattie, 2011). In his 2011 assessment of RTTT, Joe Onosko outlines 8 reasons why the initiative fails to address issues of underperformance among out nation’s most vulnerable children. Among them, he asserts that the plan “creates a false savior in charter schools” and “creates hostile school environments, undermines teacher- student relations, and inflicts the greatest harm on students in greatest need— that is, minority students and students living in poverty.” These issues are particularly relevant to the understanding of what it takes to recruit and retain Black educators because: 1) teacher turnover is higher in charter schools than it is in public schools and 2) lack of autonomy and harsh work environments also lead to high levels of teacher turnover.

In addition, school turnaround efforts have been proven decrease the number of TOCs significantly. School turnaround efforts often undertake reform without regard to

student culture, student needs, and parental involvement. Additionally, many turnaround models require the replacement of principals and most teaching staff (Peck & Reitzug, 2014). This requirement is predicated on the assumption that teaching in low-performing environments is the same as being a low-performing teacher. Turnarounds also ignore other factors that contribute to learning effectiveness such as reducing teacher attrition and providing adequate support to struggling teachers so that they have a better opportunity to succeed. This assumption is made without consideration of contextual factors such as poverty, neighborhood and community factors, and measures of learning other than standardized testing (Kersaint, 2005; Futernick, 2010). While RTTT was not explicitly targeted to poor, underserved schools, the targeted interventions of aggressive turnaround efforts for schools with low test scores, tying teacher compensation and performance to test scores, and increased expansion of charter schools are all policies which have a disparate impact on poor schools with high percentages of students of color and the Black teachers who are more likely to teach in them (Karp, 2010; Kirby, Berends, & Naftel, 1999).

As highlighted in the section, current and past events and policies in education have incrementally created environments that have led to fewer Black teachers entering into and remaining in the teaching profession. The following section will discuss the impact of having fewer Black teachers, particularly in schools with a majority of Black students. As previously stated, some of the studies in this section sampled all Teachers of Color, which includes Black teachers. This will be specified when relevant.

Black Students, Black Teachers: The Impact on Student Achievement

The benefits of having some racial and cultural congruence between students and teachers has been studied extensively. Research indicates that Black students having at least one Black teacher has a positive impact on student engagement and success. In particular, studies have found that Black teachers tend to rate Black students' behavior more favorably than White teachers, have higher expectations for their achievement, and that racial incongruence can lead to lower test scores and harsher disciplinary action against Black students (Oates, GLSC, 2003; Pigott & Cowen, 2000). In one study in particular, Pigott & Cowen (2000) found that teacher perception of students impacted student test scores significantly. Particularly, when White teachers had negative perceptions or positive perceptions of students, test scores reflected this perception. On the other hand, Black teacher perception tended to have a more "race neutral" impact, meaning that regardless of Black teacher perception, student test scores remained the same. The finding that White teachers' perceptions of students had more of an impact on test scores is of particular concern considering studies that have found that White teachers tend to have more negative perceptions of Black students (Dee, 2005; Hyland, 2005; Sleeter, 2008).

Researchers have also found that White teachers also have lower expectations of Black students which can lead to students performing worse and being challenged less than other students (Hauser-Cram, Sirin, & Stipek, 2003; Pang & Sablan, 1998; Warren, 2002). Conversely, some research has found that racial congruence is not enough to ensure student success, particularly if the teachers differ in other important areas such as background and socioeconomic status or if teachers created fun, supportive, family type

learning environments (Howard, 2001; Love & Kruger, 2005). While these findings may have merit, it is still important to note that most studies of Black student achievement highlight the benefits of having Black teachers. This is not to suggest that White teachers cannot be effective with Black students, only to illuminate the benefits of Black students having reliable, effective, and competent Black teachers as well.

Why Teachers Leave

There is a large body of research on why teachers leave the profession, with a particular emphasis on school factors and student characteristics. While much of the research is contradictory, most of the evidence points to the fact that teachers are more likely to leave low income, urban schools, with high concentrations of minority students (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wycoff, 2005; Carroll, Reichardt, Guarino, & Mejia, 2000; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivken, 2004). Further, research shows that White teachers are more likely to leave urban schools with high percentages of non-White students while Black teachers are less likely to leave these schools than their White counterparts (Achinstein, Ogawa, & Sexton, 2010; Ingersoll & May, 2011; Kirby, Berends, & Naftel, 1999). Although research does tell us where teachers go when they leave, it tells us less about why. Some researchers have suggested that teachers leave low-performing, urban schools in favor of wealthier, whiter schools (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wycoff; Carroll, Reichardt, Guarino, & Mejia, 2000; Scadifi, Sjoquist, & Stinebrikner, 2007). Newer lines of inquiry suggest that it is not the types of students that teachers are fleeing, but rather, the work environments which, in urban schools, tend to have fewer institutional and administrative supports, less autonomy as it relates to curriculum and teaching philosophy,

and overall poorer working conditions which make it difficult for teachers to do their jobs (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012; Simon & Johnson, 2015).

In 2011, a survey of 70% of North Carolina's teachers found that teacher perceptions of their working conditions significantly impacted their decision to leave or stay at their school and in the education profession (Ladd, 2011). This was true, even when researchers controlled for student race and class. As with other studies, Ladd also found that teacher perception of school leadership was the single most influential factor in a teacher's decision to remain at a school. Time for collaboration and planning and expanded roles and autonomy were found to be significant contributing factors as well. Boyd et al. (2011) also found that working conditions in addition to teacher influence and autonomy, staff relations, student composition, quality of facilities, and school safety helped to determine school turnover. Each factor, except school safety, was statistically significant, but in the full statistical model, only teacher perceptions of school administration remained significant. These findings provide key clues as to why teachers in general, and TOCs, who are more likely to teach in the contexts where these findings are most relevant, in particular leave the teaching profession.

One of the main disadvantages that TOCs face in the workplace is that many of them enter the teaching profession with activists and humanistic agendas (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Many enter teaching in order to improve their communities or communities similar to the ones they came from, or to help students to avoid challenges and disadvantages that they or their communities of origin faced. These agendas are often at odds with Eurocentric teaching environments that emphasize individual modes of learning and markers of success (test scores, grades) rather than addressing the social

determinants of educational disparities such as institutional racism and poverty (Kohli & Pizarro, 2016). TOCs often report experiencing schools, where they are often one of few, as hostile, dismissive environments. In qualitative studies, teachers have reported that the schools where they teach are happy to have them present as cultural brokers and disciplinarians but are resistant to suggestions to change the learning environment to be more culturally responsive to students and their families (Irizarro & Donaldson, 2012; Kohli & Pizarro, 2016). These studies are important in illuminating the underlying causes of turnover among TOCs. The few quantitative studies that have been conducted to specifically gain understanding about turnover among TOCs have found that they tend to exit the profession because they lack autonomy, have little administrative support, and desire to work in environments where students are excited about learning. Qualitative inquiry provides deeper understanding of these findings. For example, in a qualitative inquiry of 11 teachers of color in urban schools, respondents reported that when they attempt to implement new pedagogical approaches that more closely reflect their students' cultural preferences and ways of learning they are met with resistance (Kohli, 2018).

Based on the current literature, historical events combined with past and current educational policy have led to a decline in the number of Black teachers in America's classrooms. This decline has a negative impact on Black students (Oates, GLSC, 2003; Pigott & Cowen, 2000). According to previous qualitative research, Teachers of Color in general and Black teachers in particular enter teaching with more activists and humanitarian leanings (Simon & Johnson, 2015) and leave their schools because they tend to be poorly resourced, less supportive, and offer less autonomy (Johnson &

Birkeland, 2003; Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012; Simon & Johnson, 2015). Given what is known about the high turnover rates of teachers of color and the potential benefits of such teachers to students of color (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012; Oates, GLSC, 2003; Pigott & Cowen, 2000; Simon & Johnson, 2015), it is important to understand the underlying reasons why TOCs leave so that effective measures can be implemented to address the issue.

Part II: Black Male Teachers

Facilitators and Barriers for Black Men Entering Education

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Black men make up only 2% of teachers in the United States as of 2011, the last year for which statistics are available. Black men have not always represented such a small percentage of the teaching workforce, but the overall decline of Black teachers has been most significant among Black males. It is estimated that between 1840 and 1940, the male/female teacher ratio went from 49% male, 51% female to 21% male, 79% female. The impact the *Brown v. Board* had on the overall numbers of Black teachers has most certainly had further impact on this disparity.

It would seem that in order to remedy this issue, it is necessary to understand why Black men choose to enter into and remain in the teaching profession. In a 1999 quantitative study of 140 teachers in Maryland, Brown found that the single significant contributing factor to Black males entering education was the desire to impart knowledge. Bridges (2011), interviewed 10 Black male teachers from the hip-hop

generation (people born between 1965 and 1984) and found that there were three contributing factors that helped shape their motivation to teach: 1) call to service, 2) commitment to self-awareness, and 3) resistance to social injustice. Black teachers in the study expressed a desire to help address the needs of vulnerable communities and children, and a sense of responsibility to work with young Black males in particular. They also felt the need to foster a “a deeper understanding of self, and [their] students, as connected to a family, a community, a collective people, and the world.” Finally, participants in this study had strong inclinations to resist social injustice and importantly, saw their role as educators as critical to this resistance.

In addition to understanding the facilitators of Black men entering into education, it is also key to understand the barriers. Issues that have emerged as deterrents for all men to enter education include: 1) perceived low social status of education, particularly elementary education, 2) low salaries, and 3) having few peers within educational settings (Coulter & McNay, 1993; King, 1998; Rice & Goessling, 2005; Wood & Houg, 1993). These studies were not conducted with Black male teachers exclusively, but provide some insight into factors that might contribute Black men choosing not to enter into the field of education.

Black Male Teacher Turnover

In an often-cited attempt to urge and also to create the opportunity and incentive for more Black men to enter the field of education, then U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan created the “Black Men to the Blackboard” campaign on the Morehouse University Campus in 2011. The goal of this program was to recruit 80,000 Black male

teachers by 2015. The initiative did not meet this goal. Almost a decade later, Black men still comprise only 2% of the teacher workforce (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). There have been modest increases in Black male teachers with a 30% increase between 1988 and 2012. This increase is 16% less than the overall growth of the teaching workforce during the same timeframe (2016). While there has been some increase in Black male teachers, Black males also have some of the highest rates of turnover (Ingersol & May, H., 2011; Kirby, Berends, & Naftel, 1999).

There are few studies that specifically examine turnover among Black male teachers. One study which examined teacher turnover in Texas found that of all groups, Black males and white females were more likely to leave the teaching profession (Kirby, Berends, & Naftel, 1999) while national data suggests that they are more likely to move to new schools but remain in the profession (Achinstein, Ogawa & Sexton, 2010; Ingersoll & May, 2011). For all groups, stress is given as a major reason for teacher turnover. Haberman (2007) found that Black teachers, particularly Black males reported being called upon to serve as representatives and spokespersons for Black people, which was a significant source of stress.

While these studies provide some insight into the reasons for turnover among Black men, they do not shed light on why turnover rates are higher among Black men, nor do they address the specific issue of pushout among this population. This study provides a starting point for examining this understudied phenomenon.

Chapter III

METHODS

For this study, I chose to use qualitative methods because they are the most effective way to discover the meaning that people assign to their experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This is an important step when seeking to provide a foundation for in-depth research on rarely investigated topics and *exploration* is warranted (Stake 2006). In this case, while teacher turnover has been investigated and quantified, the reasons that teachers leave, specifically, the reasons Black males feel “pushed out” of the classroom have not been explored. This qualitative study utilized a multiple case study method to examine teacher pushout as a sub-category of teacher turnover. Multiple case study methodology is employed as a means to gain insight into a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2002; Stake, 2006, Yin, 2009). According to Stake, case studies are conducted because:

we are interested in them [case studies] for both their uniqueness and commonality. We would like to hear their stories. We may have reservations about some things the people tell us, just as they will question some of the things we will tell about them. But we enter the scene with a sincere interest in learning how they function in their ordinary pursuits and milieus and with a willingness to put aside many presumptions while we learn (p. 1).

Qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to explore phenomena, such as feelings or thought processes that are difficult to learn through conventional quantitative research methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For the present study, I explored participants’ perceptions and lived experiences (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006) of being pushed out of the classroom. I asked open-ended questions that allowed for the most elaboration on

the reasons *why* study participants believe they were targeted for pushout. In addition to open-ended semi-structured interview questions, Black male teachers answered the following overarching *how* and *what* questions: 1) What events occurred that gave you the feeling/perception that you were being pressured to leave your position? 2) What event was the initial catalyst for your departure/dismissal? 3) How were you treated/perceived by your fellow teachers? Administrators? Depth was added to the interviews by focusing on specific events that participants felt were the key contributors to their push out.

This section will describe the process for selecting cases, data collection and analysis procedures as well as discuss ethical considerations. As with all qualitative research, this section will also provide a brief overview of the background of the researcher and highlight how this background informs and influences the research questions as well as the eventual interpretation of the data.

Case Selection

Nine Black male teachers who have been pushed out of schools in various locations in the United States were interviewed for this study in order to gain multiple perspectives of teacher pushout. All teachers were Black males who have been dismissed from at least one school and perceive that they were pressured or pushed out of their position. Teachers were recruited via social media and snowball sampling, meaning that teachers who wished to participate also referred others who they know or believe have experienced pushout for participation.

Data Collection

Teachers were recruited via several online social media networks for educators using a recruitment post (See Appendix A). This method was chosen because these networks provide access to large numbers of teachers who meet the recruitment criteria. Potential participants were asked to complete a brief survey to determine if they met the criteria. Eligible participants completed a brief survey containing demographic questions and questions regarding their professional and educational background and experiences. Once selected, participants were contacted to schedule a time to interview.

Demographic Survey. The demographic survey consists of twelve questions. The questions inquired about age, number of children, children's ages, degrees earned, marital status, income, race, ethnicity, employment status, current employment in the field of education, city of residence.

Interviews. Interviews with teachers lasted 1 – 1 ½ hours and were conducted over the phone, face-to-face, or via Skype based on the comfort and convenience of the participant. Interviews were audio-recorded. Participants were reminded that breaks are allowed if they felt the need to do so. They were also informed that to protect their identity, they would be given a pseudonym. Each participant was read an informed consent statement and provided verbal consent prior to the interview. They were also emailed a copy of the Consent Form after the completion of the interview. They were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any point.

An interview protocol was developed for this study (See Appendix B). The interviews conducted for this study were semi-structured to allow for alternate lines of

inquiry based on participant responses. The protocol consisted of nine questions, with sub-questions included in three of the questions to encourage dialogue. The questions inquired about why participants wanted to become teachers, their personal teaching philosophies, and then asked a series of questions pertaining to their specific experience with pushout. Specific questions include: 1) When did you first know that you wanted to become a teacher?, and 2) What are some of the things you were asked to do that made you feel uncomfortable? Did you do them anyway? How did you feel afterward? These questions are designed to encourage storytelling and narrative rather than binary responses. These questions were designed to produce rich narrative that was thoroughly examined for recurring themes. The last section asked participants to provide any information they would like to add that they feel is important (See Appendix B).

Data Analysis

Interviews were recorded and transcribed using Otter.ai software. Before the data was analyzed, the researcher listened to all interviews and made corrections to the automatic transcription that was completed by the software program. The process of listening to and transcribing allowed the researcher to become more acquainted with the data (Riessman, 1993). The researcher then created Microsoft Word files for the interviews. All files were protected by setting a password. All files were saved in the researcher's portable computer which is password protected. The researcher used the qualitative software Atlas.ti 8 program for data management and analysis.

Thematic analysis was conducted case-by-case and then by cross-case analysis (Stake, 2006). The researcher coded all interviews for meaning and then explored recurring and salient themes within and between participant experiences. Themes that were salient across all cases and individual themes that vary greatly from all other cases were kept. I followed Braun and Clarke's (2013) step-by-step guidelines for thematic analysis. These guidelines are (1) familiarize yourself with your data, (2) generate initial codes, (3) Read each transcript to immerse in the data, (4) review themes, (5) define and name themes, and (6) produce the report. Stake (2006) describes three different cross case procedures for a multiple case study.

Validation

The validity of qualitative research is often questioned in behavioral and social science. To address these questions, I utilized various validation strategies outlined by Creswell & Miller (2000) to ensure that this study is credible and rigorous. Credibility for this study was achieved using the validation strategies of researcher reflexivity, thick rich description, participant clarification and peer debriefing. As a means of engaging in reflexivity, I include autoethnographic vignettes describing my experiences as an educator who has experienced pushout. Thick rich description is achieved by using the words and stories of participants under each theme and by providing detailed description of each of the cases. Participant clarification was used when there are themes or perspectives that are unclear or open to alternative interpretation. Finally, I used a qualitative research debriefer. This individual is familiar with qualitative data analysis.

I used Stake's "critique checklist" to assess the quality of the report generated from this inquiry (1995, p.131). This twenty-criteria checklist is used to assess the quality of case study reports. These criteria are:

- 1) Is the report easy to read?
- 2) Does it fit together, each sentence contributing to the whole?
- 3) Does the report have a conceptual structure (for example, themes or issues?)
- 4) Are its issues developed in a serious and scholarly way?
- 5) Is the case adequately defined?
- 6) Is there a sense of story to the presentation?
- 7) Is the reader provided with some vicarious experience?
- 8) Have quotations been used effectively?
- 9) Are headings, figures, artifacts, appendixes, and indexes used effectively?
- 10) Was it edited well, then again with a last-minute polish?
- 11) Has the writer made sound assertions, neither over-nor under-interpreting?
- 12) Has adequate attention been paid to various contexts?
- 13) Were sufficient raw data presented?
- 14) Were the data resources well chosen and in sufficient number?
- 15) Do observations and interpretations appear to have been triangulated?
- 16) Are the role and point of view of the researcher nicely apparent?
- 17) Is the nature of the intended audience apparent?
- 18) Is empathy shown for all sides?
- 19) Are personal intentions examined?
- 20) Does it appear that individuals were put at risk?

Ethical Considerations

All of the participants were treated in accordance to the ethical guidelines of the Columbia University Teachers College Institutional Review Board (IRB). Although there are no identifiable risks for participating in this study, a couple of considerations were kept in mind when dealing with study participants. First, while participants were being interviewed regarding situations where they were pushed out of a teaching position, they may still be teaching or in the field of education in some other capacity. This may cause some concern and all necessary precautions were taken to protect the privacy and identity of all participants. There was also the possibility that teachers might feel uncomfortable discussing the experience of leaving or being dismissed from a teaching position. These considerations were incorporated during the research design stage. Every caution was taken to ensure that participants felt safe, comfortable, and they were reminded that they had the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

The Sample

The study sample consisted of 9 Black male teachers. The average age of participants was 43 years with a range from 32-50. The average number of years teaching was 18.5 with a range from 9-26. Four participants worked in middle schools and 5 worked in elementary schools. Seven participants were still teaching, while two had left the profession. Two participants were administrators at the middle school level.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Participants	Age	Grade Level	Years Teaching	Subject Area	Still Teaching?
John Williams	45	Middle	17	English, PE	Yes
Daryl Perry	44	Elementary	18	PE	Yes
Terry Jones	50	Middle	26	Math, Administration	No
Michael Conley	45	Elementary	21		Yes
Jason Washington	32	Elementary	9		Yes
Edward Whitfield	48	Elementary	23		No
Carlos Walker	37	Middle	14	English	*Yes
Corey Baker	39	Elementary	15		Yes
Sean Parker	47	Middle	24	Social Studies, Administration	Yes

*Carlos is now an administrator outside of the United States (Dubai).

Findings

The Themes

Initial coding of the interviews yielded a total of 61 codes. After narrowing down and combining similar codes, there were a total of 30 codes which were then placed into 6 categories and 3 themes (discussed in the following section). The following table provides a description of these codes.

Table 2. Codes and Categories

Final Category	Final Theme	Code	Definition
The Reason	Responsibility	role model	The feeling of needing to serve as a role model for students, Black male students in particular.
		community	The desire to give back to the community through teaching and mentoring
		father-figure	Feeling a sense of responsibility to serve as a father figure for students. Also refers to feeling a sense of responsibility to one's own children and that feeling transferring to other children who may not have a father figure
		better life	The need to show students that they can have access to a "better life" through education
Calling	Calling	higher purpose	Feeling that teaching is not just a career but also gives one a sense of higher purpose
		blessed	The feeling of having a natural ability or being "blessed", or having a gift to teach and reach youth
Love	Love	love for teaching	Teaching because one receives a sense of joy when watching children grow and learn new skills

		love for kids	Loving being around and helping children
		nurturer	Feeling a sense of responsibility to be viewed as a nurturer. This sense is particularly related to needing to demonstrate that men are nurturing and that children need to see men in nurturing roles
The Reality	Pressure to Conform	keep silent	Feeling pressure to not speak up about issues on the schools, make waves or be outspoken
		go with the flow	Feeling that there was a system in place that was unchangeable and not to be questioned
		the solution	The feeling that one was hired to be the solution to disciplinary issues, particularly issues with Black male students
	Pressure to Discipline	scare children	Being expected to use harsh tactics to make children fall in line
		imposed negative masculinity	This refers to feeling that people had preconceived notions about manhood and masculinity and expected men to either conform to these conceptions or defy the stereotypes depending on the situation or desires of others
		over-discipline	Pressure to enact what one perceives to be punishments that are too harsh for the infraction
		under discipline	Pressure to enact what one perceives to be punishments that are not harsh enough for the infraction
		unable to enact harsh discipline	Feeling unequipped to be a disciplinarian
		unwilling to enact harsh discipline	Being unwilling to be the primary disciplinarian for students, Black male students in particular
	Not Being Heard Other	feeling disrespected	Feeling that one's voice, ideas, and opinions are unwelcome and

		d	unappreciated
		feeling unheard	Feeling that one's input and ideas are being ignored
		ostracized	Feeling placed on the outside of the social and professional structure within the school
		disciplinary action	Being disciplined for things that others are not disciplined for
		I've been a boy	Feeling a sense of connection to Black male students because one was a Black boy.
		walking on eggshells	Feeling the need to be overly careful in order to avoid being fired, disciplined or reprimanded
The Removal	Incidents with students	protecting students	Having a feeling that one is being disciplined or singled out for advocating for students
		disciplining students	Having a feeling that one is being disciplined or singled out for providing what one perceives as needed or appropriate discipline
	Incidents with teachers	disagreements	Having negative interactions with fellow teachers
		misunderstandings	Feeling that one's behavior is misinterpreted and negatively received
		accusations	Being accused of negative behavior that contributes to the escalation of pushout
	Incidents with administration	called to the office	Being summoned to the Principal of Head of School's office for minor infractions

The Pattern

Upon examining the data from the 9 interviewees, a pattern emerged. These narratives revealed that Black male teachers experience pushout in three phases that are

characterized by several sub-themes. I call these three phases, the Reason, the Reality, and the Removal phases. Below is a visual depiction of this framework:

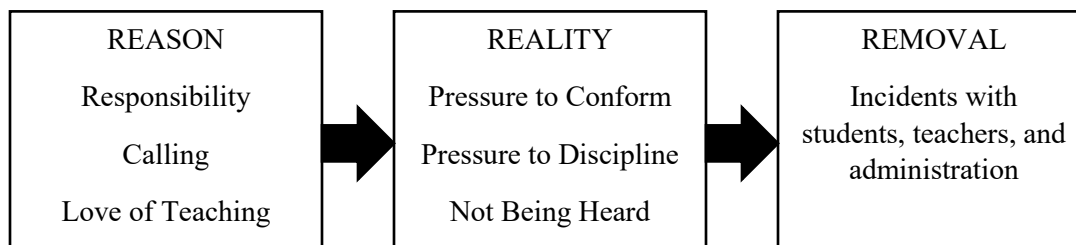


Figure 1. Phases of Pushout

The Reason. The Reason phase of pushout as study participants describe it, is the phase when teachers first enter the profession and have the feeling that they can change the world. As described by the participants in this study, they enter teaching with a sense of purpose and have very specific “reasons” that they choose to teach. They enter with a real sense of optimism and belief that they can and will make a difference with their students. While they are under no illusion that the task will be easy, they also believed that they will be supported by the school administration and will be effective in the classroom. Several teachers recalled that during their first year or two teaching they did not experience any issues with administration, but later, due to changes in policy and/or administration they started having problems. One participant, John, said, “at first, let me say the first couple of years, I didn’t experience that push back. It wasn’t until maybe about the middle of the second year, going into the third year that I began to experience a little bit of the push back from administration. It’s like, once they started realizing that I wasn’t a ‘yes man’ type of dude – you know, that I would push back against the system, they started pushing back against me.” Terry, a Dean of Students, noticed the shift at his school when a new Principal was hired. When she came in she really wanted to “start

fresh with her own people” and started strategically replacing teachers, administrators and support staff. He was one of the last to be removed

There were some recurring themes during the Reason phase of pushout for these men. The salient themes that came up in almost every interview were: 1) participants felt a sense of responsibility to give back to youth, particularly Black males, 2) participants felt that teaching was more than a career, it was a calling, and 3) participants entered teaching because they loved it and felt a true sense of fulfillment from teaching. The stories that the men tell about the Reason phase of their teaching career are consistent with existing research on Black male teachers. The sense of responsibility, calling, and love for teaching can be summed up as a sense of social justice, which researchers have found to be key motivators for Black men to enter the teaching profession and are key contributors to job satisfaction (Bridges, 2011; Lyön, Johnson, & Hassan, 1999; Lynn, 2006).

Responsibility. During the interviews with the participants in this study, all of the men expressed that they had a sense of optimism when they first began teaching. One of the main themes of why the men first entered teaching was that they had a sense of responsibility to enter teaching in order to be good role models and to teach children, particularly Black boys in struggling schools and communities. For example, one participant John, a 45 year old middle school teacher, started volunteering at the charter school his son went to when he entered the 6th grade. He eventually got hired as a Teacher’s Assistant and later became a Head Teacher. When asked why he wanted to teach, he stated:

My oldest son, who's now 29, was just entering in middle school, 6th grade. And I saw that there were some challenges that he was facing in the public school

system. And so as an involved parent, I made it my business to get involved with the school and activities and even visit classrooms and provide some assistance to the teachers during his education experience.

John's statement that he "made it his business" to be present at the school indicates that initially he felt responsible for his own son and later extended this sense of responsibility to the other children and the school at large. Other participants expressed feeling responsible to help young people and to impart a sense of the importance of education to their students:

I want to help young people that are dealing with some of the things that I was dealing with, you know, as a young man. – Daryl, 44, High School Teacher and Football Coach

...number one was, you know, helping young people understand that education isn't just something that you have to do just get college man, as Malcolm X says, it's a passport. It's passport into many things, you know, you may start out saying that you want to be this in education, but you may end up being something else. All it does is it gives you an opportunity to open some doors. – Jason, 27, Elementary Instrumental Music Teacher

I felt like it was my responsibility and I think that just speaks to a cultural climate and environment where a lot of us people of color when we're in an environment where we're the minority we feel like we hold the whole weight of our race on our shoulders where we represent our whole ethnic group. – John

Calling. In addition to feeling a sense of responsibility, participants also felt that teaching was a calling. For example, Daryl said, “, this is something that I feel like I'm called to do”. Similarly, when John first started volunteering at his sons school, he didn't recognize teaching as his calling, but the more he interacted with the children, the more he knew this was what he was meant to do:

I felt it was a new calling. I really didn't recognize it as a new calling then. I've been involved with children in more so the athletic arena. So I was used to, you know, supporting the youth and working with the youth, but in at this particular time on academic level was new for me. And I realize this calling now, but at that time, I didn't realize it as a calling. – John

I don't know how I got the ability. I don't know even know how I got the skills, it's just what God blessed me with. I know how to get into these rough schools and say, "we're going to do this and this" and I can turn that school around. I know what things work and I'm going to go in and build relationships with these Black babies and give them support because I'm just like damn I was young, Black, poor, from a single parent family with domestic abuse. So, I can relate to a lot of the kids. – Sean

I want to contribute to the growing healthy children that look like me. I want to be a champion for them and help them throughout their situations. It was one of those things where, you know, it's my passion. It's what I want to do and it comes easy to me. I just want to be a positive light and their life in some way shape or form so that they can look back with some positivity about education and know that, hey, somebody cared about me. – Corey

Hansen (1995) describes having a sense of calling as “a hopeful, outward looking sentiment, a feeling of wanting to engage the world in some substantive way (p.5).”

Existing research asserts that when teachers have a strong sense of calling and commitment to teach, they are more likely to remain in the profession despite hardship (Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2011; Buskist, Benson, & Sikorski, 2005). This small sample seems to confirm this assertion given that most of the men in this study remained in the field of education despite challenges and one or more pushout experiences.

Vignette 1: Called to Serve

There are times when you just “know”. I had never really thought much about teaching or working with kids. I was 21 years old, in undergrad and studying psychology at a Historically Black University in Oklahoma. Honestly, my main focus was football. Making it to the NFL. It was through football that I discovered my love for teaching.

The summer before my senior year the football team was sponsoring a Little League Football camp for elementary aged boys. I was excited about it because I was excited about all things football. Throughout the summer, though, I started realizing that

this was so much bigger than football. I found that I loved teaching and interacting with the kids, being a positive role model, and teaching them life lessons. I loved when they came to me for advice, high fives, hugs and horseplay. I did not know when I started that summer of volunteering that I would find my true calling. I wanted to be a teacher.

Love. Another motivating factor during the Reason phase of teaching was simply the love for teaching or “imparting knowledge”. Terry, 50, has taught at the elementary, middle and high school level. His last position before being pushed out and leaving the field of education after more than 25 years was as a Dean of Students at a K-8 performing arts charter school. Because of his upbringing, he developed a love for teaching that stemmed from his experiences with “community teachers”:

Growing up in the hood, just being a child you know, living in the city, New York City, on the block everybody taught you something. And there was always like a daycare or block party or after school program and you see the old elders in the building teach karate and teach us how to beat on the drums. From there I just got the love of teaching people stuff. That made me want to become a teacher. – Terry

Other participants found joy in teaching and loved being a nurturing figure in the lives of children:

I enjoy being a part of the learning process, I enjoy seeing young children of African heritage see the importance of becoming smarter than they were. So that was invigorating and inspiring for me. So I just love being a part of that process. – John

The most fulfilling aspect of teaching - getting the students to believe in themselves to get them to believe in me and to show them that they're far more capable of learning material and applying it to life outside of the classroom. – Michael, Elementary School Teacher

I just love kids. I love getting the chance to show kids, hey, men can be nurturers. Men can be loving. It's not just women. It's really important for boys – Black boys – to see Black men in nurturer roles so they know that it's okay, you know? I like being the one to show them and be a positive example. – Sean

This is particularly true as it relates to the need to impact the lives of Black boys in particular:

I'll call it a sense of responsibility, as far as the disciplinary tactics, as far as teaching black males, because we already know what it's like in society for a black male as opposed to being black female. – Michael

I'm really about lifting up black boys and calling out inequalities that's affecting black boys and black males. – Terry

Some of these kids may not have father figures in their life. And sometimes it takes them having a relationship with a teacher to understand, 'wow, you know, when I grow up, I want to be like Mr. Perry. You know, I want to go to school, I want to have a life, and I want to do those things. You know, he taught me a lot in this classroom about not only academics, but my work ethic, you know, being the best, not settling for less. He also taught me about being a man.' – Daryl

I should be part of the process before we kick this kid out or before we reprimand a kid or before we say he can't come back to this school. So I should sit down at the table and discuss those type of things and have a legitimate say. Why? Because I have the lens, because I've been a boy. Because I may have experienced some of those things. And that's one of the reasons why you hired me is to handle these tough situations to handle black boys that may be a little tough. – Jason

It's important for schools to have Black men teachers because they really understand Black boys and are able to talk to young men the way young men talk to each other. Something that may be missing in that young man's life. That might be why he's acting out because he doesn't have that representation in his life. But now because you have this representation in your building, in your classroom, in organizing and making decisions, now it's going to help these young men who are making bad decisions hopefully be able to make some good decisions. So there is a big time value for men and especially black men to be in schools. -Edward, 48, Elementary School Teacher

When I was the principal at a high school in the hood, these kids came in a little more rough around the edges – not aggressive - but you know, we need to know what's in your bag. What's going on? How was your weekend? We would try to find out what's going on in the community because a lot of things happened on the bus, a lot of things happened in the community and trickled back at school and it stems from some of the stuff that happened from the males, from the football field, to the front of the store. So we tried to keep our ear to the ground with the Black males for those things. So certain schools you got to know your population and you gotta know your males. You got to be willing to just talk to all the males. Get to know them. Get them to trust you. Get them to love you so when problems

arise, they come to you and you can try to help them. – Sean, 50 Middle School Principal

The Reality. At different phases of their careers, each participant experienced a point at their pushout school(s) where they began to realize that the altruistic goals that they entered teaching with may not be realized. There were several recurring themes during this phase. Participants expressed they often experienced: 1) pressure to be the disciplinarian, particularly for Black boys and 2) pressure to conform to policies and practices that participants felt were ineffective and unethical. It is during this phase that participants began to question whether they could remain in their current school or the field.

Pressure to be the Disciplinarian – Particularly for Black Boys.

Vignette 2: Making Faces

I loved serving as a Dean of Students at an elementary charter school in Brooklyn, NY. I would arrive early everyday to make sure that I was there to greet the kids with hugs and high fives. During lunch and class transitions, I walked the halls and spoke to the students. At recess, I played games with the kids. Things were going great until I was called in to see the Head of School, a Black woman, about a month later. When I went to the office, the Head of School said:

“We need to talk about how you interact with the kids.”

“Okay,” I replied, confused.

“You aren’t mean enough.”

“What?”

“The kids should be scared of you. You need to make stern faces and walk around like you mean business. You’re the Dean, the students need to know that you’re in charge.”

As crazy as it sounds, she started demonstrating various faces I could make to intimidate and scare the students. I watched in disbelief until I was dismissed from her office. It was the first sign that I might not make it at this school. It wasn’t the last.

In his research, Anthony Brown discusses the concept of “human kinds” (2012). The basic premise is based on Hacking’s research (1995), which contends that the social sciences have contributed to the formulations of categories of people that we can generalize about and through these generalizations we can extrapolate truths about these broad categories of people. Brown asserts that within the field of education, Black males have been constructed into a human kind and as a result, they have been essentialized and categorized as the solution to dealing with difficult students, particularly Black boys. Assumptions that are made about Black men through these generalizations include: 1) all Black men are capable of being effective disciplinarians, 2) all Black men are equipped to connect with and correct difficult students, and 3) all Black men enter the profession with a desire to be the solution to the “problem” of the difficult Black male student.

While many of the participants in this study indicated that they felt a sense of responsibility to address the needs of Black male students, this sense of responsibility – and the expectation from school administrators and fellow teachers – can also lead to issues in the school. Firstly, because Black males are often hired with the expectation that they will be the solution to the school’s problems with Black males, they are often limited to this role (Brown, 2012). Second, all Black male teachers may not have the skills or the

desire to be disciplinarians and father figures to Black male students. Many participants in this study expressed the conflict between having a desire and a sense of responsibility to help guide the Black males but not wanting to be relegated to the role of disciplinarian and enforcer. Jason, an elementary school music teacher stated: “I felt frustrated because I was seen as ineffective if I couldn't be the domineering person in the building that the boys would respect just because I raised my voice or things like that.” He also recounted experiences where he was expected to help female colleagues deal with Black male students who were misbehaving. While he didn't mind doing this at times, it became a disruption to his class routine. In addition, some teachers expressed dissatisfaction when, instead of yelling, he used methods such as restorative justice and positive reinforcement to help the students understand their behavior and make better choices in the future.

According to him:

Raising my voice to an unacceptable level was sort of expected. Embarrassing kids, calling kids out in front of the class was cool. Like, cool, like it was okay. It was permissible. Uh, what else? In-school suspension. Yeah, like being real confrontational with the boys was okay. Cuz it was about control, it was like a power struggle that was illustrated. And to some degree, it was effective. I wasn't very effective with these methods, but when I saw it employed, it was effective at getting a result in the moment, which was power or control but it wasn't sustainable because you weren't seeing an improvement in their behavior or the results in the choice making in the kids. It was literally just “I'm gon' overpower you.”

Terry, who has left the education field entirely recounted similar stories. As Dean of Students for a K-8 performing arts charter school in Washington, DC, he was often expected to “bully” black boys into behaving. He said:

You know so sometimes I was put in that position that, “I need you to bully or I need you to bully a Black boy into acting right.” And the reason I was put in that position partly is because once again I'm from the streets of Bronx, New York. There's a persona, of people thought oh, you wear a kufi. Or you're hood. You know that's how they would think that “you a educated thug.” And I'm like, no, I'm not a thug, I'm educated. I'm good people. I can't help that I'm from New

York, but they put you in that light that they want you to carry yourself like that so sometimes you got to be that buffer just for that moment but then when you get like that, then they want to call you angry.

Terry's statement really points to the dilemma of playing the role of disciplinarian. He admitted that he would sometimes go along with being the "bully" in order to be a team player and appease the teachers and other administrators.

Unfortunately, he believed that this sometimes backfired when he was perceived as being mean and angry by the very colleagues and students that he wanted to build rapport with.

As a principal, Sean felt like sometimes he was really put in an awkward position. While he was in a position of authority, and by definition, a disciplinarian, he still wanted to be a compassionate and loving figure in the school. Some teachers and administrators were frustrated with his approach, but Sean insisted on being loving because he felt that, "some kids might not see that" in their everyday lives. When teachers in his school, most of them Black women, tried to push him to be more harsh and suspend more students, Sean told a story of resisting the notion that suspension was the only way to deal with discipline problems. He also resisted the push to be more aggressive and punitive with students:

I didn't really like giving suspensions. I just felt like the kids need to be at school. So if I did it, it might be in-house. If no skin was broken. It was a little yelling and screaming or a scuffle, I would do in-school suspension. And I always gave the kids a plan for redemption, but a lot of the teachers felt like, "hey, you should have suspended him". I'm not suspending kids you know. I'm not getting up in people's faces if I don't have to. Yeah, they respect me and sometimes that creates a problem, where if I walk in a classroom and everybody's quiet and respect me and then, when I leave, and they cut up, you can't be mad at me because I'm not coming back in that classroom to take over your class, you know? You have to find ways to get that respect in your class. But you can't blame me for that. I did nothing wrong, so you can't use me as a bully because I'm not going to be a bully. I'm not going to suspend a kid just because you don't want to deal with him.

Daryl is another participant who felt his job satisfaction, livelihood, and even his safety has been put on the line for the sake of serving as the enforcer when Black boys misbehave. While he is currently a high school teacher at a predominately white private school, at the time of the incident he recounted, he was working in a predominately Black public school in The Bronx. The principal at the school was a Black woman:

I remember when I was teaching in Special Ed, there was a young man that was that was really, you know, he was dangerous. He brought a machete to school. You know, he actually threatened to kill people. Well, they wanted me to be a one to one with this young man. Now, I told them no, because there's no one to advocate for me. We could be on the stairs; he could say Mr. Perry pushed me down the stairs. Well, if no one saw that, because of state law, they have to investigate. That takes me off of my job. I don't get paid and it's his word against mine. And we already know that the system takes his word against mine. So, they frowned upon me and said with this state law you have to be with him. Well, I said no, I'm not doing that. Because there is no one to advocate for me when I am alone with this student. Are you going to advocate for me? No. You're going to investigate whatever he says, and then it's my word against his and then I'm put in a vulnerable position. I'm not going to do that.

Daryl wound up taking his case to the Teacher's Union who sided with him.

While he was able to preserve his job temporarily his contract was not renewed for the next year. He says that with this incident and many others, "this is the thing, it was pretty much mutual. They weren't going to ask me back and I wasn't going to come back, you know. And they weren't going to ask me back because I wasn't a 'yes man' person. You know. If there was something that I felt wasn't in my best interest, I questioned that. I wanted to know why." Later in the school year, this student pulled a knife on a student which forced the school resource officer to draw his gun. He was expelled from the school.

Participants also felt that some of the schools they worked in fostered an environment that was overly rigid and punitive to the students. Despite this, they were

expected to remain silent. When speaking about the atmosphere at a predominately Black school he taught at when he first started teaching, Jason felt:

It was very institutionalized. There was an expectation for the kids to be robots to a degree. Like there was a lack of understanding of the real needs of the kids. The kids come with a lot of baggage, just like the rest of us, but they aren't given much grace in managing that baggage. Everything's punitive. Punishment, punishment, punishment.

When Jason first started at the school he described as “institutionalized”, he was a new teacher, fresh out of college. He admits that as a new teacher who had attended an “urban” school in Baltimore, MD, he initially thought that the school environment he was in was normal. He said, “I was so familiar with that atmosphere and it was my first teaching gig and you know, it aligned with what I experienced as a kid in school, you know, and I was there awhile before I started realizing that something was not quite right.”

The discipline of Black boys came into play in other ways with these participants. Some participants recounted stories when they were expected to remain silent when they felt the punishments being meted out were not appropriate. Interestingly, on one hand, the participants felt that sometimes the punishments that were given were too harsh. This occurred particularly with minor infractions such as uniforms or not walking quietly in a straight line. Participants were expected to either hand out the harsh punishments themselves or watch as others disciplined the children harshly. I call this the “Hard-Wall” in that the Black men in this study – and in other studies- were expected to be the “Hard-Wall” meaning they were supposed to be the cold-hearted, indifferent dispensers of punishment. In one incident, Edward witnessed a teacher interacting with a second-grader in a way that he thought was inappropriate:

I heard a (white female) teacher say to a second-grade little boy - and the teacher happened to be a woman - I heard her say to the kid in the hallway, "Now, I know you did it. Man up and admit it." I was in a room by myself and I was so frustrated like yelled, I was cursing her out in my head. Like you just told a 7, 8 year-old boy to "man-up". That's so toxic! Like what's going on?

Following the incident, Edward was torn about whether or not he should say something to the teacher who he overheard berating the student. He chose not to say anything because he felt that his approaching her would be perceived as threatening. His concern may not have been unfounded. Terry, a veteran teacher and Dean of Students at a K-8 charter school felt that he was expected to serve as somewhat of a security guard when interacting with parents and teachers, but that his authority with the teachers was not respected. He felt that his primary role was to serve as a buffer between school faculty and staff and the community. Internally, he was supposed to remain silent and subordinate:

You can't tell me that you want me to be the Dean; you want me to keep the roughnecks out the building. You want me to encounter the parents when they come in smelling like weed and alcohol. You want me to deal with all fights in the building. But then when I come at you and say, listen, I need you to do this and do that, you tell me I'm talking to you in a condescending way.

Other participants reported that they observed an interesting paradox where teachers were either being too lenient or not doing enough to hold Black male students accountable for their behavior. Carlos reported:

There is kind of this push back, especially when dealing with young black males, because what I saw is, there's either too much leniency or there's no leniency. There's this situation where, okay, well, we want them gone (suspended or expelled), or we don't want to have any consequences. It makes no sense. My thing is, is there any plan? I mean, we know that the research says that Black males are being disproportionately suspended, and all of those type of things. So we had admin saying we're going to have this reward system for them, or whatever, and then they're not being held accountable. They're going around the school doing a lot of things that are not accepted out in society, if they wasn't inside of the school, those things will get them in trouble. And so, then there is a

situation where I was saying, “Hey, we need to make them accountable”. I understand that if they’re not being held accountable, and we do not put something in place where they feel as though this is not good behavior, then it is going to hurt them later on down the road, but you're pushing me aside and saying, “yeah, but, you know, we don't want to do that. We don't want to do that.” Okay. All right. Well, then, why am I here?

John had similar concerns where he felt there was no “in-between”. Either Black male students were suspended or received very little consequence for misbehavior:

The consequences were not appropriate There's a way to put appropriate consequences in place for children where they have the opportunity to learn, reflect and then make improvements. But this was not the case. Their approach or way of doing things was not necessarily going to give the optimal benefit for the kids. But in their stance of, “I'm in charge, that's how it should be”, they chose not to change, and the behavior got worse. So, the children just responded like you expect a child to respond. That a child is going to take as much as you give them. A child hasn't developed mentally yet. If you put a cake in front of them and you say, “this cake is for you”, a child may eat the whole cake and not say, “I'm gonna save some for tomorrow” or “I've eaten too much cake for right now.” So, they would overindulge in unfavorable behaviors because there really was no consequences set in place for them.

Vignette 3: The Crying Game

While working at a charter middle school in Washington, DC, I decided to also serve as a coach for the school football team. One day, during the championship game, Ms. Harris, a Black female teacher, stormed onto the sidelines demanding that our star player be pulled from the game. When Devon came to the sidelines, she started yelling, pointing her finger in his face, and waving a piece of paper. I walked over to see if I could diffuse the situation. The situation was starting to cause a scene. I calmly asked what was going on when Ms. Harris exclaimed, “Devon didn't write his name on his exam today. If he can't be serious about academics he shouldn't be allowed to play football!”. I asked, “Ms. Harris, would it be okay if Devon wrote his name on the test

and got off with a warning?” She was clearly upset but agreed. When I looked at the grade on the top of the paper, I saw that Devon had made a B.

The next day, when I saw Ms. Harris in the office. She asked if we could meet in her classroom during lunch. I was reluctant but told her I would meet. When I arrived in her classroom later that day, I immediately noticed that she was crying. Crying! “Oh no,” I thought, “what in the world have I gotten myself into?” She proceeded to tearfully tell me that I had embarrassed her and undermined her authority in front of the students. I should have sided with her and yelled at him and pulled him from the game. I told her that I was just trying to de-escalate the situation and that I didn’t mean to undermine her. I also let her know that I thought that the only person that was embarrassed was Devon who was getting yelled at and berated for not writing his name on a test that he passed. At this point, she started yelling at me and telling me that it didn’t matter what I meant to do, I had offended her. I apologized and told her that I was going to leave. I was upset but I didn’t want to get into an argument with her. I knew it wouldn’t turn out well. No matter what happened, I would be the bad guy. I felt that I was right but what good would it do to assert myself?

Pressure to Conform. Interestingly, all of the men felt that in some sense and to some degree, they were expected to conform to the “system” that had been established by school administrators. Regardless of how they felt about a policy or practice within the school, they were supposed to remain silent and be a team player. Several recurring themes that emerged include that participants felt they were: 1) discouraged from and penalized for outwardly expressing masculinity, 2) discouraged from using creative and alternative approaches to teaching and discipline, and 3) expected to go along with,

participate in, and remain silent about policies and practices that they deemed unethical, harsh, or ineffective.

Don't Be a Menace: Black Male Teachers and Masculinity.

Sometimes I played the role. Sometimes it didn't bother me cuz I figured maybe if that's how they saw me then maybe I'll get things done. Maybe sometimes I have to put some fire into people to get things to happen. But then sometimes I just felt it was bad that I thought I was doing an honorable service for the community, helping our children but sometimes it didn't feel that way. People say want it this way. They want us to be model citizens but when you go to the classroom and you try to exemplify those things, they want you to perform to what they want you to be. – Terry

In his 2012 qualitative study about Black male teachers (2012), Brokenbrough interviewed 11 middle and high school teachers. He found that most of the men expressed that they felt that they were often emasculated in their teaching positions, particularly by female administrators. He concluded that the men had “patriarchal gender ideologies that produced an inattention to male privilege, fueled conflictual encounters with women colleagues and administrators, and informed a desire for more male-centered spaces and interactions within the profession (p. 1).” Men in this study expressed similar views of feeling that their manhood was under attack, but through a close examination of personal experiences and the data provided by the 9 men in this study, I conclude that it is erroneous to dismiss the feelings that men express about teaching in female dominated environments. In a society where Black males are often seen as threatening forces that need to be contained and controlled, even from a young age (Foster, 1995; Noguera, 2003; Warren, 2013), it is important to consider that there is validity to the stories that these men tell and to give voice to their concerns so that we can genuinely learn what it takes to recruit and retain Black male teachers. Existing research has even found that feminized educational spaces are often inhospitable to men and view the presence of men

as unwanted and threatening (Lynn, 2006; Maboleka & Madsen, 2003; Sargent, 2001). To dismiss the narratives that men provided as simply the product of “patriarchal gender ideologies” is to fail to nuance the conversation and delve deeper into the “why”. Why do men feel this way? What are the events that precipitated such feelings, and how did these experiences impact the men emotionally and professionally? This study takes steps to understand “why”. It is important to understand so that when men are hired to teach, administrators spend less time trying to contain and control them and more time cultivating their unique gifts and creating “Black male responsive” policies and practices that consider the needs of their Black male teachers. In my experience, I have never had a problem with female leadership. I do, however have a problem with feeling like I am being singled out, treated unfairly, and chastised like a child, especially when I do not see my female counterparts having the same experiences. No person wants to be treated like they are incompetent, unprofessional, or incapable of performing their job duties, nor do they want to be condescended to and patronized by supervisors and co-workers of any gender. Being willing to consider these perspectives and realities provides more context and an added layer to Brokenbrough’s research.

Several participants expressed that they felt like teachers and administrators attempted to “control and water down” (Daryl) their masculinity. Some even felt that female administrators were particularly hard on them because they wanted to establish that they were in charge from the beginning. This manifested itself through a perception of closer scrutiny of classroom management, curriculum, interactions with students and fellow teachers, and harsher consequences for mistakes and missteps:

I would say, there is definitely an attack on Black males, you know, especially if you have a woman administrator versus a male faculty, you know. I have

experienced both. Because I am a man, there is this notion that, “I have to show him who's in charge,” or, “I have to be harder on him to show him that I'm in charge, and then maybe, as things go on, I can ease up.” But, you know, it shouldn't be that way because we're both professionals. – Edward

I do feel that there was this sense that, “well we want to break him down, we want to let him understand the power structure.” And at every turn, there seemed to be a roadblock. “Well, it wasn't good enough, or “Mr. Perry, you should be doing this” or “Mr. Perry, that's not what we're doing.” It was kind of a dictatorship. And so, I do feel with a lot of women administrators that I experienced, there's this power struggle. You're ready to be in an environment where you're not judged and critiqued all of the time or being told, “this is not what we're doing.” You know, you kind of feel like your manhood is trying to be taken away. Like, you're being chopped down like a tree. And, you know, it could be very draining man, very draining. So, but I had been pushed so hard that I didn't care anymore, because I'm like, I can't sit back and continue to not be me because there had been a point where I felt like my manhood was trying to be cut down, who I am was being cut down. I knew that it was an attack. So, I walked around on eggshells all the time in that building, in that school. And to a certain extent it was everybody, but it was heightened when it came to me and the other men because there were only three men in the whole building. – Daryl

Because I'm an unapologetic, strong alpha male, I'm always going to be a target in the over feminized culture of education, because they're expecting the men to be feminine to the point where we're, expected to have the same sensitivities and sensibilities as women, and we're different. But the problem is that you're expecting some of the male teachers to be like that, and then you're expecting some of the kids to be like that as well. And that's where you have a big problem when you're expecting these boys to act like that and you're punishing them when they don't act like that. Like, that's problematic. – Michael

Two participants, John and Jason felt that some of the people they worked with had a problem with reconciling their masculinity with their caregiving role. On one hand, they wanted them to be intimidating disciplinarians and on the other hand they wanted them to avoid other outward displays of masculinity – in other words they wanted to control and dictate the circumstances under which they displayed stereotypically masculine traits. Both felt that co-workers and administrators would often discourage them from or misunderstand when they were nurturing with their students:

There was an expectation for the black males in the building to be domineering sometimes and it's frowned upon by some teachers when those men make strides to build relationships with the kids and meet them where they are. That might mean dapping them up or, making a joke here and there and it's frowned upon. It's kind of looked at like, you know, you're this big man with a deep voice, like, you should be controlling. You can scare these kids. – Jason

I would definitely say that I'm not a feminized man. I'm not emasculated. I walk in proud of who I am. Proud of what the creator made me, and I stick to that, but I would also emanate an element that supported the young children to let them have a sense of pride of who they were based on how the creator made them. So, I'll definitely say there was some level of bias based on gender. Like I said, I also had my children at the school while working at the school. So, they got a chance to see me not only as an educator but as a caring father. So not only do they see me care for my children, they see me caring for all the children. I don't think they knew how to take that. – John

Another example of wanting to control perceived masculinity of Black male teachers was that some participants felt that teachers and administrators were comfortable with deploying their “masculine influence” when it suited their needs, but when it was uncomfortable for them they tried to “shut it down. Daryl recounts:

One of the things that we need to understand is, some of these young people don't have father figures in their in their lives. So, when a child doesn't respond to a black male teacher, it necessarily doesn't have to be because Mr. Perry is mean, or Mr. Perry really is not sensitive, or Mr. Perry needs to not be so tough or Mr. Perry this or that. It could be maybe I remind them of a father figure and, they don't understand how to interact with that, because they've never had that. They also haven't had anybody that is building character in them, that is challenging them to do better than what the standard is. And so, I've had those higher up that say, “well, you know, what, we need to be kid-sensitive, you know, this is elementary”.

Interestingly, Daryl was one of the teachers who reported that he was often deployed to “get kids in check”, which was fine as long as it was under circumstances where he was told to be tough. Otherwise, his no-nonsense approach to teaching was viewed as inappropriate and unnecessary. These findings are in alignment with research that has found that the expectation for Black male teachers to be school disciplinarians is

often in conflict with their role as caregivers and nurturers (Sargent, 2001; Williams, 1992).

Vignette 4: Choking Children

When Marcus walked down the hall, I yelled, “What’s up, man!”, then I put my arm around his neck and tousled his hair. I told him to have a good day and proceeded to greet more kids as they made their way to their classes. It was going to be a great day. A few moments later I was summoned to the office. The principal looked at me gravely like someone had died. “Mr. Mathews, Ms. Simons came to me very concerned about something she saw a few moments ago. She said you choked Marcus in the hallway.”

“What?” I said in disbelief, “Choked him? Really? Why would I choke a student? In the hallway. In front of everyone? I put my arm around his neck and tousled his hair. I did not choke him.”

“Well, she was startled by what she saw and came to me immediately. In the future, I need you to limit physical contact with the students to avoid misunderstandings.”

I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. My showing affection toward a student had been read as violence, and because of this, I was being told to “limit physical contact” with students. Female teachers hugged students all of the time, but because I had exhibited a more masculine display of affection I was being penalized. Unbelievable.

The misinterpretation of behaviors exhibited by males was not limited to teachers according to some participants in this study. Several studies have found that the behavior of Black boys is often perceived as violent and delinquent. When similar behavior is displayed by white boys it is perceived as normal (Davis, 2001; Ferguson, 2010; Kujufu, 1985; Monroe, 2005). According to Carlos:

The Black boys were just more physical, more hands on, you know? Some white teachers, especially white female teachers took that as a threat like, “he may come get me”, and the student is not acting violent, the student is just acting up. And she's like, "he's acting up, what's wrong with him? He's so active" and I'll just look at the same student and think, he's okay, just let the sillies get out of him. Let's exercise in the classroom with the kids, you know do some stretching exercises to get them to be more active and then settle them down and then you can start teaching. You know, get their sillies out, then start teaching.

The term “toxic masculinity” is used more and more in the academy. It is defined as: “a narrow and repressive description of manhood, that designates manhood as being **defined** by violence, sex, status and aggression” (Clemons, 2017). I assert that while the origins of this concept were to end the justification of male dominance over women and relieve men of “narrow and repressive” definitions of manhood, the term has taken on new meaning. It has gone from being a way to broaden and nuance what it means to be a man to a way of stigmatizing, problematizing, and repressing all expressions of masculinity. As a result, Black men in education exist in a strange and confusing space where they are expected to enact stereotypical and problematic expressions of what *others* perceive as masculinity in order to dominate and control students while simultaneously being discouraged from self-definition and self-expression of their own conceptions of masculinity which include the ability to educate and nurture children of all ages. To conclude this section, I would like to include expressions of masculinity from the participants in this study that defy the stereotypes:

The biggest thing about this teaching is just being compassionate. When you're teaching a child or an adult, anyone just be compassionate with it. You know. Love what you're doing. Don't get upset. You know, come to work with a healthy attitude. Think about how you would feel if you were on that side of the table learning something? You know, how would you feel if you didn't know this? Instead of me being mean to that the person and yelling at the person, sit down and help them. Be more of a friend and also a teacher and just share life experiences. I always put myself in front of the class and let them know that I'm not perfect, I've

made mistakes. I didn't have it all. At times it's going to be hard. And if I made it, you can make it. – Terry

I take full advantage of the opportunity to crush a lot of stereotypes that I knew that are present about me as a Black man. I just express who I am naturally to show others who thought they were different, that we're really no different. We are the same. – John

I refuse to yell at kids. That's a red line for me. Like, if it gets to a point where I have to raise my voice to that level I feel like it should be seen as disrespectful to have to raise your voice like that at another person, especially kid, a student. I make sure I communicate that to the kids. Like, this isn't what we do, this isn't how we behave, you know, I will always show you respect, I expect the same from you. When you come in this room, we have peace. We support one another. – Carlos

Playing Games and Dapping It Up: Creative Approaches to Teaching Children.

In his unique portrait of Black male teachers' pedagogical practices, Lynn (2006) found that Black men used unique strategies to connect with and engage students, particularly Black students. According to his study, Black men: 1) used their personal stories and experiences with oppression to teach children important lessons, 2) didn't expect their students to "leave the streets at door" but rather used the experiences of their students to inform their curriculum and teaching to make it more relevant to the experiences to their students, and 3) where appropriate, used the same language as their students to communicate and connect. These creative methods help Black male teachers to be effective and beloved educators. Unfortunately for the participants in this study, when they employed these and other creative methods they were often corrected and forced back into a more traditional, feminized pedagogical mold.

Unfortunately, because of the way that the system was run, in that particular school, it lead to some of the programs that I brought to the school, that I initiated, that were very invigorating for the students that were learning experiences that respected them as people, that respected their learning styles, those programs

were cut, and they were put off. And I was given some lame reason why they were cut off. And then, the children, of course, were dissatisfied. The children, of course, were offended. – Corey

So, some of the some of the athletic programs that were developed at a younger stage in the middle school, I proposed a similar program for the high school just like you know, an introductory program like a freshman program, not a full-fledged program. So, I developed proposal for how it will help the school and what it would do for school the culture. This particular admin who I had to present it to because she was hired as a Principal of the high school, she already didn't like the middle school program. It was denied. The idea was shut down. She didn't really listen to the idea. I had a meeting with her and the Head of School but after I get two days of her reviewing my proposal and talking to other administrators, the proposal was denied. – John

I never felt supported. And there were things that I tried to be a part of and I was kind of shunned. There was a new curriculum that they were working on. I told them that I had some experience in that, but, you know, I was kind of pushed aside and I noticed that the men in the building were never at the table when decisions were made or when new things were created and introduced. And, you know, I felt like, I couldn't grow there. And I felt like I wanted to leave, you know, I was ready to leave. – Daryl

According to Lynn (2001, 2006), “Black men have remained largely absent from the educational discourse on teachers and teaching. Even more important, their perspectives have not been fully considered in the debates over what constitutes culturally relevant classroom practice”. The absence of Black male voices at the table results in the marginalization of Black male teachers within schools and in educational discourse. It would be unconscionable to accept as the norm, the absence of the voices of any other group in a conversation so critical to the future of children, Black children in particular. However, the absence of Black men in education and educational discourse seems to be accepted. Even when Black men are in educational settings, it seems that they are there to serve narrow, predetermined roles and when they have a desire to offer more it is discouraged and suppressed. It would also be unconscionable to imagine a scenario in which it would be acceptable to only allow women of any color to contribute

to educational discourse in ways that allowed limited views of womanhood and femininity. The culture of education has to evolve beyond this point, so the Black men can contribute in meaningful ways that help to improve the lives of children.

Vignette 5: Making Collages and Visiting the Office - Again

When I was teaching at a charter middle school in Washington, DC, I sometimes worked with the afterschool program. One day, after school, when the students had finished their homework, the teachers rounded up all the kids into the cafeteria where there were a few activities for kids to participate in. There was a station to make collages and a table with several board games. In the corner the room, there was a bin full of basketballs. After exploring the options that were available, several of the kids approached me and asked me if I would take them outside to play basketball. I looked around and figured that there were plenty of teachers inside to supervise the kids while they played games and made collages, so I said, "sure". It was a beautiful day, and I prefer to be outside vs. cooped up indoors any day. As we were preparing to go out, one of the teachers approached me and asked me where I was "taking the boys". Now, the majority of the kids who wanted to play outside were boys – 7 or 8 –, but there were 2 or 3 girls who wanted to go too. I responded, "well, I am taking these boys and girls to play basketball. It's a nice day and they want to go outside."

She simply stated: "No."

At first, I didn't think I had heard correctly, so I repeated, "we're going outside to play basketball".

"No." There it was again. She continued, "The kids can't go outside. Everyone is staying inside to make collages. The boys don't need to feel like they always have to play

sports to have fun. They need to find other ways to channel their energy. They're staying inside," then she instructed them to find a table and make a collage. After the kids walked away she confronted me and told me that I was a patriarchal misogynist because I wanted the boys to play sports. I told her that I actually offered the boys and the girls an opportunity to go outside to play. She then told me that I was being violent toward her.

This incident occurred after I had been chastised for asking if the student could re-enter the football game. This confrontation was the same teacher who had cried when I tried to defuse the situation with the Black male student, so I decided to bite my tongue. It made me angry, but I knew, once again, that as one of the only males at the school, it didn't matter what I said, I would be in the wrong. I walked back into the cafeteria and started helping out with the kids.

The next day, I was called into the Head of School's office again. This was starting to become a very familiar routine for me, so I said, "what did I do this time?" She replied, "Ms. Simons said that you were playing favorites with the boys by trying to allow them go outside instead of participating in the activities with all of the other children. We feel that you are perpetuating male stereotypes with the male students that are unhealthy and not 'gender neutral'". I would say that I couldn't believe my ears, but I would be lying. At this point, I had heard and experienced it all. I exhaled deeply, feeling drained. "So, a group of boys AND girls wanted to play basketball after school yesterday. There were no structured or mandatory activities, the kids had finished their homework, and it was a nice day outside. I also don't think that being physically active is perpetuating stereotypes of any kind and I think the fact that boys AND girls wanted to play proves that point." I would like to say that I won this one. I did not. Instead I got another

dressing down and a lecture about toxic masculinity and gender neutrality. What in the world was happening here? Needless to say, there was no more outdoor activity for the kids after school even though we had basketball courts, an open field and playground equipment. I eventually stopped working after school. Not too long after that I started hearing from some of the teachers that there had been several fights in the cafeteria and they were trying to figure out what to do. I knew one thing they could do. Get those kids out of that stuffy cafeteria and let them play. But I kept that to myself. I had no desire to visit the Head of School again.

Just Go with the Flow. A qualitative study of Black teachers suggested that Black teachers who want to make too many, uncomfortable changes, or relate too closely to their students who come from their communities or similar communities are viewed with suspicion, silenced, reprimanded, and have their competence and professionalism questioned (Kohli & Pizarro). The combination of these factors can create hostile, isolating work environments that effectively pushout teachers with social justice leanings in favor of White teachers and even teachers of color who are willing to adhere to more traditional modes of teaching. This presents a particular challenge with Black male teachers who are already in short supply. Michael observed that,

most of the teachers just fell in line. And that's what they expected. It didn't matter if it made sense. If it was it was good for the teacher or if it was bad, you just need to fall in line, don't ask questions. That's how we're running the ship. Well, that wasn't my situation, because I am a seasoned veteran teacher that has taught at different levels and I have credentials. So there were things that I was going to question that a young teacher that's fresh out of college or that's from Teach for America was not going to question. So, that was kind of the situation and they really didn't so much care for that type of questioning and that was the thing there was no one advocating for me, as a faculty. So, if there was no one there to advocate for me, I had to step into that position for myself and do that and it wasn't accepted.

The previous vignette is a good segue into this section in that it straddles a line between having creative or alternative approaches frowned upon or suppressed and being forced to go with the flow in order to avoid conflict or reprimand from co-workers and supervisors. Many men in the study had similar experiences of feeling like they could not speak out when they felt that measures taken were inappropriate or ineffective because they either had not been taken seriously in the past or felt that their concerns or input would be dismissed. In one such instance, Daryl, an elementary Health and PE instructor at the time, had started incorporating life skills lessons into his class. Some of the children in class were engaging in behavior and using language that he felt wasn't age appropriate, so he would have brief lessons for his classes that addressed the behavior he was witnessing:

So I had an administrator that thought that some of the lessons that I was teaching were too advanced, you know. Some of the things that I was communicating was too advanced. But the thing is, we all know that when they're out in the community, when they're doing wrong, law enforcement will not say that, "hey, you're too young, this is too advanced for me to take you to take you in or to put you down and put you in handcuffs and to put you into the police car". So, we need to continue to teach not only educational lessons, but life skills. So that was pushed against so much, so much that we, the word that I use is we were patronizing the kids. We weren't setting them up for success. We have to be positive, but we also have to make them accountable and help them understand that, look, this is not real life. You don't do something wrong and then just go to the principal's office. If you do something that is wrong, there could be consequences, that can hurt you later on down the road. And so, I feel like because I thought different than what the leadership thought there was never this coming together and seeing it through the lens that I saw it because I have experience in being a Black boy, not just reading about Black boys. Understanding those things, helps me be the expert in why this young man is doing some of the things that he may be doing.

Despite trying to make his case with the school administrator and even going so far as getting the endorsement of some fellow teachers and parents, Daryl was told to discontinue his life skills lessons and "just teach PE because that's why (they) hired

(him)". He felt deflated and demoralized, but he went with flow. He needed his job. His wife was pregnant with their first child, a boy.

Carlos was also very frustrated at his school. He felt like his voice or input was not valued and that he was just a "male body" at the school for appearances. He felt that "where you are culturally competent, and you're paying attention to the needs of different kinds of people and cultures, you're not just approaching things just one way. You're not just given a one fixed system fits all set-up. You're looking at different intelligences, you're looking at different learning styles, you are doing research on these learning styles." The school he was in at the time was not this kind of school. Corey felt that being unwilling to just go with the flow eventually cost him his job. At one time, he was a respected teacher, but he was never one to go along to get along. He openly expressed ideas, concerns and presented alternatives. Over time, this became a problem for school administration:

At one particular time, based on the tenure that I had at the school and based on the knowledge that I attained on the how the system of the school worked, I was very cooperative and very collaborative. I instituted different programs that helped the school thrive to higher levels. There were times when I would be teaching a class and then I'd look up and there was be a teacher sitting in my classroom. And then when I would ask why this teacher was in my classroom, then the administrator would tell me this person is in here to observe you, so they can learn some of the strategies that you use to help them with their class. These people were, I guess, easier to deal with, they were more willing to go along with the system without questioning the system where I had reservations about, you know, is this the best thing for the students? What about trying something new instead of doing A or B? What about let's do C or D? So, this person may not ask any questions about C and D, they just agree with A and B. I was kept around so they could train some of the people who work in the system. Some of the people who they felt were not going to be as questioning but could learn skills that I had. And as my questioning became a problem to the system, I began to get bad evaluations and the administration started saying that my strategies were not competent enough to teach. This is after they were using my strategies to help someone else. Now, all of sudden, I'm not competent enough to

teach. They kept me around and let me train people until they didn't need me anymore. I said: "okay, I see what's going on here".

Two participants had incidents that were directly related to teaching lessons about Black history and culture. Michael had a run-in with a white teacher who had a problem with him talking to his students about being proud of who they were.

She was going around and telling the other teachers, "he's talking about all this black stuff in the classroom". She was going behind my back and telling them this, and really, all it was, was self-awareness and giving a sense of pride in who they are because I know we're not the standard of beauty, we are still treated in some cases like second class citizens regardless of what they say and we have to be the ones to enforce that pride, we can't look to other races, i.e. white folks to validate our beauty and our intelligence.

Michael was told by his school's all-white female administration to stop talking about "Black stuff" with his students. Jason and several teachers witnessed a lesson for 3rd Graders about the Harlem Renaissance where the only thing the white female teacher told her classroom full of Black students was that, "it was a time when Black people were treated better in Harlem than in any other place in the world," and that they "produced a lot of great music and art during that time." He was disturbed that the teacher did not mention W.E.B. Dubois or Ralph Ellison or Zora Neale Hurston.

I felt like I can't watch this happen like, why are we letting this happen? Why is this okay? So, when I approached her later, she was offended. She told me if I didn't like how she did it, I could teach them about it. So, I was just like, "alright, cool", like if that's how you wanna do it, I will, that's fine. But you should also be able to have can have a constructive conversation about it. Things like that I had to check because nobody else would. I couldn't stomach it. I was like yo, if I'm gonna be a part of this community and I see something that needs to be changed, like I need to be a part of the change.

Corey also had an experience with a principal feeling uncomfortable when he gave his students an assignment to do a poster on a prominent figure in Black history for Black History Month. He gave them guidelines on what to include on their posters but allowed them to choose who they wanted to research. One of his students chose Malcolm X and

another chose Marcus Garvey. When he proudly displayed the posters, the principal asked him to remove all of them because the ones with Malcolm X and Marcus Garvey were not consistent with school culture. She would not elaborate why she felt this way, but Corey had a suspicion that his white female principal was uncomfortable with these two men because of their views about white people. He waited a few days before removing the posters. The kids had worked so hard and had done a great job. The next year, the principal told teachers that they would not be including Black History or Hispanic History in the curriculum for any of their classes because of the schools growing diversity, but Corey knew why.

In regards to Black history, you can't have a classroom full of, a school district full of African American students - like I said, some Latino, some white - and not talk about things that our ancestors have done. Just wait til Black History Month and they talk about a couple of the same people, they talk about Dr. King, maybe some Frederick Douglass. No, no, no. Let's go, let's talk about Stokely Carmichael, let's talk about Marcus Garvey you know we can talk about Madame CJ Walker, we can talk about Garrett Morgan, you know what I'm saying? Now you want to take that away. I feel that principal and some of these teachers didn't want them to know that sense of pride that comes from knowing your history and your contribution. They wanted to keep them down and that's really the frustrating part. That part really pissed me off man.

Finally, Edward reported feeling like there was a system of concentrating more effort on students who made good grade and test scores and who presented minimal or no behavioral challenges:

They would label some of the kids as problematic. It was almost like a favoritism thing where, like some of the kids we like to work with, and I would see kids that needed that extra attention, and they would say it's not worth it because some of those kids may be slow performing. Especially the white teachers, the Black teachers wouldn't necessarily do this as much. I would see some of the white teachers kind of push some of the Black kids aside, the ones who weren't performing well or the ones who were considered disciplinary problems. They would almost dismiss them on the elementary level and I'm like, "no, this is not good."

But Edward, like many of the teachers in this study remained silent because he felt like his dose of reality had escalated to the point where he was on very thin ice.

The Removal. The final phase of the pushout experiences of the Black male participants was the final escalation of events that led to not having their contract renewed, being fired, and or making the decision to leave their current position. In this section, I will let the pushout stories of the participants speak for themselves.

John's Story. John was a middle school English teacher, PE instruction and intramural sports coach at a predominately Black and Hispanic charter school in Washington, DC at the time of his pushout. One day, after school, John noticed that some teachers and students were playing a pick-up basketball game in the gym. He also observed that there was a student standing on the sidelines looking like he wanted to participate. When he questioned why he wasn't participating the student said that there were not enough people, so John agreed to play to make the teams even. Given that John was one of two Black male teachers in the school, he had been playing the role of disciplinarian and father figure to the Black boys. As he puts it, he "provided some consistent structure for them because many of them don't have male role models". Consistent with this role, John intervened when a student misbehaved during the game:

Some of the boys with behavior challenges were involved in the basketball game. And as the game continues to go on, some of these students began to exhibit some of that unfavorable behavior with certain word choices that I found very inappropriate. So, of course, as the educator that I have always been, you know, I approached them and I said, "this profanity is inappropriate and if you want to continue participating in this activity, you need to, you know, reflect on what you're doing, and come with a different approach." But the ironic thing about it is I was the only person saying something and for all the other educators it was as if it was okay that this child was doing what he was doing.

This is where John's story takes a major turn. According to him, the student was so angry about being corrected in front of his friends that when his mother arrived, he told her that John had hit him. The mother called the police, John was arrested, he lost his job and he had to go on trial for aggravated assault against a minor. Fortunately for him, several people, including students and teachers who had been in the gym that day testified on his behalf and told the judge that John had only corrected the boy for cursing and had not hit him. Unfortunately, the school opted not to give him his job back. He is currently teaching at another public charter school, where he says he has been much more reluctant to play the role of disciplinarian, father figure, and role model to the Black male students. He still feels responsible to do so, but in his words, he is, "much more strategic" in how he approaches this responsibility.

John's story does have a happy ending though. He is at a new school where he teaches middle school English. The school administration is all white female but he reports:

The administration has provided me with support as far as giving me strategies to enrich my teaching skills. They've also provided support for me to have a certain level of freedom in my classroom. This particular school culture is supportive, to the point where you have teachers who are willing to give you the necessary support you need for your craft. And this is a very reciprocal positive community. I'm noticing, it appears that the majority of the school community and staff have demographic that looks like the children so that brings a certain element of community to the building as well. It also seems like the focus of educators is primarily focused on the well-being of the children. It's a much smaller community and a lot of times, the population has a lot to do with the system and how the system is run as well. So, the last three years have been a very positive experience.

Daryl's Story. At Daryl's "pushout school", he says he felt like he constantly fighting and struggling just to teach. His story was not as dramatic as John's story, he

says the decision to part ways was “mutual, I didn’t want to be there. I was ready to go”.

He felt:

I was in a situation where there was a constant power struggle, okay. You may have some ideas, administration says, that's not what we're doing. We're going to do this, you know, Mr. Perry, there's no leniency, there's no creativity there. There's an atmosphere of saying, “hey, you shouldn't question me”, Mr. Perry, you know, this is what we're doing. So, then there's a situation of, “Okay, why am I here?” You know? Why am I fighting? I'm always fighting a battle. Or when you come and you call me into the office and your assistant principal is sitting and staring me down as though I'm not a professional. Why should I be scared of you? We're both grown. You put on your pants one leg at a time, like I do. We should be counterparts, we should be equal. Yes, I respect you as the leader of the school, but you do not have to put me in a position where I feel less than. And then, understanding that the compensation of an educator isn't as high as other careers, and then, you're not feeling wanted or welcome, whether it's just as a man, or when you're just trying to give insight or some things that you have experience in. It makes you feel like, “Oh, well, I really don't want to teach anymore.”

Daryl moved to another school to teach PE. He loves his new position and works with a Black male principal. He is in his second year at the school. He reports that his experience with the principal at this school when compared to his previous job, he says it is:

Night and day man. Night and day. I didn't make it up, that's just how it worked, you know. I don't have any of the problems I had before. I don't even have to say certain things, because we speak the same language, He understands me, you know, he understands who the kids are, and he understands what I'm doing and how I'm trying to be the best educator I can. He's happy that I'm a veteran teacher, not a young teacher even though we have many here, but he understands how valuable that is.

Michael's Story. When Michael first started at the school where he was pushed out, things were great. The two female administrators were also great mentors to him and to the other teachers in the school. In fact, Michael had started at the school as a tutor and was encouraged to apply for a position when he completed his teaching certification. He did and was happy to get the job. Michael said: “I found myself fitting in even though I

was a male in a female dominated school building because it was me no other males in the classroom”. The trouble started when one of his mentors took a position as a principal at another school and the other took a position as Superintendent of Schools in the district where he taught. When the new administrator came to the school, an older Black male, Michael came under increasing scrutiny and had more and more run-ins with his supervisor.

During that time period it was, it was a sense of rejection. Because I liked it there so much and I thought that with a Black man coming in it would be all good. It wasn't. I guess if I didn't like it there so much it wouldn't have been so bad. When he got there the first couple of years I noticed, instead of making it work, I was kind of, I think, targeted because I'm a Black man. Not playing the victim at all. But I noticed I was being targeted for certain things because I was one of the only males around the school. Okay. And it took me a while to get it.

One of the ways that Michael felt he was targeted was that he was placed with a teacher who nearly everyone else found difficult to work with. He believes this was a tactic to make him want to leave the school:

I would do some things and the woman I worked with that year, uh teaching, would question some of my disciplinary tactics, even some of my teaching methods in front of the students and the students picked up on it and all the stuff. I would try to have fun in the classroom and I could tell that the kids would see how she would take it. It's like if a kid sees two parents arguing and they start choosing sides. It's kind of like that. So that made it harder for me in the classroom and that would hurt because she was white. All my students in the classroom were Black and they started taking sides, and that part, I won't say it hurt, it pissed me off. Because, honestly, she's borderline like a closet racist. I'm just gonna be real with you. I feel like no matter how we feel personally, we should get along in front of our students, but she wanted to undermine me in any way she could, and what could I say?

This situation caused a lot of anxiety for Michael. He knew he needed to start looking for a job, because even if he made it to the end of the school year he knew his contract would probably not be renewed. When asked if the bad experience he had “soured” him on education he responded, “No, it didn't make me sour on teaching, it made me sour on the

school system.” By the end of the year, he had found a new position as a 3rd Grade teacher.

Terry’s Story. Terry is an elementary school teacher by training. After 10 years of working as an elementary math teacher he was promoted to a Dean of Student’s position at the performing arts charter school he helped to found. His story is one of truly being pushed out by outside entities brought in to restructure the school due to low test scores. Terry was no longer welcome at the school because he spoke out about the policies and practices of the new administration. Interestingly, he was given a “going away” celebration and the official word of his departure was that he was resigning to move on to bigger and better things. He didn’t resist the narrative because he was beloved by parents and teachers alike. He is just now starting to speak about the real circumstances of his exit from the school:

I started out as a teacher at a new performing arts charter school. I loved this job. When it started, it felt so special. We were doing something really unique. All of the elementary school kids took ballet and experimented with other forms of dance. They also took vocal music, learned an instrument, and took visual art. When they got to middle school, they got to choose a “major”. It was something I was so proud to be a part of. Eventually, after 3 years, I was promoted to Dean of Students and spent the last 5 years I worked there in this position.

The trouble really started in my last two years at the school. Our test scores were not where they needed to be, so the charter board fired the Principal who was really the heart and soul of the school. They sent in a charter management company to “get the school back on track”. This meant firing teachers, cracking down on uniform policy, and riding the remaining teachers about grilling students and “teaching to the test”, in our case, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) test. I understand wanting students to perform well, but the way they went about it was all wrong. They started stripping away the arts, suspending students for minor uniform infractions (not wearing a belt, wearing the wrong color shoes), imposing silent lunches, giving excessive amounts of homework, cutting recess to 10 minutes (if there was recess at all), and just being mean to kids for being kids. It was ridiculous. The company that the charter board sent in was culturally and racially insensitive. Our parents were used to a very family environment. They were no longer welcome in the building and when they came they were not greeted or spoken to respectfully. My

trouble started when I started speaking out about the treatment of the kids and their parents. The last year I worked at the school I was told in January 2015 that my contract would not be renewed the following year because I no longer “fit into the school culture”. I had been at the school since the beginning. I helped shape the school culture and now I was being told by people who knew nothing about the school, the community or the families that I didn’t fit in anymore. It hurt me. I was so devastated. I am no longer working in education. This experience really soured me on working in the education system. Maybe one day I’ll come back because my true passion is working with kids and parents. For now, I just need time to heal.

Terry’s story was the first one I gathered as preliminary data for this study. When I contacted him again to interview him and ask permission to use his story he consented. Currently, Terry has moved to another state be closer to his adult son who recently graduated from college. He is easing his way back into education by substitute teaching part time and says maybe one day he will teach or be an administrator again. He placed emphasis on *maybe*.

Jason’s Story. Throughout his interview, Jason made it clear that he had an aversion to yelling at and “fronting on” his students, even though this was acceptable behavior at his pushout school.

The kids hear so much of the same thing all day, "be quiet", "stop this", "stop that". If you just change up some your vocabulary with them, you might say, "Alright, listen, we're in the music room. In here, we can make as much noise as we want, but in the hallway, we can't make that much noise because we're gonna disturb other classes. So I want to see you get your mouth and your body together right before we go on the hallway. I'm looking for people who can get themselves together right now." And so like, I'm not just yelling, "Get in line. Be quiet." I'm saying this is why and you can self-regulate, you can make a choice right now to think about where you are, think about what you're going to do and make a decision about what's appropriate. Because, if adults are in the room, or if we are traveling from one place to another, we're not gonna walk in a straight line. If adults are sitting in a seminar, we're likely going to have a side conversation or two. It's a human thing, but we put this pressure on these kids, because it makes us feel like we have a certain amount of control. And ultimately, you have some kids that are very submissive and won't buck the system or will always like have a natural desire to please the authority in the room, but your only other tool for the

kids who don't have that natural inclination is to be punitive, and that's not healthy for anybody.

So, Jason didn't yell. He studied positive reinforcement and classroom management. He worked hard to "gain the trust" of his students. At first, he admits, it was a little rocky. He was a new teacher and he was still learning, but eventually, he got the hang of it. But he was constantly being told that he was "too soft". He got so tired of the school culture where teachers yelling at students and students yelling at each other was the norm. After three years he applied to be the music teacher at a public school in the same district in a predominantly white and more affluent area. This school was a stark contrast to his previous position. He noticed that the school – even though it was a public school in the same district of the school he had just left – had an abundance of resources, state of art equipment and classrooms, gourmet lunches. Only one thing was missing – the yelling. He had been told at his previous school, "sometimes, you have get in these kids faces!". At his new school, children with discipline issues had mediators, counselors, and programs to redirect their behavior and choices. Students were rarely suspended, and he was no longer expected to be an enforcer. He's allowed to "just teach" and is quite happy doing just that.

Edward's Story. I have witnessed Edward teach. He is dynamic to say the least. When I knew him as a teacher, his students loved him. He always had creative ways of teaching lessons. He is funny, and he is kind. Edward is simply one of those people that you see teach and just know that this is what he was born to do, so it's surprising that a good teacher like Edward has a pushout story. But he does. Four years ago, Edward was teaching 5th Grade at an elementary charter school. When the school got a new administrative team, things they used to do – a costume party at Halloween, a holiday

play right before Christmas, casual Friday's – were all cut. It was all about testing and there was not time for fun. Pep rallies that used to be for the school's intramural basketball team – also cut – were now held for boosting kids morale to do well on the state test.

Dealing with testing was hard, you know. A lot of times you just have to take tests and sometimes they might want me to take out science and history and just focus on English and math and I'd be like no you just can't do that. Kids need to have history. Kids need to learn something about history. Kids need science. It comes together, you know let's not try to push this test so much. Let's not just always just talk about test tests, tests, tests. Let's teach them something. Let's not just focus on the textbook. Let's take some field trips. Do some hands-on learning.

This attitude is what eventually led to Edward's push out at this particular school. He started contacting parents and encouraging them to talk to the new administration to push them to bring back some of the fun things that Edward believes help students stay engaged in the classroom and by extension, do better on tests. After a lot of pressure from parents, the administration brought back some of the things that he says, "gave the school life." The kids could have the Halloween party – but could not wear costumes until after school, which is when the party was held instead of during the school day. There was no holiday play, but the music teacher put together a nice Christmas program. The basketball team did not make a comeback and Pep rallies were still for testing, but "hey, you win some, you lose some". After Christmas break, Edward was looking for jobs. He was tired of dealing with the new, more restrictive environment. Students were being suspended for uniform violations and other minor infractions. Teachers were being reprimanded for not giving enough homework. To his surprise, during his search, Edward noticed that his job was posted for the next school year. When he asked the Head of School about it, she told him that they were "trying to keep their options open". After the school year ended,

Edward decided to go back to school to study to be a social worker. He took a job outside of education and is now working toward completing his degree and becoming a social worker. When asked if he had been soured on education he responded:

I'm not sour about it. I miss that joy of teaching. I miss the joy of working with other teachers to teach them things. I miss, just parents coming into a healthy building and being able to go to work with a smile on their face. The reason I'm not really into it no more like I used to be into it is because I see the way society is going in. I think there are better ways that we can establish these kids outside of school and doing more after school programs because we're focusing too much on trying to beat a state test.

Carlos' Story. Before telling Carlos' story, I double-checked to make sure he was alright with it being included. His is a deeply personal one. He has more than 20 years of teaching experience at the elementary and secondary level and is a Master Teacher.

Carlos admits that he is very confident in his abilities and has never wanted to do anything but teach. It is his passion. One year, Carlos left town for a few weeks in the summer. He returned from vacation only to be arrested at his home. He was being accused of sexual assault by a fellow teacher who happened to be a white female. He was floored and could not understand how this could happen. Without question, he was fired from his current teaching position. He was also kicked out of his doctoral program, lost his two businesses, and spent 54 days in jail. He had to get a lawyer and prepare his case. Even though he knew he was innocent, and thankfully he had been out of town when the alleged incident occurred, Carlos was nervous and also devastated. He had lost his job and his reputation. Even if he was found not guilty, he knew there would always be people who believed he did it.

When the case went to trial, Carlos presented witnesses who saw him in the state he had visited, receipts, plane tickets and even pictures from his social media proving that he

was not in town when his alleged victim said he assaulted her. There was no DNA. He says they never had a sexual relationship and that he had never even flirted with her. His evidence proved his innocence. His innocence did not get his job back. He didn't know what he was going to do. He decided to leave the country and teach overseas. He has taught in several countries in the Middle East and in Africa over the past 5 years. He says he has no plans to return to the states. This incident has "scarred him for life" and he says he has PTSD from the experience. Carlos believes that men, especially Black men, are particularly vulnerable to accusations of sexual assault in female dominated spaces. He says he has nightmares about what would have happened if he had been in town when his accuser says the assault occurred. It would have been her word against his and he says he knows they would have taken her word. I spoke to Carlos over the phone from his home in Dubai.

Corey's Story. Corey is creative. If you ask him his main characteristic that's what he will say, "I'm creative". Corey's creativity is what ultimately cost him his job. In addition to the incident with the Black History Month posters, he had several other run-ins with administration, which he says are all a result of his unwillingness to "live in a box". Corey is a rapper and a lover of hip-hop music and he loved using hip-hop in his 4th Grade classroom. There is evidence that hip-hop can be an effective teaching tool, particularly with marginalized communities of color (Akom, 2009; Irizarry, 2009; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade 2002) and Carlos took full advantage of this. Using videos and materials from websites like *Flocabulary*, he overheard his students singing, "It's all about that PEMDAS (parenthesis, exponents, multiplication, division, addition, subtraction)" at recess. He was proud and felt like the kids were really learning.

When the lead teacher came to observe Corey's class, she told him he needed to be "more structured". He didn't realize how structured she meant until she provided him with a template for an outline he should follow each day. She explained that all of his classes should follow a structured outline and he "may even want to have some sample language to use" during his lessons. He told her that was not his way of teaching and that this would force him to be too stiff and formal. His kids were learning, their grades were good, their test scores were improving. What was the problem? The problem? This is how she wanted everyone to do it now. He needed to fall in line. Corey tried to follow the new system, but it just didn't feel natural. His students were bored and they kept asking about the PEMDAS song. So, he went back to teaching the way he knew how. When the lead teacher came back to observe, Corey had written the outlines but was not following them to the letter. He was written up. This pattern continued all year. Corey felt worn down, demoralized and burned out. When asked what he felt, he responded:

Depression, man. You know, it's depressing. You know, you feel drained, you're not 'you'. You just feel like you're fighting instead of working. You know, it doesn't feel how being a teacher supposed to be. It's hard work, but there's supposed to be some fulfillment, you know, and you don't feel that. You're just ready to run away. You're ready to be in an environment where 'you being you' is not judged and critiqued.

At the end of the school year, Corey resigned. He now works as a 4th Grade teacher at another charter school.

Sean's Story. Sean, the other administrator in the study is a veteran educator with over 25 years in the field. For the last 12 years, he has served as principal at three different schools. His pushout experience occurred in in his capacity as a principal. He came to the school, a college prep charter school in Washington, DC under circumstances that were not ideal. The former principal had been fired because she was caught padding

test scores. Her departure had been bitter, because despite the controversy, the principal was loved. His arrival at the school was not welcomed. Despite this, Sean wanted to make the most of the situation. He's a creative, effective administrator and he figured he could win people over. He had relocated from Grand Rapids, MI where he had a proven track record as a principal.

From the start, he started making changes. Faculty and students met in the atrium every morning for morning "warm up". Students were given words of encouragement, special accomplishments were celebrated. I was his Dean of Students and we implemented new things that got the kids excited about coming to school. Every day they played the song "Lovely Day" every day. Every Friday was Freestyle Friday. Students gathered in the auditorium for an hour every Friday and shared songs, poetry, and dances. There were field trips once a month, an after school tutoring program was started, and the kids – yes middle school kids – were given a 30-minute recess every day.

This all sounds great, but teachers started to complain. The kids had too much freedom. Why did they need a 30-minute recess? Why so many field trips? Why freestyle Friday? What did any of this have to do with education? Sean tried explaining that he was trying to instill a sense of school pride. He was trying to make school a place where these kids, from this tough neighborhood, wanted to be. He was trying. But the teachers still didn't like it. Nine-weeks into his first year, the teachers were complaining to the Board and pushing for Sean's job. They wanted the old principal and the old ways back.

Sean made it through that school year but was fired at the end. The old principal was brought back and so were the old ways. Sean got a new job as dean at another charter middle school, but he would sometimes see his former students. They told him that

school was horrible. There were fights every day and most of the kids just reminisced about how much fun that school year had been. Two years later, the school was shut down completely due to various issues including low enrollment and another cheating scandal. Sean is now the principal at a charter high school in South East DC.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine teacher pushout among Black male teachers. Because Black males make up such a small percentage of the teacher workforce (2%), it is important to examine not only how we can recruit more Black males to teach but also how we can retain the Black men who are currently in the workforce. Of the 9 men in this study, two left full-time teaching, and one, while still in the field, left the country to be an administrator. While the stories of these men are just a snapshot of the experiences of Black male teachers, their voices are an important contribution to the field of education and to understanding how to increase the number of Black men who choose to enter and remain in education. By specifically focusing on stories of Black men who were pushed out of positions, we can gain more insight into what contributes to this specific element of Black male teacher turnover. These men and this study also provide an important perspective, as the purpose of much of the prior research on Black male educators was to: 1) highlight Black male teachers paths to K-12 education, including understanding the motivations for entering the profession with the goal of increasing Black male recruitment (Bristol, 2014; Brown & Butty, 1999; Bryan & Ford, 2014; Davis, Jones Frank, & Clark, 2013; Pabon, Anderson, Kharem, 2011), 2) understand Black male teachers pedagogical practices (Brown, 2009; Lynn, 2006; Lynn, Jennings, 2009), and 3) problematize masculinity in education (Brokenbrough, 2012;

Rezai-Rashti, Martino, 2010). In contrast, this study gives voice to Black males, who are a significant minority in the field of education so that we can better understand their experiences with being pushed out of educational settings and understand the implications of these experiences on Black male teacher retention. This study listened to the concerns, shares in the triumphs, and celebrates the resilience of Black men who choose to take on the task of educating and nurturing America's children.

Recommendations

All of the Black men in this study had one major thing in common – they have had the experience of being pushed out of a teaching position in K-12 schools. Interestingly, these men reported similar experiences with feeling that they were “under the microscope” and often scrutinized more than their co-workers and that they were expected to serve as disciplinarians, not just for their own classrooms, but for the school at large. Many of the men believed that their pre-determined role of disciplinarian limited the ability for co-workers and administrators to see them as “complete educators” (Daryl). In addition, the participants expressed the feeling that they were often expected to “stomp around” (Terry) and intimidate the students while simultaneously being docile and submissive when interacting with administrators and co-workers. This notion went beyond just being respectful co-workers and cooperative employees and extended to the feeling of being silenced, ignored, treated unfairly, and disrespected. One participant, Daryl, told me he felt like he, “spent more time in the principal's office than the worst behaved kid in the school”. He didn't believe he had done anything extraordinarily

different than any other teacher at the school. His only distinguishing characteristic – he was the only Black male teacher in the building.

The teachers in this story provided rich narrative and insight into the experiences of Black males who have been pushed out of schools. The lessons that emerge from these narratives provide important information about how those who strive to improve retention among Black male teachers. In the following sections, I will provide recommendations for schools/school systems, recommendations for teacher education programs, and recommendations for Black male educators. The recommendations are based on the lessons learned from the background research and more specifically from the research participants.

Recommendations for Schools/School Systems

Based on the information gathered from research participants, it is clear that some schools and school systems could benefit from adding some cultural competency and professional development training that includes a particular emphasis on the needs and concerns of Black male teachers. This training should convey the message that schools should not automatically assume that Black male teachers desire or feel comfortable with playing the role of disciplinarian and enforcer, particularly if: a) they are expected to fill this role without regard to teaching philosophy, b) they are expected to play the role of disciplinarian for other teachers who have difficulty with classroom management and student engagement, c) they are expected to discipline students based on narrow perceptions of Black males that require them to downplay their role as nurturers and overemphasized their role as enforcers, d) they are limited to having

meaningful interaction with Black male students and discouraged from having similar meaningful interactions with other students, e) it is automatically assumed that they will have a connection with all Black male students and that this connection will result in dramatic improvements in Black male achievement and behavior, and f) they are only allowed to be disciplinarians but now allowed to contribute to the programs, measures and decisions that are developed to address disciplinary issues – in other words, they can't just be used as the “muscle”, they should also participate fully in the process. These points cannot be overemphasized because they played a major role in how the Black males in this study felt about their roles as educators and in their overall job satisfaction. Placing Black men in narrow disciplinarian roles downplays other skills and assets that they bring to the school and place an undue burden of responsibility for the remediation of student behavior, particularly Black male student behavior, in their hands. This ignores the complex systemic and social determinants of success in school. Having Black men on staff cannot be used as *the* solution, nor can it be the only measure put in place to improve outcomes for Black males. Placing Black male teachers in pre-determined disciplinarian roles undermines their ability to be complete educators who contribute to the overall health and success of the school.

On the other hand, Black men who have the desire to serve as mentors and role models to Black male students should feel that they have the support of their schools. If they have insight into measures that can be taken to improve Black male student achievement and outcomes, it is important to consider their opinions and input seriously. As multiple participants mentioned, “I was a boy!”. In their view, this fact made them uniquely qualified to impact the lives of young Black men.

When schools hire Black men, they should pay attention to whether they are treating them as full-fledged team members. This means listening to and considering their input, including them on committees and in decisions that impact the school, and making sure that their own implicit biases about Black men aren't impacting not only how they treat Black students, but also Black male teachers. Some participants reported feeling like they were being "treated like children" and that they were often chastised, yelled at, and patronized by female administrators and co-workers. This emerged in both this study and the study by Brokenbrough (2012) on Black male teachers, but the interpretation of this finding is vastly different between the studies. Brokenbrough asserts that this finding "revealed participants' perspectives on the excessiveness and illegitimacy of women administrators' authority, [and] the usefulness of masculinist posturing to counter that authority." Based on the stories from the men in this study, as well as a thorough interrogation of my own experiences, I believe that this assertion is dismissive and fails to truly listen and give voice to the experiences of Black male teachers. The participants in this study did not express disdain for female leadership, and in fact, many of them had female mentors. While many had had negative experiences they also reported positive relationships and interactions with female administrators and co-workers. Rather than immediately dismissing the experiences of Black male teachers, we should examine the cultural and political forces that might contribute to school environments where there is hostility toward Black male presence. Rather than assert that Black male teachers have "disdain for female leadership", we should also consider whether schools that have been unaccustomed to the presence of Black males can sometimes be inhospitable – intentionally or unintentionally – when Black men enter these spaces. If we don't at least

take this possibility into consideration, we run the risk of developing recruitment and retention strategies that don't work because the input of Black males was not solicited or dismissed as misogyny and toxic masculinity. We have to allow room for alternative viewpoints and consider new possibilities or else we run the risk of Black male teachers making up 2% of the teaching workforce decades into the future.

Recommendations for Teacher Education Programs

There are many existing programs such as Call Me MISTER (Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models), NYC Men Teach, and Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color (COSEBOC) that have the specific aim of recruiting Black men to teach. Call Me Mister currently has 14 participating colleges that provide tuition assistance, mentoring, job placement assistance, academic and social support. NYC Men Teach focuses on recruiting and mentoring men of color who wish to be teachers with a particular emphasis on retaining them in the field for at least three years. COSEBOC is focused on preparing school leaders to support boys of color in K-12 education. All of these programs serve as model for expansion of programs that can provide the needed support to Black men who desire to be teachers but need additional resources and encouragement to make this goal possible. The education workforce comes from teacher education programs, making these programs an important entity in addressing the shortage of Black male teachers and the reasons for this shortage. While some programs have taken strides to be more intentional about encouraging Black males to become teachers, efforts must also be taken to ensure that when they enter into the field they are coming into spaces that are open and prepared to receive them. One of the ways that

teacher education programs can accomplish this is by adding more emphasis on and training in classroom management. This was a particularly salient issue with Black men who were often perceived as being natural disciplinarians and therefore they were being called upon to manage the classrooms of other teachers. This often caused discomfort when Black male teachers were either unprepared or unwilling to fulfill this role or when taking on this responsibilities led to disruptions in their own classroom routines. If all teachers entered classrooms feeling more prepared to manage classroom behavior, this would potentially place less pressure on Black men to play this role. This training should also be clear that it is inappropriate to place the onus of school discipline on Black men, or any other particular group.

Another step that teacher education programs can take is to have programs put in place that have a particular emphasis on recruiting Black men. Rather than relying on community based programs with this purpose, programs should develop such initiatives with substantial input from Black male teachers to ensure that they are responsive to the unique needs and circumstances of Black male students who enter into their programs. This includes understanding that while some Black men may have perspectives and approaches that are unconventional or unfamiliar in traditional teaching programs, these viewpoints have the potential to add a new layer of understanding about how to engage Black male students as well as students from all walks of life. Rather than attempting to beat all displays of masculinity into submission, these programs should be critical in their thinking about healthy displays of masculinity that allow Black male teachers to fully express themselves and their self-defined, self-determined displays of their masculinity and humanity.

Recommendations for Black Male Educators

Being a minority in any situation can be a challenge. For Black males, this challenge is magnified in the field of education where Black teachers of any gender and men of any race are rare. Within the teaching profession, Black men exist in an intersection of race and gender that can place them in an especially unique and particularly uncomfortable situation. Because of this, it is important for Black male teachers to find support systems and perhaps even have meet-ups and social media groups where they can discuss issues, share victories, and develop strategies for dealing with challenges. These spaces can also serve as sources of comfort, healing and support for Black men who have been or are on the verge of being pushed out of their positions. Many of the men in this study expressed feelings of not being heard, considered, or taken seriously when they had ideas or grievances. Black male educator support groups can serve as one way to help them to come up with new ways to approach administrators, and, if need be, a place to find new teaching positions at schools that are “Black male friendly.”

Directions for Future Programming and Research

There are multiple things that I believe can be done within the field of education to move the needle forward in Black male teacher recruitment, retention, and pushout prevention. In this section, I propose several directions for programming and research that will help begin this work. Some of this is work that I have already begun by traveling across the country providing professional development workshops for future, new, and

veteran educators. Other recommendations in this section are directions that I feel the field will need to go in so that more Black men will see teaching as a viable and fulfilling career.

Develop Teacher Mentoring Programs Specifically for Black Males

School systems and community organizations should develop mentoring programs specifically for Black male teachers. These programs should have a particular emphasis on helping new Black male teachers to develop culturally competent pedagogical practices, developing strategies to cope with and understand what it means to teach in majority female environments, preparing Black males who want to be mentors but may not necessarily have the tools with skills and confidence to play this role in the lives of children and Black male students in particular, and perhaps most important, providing a safe space for support and encouragement. In addition to providing mentoring programs for Black male educators, teacher education programs can also create community initiatives designed to provide Black male mentors to Black male students in middle schools and high schools. This provides an opportunity for Black male students to see Black male educators in leadership roles and also learn leadership and advocacy skills. Eventually, this may lead to more young Black men to value and pursue careers in education.

Throughout my career in education, I have had multiple opportunities to mentor other Black male educators. I have also received invaluable support and mentorship from other Black male educators. These experiences have served as a constant reminder of the need to provide resources and safe spaces for Black men, particularly Black men in the

field of education. In the future, I would like to expand on this by creating physical and virtual safe spaces for Black male educators. For example, there are several large groups on social media that serve as resources and safe spaces for Black male educators. One group in particular, Black Educators Rock, has expanded to over 8000 teachers who have local meetups and an annual conference. It would be amazing to have a similar group designed specifically for Black male educators to have local meetups and support groups and eventually an annual conference with speakers, training workshops, and opportunities to network.

Provide cultural competency training to all administrators

Over the years, there has been an increasing emphasis on providing cultural competency training to teachers and administrators. Many of the men in this study expressed feeling misunderstood and felt that oftentimes their efforts to participate in and contribute to things that were happening in the school were misinterpreted. As a way to begin to bridge that gap and create more harmony between Black male teachers and administrators, it is important to develop cultural competency training to administrators with an emphasis on providing them with the skills and assets needed to incorporate and integrate Black male teachers, examine their own implicit biases about Black males, and develop strategies to ensure that their schools are safe work environments for Black men. As with all of the suggested strategies, this training should be developed and implemented by Black male educators to ensure that the messaging is relevant and effective.

Over the past several years, I have undertaken the task of providing professional development training to teachers and administrators that incorporate elements of cultural competence. As it relates to Black males, much of this work has centered around better understanding and engaging Black male students. In the future, I plan to incorporate modules that emphasize the importance of culturally competent practices for engaging Black male educators as well. These modules could also be developed into a curriculum that could be taught and implemented around the country. Based on my own experiences and many of the participants in this study, I would suggest including topics that help administrators recognize that not all expressions of masculinity are toxic. It is also important to help teachers and administrators recognize when they are potentially encouraging toxic displays of masculinity when it suits their immediate needs, such as when they need someone to control the behavior of misbehaving students. This was frustrating and confusing for Black male teachers in this study, many of whom felt that they were being used and controlled but were not allowed to express themselves freely when it was not convenient or desired. These and other topics can be the start to helping Black males become more complete educators and more valued assets in the classroom.

Conduct more qualitative and quantitative research that specifically focuses on Black male teachers

Finally, this research project really highlighted the fact that there is a dearth of research about Black male educators. While it is known that there is a problem and that there are too few Black male teachers, very little is known about how to fix the problem. In order to better understand the issue, more educational researchers need to place an

emphasis on understanding the problem and develop solutions to increase the number of Black men who are prepared and desire to teach. Suggested research topics include: 1) pushout and turnover with an emphasis on understanding the “why”, 2) motivations for entering and remaining in education to better understand the factors that contribute to Black male teacher retention. This study is one small step in the direction of bringing the unique talents, skills, and perspectives of Black men in the classroom.

Limitations

This study has some limitations that should be noted. First of all, this study only included nine participants, which is far from a representative sample of Black male teachers. As with most qualitative research, the sample was necessarily small in order to delve more deeply into the stories and experiences of these Black male educators. This provided rich narrative and insightful new information about the experiences of Black male teachers who have been pushed out of positions. More research needs to be done so that the this information can be used to conduct larger, quantitative and mixed methods studies that paint a more representative picture of Black male educators.

Another limitation to this study is that the participants were only men who had experienced being pushed out of a position or out of the field of education. Many men who have not been pushed out and who remain in the teaching profession have had experiences that would add valuable information about why Black men enter into teaching. Their stories and experiences would add a valuable and needed layer to this

body of research in order to come to better understanding of how to recruit and retain Black male educators.

Conclusion

Black male teachers are asset to America's classrooms, both to address educational and behavioral challenges that Black boys experience and to serve as educators and role models to all student of all races and genders. A recent study found that when children have at least one Black teacher between 3rd and 5th grade, there was a 29% decrease in the probability of dropping out of school for girls and an even greater decrease for boys (39%). Further, there was and 19% and 29% increase in students who indicated that they planned to attend a four-year college among girls and boys respectively (Gershenson, Hart, & Papageorge, 2017). Black males need to be included in the equation when considering the implications of these findings.

The voices of these brave men are one way of beginning to understand and explain what quantitative studies have already found – that teacher turnover is higher among Black male teachers than any other group. Through qualitative inquiry, we can begin to understand the stories behind the numbers so that effective strategies and solutions can be developed to remedy this issue and bring Black men back into the classroom.

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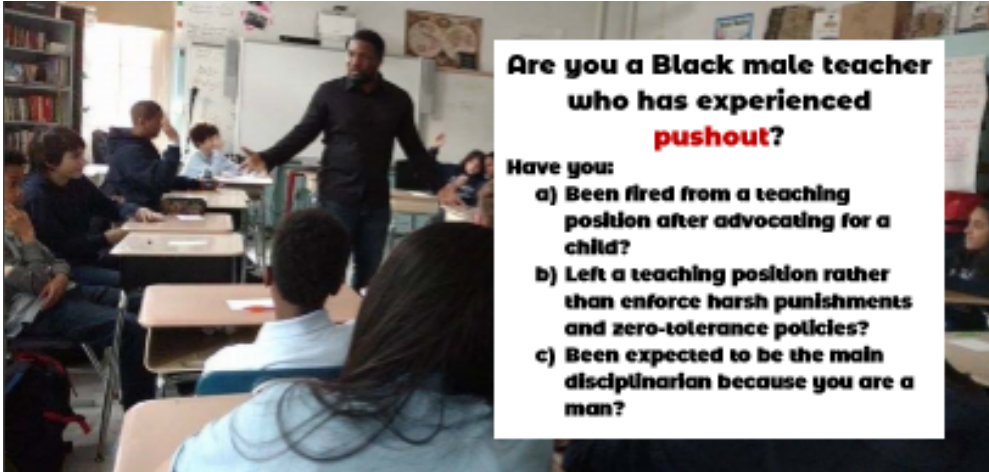
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Appendix A

Recruitment Flyer



Are you a Black male teacher who has experienced pushout?

Have you:

- Been fired from a teaching position after advocating for a child?
- Left a teaching position rather than enforce harsh punishments and zero-tolerance policies?
- Been expected to be the main disciplinarian because you are a man?

Have you been Black-maled?

Joseph Mathews is looking for Black Male Teachers who have been pushed out of teaching positions in K-12 schools to talk about their experiences and make their voices heard.

Qualified Participants must:	Participants will:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a Black male • Be a teacher • Be 18 or older • Have experienced pushout from at least one teaching position in a K-12 public and charter school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete a 60-90 minute interview and have the opportunity to talk about their experiences with pushout

Interested? Contact Joseph Mathews @ (202)702-5262 or email: blackmaledstudy@gmail.com

Appendix B
Examining Teacher Pushout
Interview Guide

Materials Check List:

- ✗ Digital Recording Device
- ✗ Informed Consent Form Emailed in Advance and Received

Introduction:

“Good morning/afternoon, my name is Joseph Mathews. Thank you for taking time out of your busy day to speak with me. This interview will likely last 60 to 90 minutes, is that okay?”

Consent Waiver Language

Before we begin, we need to go over informed consent before starting the interview:

*You are invited to participate in the study to be conducted by **Joseph Mathews** at Columbia University Teachers College. The researcher is interviewing teachers who have been pushed out their position in public and charter schools. The purpose is to better understand one aspect of teacher turnover and to better understand the impact of this phenomenon on schools, students, families, and communities. You have been identified as a current or former teacher who can provide value insight into the impact of teacher pushout. That is why you are being asked to complete this interview.*

There are no direct benefits to participating in this study. However, possible benefits include a potential improvement in the understanding of teacher pushout which might encourage further exploration of the impact of teacher pushout. No personal identifying information will be collected from you. Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by keeping all study documents in a secure, password protected computer to which only the researcher has access.

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. If you decide to participate in this interview, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

*If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator **Joseph Mathews**. If you would like a copy of this information for your records, a copy will be provided to you. By continuing with this interview, you attest that you are at least 18 years old and understand the terms of this study and voluntarily agree to participate. Do you agree to continue and have your responses audio-recorded?*

_____ Yes _____ No

[If **YES** from interviewee, “Thank you, now let’s begin to talk a little more about your experiences” and proceed with the next paragraph; If **NO** from interviewee, “Thank you for taking the time to speak with me”, and **STOP HERE**.

Questions:

1. When did you first know that you wanted to become a teacher?
 - a) Why did you want to become a teacher?
 - b) What were/are the most fulfilling aspects of being a teacher?
 - c) What were/are the most challenging aspects of being a teacher?
2. Briefly, describe your personal teaching philosophy (i.e. What are your fundamental beliefs about your role as a teacher? What motivates you to teach? What are your key values as it relates to how you treat students?)
3. Tell me about your experience(s) of being pushed out of a teaching position?
 - a) When did it happen?
 - b) Did you leave voluntarily or were you dismissed (contract not renewed/laid off/fired)?
 - c) How did your experience(s) during the school year that you were pushed out impact your home life?

- d) Describe the overall school culture at the school where you were pushed out.
 - e) What specific tactics do you think were used to facilitate your pushout?
 - f) Do you feel that this/these experience(s) have impacted your mental health? If so how? If not, why?
 - g) How did this experience effect how you feel about teaching as a profession?
 - h) Did you leave the teaching profession as a result of this experience?
4. What are some of the things you were asked to do that made you feel uncomfortable? Did you do them anyway? How did you feel afterward?
5. Do you feel that you were treated differently than your white co-workers? Were there different expectations for how you should interact with students? Administrators?
6. Was there a culture of fear (fear of administration, etc) in your school? If so, how did this culture impact your teaching?
7. Some teachers have told me that their positions have been posted on job hiring web sites during the school year. Have you ever experienced this? If yes, please describe how this made you feel. Please describe how this impacted your ability to teach effectively.

8. Do you feel any sense of financial insecurity as a result of observing high teacher turnover?

a) What, if any impact does the observation of massive teacher turnover have on you? (i.e. your mental health etc.)

9. Is there anything else that you would like to add that you feel might be important?

I would also like to ask a few demographic questions before we end. The information you provide is confidential and we will only report grouped data; people will not be able identify your responses:

1. How old are you?

- a. 18-34
- b. 35-49
- c. 50-64
- d. 65-74
- e. 75+

2. What is your gender?

- a. Male
- b. Female

c. Other

3. What is your ethnicity?

a. Hispanic or Latino

b. Not Hispanic or Latino

4. What is your race?

a. White

b. Black or African American

c. American Indian or Alaska Native

d. Asia

e. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Island

f. Other

5. Do you live in the District of Columbia?

a. If so, what Ward do you live in? _____

b. If not, what city do you live in?

6. How long have you lived in this community? _____

7. What degrees do you hold? Please

list: _____

8. What is your marital status?

- a. Married
- b. Not Married
- c. Prefer not to answer

9. Are you currently employed?

- a. Yes, Full-time
- b. Yes, Part-Time
- c. No (SKIP TO QUESTION 11)
- d. Other _____

10. Are you currently teaching?

- a. If yes, what grade(s)? _____
- b. If no, what is your current profession? _____

11. Do you have children under the ages of 18 years of age living with you?

- a. Yes
- b. No

12. If yes, how many children under the age of 18 do you have?

Thank you so much for your participation!