

BLACK ON BOTH SIDES: DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE BLACK MALE  
EDUCATOR EXPERIENCE IN A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE SCHOOL DISTRICT

SAMUEL THOMAS MARTIN IV

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Samuel Thomas Martin IV

Dr. Juanita Simmons, Dissertation Supervisor

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the  
dissertation entitled

BLACK ON BOTH SIDES: DOUBLE CONCIOUSNESS AND THE BLACK MALE  
EDUCATOR EXPERIENCE IN A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Presented by Samuel Thomas Martin,  
a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education,  
and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Dr. Juanita Simmons, Dissertation Chair

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Dr. Noelle Arnold, Committee Member

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Dr. Sarah Diem, Committee Member

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Dr. Carol Maher, Committee Member

## Dedication

Any success I have-academic or otherwise-is a direct reflection of who I represent and the team of folks that surround me. It takes a village to write a dissertation and I want to thank several individuals in my village for helping me get to this point.

First, and foremost this dissertation is dedicated to my Creator for everything including the ability to think, reason, question, and the stubbornness to see it through to the end. Colossians 3:23.

To the memory of my father, Samuel Thomas Martin III, thank you for daring me to be myself and instilling in me the conviction to back it up. You told me to stay focused and I did! I know you are proud.

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Abstract

Recently, in pk-12 schools there has been an increased emphasis on developing educators who are able to provide culturally responsive instruction (Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Lewis, 2006; Naman, 2009). Several researchers have noted that the Black Male Educators (BMEs) have the potential to play a significant role in providing social and academic support for Black students in general, and Black male students specifically. Thus, stakeholders have increased their efforts to recruit and retain BMEs (Lynn, 2002; Lewis, 2006). It is imperative that stakeholders have a more nuanced understanding of the BME experience. This qualitative multiple case study seeks to explicate the complexities of the BME experience and trouble common sense notions of about BMEs.

This study explores the experiences of nine BMEs in through the lens of CRP and double consciousness, highlighting the various ways that racial consciousness and racial identity influence the pedagogical practice of individual participants in addition to offering a critique of the systemic forces of oppression embedded in formal educational institutions. The major themes that emerged from this study included the following: racialized foundations, the veil of double consciousness, stalled progression, tools of navigation, and the critical race pedagogy of BMEs.

Participants varied in their family backgrounds, educational experiences, paths to certification, and years in the profession, however each individual expressed a clear conceptualization of their racial identity and its influence on both their professional experiences and their pedagogical practice. Moreover, BMEs illustrated a heterogeneity that acts as a counter narrative for what it means to be Black, male, and an educator. The findings for this study have implications for education preparation programs and school

districts that want to recruit, train, and retain BMEs in the field of education and is relevant for current, and future BMEs and others that have a vested interest in seeing a more equitable public school system that reflects the diversity of the students it serves.

### Proem

The first part of my title—Black on both sides—is a nod to a phrase I first heard growing up as a child. I’m not sure of its origin. This phrase was later popularized by recording artist, Yasiin Bey, who titled his debut album Black on Both Sides. Hip Hop as culture, at its core, is about giving voice to the marginalized individual. As Yasiin Bey so eloquently stated, “speech is my hammer/now bang the world into shape.” My title is an ode to the platform—Hip Hop—that helped me locate my own voice. In a similar vein, this study is designed to give voice to individuals whose experiences have been marginalized in professional educational practice and scholarship. I chose this title because it denotes a level of authenticity and appreciation for one’s own experience. My background is my compass and I cannot forget my roots.

Additionally, I also chose this title to highlight the complexities, pressures, and duality that have been associated with my experience as a Black American male. The fact of the matter is that race has indelibly influenced my experiences in America. My Blackness accompanies me wherever I go, whatever environment I am in. It encompasses my physiological, psychological, and emotional being. My race affects how others perceive me and my race also affects how I perceive certain situations. My Blackness affects my culture, my approach to education, and my scholarly pursuits. Though it is not the only aspect of identity, it is certainly the most visible aspect of my identity. In that sense I am inextricably linked to my Blackness. I am truly black on both sides.

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The genesis of my interest in this topic occurred the first time I read *Souls of Black Folks* as a college junior. DuBois' (1965) words articulated emotions and thoughts that resonated with my own experiences. He provided language and framework for me to process some of my inner most thoughts. During this point in my life, I was struggling to find my way at a predominantly White university (PWU). I grew up going to schools that were predominantly Black and was not used to being the only Black individual in my classes. I was learning how to adjust to a different climate. In reading his words I felt understood, affirmed, enlightened, and inspired – which was especially salient for me at such a pivotal time in my life. DuBois describes the *twoness* of the Black American existence. I not only felt this at time of my early experiences at this PWU, I have felt this as a member of my current educational organization. I have learned to balance my authentic Black identity while learning to develop an institutional identity as well. I am interested in exploring how other Black male educators BMEs have dealt with similar themes. I ask the question, and in my introduction and literature review I make a case that, yes, it is still relevant. Moreover, I am eager to see how this compares and contrasts with the personal and professional experiences of other Black males in a similar setting.

I have been conscious and cognizant of race and racial differences since I was a child. I have always been fascinated by history and culture of the African Diaspora. Ever since I first discovered the language of DuBois' double consciousness I've been fascinated by it. I've often reflected, wondered, and struggled with the concept in my own personal and professional life. It has always been a concept I wanted to explore in a scholarly fashion. It is fair to question the contemporary relevance of double consciousness. DuBois first broached the topic in 1897, predating the Niagara

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Movement, the Harlem Renaissance, the Civil Rights Movement, and America electing its first Black president. Considering the progress that has been made in the 20th and 21st centuries, it is plausible to understand how some may question the relevance of double consciousness in contemporary times.

I have always been fascinated by how race, class, and socialization affect one's perspective on life in general and education specifically. When I entered this program I knew my dissertation study would focus on race, gender, and education. However, I did not know the specifics until this study emerged.

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### Chapter 1

#### Introduction

In his seminal work *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903/1965) noted scholar W.E.B. DuBois described the Negro (see explanation of terms in definitions section) existence in America as a balancing act between dueling identities. In an era of American history rampant with bigotry and government sponsored racism DuBois (1903/1965) eloquently asked, “Can a man be both American and Negro?” (p. 214). In the socio-historical context of the second class citizenship that characterized the existence of many Negroes in America at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. DuBois raised a valid question. DuBois posited that the impact of racism bled into the psyche of the Negro in America (DuBois, 1903/1965). He stated that Negroes saw their existence “through the veil”, meaning that Negroes were forced to view themselves through the lens of a White America that did not acknowledge the value of the Negro life. Negroes experienced an identity crisis of sorts as they attempted to establish both a positive Black identity and a positive American identity. This identity conflict has been described as the double consciousness of the Black American identity (Allen, 1992; DuBois, 1903/1965; Lyubansky & Eidelson, 2005). In the decades following several researchers have revisited the concept of double consciousness and argued its continuing relevance (Allen, 1992; Dillard, 2008; Lyubansky & Eidelson, 2005; Swain, 2010).

Dubois’ initial conversation regarding double consciousness fueled discussion for the better part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century regarding the intersectionality and interdependence of education, identity development, and the socialization of Black America (Foster, 1990 and 1997; Kunjufu, 1985; Lyn, 1999; Jennings & Lynn, 2005; Rath, 1997; Woodson,

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1933). In the field of education this conversation has been largely centered on the achievement gap as it relates to the lack of academic success among Black children in the years since the Supreme Court mandated desegregation in American public schools (Foster, 1997; L. Howard, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1995a and 1995b; Lynn, 2006; Noguera, 2003). Although, a presumed goal of desegregation was to increase Black children's access to quality education, decades of results suggest that desegregated public schools have not met the needs of Black children (Hughes, 2010; O'Connor, 2006; Saddler, 2005). Multiple researchers have cited a lack of achievement among Black students across several measuring factors including college enrollment, standardized test scores, dropout rates, and suspensions (Brown, 2011b; Howard, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Noguera, 2003; Saddler, 2005). It has been suggested that Black children, specifically Black males, are being failed by the public school system (Brown, 2011a and 2011b; James, 2012; Kunjufu, 1985; Lewis, 2006; O'Connor, 2006; Noguera, 2003; Saddler, 2005). Several socio-cultural factors have been cited as impediments to the academic achievement of Black males, including poverty, lack of parental education, negative peer influence, and the lack of culturally relevant pedagogy and curricula (Brown, 2009a and 2009b; L. Howard, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1995a and 1995b; Noguera, 2003).

To combat the societal factors that impact Black student achievement school districts and relevant stakeholders have focused efforts on developing culturally responsive instructors and curricula (L. Howard, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Several scholars have noted that students benefit from building relationships with educators from backgrounds that reflect both the cultural and racial identities of the students they teach

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(Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings 1995b; Lynn, 2002; Lynn & Jennings, 2009; Naman, 2009). An increased emphasis on ethnically diverse educators and culturally responsive instruction has been supplemented by a push for more Black Male Educators (BMEs) (Lewis, 2006; Naman, 2009; Wilder, 2000). Several researchers have noted that BMEs have the potential to play a significant role in providing academic, social, and cultural support for Black males in the school setting (Brown, 2009a and 2009b; Lynn, 2002 and 2006; Lynn & Jennings, 2009; Lewis, 2006; Naman, 2009). In recent years, teacher education programs and school districts have increased efforts to recruit, train, and retain Black male teachers (Brown, 2011b; Lewis, 2010). Despite these efforts, fewer and fewer Black males are entering into the field of education and it has been noted that low pay, low prestige, and negative school experiences are factors contributing to the lack of Black male educators (Brown, 2011b; Lewis, 2006).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Much of the discussion regarding increasing the number of BMEs is based on the assumption that Black males are more readily prepared to understand, motivate, educate, and ultimately connect with Black children than non-Black educators (Brown, 2009a and 2009b; Delpit, 1995; Lynn, 2002 and 2006; Naman, 2009). These assumptions are not completely unfounded, several scholars have noted increased effectiveness for educators who are able to connect with the culture of their students (Brown, 2009a and 2009b; Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). In fact, Delpit (1995), Ladson-Billings (1995a and 1995b), Lynn (2004), and Wilder (2000) argued that culturally responsive instruction is a key component of student engagement.

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Although the literature consistently presents BMEs as positive catalyst for the social and academic development of Black students (Brown, 2009a, 2009b, and 2011a; Lewis, Shears, & Furman, 2010; Lynn, 2002 and 2006; Naman, 2009; Wilder, 2000), education researchers have not fully considered the complexities of the experiences of BMEs (Brown, 2011a and 2011b; DuBois, 1903/1965; Lynn & Jennings, 2002). Only a fledgling body of literature exists on specific methods that Black educators employ to meet the needs of the students they serve (Brown, 2009a and 2009b; Lynn, 2002), nor is there much literature on BMEs who work in predominantly White settings. The assumption that all BMEs are inherently effective at connecting with Black students does not acknowledge the various lived experiences among Black students, nor does it fully consider the professional and personal skill sets and diverse socio-economic backgrounds of Black educators (Brown, 2011a; Kelly, 2007; Tutwiler, 2009).

In addition to presenting a myopic perspective of BMEs the research literature has largely focused on BMEs in predominantly Black urban settings; thus, further marginalizing the experiences of Black males in predominantly White settings. Furthermore, the research literature has not explicitly explored the relationship between BMEs and the students they serve in the context of a predominantly White environment.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of this study was to consider the experiences of BMEs in a predominantly White setting. For the purposes of this study I define BMEs as self-identified Black, male, professional staff employed in the school setting in a variety of roles including, but not limited to classroom teachers, school counselors, assistant principals, and principals. This study contributes to the literature on BMEs by moving

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beyond assumptions of effectiveness to consider the complexities of the socialization of BMEs, and examining how that process impacts both their pedagogical practices and professional experiences as educators in a predominantly White school district.

Specifically, I will explore how BMEs make meaning of their experiences in a predominantly White school setting. Additionally, I will examine how their (BMEs) lived experiences influence their professional practice and pedagogy. A final goal of this research project is to explicate the strategies that BMEs employ to navigate their professional experiences as minorities in a predominantly White environment.

This research will expand the conversation about BMEs beyond the urban context and acknowledge the experiences of Black males in predominantly White settings. I want to problematize the dominant discourse that has presented a myopic view of BMEs by producing a counter narrative that considers the complexities of the BME experience in a predominantly White school district. Ultimately, I want to make this research accessible to future and current BMEs to affirm and encourage other BMEs to embrace the power of their individual and collective story. Lastly, by examining the experiences of BMEs in a predominantly White setting this research reforms the strategies that school districts and teacher education programs employ to recruit, train, and retain BMEs.

### **Research Questions**

The inquiry for this project focused on answering the following two research questions:

1. How do BMEs make meaning of their experiences as professionals in a predominantly White school district setting?

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2. What influence do the experiences of BMEs in predominantly White settings have on their pedagogy and practice?

### **Definition of Key Terms**

In this research project several terms are used frequently. For the purposes of clarity and consistency definitions of these terms are listed below.

**Achievement Gap.** This term refers to the discrepancy in academic achievement between two or more populations. Initially, the achievement gap was understood to mean a gap between lower achieving Black and Hispanic students and higher achieving White and Asian students.

**Authentic Black Self.** This term refers to how one conceptualizes and expresses their racial identity—culturally, socially, politically, and intellectually. The authentic Black self rejects simplified stereotypical expressions of Blackness in favor of an approach rooted in one's own experience. Furthermore, the authentic Black self acknowledges and appreciates the complexity of one's own lived experiences and the experience of others.

**Black.** This term is used to describe individuals with physical and cultural ancestral origins in Africa. This term is used interchangeably with African-American. The author recognizes that the American Psychological Association (APA) prefers the term African-American. However, as a Black individual and as a matter of personal preference I use term Black to describe members of the African Diaspora. In the past Negro was also used to describe the same population of individuals. In this project I use the term Negro to reflect the time period of the work to which I am referencing. For

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example, when referencing the work of Carter G. Woodson (1933) I use the term Negro to reflect his word choice in describing Blackness in 1930's America.

**Double Consciousness.** This terminology was first coined by W.E.B. DuBois (1903/1965) to describe the Black American experience. The term has been theorized and re-conceptualized by several others in the ensuing decades. For the purposes of this study I define one identity as the authentic Black self and the other as the institutional identity.

**Educators.** This term is used to describe credentialed and/or professional staff employed by school districts including, but not limited to classroom teachers, counselors, social workers, assistant principals, and principals.

**Pedagogy.** Historically, this term describes the particular teaching methods educators employ to transfer knowledge to students in the school setting. In addition to traditional instructional methods this may include discipline conferences, academic advising and counseling, and other formal activities in which non-classroom educators such as principals engage in. For the purposes of this study I expand the notion of pedagogy to include both the formal and informal teaching that occurs in the school setting—both inside and outside the classroom. I will expound on this concept in my conceptual framework.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The foundation of the conceptual framework for this study is Critical Race Pedagogy (CRP) and the DuBosian concept of double consciousness. Double consciousness is defined as the duality of the Black American experience that encompasses two distinct identities—the authentic Black self and the institutional self.

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In my literature review I situate double consciousness in its socio-historical and contemporary context and provide a detailed explanation of the operational definition of the term that is provided in the conceptual framework. Additionally, in my literature review I go into detail about how I define the both the authentic Black self and the institutional identity.

### **Critical Race Pedagogy.**

CRP emerged in the research scholarship as a tool for creating a more evolved understanding of the intersectionality of race, gender, and pedagogical practice as it relates to the experiences of Black educators (Lynn, 2004; Lynn, Jennings, & Hughes, 2013). Lynn (2004) suggests that CRP can be used to marry the relevancy of race and culture in an effort to better understand the social justice practices of Black educators (Lynn, 2004). CRP offers a critique of the racial, ethnic, and gender based historical and contemporary disenfranchisement of individuals marginalized in the field of education (Lynn, 2004). CRP is based on the following assumptions: (a) the pervasive influence of racism (b) acknowledgment of the ‘power dynamics inherent in education’ (c) the power of self-reflection and (d) recognition that CRP is emancipatory practice for both teachers and learners (Jennings & Lynn, 2005, p. 26). Building on the foundation laid by Critical Race Theory scholarship broadly and critical race methodology in particular, CRP scholars acknowledge the fact that systemic oppression infiltrates the structure and culture of the American education system (Crenshaw, 1995; Jennings & Lynn, 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Furthermore, like critical race methodology, CRP emphasizes the importance of intersectionality of multiple layers of identity including race, class, gender, and sexual orientation (Lynn, Jennings, & Hughes, 2013). CRP

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recognizes, also, that schools are arenas of power for the dominant discourse (Delpit, 1995; Jennings & Lynn, 2005; Lynn, Jennings, & Hughes, 2013). This power is manifested through cultural norms, pedagogical methods, and the use of language (Delpit, 1995; Jennings & Lynn, 2005).

CRP places an emphasis on using reflexivity as a tool for furthering one's knowledge of self (Jennings & Lynn, 2005). Jennings and Lynn (2005) challenge scholars of colors to consider how their identity inside the academy and their professional lives intersects with the identity established within the communities of color that they conduct their research. For example, my status as a Black male scholar will be received one way in the academy and perhaps another way in the urban community where I was raised. The goal of CRP research is to emancipate scholars, practioners, and the students they serve challenging each to be critical of the society one lives in and critical of the knowledge one consumes (Jennings & Lynn, 2005).

### **CRP In Practice**

CRP has roots in Critical Pedagogy (CP) and Afrocentricity and focuses on the destruction of systemic forces of oppression in education recognizing that the impact of race and racism has infiltrated the public education system (Jennings & Lynn, 2005; Lynn & Jennings, 2009). Jennings and Lynn (2005) noted in particular three concepts as essential to their critique of CP, and subsequently the emergence of CRP: social reproduction theory, cultural reproduction theory, and resistance theory. Social reproduction theory posits that school systems are designed to perpetuate current stratifications of dominance—politically, socially, and economically (Jennings & Lynn, 2005). Cultural reproduction theory states that school systems are constructed to transmit

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“certain forms of class-specific cultural knowledge” (Jennings & Lynn, 2005, p. 18). In particular Lynn and Jennings were troubled by the primary focus that CP places on class and the limited agency of the oppressed as outlined in traditional discourse on resistance theory (Jennings & Lynn, 2005). CRP scholarship seeks to theorize and illuminate the impact and intersectionality of other aspects of identity including race and gender, (Jennings & Lynn, 2005; Lynn and Jennings, 2009). Furthermore, CP doesn’t adequately address the agency that is available to individuals from oppressed groups. The creation and transmission of knowledge and culture is not a right strictly reserved for those individuals that belong to dominant groups. CRP scholars highlight the various ways that oppressed individuals, Blacks educators in particular, have collectively and individualistically sought to eradicate the influence of systemic oppression in the system of education.

More explicitly, CRP has been used by scholars to explicate the pedagogical practices educators employ to counteract the institutionalized systems of oppression they face (Jennings & Lynn, 2005; Lynn, 2004). CRP scholarship examines the narratives of Black educators and scholars who are ‘strongly committed to the ideals and principles found in critical race theory and/or Afrocentricity and defines critical race pedagogues as individuals that share a similar focus (Lynn, 2004, p. 154). Lynn posited that critical race pedagogues have four key aims: (a) embedding the importance of African culture into curricula, (b) promoting self-affirmation, (c) engaging students through dialogue, and (d) countering the influence and power of systemic oppression in the school-setting (Lynn, 2004).

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In discussing the impact of CRP in the field of practice it is necessary to clearly conceptualize the term pedagogy. The term *pedagogy* is often used to describe the specific practices of classroom teachers. However, building on the work of Lynn and Jennings (2009) I conceptualize pedagogy to include both the formal and the informal teaching that occurs in the school setting. My broadened conceptualization of pedagogy encompasses the formal practices of non-classroom based educators, such as counselors and principals, which may include discipline conferences or career counseling, for example. It also includes informal messages that delivered in less structured situations such as a conversation in the cafeteria about how to handle a conflict. I choose to expand the definition of pedagogy to recognize that there is a great deal of instruction that goes on in the school setting that is often overlooked when considering the impact of educators in general, and Black male educators specifically. Moreover, CRP asserts that there is a myriad of ways that BMEs seek to counteract the systemic forces of oppression that are present in public education. Expanding the scope of pedagogy will allow the researcher to highlight both the informal and formal practices that BMEs in this setting employ to connect with students and counteract oppression.

It is worth noting that critical race pedagogues' focus on Afrocentricity is not advocating for blind adoration for all things African and/or African-American as much as it is a testament to the significance that critical race pedagogues place on infusing their practice with elements of culture that reflects their identity and affirms the value of an Afrocentric perspective (Asante, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lynn, 2004). Critical race pedagogues also recognize the importance of affirming students in the school setting by giving students a safe place to develop and communicate their own voices (Lynn, 2004).

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This approach is supported through dialogical instructional methods in which critical race pedagogues are as open to learning from students as students are open to learning from them (Lynn, 2004).

Critical race pedagogues understand the pervasive influence of race in America, and recognize the negative impact systemic oppression has on students of color (Harper, 2009; Lynn, 1999 and 2004). Critical race pedagogues are purposeful about counteracting the negative imagery of persons of color perpetuated by systems of oppression (Lynn, 1999; Lynn & Jennings, 2009). In addition to emphasizing the historical achievements and intellectual perspectives of Black folks throughout history critical race pedagogues deliver curricula in a way that honors the culture of students of color (Jennings & Lynn, 2005; Lynn, 1999 and 2004). This focus dovetails with the premise of Afrocentric education, which can be defined as “a frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person” (Asante, 1991, p. 171). In the Pk-12 setting “this means that teachers provide students with the opportunity to study the world and its people, concepts and history from an African worldview” (Asante, 1991, p. 171). It is important to note that neither Afrocentricity, nor CRP, advocate a blackened version of the Eurocentric perspective. Afrocentrists and Critical race pedagogues seek to connect the learning and culture that exists in the school setting with the culture that exists in the communities and homes of students. Critical race pedagogues recognize that an education that is not readily accessible and relevant to improving the lives of students is of no value (Jennings & Lynn, 2005; Lynn, 1999). By drawing on the scholarship of Afrocentricity critical race pedagogues work to ensure that

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the education of students is embedded in the cultural context within which their students live.

The use of CRP provides a framework to offer counter story to the current research discourse about BMEs, highlight the practices that BMEs utilize to meet the needs of their students. Counter narratives provide a voice for historically marginalized groups of people and troubles the myths and assumptions that exist regarding marginalized groups (Decuir & Dixon, 2004; Lynn, 1999; Milner, 2008). One might argue that the portrayal of Black males in the research literature is not negative, however I contend that it is equally important to avoid typecasting Black males educators solely as urban based saviors of Black male children. Harper (2009) suggested the need for narratives that reject the notions that Black males have represented in the research canon as caricatures and move beyond what is assumed about the Black male experience to the act of capturing the multilayered complexities embedded in the Black male experience.

Utilizing CRP with support from double consciousness will give me more tools for the data analysis process. Both perspectives are explanatory tools for gaining insight into the perspective of Black males, albeit in two distinct ways. CRP addresses the actions that BMEs take in response to systemic racism. Its focus is on how external actions can be used to counteract forces of oppression. Double consciousness has a more internal, psychological focus. It provides insight into the psyche of Black males paying special attention to how individuals respond psychologically to internalized racism and oppression. CRP will be used to make meaning of the pedagogical practices of participants and situate my findings in the larger body of scholarship on BMEs. Double consciousness will inform, but not dictate the researchers understanding of how

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participants make meaning of their experiences as BMEs in a predominantly White school setting. In essence CRP is a tool for examining the making of the consciousness of the research participants. The researcher understands that double consciousness is experiential in nature and may or may not be applicable to each and every participant, however it will serve as a the impetus for my discussion of the impact of race on the BME experience.

Several assumptions are made with the adoption of this conceptual framework. Firstly, Research supports the notion that participants are aware of racial dynamics in general and specifically, as it relates to the Black American experience. Additionally, it is the researcher's assumption that given their status as Black males in a predominantly White environment that the participants in this study have some degree of awareness of the rarity of BMEs in the field of education. Lastly, it is expected that research participants are aware of the common sense perception that Black male educators are portrayed as saviors of Black children in general, and Black male students, specifically.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter is divided into two parts. I begin the first part with a brief discussion of Black Education in the pre-Brown and Post-Brown eras, highlighting similarities and differences, and establishing a connection from the past to the current state of Black education. Next I review the literature on Black educators and Black education, highlighting the contextual factors that influence the current and past scholarship on both. I conclude the first section of this chapter by discussing the role of BMEs as it relates to the field of education and education of Black male students.

In the second part of this literature review I explore how W.E.B. DuBois' concept of double consciousness has been interpreted by scholars in recent years. I outline the socio-historical context for DuBosian thought and broadly address how the concept of double consciousness has been interpreted in the literature. Next, I define the term race/racial identity and situate its prominence in the everyday lives of Americans in general, and Black folks specifically. My discussion on the definition of race provides context for my conceptualization of the Black identity, highlighting both the relevancy of authentic Blackness, and the pervasive influence of the institutional identity or American self. I conclude this section by synthesizing the literature on racial identity, ethnic identity, and providing my conceptualization of double consciousness.

#### **Black Education in America Pre-Brown**

Historically, education has been held in high esteem as a reliable vehicle for upward mobility in America (Woodson, 1933; Foster, 1997). However, in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the socio-economic mobility of Black folks was impeded by legalized

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segregation. The vast majority of Black students and Black educators were employed in segregated schools (Foster, 1997; Siddle-Walker, 2003). In addition to critiques, from the Black scholars of the time period the prevailing dominant narrative was that all Black schools were academically inferior, however in recent years scholars have noted a rich tradition in Black education dating back the mid-19th century (Foster, 1997; Siddle-Walker, 2001 and 2003). Black educators founded and managed schools that served as pillars in the Black community (Tillman, 2004). Black educators held one of the more noble positions in the community and were germane to the creation of sustainable communities. Furthermore, education was one of the few professional arenas for Blacks to enter for much of pre-Brown time period. Black teachers were instrumental in preparing students educationally and socially for life in a hostile environment. Foster (1997) and Siddle Walker (2003) in particular, have illuminated the strengths of Black educators in the pre-Brown era establishing a counter narrative to the notion that segregation era Black education was subpar.

At the turn of the century there was great debate in the field of Black education regarding the educational philosophies of W.E. B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington (1903/1965). Washington recommended taking an agrarian/ trade based approach to the mass education of Black folks at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. DuBois, reflecting his more formal educational background advocated that capable Blacks be trained in the classical liberal arts tradition. Both individuals—Washington and DuBois championed an educational approach that mirrored their own educational path. Washington, a former slave was raised in the rural south. DuBois, of course, was the first Black man to graduate from Harvard (1903/1965). Woodson critiqued the ideologies of both DuBois

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and Washington suggesting that the topic of Black education did not matter as much as the quality and usefulness of how they were educated. Woodson (1933) questioned whether some Negro educators were adequately prepared to educate students because of their lack of racial consciousness. Furthermore, Woodson (1933) recognized the ill effects of internalized racism on the education of Black students and posited that Negro education needed a sharper focus, beyond simply imitating Whites. Ultimately, Woodson (1933) posited that an education that did not prepare the Negro for the uplift of the Black community is worthless and advocated for purposeful education that would prepare students to uplift their own communities. The enormous responsibility of educating children in the Black community warranted high standards for teachers, students, and administrators (DuBois, 1935; Foster, 1997; Woodson, 1933). Woodson's (1933) point was echoed by DuBois (1935) in his essay *Does the Negro Need Separate Schools?* DuBois bluntly stated "To sum up this: theoretically, the Negro needs neither segregated schools nor mixed schools. What he needs is Education". In actuality, Woodson and DuBois were early advocates for culturally relevant instruction for Black children—a conversation that continues to this day.

### **Black Education in America Post-Brown**

The landmark Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) forever changed the landscape of public education in America (Foster, 1997; Horsford, 2010; Saddler, 2005). Historians and education scholars have largely lauded this event as a positive step towards equality in America (Bell, 2004; Tillman, 2004). However, several scholars have noted that historically the Brown decision has often been viewed favorably and have offered critiques that highlight several lasting consequences of *Brown v. Board*

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of Education that have negatively impacted both Black students and Black educators (Bell, 2004; Horsford, 2010; Foster, 1997; Saddler, 2005; Tillman, 2004).

The United States Supreme Court's decision to mandate desegregation was based in part on the reality that in American public schools separate facilities were often grossly unequal. Desegregation led to the closing of many predominantly Black schools and districts throughout the country in places populated by Blacks (Foster, 1997; Siddle-Walker, 2001; Tillman, 2004). Many Black educators lost their jobs as their formerly segregated schools were absorbed by predominantly White schools and districts (Horsford, & McKenzie, 2008; Tillman, 2004). Black educators were marginalized and were assumed to be less effective than their White colleagues (Siddle-Walker, 2001; Tillman, 2004). Interestingly enough at the midpoint of the 20<sup>th</sup> century an educator was highly respected profession in the Black community, and many of the best and brightest that Black America had to offer served Black children in Black schools throughout the country (Foster, 1997; Horsford & McKenzie, 2008; Tillman, 2004). As the Civil Rights movement progressed and more Black folks had access to a more diverse professions fewer and fewer Black folks entered the field of education.

In his 2004 text *Silent covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform* Derrick Bell quotes an elderly Black woman's perspective on desegregation "We got what we fought for, but lost what we had" (p. 125). This begs the question what were Blacks fighting for with school desegregation and what did they lose in the process. If the primary goal of the Brown decision was to grant Black children equal access to educational facilities and resources then the Brown decision was a great success (Bell, 2004; Horsford, 2010; Horsford & McKenzie, 2008). In addition to

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increased accessibility to resources there were several benefits to desegregation. First, it allowed Black and White students to learn side by side and for some Black students realized that they were just as intelligent and just as capable as their White peers. Second, for the first time in American history it provided Black folks with an opportunity to select where they went to school. School desegregation declassified the discussion of interactions across races and opened doors and opportunities that had been previously closed.

Conversely, several scholarly critiques of *Brown v. Board* have noted several negative consequences of the landmark case. Some have cited that the subsequent exodus of Black students from Black schools perpetuated the idea that White schools were superior to Black schools which fed into the larger narrative of White hegemony (Horsford, 2010; Horsford & McKenzie; O'Connor, 2006; Tillman, 2004). It also illuminated the fact that equal resources does not always mean equitable distribution of resources. Some school districts found other ways to keep Black students and Black educators from integrating themselves in predominantly White school districts (Tillman, 2004). Black teachers were systemically removed in some areas by school districts who refused to hire Black educators or offered qualified Black undesirable positions (Tillman, 2004). Equality is not synonymous with equity. A review of the research suggests that in some ways more equal facilities has resulted in a less equitable education and perpetuation of the devaluation of the epistemology that Black children and Black educators bring to the field of education (Foster, 1997; Horsford, 2010; Horsford & McKenzie, 2008; Hughes, 2010; Lynn, 2006; Tillman, 2004).

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It is important to note that for many Black folks schooling and education are not synonyms (Shujaa, 1994). The work of Douglas and Peck (2013) affirmed the multitude of ways that Black people utilize non-school based learning spaces to supplement and at times supplant the education that occurs in formal school settings. This utilization of informal space was a necessity, however decades after *Brown v. Board* (1954) effectively ended government sponsored segregation the context has changed. In most instances there are no legal barriers preventing Blacks from accessing a quality education, (Douglas & Peck, 2013). Community institutions such as places of worship, barbershops, and athletic fields continue to be spaces where Black folks can be fed intellectually and socially, whereas many schools fail to provide spaces where young Black students are provided the social, cultural, intellectual, and emotional support needed to succeed.

### **Black Educators**

Siddle-Walker (2001) posits that the decline in Black teachers led to a decline in culturally responsive education for Black students that had previously been educated by Black teachers in Black communities by educators that adhered to the same cultural norms and held similar cultural values (Tillman, 2004). In the same vein, the work of Molefi Asante (1991) iterates that a lack of culturally relevant curricula has done considerable damage to Black students. In the 1990's the research of several scholars including Asante (1991), Delpit (1995), Irvine (2002), and Ladson-Billings (1995) highlighted the importance of students being able to make meaningful connections between what they learned inside the classroom with the culture presented in school. Although he is not recognized as such one could consider Carter G. Woodson a forefather

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for culturally relevant pedagogy. In his landmark book *The Mis-Education of the Negro* Woodson described the education of Negroes in the following way:

Herein, however, lies no argument for the oft-heard contention that education for the white man should mean one thing and for the Negro a different thing. The element of race does not enter here. It is merely a matter of exercising common sense in approaching through their environment in order to deal with conditions as they are rather than as you would like to see them or imagine that they are. There may be a difference in method of attack, but the principle remains the same (Woodson, 1933, p.6).

Ladson-Billings espouses a similar perspective acknowledging the fact that there is nothing revolutionary about culturally relevant pedagogy, it is in fact, simply the good teaching that every student deserves (Ladson-Billings, 1995a & 1995b).

Research on Black teachers in general and BMEs specifically has typically been in the form of qualitative research projects highlighting exemplar educators in urban settings (Brown, 2011b and 2012; Lynn, 2006; Lynn & Jennings, 2009). Siddle-Walker and Tillman are notable for utilizing the historical analysis of the practices of Black educators to inform the practices of present day educational leaders. The work of Ladson-Billings (2004) and Jordan-Irvine (2002) found that effective teachers of color focus on culturally relevant curricula that speaks to the experiences of students, employ engaging instructional methods that garner the attention and respect of students, and maintain high standards of excellence for themselves and the student they teach.

**Black Male Educators.** The research literature has situated the BME as the figurehead of the movement to bring culturally relevant curricula and pedagogical

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practices to Black children in America (Brown, 2011b and 2012; Lynn, 2002, 2006a and 2006b). However, the research literature has not adequately explored *how* BMEs meet this critical need in American schools (Brown, 2011b and 2012; Lynn, 2004, 2006a and 2006b; Lynn & Jennings, 2009; Milner, 2008). The scholarship of Lynn and Jennings (2009) and Brown (2011b) call attention to the fact that the pedagogical practices of BMEs have been under-examined and under-theorized in the research literature. A review of the research literature reveals that much of the scholarship paints Black educators as proponents of culturally relevant curriculum, particularly curriculum that reflects the shared history and/or culture of the African Diaspora (Foster, 1997; Jordan-Irvine, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

There are several, as Brown (2012) asserts, ‘common sense assumptions’ in the scholarship regarding Black male educators. First, there is the assumption that BMEs have high levels of racial consciousness and/or a strong Afrocentric perspective (Brockenbrough, 2012; Brown, 2012; Mabokela and Madsen, 2003). This, however, is not always the case. As far back as the 1930’s Woodson posited that the designation of being Black and educator does not necessarily mean one has an informed understanding of how race impacts the formal education experience (Woodson, 1933). In fact, he posited that some Black educators have internalized negative messages about Blackness and Black children which substantiate the dominant discourse that devalues the experiences of Black folks in general (Woodson, 1933). In their separate studies on teachers of color and BMEs, respectively, both Mabokela and Madsen (2003) and Brown (2011a and 2012) found that some Black teachers minimized, if not worked around the issue of race in the classroom. Milner and Hoy (2003) found that Black teachers that did

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not feel empowered in the predominately White school setting were more likely to leave the profession, due in part to the internalization of the negative messages they receive.

Just as race is a human construct influenced by societal expectations the discourse on BMEs has been socially constructed as well. For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this discourse focused on depicting the Black male as the sole party responsible for the failure of Black children (Brown, 2012). In recent years the pendulum has swung the other direction. Black males are now portrayed in the research literature as the savior of Black children (Brockenbrough, 2012; Brown, 2011a). In doing so, BMEs have been stereotyped into broad categories to fit this narrative (Brockenbrough, 2012; Brown, 2012). Some BMEs embrace the idea of playing a prominent role in the lives of Black children and thrive in making differences in the lives of students of color (Brockenbrough, 2012; Brown, 2009a and 2009b, 2012; Lynn, 2002, 2006a and 2006b). The work of Marvin Lynn (1999, 2002, 2006a, 2006b) contributed greatly to the scholarship on the social justice practices of BMEs in urban settings. Lynn found that a number of BMEs enter the profession because they want to be difference makers in the lives of Black children (Lynn, 2006a). Moreover, Lynn was able to articulate a narrative that captured the diverse ways that BMEs meet the needs of their students (Lynn, 1999, 2002, 2006a and 2006b).

However, studies have shown that some individuals find that line of thought limiting and resent the parameters of the idealized BME (Brockenbrough, 2012; Mabokela & Madsen, 2003). Brockenbrough found that relationships with Black male students featured complexities that haven't been well addressed in the BME scholarship. These individuals have what Brockenbrough described as 'palpable anxiety' regarding

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the expectations placed on BMEs (Brockenbrough, 2012, p.362). Brockenbrough's study explored the perspective of BMEs on other-fathering, a term used to describe the surrogate father role that the popular discourse has placed on the shoulders of BME. He found that the some of the colleagues of BMEs struggled to make sense of the pedagogical practices of BMEs when their behavior did not fit a certain mold (Brockenbrough, 2012). Some Black males are mistrusting and resistant to BMEs based on their own past with their experience (or lack thereof) with Black males outside of the school setting (Brockenbrough, 2012). Authority does not always have to be expressed authoritatively, some BMEs have a relationship focused authoritarian approach to dealing with students. One of the participants in a Brokenbrough's study described himself as a "talk it out" type figure and expressed concern that because his discipline approach did not fit the phenotype of the traditional BME (Brockenbrough, 2012, p.363). His refusal to embrace the role imposed upon him by the dominant discourse created a counter narrative of what it means to BME in an urban setting (Brockenbrough, 2012). It is important to note that not all BMEs connect with students by embracing a dominant, patriarchal, father type role. Moreover, in generalizing the role of the BME the literature has devalued the pedagogical expertise and placed limits on the understanding of the effectiveness of BMEs (Brown, 2012).

The common sense assumption that BMEs innately connect with Black male students in the same way is also prevalent in the research literature. Some researchers have found that this is not always the case, and that in some instances BMEs have cross cultural barriers to connect with African-American students (Milner, Pabon, Woodson, & McGee, 2013; Tutwiler, 2009). Some Black students are mistrusting and resistant to

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BMEs based on their own past experience (or lack thereof) with Black males outside of the school setting (Brockenbrough, 2012; Mabokela & Madsen, 2003). Social class and expressions of masculinity have been cited as barriers in relationships between Black male educators and Black male students (Brockenbrough, 2012; Tutwiler, 2009). Despite these barriers the research on BMEs shows that BMEs often utilize their human capital to build positive connections with students (Brockenbrough, 2012; Tutwiler, 2009).

Social justice education is often used as catch all term for issues dealing with people of color and/or low-socio-economic backgrounds, however Brown (2009a and 2009b), building on the work of Lynn (2006a and 2006b) used the term consider the multiple ways that BMEs are difference makers in the lives of the students they educate. Brown, like Lynn before him, found that there was no uniform BME social justice approach, rather a combination of one's socialization and lived experiences informed one's social justice approach (Brown, 2012; Lynn, 2006b).

My study is similar to the work of Brown (2009a, 2009b, and 2012), Brockenbrough (2012) Kelly (2010), and Lynn (2002 and 2006b) in that I want to trouble the oversimplified narrative of the BME, cultivating a counter discourse regarding the professional experiences of BMEs that explores the multiple pedagogical practices that BMEs employ to connect with students. I appreciate Kelly's analysis on racial tokenism and the impact that it has on the experiences of Black educators is one of the few in the literature that critically examines how Blacks in predominantly White settings make meaning of their experiences (Kelly, 2007). There are several recent studies in the literature that consider the BME experience from multiple lenses including masculinity

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and patriarchy (Brockenbrough, 2012; Lynn, 2006b), role modeling (Lynn, 2002 and 2006), and pedagogical practices (Brown, 2009a and 2009b; Lynn, 2006a). My study differs from these, however, in that I want to consider how race has impacted the socialization of BMEs. Furthermore, I want to examine how their consciousness regarding their socialization impacts their pedagogical practices, professional experiences in a predominantly White environment.

As I will address in the next section, double consciousness is about maintaining balance between the twoness that one feels when existing as a Black individual in a larger societal context dominated by White hegemonic thoughts and attitudes. The social realities of race force BMEs in predominantly White settings to be adept at negotiating a dominant culture that is not always appreciative or understanding of the skills and experiences that BMEs offer.

### **Double Consciousness**

DuBois' first writings on double consciousness were drafted in the context of intense systemic degradation and devaluation of the Negro in America. In many ways the turn of the 20th century has been portrayed as a nadir in the African-American experience. The promise of freedom had been made, but for all intents and purposes that promise had not yet been realized. Voting rights were limited, legal rights were routinely ignored, and segregation was legal. DuBois situates his discussion of the double consciousness of the Negro experience in this socio-historical context. DuBois described the double consciousness conflict as a battle between two identities.

It is within this context that DuBois described the Negro existence as a duel between two distinct identities. He posited that Negroes were forced to choose between

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establishing a positive Negro identity or a positive American identity, to grab hold of one would be to deny the other (DuBois, 1903/1965). DuBois postulated that the Negro identity was not appreciated by the greater American mainstream (DuBois, 1903/1965). Ultimately, if a Negro decided to establish a positive American identity it would mean that one would have to sacrifice a positive Negro perspective. DuBois argued that the presence of these two distinct identities created a double consciousness for Negroes—a continuous identity conflict for Blacks attempting to thrive in 20<sup>th</sup> century America.

In recent years several scholars have revisited DuBois' writings, suggesting that Black folks in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century are hyphenated Americans, experiencing American citizenship from the perspective of an 'other' similar in some respects to what DuBois and other Blacks in his era experienced (Allen, 1992; Dillard, 2008; Gaines & Reed, 1995; Lyubansky & Eidelson, 2005; Rath, 1997). The pervasive influence of racism in America has enabled the African-American individual to see a unique perspective on identity (Bell, 1992; Cokley, 2005; Cross, 1971 and 1994; Dillard, 2008; Lyubansky & Eidelson; Rath, 1997). Scholars, however, have drawn similar conclusions on the implications of double consciousness for contemporary Black folks by focusing on certain aspects of DuBois' writings on double consciousness.

Rath (1997) suggests that DuBois' discussion of double consciousness is an early foray into code switching, recognizing that Negroes simultaneously exist in two worlds at one time. Double consciousness does not demand a resolution to the identity crisis. It demands a skill set that will allow individuals to successfully navigate the crisis of having two identities (Rath, 1997). This stance is reiterated by Gaines and Reed (1995) and Allen (1992) both of whom highlighted the skill needed to successfully operate in two

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distinct worlds. This scholarly approach assumes that the individual is successfully navigating in the Black community (socially, educationally, culturally etc.) while simultaneously existing in mainstream society. Some scholars have noted that this is not always the case. Cynthia Dillard (2008) does not take the dual citizenship for granted and charges Black scholars with the task of ‘re-membering’ their identity, highlighting the fact that systemic devaluation of the Black experience has led some individuals to lose touch with significant formative aspects of their racial identity (Dillard, 2008). Individuals whose identities have been systemically devalued have to be purposeful about unlearning negative messages and recapturing their history (Dillard, 2008; Fordham, 2010; Tyson, 2003).

Ernest Allen (1992) takes a different approach to in his analysis of DuBois’ double consciousness, he posits that is unwise to suggest that every Negro struggled with the duality of the Black American experience (Allen, 1992). He notes that DuBois wrote from the perspective of an intellectual schooled in the Eurocentric school of thought and that DuBois represented the antithesis of the Negro experience in America at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Allen (1992) suggests that DuBois’ double consciousness is a cultural dilemma, not a racial one.

The notion of dual identities is a popular point of reference for scholars discussing DuBois’ concept of double consciousness, however it is worth noting that in addition to his description of dual identities DuBois expanded his description of double consciousness to include his description of the veil. According to DuBois the veil acts as a filter for the Negro experience. DuBois describes the experience of the veil ‘as this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others of measuring one’s soul

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by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity' (DuBois, 1903/1965, p. 215). Double consciousness not only affects how an individual views the world, but also how the world views that individual. For the purpose of this research study I describe the veil as the physical and socio-emotional consequences of systemic racism and oppression. These consequences impact the lived experiences of individuals both from the minority and the majority.

It is impossible to adequately examine the BME experience without first addressing how Blackness impacts the lived experiences of Black folks in America. In the U.S. race is often discussed in terms of external factors such as systemic oppression, racist micro-aggressions, and stereotypes (Cokley, 2005; Cross, 1971 and 1994; Smith, 1989). Arguments against the existence of racism are often made at the micro level, however it is important to note that aspects of institutionalized racism have infiltrated the institution of education on a macro level. Racist ideology is communicated and reinforced through the implicit and explicit messages of inferiority that are sent to minorities through the dominant culture (DuBois, 1903/1965; Freire, 1970; Woodson, 1933). Multiple scholars have noted the implications that systemic oppression has on people from oppressed groups in the field of education (DuBois, 1903/1965; Freire, 1970). Woodson (1933) was one of the first to do so, he posited that Negroes in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were taught to devalue Black thought and recognized how that perversion of perspective was passed on through formal schooling. Both Freire and Ladson-Billings posited that dominant discourse infiltrates the minds of those in the minority (Freire, 1970; Ladson-Billings, 2000). The messages that minorities receive from the dominant society are not liberatory in nature. In fact, the opposite is true. The

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dominant discourse is designed to perpetuate the systems of power that are currently in place (Freire, 1970). For that reason it is important to consider the impact of the messages that BMEs receive. DuBois' work challenges individuals to consider both how those external factors impact the individual and how the internal factors impact the one's perceptions of their lived experiences.

The experience of the individual is the unknown variable when considering the impact of race and racism. How one is socialized impacts how one experiences race and racism. Racial socialization is important to consider for multiple reasons including the fact that socializations intersect with messages that young people receive regarding race and racism, influences political attitudes, and informs worldviews regarding appropriate ethno-cultural behavior (Lesane-Brown, 2006). For example, a Black male raised in an upper class family in upstate New York will experience socialization in ways that differ from a Black male raised in poverty on the South Side of Chicago. Cultural capital can mitigate some of the effects of cross cultural interactions (Yosso, 2005). That being said, there will always be marginalized experiences on both ends of the spectrum as well as isolated points along the continuum. Though it may be difficult to quantify with absolute accuracy there are perceptions of what the contemporary, modal, Black American experience looks like (Brown, 2011a).

Having said that, it is safe to assume that the Harvard educated DuBois had few, if any, colleagues in his day that possessed his academic credentials and/or had access to his social circle. It would seem that Allen (1992) is correct in his assertion that because of his education and Eurocentric proclivities W.E.B. DuBois did not represent the modal Negro experience. In a similar way the individuals I want to study—Black male

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educators—occupy a position that offers a unique perspective on identity and the impact of that identity on their professional experiences. Based on Allen's (1992) perspective on double consciousness educated Black males employed in predominantly White environments represent a perfect parallel to DuBois in that regard. In the same way that DuBois' Harvard education afforded him access to interactions that were impossible for the average Black person to experience the formal education of certified BMEs affords them entry into an area of professional privilege that would be inaccessible otherwise.

### **Contextualizing Race**

The relevance of the intersection of multiple aspects of identity has been well documented in the literature, especially in research on CRP, however the focus of this study demands special attention towards the concept of race (Lynn et al., 2013). Before, I delve into a discussion of the impact of race it is important to establish an operational definition of the term and address the literature that informs my perspective on the concept of race. The Black American identity is complex and multi-layered. This complexity in no small part is due to the convergence of the fractured culture of the African-Diaspora, and the history and real life implications of race in America. The research literature is clear in that there are no genetic or biological criteria for racial classification. Furthermore, it is equally clear that race is a social construct with tangible social consequences (Cokley, 2005; McPherson & Shelby, 2004; Sundstrom, 2002). The power of race is manifested through an individual's perceptions of others and perceptions of themselves. Unfortunately, the culture of racial oppression in the United States has further muddied the waters regarding race. One of the great challenges of educators and

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scholars is to unpack, and redefine a concept that is convoluted—both in theory and in practice.

There are divergent perspectives in the research literature about what exactly race/racial identity is (Cokley, 2005 and 2007). Blackness has been researched and discussed in the scholarship from of the perspective race/racial identity and ethnicity/ethnic identity, however the terms race/racial and ethnicity/ethnic identity have often been used synonymously, however a close review of the literature reveals distinct differences in the origins of both discourses that are worth noting (Cokley, 2005). The research on racial identity was largely influenced by William Cross' Nigrescence model of Black identity development which was developed to describe the path that disenfranchised Blacks take in establishing a positive Black identity in a racialized America (Cokley, 2005; Cross, 1994). Whereas Nigrescence models were created out of a need to establish a positive approach to understanding the Black identity in America, the discourse on ethnic identity was fueled by the desire of scholars to consider the role of self-identification and culture (Cokley, 2005 & 2007; Phinney, 1992 & 1996).

Nigrescence models define positive racial identity as an end goal, and are focused on individuals navigating external factors such as oppression and racism (Cokley, 2007; Cross, 1994). Parham (1989) described Nigrescence identity models 'as the process of becoming Black' (p. 188). Early models of Nigrescence were mostly comprised using research that focused on late adolescents, and failed to recognize that identity can (and often time does) change over time (Parham, 1989). Nonetheless, Cross' model of Nigrescence was important in its focus on a positive Black identity as a critical component of identity development.

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The discourse on ethnicity/ethnic identity was evolutionary in its focus on internal factors such as culture and self-identification. Jean Phinney (1992) contrasts the focus on group labels with a focus on the cultural and psychological factors that impact identity development. Phinney delineated three components of self-identification, feelings of belonging, and perceptions of other group members as the eminent factors in deciding ethnic identity. In her later work Phinney (1996) cited cultural behavior, self-affiliation, and experiences of minority status as key components of ethnic identity. The acknowledgement of culture is critical in understanding the importance of ethnic identity. Researchers have noted that racial identification does not correlate with racial consciousness or ethnic affiliation. That is to say, one individual may identify as Black, and have no cultural experiences or established bonds with Black folks and culture at large. Ethnic identity is self-identified affiliation (Phinney, 1992). The importance or relevance of race to an individual increases as their level of ethnic consciousness increases (Yip, Seaton, & Sellers, 2006).

I agree with Cokley (2005), who posited that it is more important to understand the psycho-emotional effect of race, more so than the mere classification of it. However, the consequences of identifying (and/or being identified) as a member of a particular group cannot be underestimated. In the context of this research project, it is most important to explore what influence, if any, does affiliation with the Blackness have on the professional experiences of BMEs. Racial identity tells researchers more about how society perceives individuals, whereas ethnic identity addresses how individuals experience society.

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I embrace the fact that race, though difficult to define, impacts the lives of every American. The phenomenon of race is particularly salient for individuals that live and work in an environment as a member of a minority groups. For that reason it is important to address the role and subsequent impact of race in American society, particularly in the field of education, which has larger implications on the social, economic, and political viability of future generations of students from both minority and majority groups. In this section I will seek to demystify the socially constructed term of racial identity, highlighting several perspectives on race and racial identity that inform and further contextualize the conceptual framework that guides this study.

### **The Black Identity**

Although there is extensive literature regarding the social realities and impact of race and racism, there are some scholars that have denied/and or minimized the existence of race (Appiah, 1985, 2006; Sundstrom, 2002; Webster, 1993). The early work of Appiah (1985) and Webster (1993) refuted the existence of race biologically and culturally. Webster (1993) described the Americas fascination with race as much ado about nothing, that is to say that racialized conversations only serve the interests of scholars and government officials that submit to the historical narrative regarding the existence of race. His later work posited that focus on racial differences prevents us from bonding as human beings across so called racial lines (Webster, 2002). Appiah's perspective on race has evolved in recent years and he has conceded that although race may not be real the social implications of race are (Appiah, 2006). The term Blackness is difficult to describe, however as a Black man I have a strong sense of knowing and understanding of my own Blackness and the Blackness of individuals similar to me

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through my own lived experience (Fordham, 2010). Fordham (2010) describes it as an intuitive connection that unites contemporary and ancestral notions of Blackness (Fordham, 2010). It is important to develop a conceptualization of Blackness in order to properly address the role that Blackness has in the lives of BMEs (Connor, Lewis, & Mueller, 2013). In this section I discuss the work of several individuals to provide a historical perspective on the various ways Blackness has been discussed in the literature and conclude this section with my conceptualization of Blackness.

Shelby (2002) describes the Black identity using the terms thin and thick to describe the surface level and more in depth components of Blackness. Thin black identity referred to the indefinable societal assumed aspects of blackness, including ancestral origins and physical characteristics (Shelby, 2002). Thick Blackness as described by Shelby is more specific. It includes genetic makeup based on biological factors, ethno-culture based on common ancestral history, popular cultural behaviors associated with Black folks, and kinship or familial ties to the larger Black community (Shelby, 2002).

McPherson and Shelby pragmatically explored this discussion on the components of the Black American identity by describing the African-American identity through a description and categorization of behaviors (McPherson & Shelby, 2004). McPherson & Shelby (2004) denoted five interconnected elements of the African-American Identity: racial, ethnic, national, cultural, and political (McPherson & Shelby, 2004). The racial dimension refers to the perceived biological markers of race including skin color, hair texture, and facial features (McPherson & Shelby, 2004). The ethnic element addresses the idea of a shared culture among Americans of African descent (McPherson & Shelby,

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2004). It includes aspects of indigenous African culture such as the African oral tradition and story-telling methods. The cultural dimension is defined as the cultural norms not directly related to ‘physical traits, descent relations, or geographical origins’ (McPherson & Shelby, 2004, p. 176). This would include easily imitable surface level aspects of culture such as dialect and style of dress. Perhaps the best example of this is the ‘black card’ that some non-Black folks are given among Black folks because of their ability to adopt so-called authentic Black behaviors. The national element places emphasis on geographical origins and territorial boundaries (McPherson & Shelby, 2004). For example, McPherson and Shelby (2004) describe the pride of embracing a geographical allegiance to the places where African-American come from such as the Caribbean and/Western Africa. Lastly, the political dimension refers to the assumed shared political values of African-Americans such as an emphasis on civil rights and equitable distribution of resources (McPherson & Shelby, 2004). This perspective is reinforced by much of the work on ethnic identity which focuses on the socio-cultural elements of race.

Clearly, Blackness is not only about how one looks and how one behaves, but Blackness is also about where one comes from—culturally and geographically, what one values—aesthetically and morally, and who one aligns oneself with—politically and socially. One can certainly be well rooted in the racial, ethnic, and cultural dimensions without embracing the modal African-American political stance. Understanding that racial identity is multi-faceted, it is often the case that individuals that identify as Black may not exhibit each of these five distinct categories, or exhibit each of these behaviors to the same degree. This approach emphasizes the in-group diversity and the acknowledges the various shades of Blackness (Connor et al., 2013).

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Several scholars have noted that the Black identity matures over time (Cross, 1971, 1994; Demo & Hughes, 1990; Geller, 2012). Geller (2012) argued that “Black people are not born. They are made” (p.2). The work of Demo and Hughes (1990) highlights the impact that sociocultural factors such as family of origin and peer groups have on the racial identity development of various individuals. Though Demo and Hughes focus on the internal and familial factors of racial identity development, Geller emphasizes the external factors, namely the perceptions of mainstream society (Demo & Hughes, 1990; Geller, 2012). Geller describes the process of an individual becoming black through intersubjective conversations, naming, and the experience of racial prejudice. The intersubjective negotiation occurs between one’s self-identification and how others society perceives that individual’s race. Nominal power is wielded by the government, mass media, and the people in one’s community (Geller, 2012). I agree with Geller that intersubjective dialogue and encounter moments raise racial consciousness levels, however I disagree with the notion that Blackness can be made. When scholars focus too much on the socio-political aspects of Blackness the importance of the process of Nigrescence is minimized and heterogeneity is discarded for the sake of uniformity and solidarity. I assert that one’s Blackness is present and established whether one has a low or high level of racial consciousness. Moreover, I subscribe to the adage that one’s Blackness is ever present, although how one experiences and perceives that Blackness may change over time.

The work of Demo and Hughes (1990) and Shelby and McPherson (2004), and Geller (2012) focus on individuals that are already identified as Black—either by themselves or by others. In contrast, the Cross Model outlines the process by which

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individuals become Black. William Cross created the most widely used nigrescence model in the early 1970's (Cross, 1971). Cross's original model of nigrescence included five distinct stages: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion/emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment. The mission of the original Cross Model was to affirm a positive Black identity in a time in history when mainstream images of Blacks were overwhelmingly negative (Cross, 1994). The original Cross Model focused on combating issues of self-hatred and self-degradation and its original goal was for the individual to move towards heightened state of consciousness and increased advocacy on behalf of the Black community (Cross, 1971). I include the Cross Model in literature review for several reasons: a) it serves as the starting point for my interrogation of conventional notions of Blackness, b) the various levels of nigrescence provide a framework for understanding one's journey towards personal liberation, c) to cultivate a more thorough understanding of double consciousness in the contemporary Black American experience, and d) to provide a framework for understanding the purpose of CRP

In the decades following several researchers have revisited the Cross Model, in fact the it has been revised three times, most recently in 2010 (Fhagen-Smith, Vandiver, Worrell, & Cross, 2010). The most recent incarnation of Cross's model provides a more nuanced description of the process of becoming Black that reflects complexity of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Fhagen-Smith et al., 2010). Fhagen-Smith et al. categorize Black identity development into three distinct stages: pre-encounter/encounter, immersion/emersion, and internalization (Fhagen-Smith et al., 2010). The purpose of the revised model reflects the changes in American society since the late 1960's. The

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expanded Cross Model and its accompanying scale were devised to measure the attitudes that Black individuals have in regard to their Blackness and lived experiences as Black individuals in America (Fhagen-Smith et al., 2010).

Fhagen-Smith et al. (2010) outlined three perspectives in the pre-encounter stage—assimilation, miseducation, and self-hatred. The pre-encounter stage of assimilation is described one of intense national pride and mainstream thought process (Fhagen-Smith et al., 2010). Race is understood to exist, however its impact and influence on one's life is minimized. Miseducation describes individuals that hold a negative and/or narrow perception of Blackness based on misinformed stereotypes perpetuated by mainstream society. Individuals embodying the self-hatred perspective hold negative views of Blackness that are inwardly focused (Fhagen-Smith et al., 2010).

The encounter moment occurs when one is confronted with the social realities of Blackness for the first time (Cross, 1971; Worrell, Cross, & Vandiver, 2001). The specific circumstances may vary person to person, but the new reality that is formed after the event bears similarities across multiple cases. For example, W.E.B. DuBois' encounter moment occurred when a White classmate refused to accept a greeting card from extended in friendship from him because he was Black (DuBois, 1903/1965). His classmate didn't have to say anything to the young DuBois, the cross expression on her face said enough (DuBois, 1903/1965). That moment acted as an awakening for DuBois and realized with a new degree of clarity that he was indeed different from his White classmates.

The second stage of the Expanded Cross Model is immersion/emersion which is described as an intense emotional involvement with all things related to being Black

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and/or Blackness (Cross, 1971 and 1994; Fhagen-Smith et al, 2010). This includes immersing one's self in Black literature, Black music, Black political gatherings, and establishing stronger bond the Black community (Cross, 1971; Fhagen-Smith et al., 2010). The immersion stage may be coupled with a strong distaste for all things associated with White America, specifically White individuals (Cross, 1971 and 1994; Fhagen-Smith et al., 2010). Cross and Vandiver (2001) described this stage as a romanticizing of the Black experience. Cross described the emersion phase as the development of a more informed, and balanced an approach to one's Black identity.

The third category of attitudes that the Expanded Cross Model addresses refers to internalization which encompasses individuals developing a more critically conscious perspective of Blackness and includes four perspectives: Afrocentric, bicultural, multiculturalist-racial, and multiculturalist-inclusive (Fhagen-Smith et al., 2010). The Afrocentric perspective focuses on one seeing the world strictly from the Black perspective (Fhagen-Smith et al., 2010). Biculturalists embrace both Blackness, and one other aspect of their identity such as spirituality, sexual orientation, or gender (Fhagen-Smith et al., 2010). Multiculturalist-racial identity refers to individuals that have strong positive Black identities, while maintaining a healthy respect for non-Black folks, specifically individuals from the dominant group. Multiculturalist-inclusive individuals have a strong Black identity and are also strong convictions about embracing individuals from various backgrounds regardless of how they identify (Fhagen-Smith et al., 2010).

Whereas past scholars argued for the humanity of Black folks recent researchers have sought to define and quantify the Black identity and experience (DuBois, 1903/1965; Fhagen-Smith et al., 2010; Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross, &

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Worrell, 2001; Worrell et al., 2001; Worrell, Mendoza-Denton, Telesford, Simmons, & Martin, 2011). My definition of race is informed by the reality that although race is a social construct it has tangible impact. Furthermore, I posit that parameters of understanding for discussing Blackness have been laid and provide a back drop for my conceptualization of contemporary Blackness. I disagree with the idea that individuals are made Black, however I do subscribe to the reality that racial consciousness is developed not out of want, but out of need. As outlined in the original Cross Model a positive Black identity is assumed as a weapon to combat messages of hate and inadequacy (Cross, 1971 & 1994). What Geller (2012) described as the creation of a Black person, I describe as the encounter moment as quantified by the original Cross Model (1971). I also see the thick and thin descriptions of Blackness as supporting much of the research on ethnic identity that highlights the cultural implications of how individuals relate to each other. The expanded Cross Model adequately addresses the heterogeneity amongst Black individuals and supports the fact that not every individual with a positive Black identity manifest that identity in the same way.

### **Contemporary Double Consciousness**

In addition to establishing a clear understanding of what it is meant by the terms Black/Blackness, it is also imperative to conceptualize the term consciousness through a contemporary lens. All human beings possess an innate capacity for consciousness (DuBois, 1903/1965; Freire, 1970). DuBois posited that Negro's ability to critically reflect on his place in America frustrates the Black American experience (DuBois, 1903/1965). DuBois' concept of consciousness is akin to Freire's writing on conscientization. According to Freire (1970), "conscientization is viable only because of

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men's consciousness, although conditioned, can recognize that he is conditioned" (p.455). I agree with both scholars in that one's humanity is rooted in the capacity to critically reflect on one's place in the world. Furthermore, I offer that the more one engages the world through critical reflection the more one engages one's own self through critical consciousness. In that regard double consciousness is not just a tool for BMEs to examine the world, but a necessary component of their psyche as informed men engaged in the world around them.

Consciousness is innate, however, the twoness of double consciousness is a testament to the exclusionary effects of systemic racism and oppression. In an equitable society there would be no need for double mindedness. In fact, the marginalization of Black America has made double consciousness necessary. The presence of double consciousness tells us as much about society as it does the individual. Several scholars have discussed the various ways in which dominant culture is impressed upon minority individuals with negative effects (Asante, 1991; DuBois, 1903/1965; Freire, 1970; Johnson, 1912/1990; Woodson, 1933). Although DuBois, is considered the forefather of double consciousness other individuals such as Freire (1970), Johnson (1912/1990), and Woodson (1933) after him noted that seeing one's self through the eyes of the oppressor is an unavoidable characteristic of life as minority in a dominant culture. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century multiple critical race pedagogues have critiqued the encroachment of oppression on the minds and souls of the disenfranchised. The work of DuBois (and to a lesser extent Johnson) is designed to explore how internalized racism has impacted the psyche of Black individuals. Whereas the more critical work of Freire (1970) and Woodson (1933) is designed consider how to counteract this negative systemic influence.

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I choose to focus on the DuBosian concept of double of consciousness, however the label is not as important as what the phenomenon means in the everyday lives of Black folks in America. The fact of the matter is that being impacted by the perspective of the oppressor is an unavoidable consequence of living as a minority amidst a pervasive dominant culture. In order to promote socially just practices it is important to explore how individuals from groups that been disenfranchised experience consciousness and come to view themselves in the context of larger society. The prolonged disenfranchisement of Black folks by the effects of systemic racism and oppression increases the importance of establishing a narrative that counteracts the dominant discourse of the Black experience, illustrates how individuals in the margin make meaning of their lives, provides a framework for beginning to understand how minorities navigate systems of power, and began to initiate conversations about creating safe spaces for BMEs to thrive inside and outside the schoolhouse. The DuBosian concept of double consciousness provides an appropriate back drop for examining the impact of race and racial identity of BMEs in a school setting with majority White students and staff.

For the purposes of this project I define double consciousness as the phenomenon of dual identities that is inherent in the Black American experience. Black individuals have what I term the authentic Black identity and the Institutional identity. These two identities and the correlating experiences demand to be reconciled, however at times can appear to be irreconcilable and even adversarial in nature. An individual cannot have an institutional identity without being yoked in some way with institution. Similar to DuBois, the participants in this study have an education and professional skill set that affords them access to an experience that is unique among Black males. The

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contemporary BME is more like DuBois than unlike him in terms of professional environment in which he must navigate.

In this project I employ the term Black authenticity, which refers to the degree that one is true to one's self and not, an arbitrary standard of Blackness established by others. As a product of being marginalized the authentic voices of the disenfranchised are muted (Freire, 1970; Woodson, 1933). Double consciousness presents an opportunity for Black individuals to maintain their sense of self, while navigating life in a society that has marginalized the Black experience. Authentic Blackness/Authentic Black identity can be described as the identity that is initially formed during an individual's initial socialization process. Authentic Blackness, of course, reflects the intersectionality of the various layers of identity including class, ethnicity, cultural norms and attitudes, family structure, language patterns, and kinship outlined in Shelby's description of thick and thin notions of Blackness (Shelby, 2002).

DuBois uses the term American self to describe the other component of double consciousness. As the term denotes this reflects one's sense of belonging in relation to mainstream American society. In this study I use the term institutional identity to reflect the specific context in which I will examine double consciousness. The progress of the civil rights legislation of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has made the American experience more accessible for Black folks. However, there remains of tangible socio-cultural barriers that imbue the experiences of Black individuals in a predominantly White setting. The institutional identity is borne of a veiled existence as described in *Souls of Black Folks*. The veil is a metaphor for the lens of ignorance through which mainstream Americans view the Black American experience. The veil also represents the contorted perspective

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Black Americans have of their own experience through the messages of hate, shame, and degradation that are promulgated through the forces of systemic racism.

### **The Institutional Identity**

This research study is unique because it is one of the few in the literature that examines the experiences of BMEs in a predominantly White setting. That being said, the research that does exist provides some insight into the challenges that BMEs in predominantly White settings face. In their research on the experiences of Black educators in a predominantly White suburban school Mabokela and Madsen (2003) noted that desegregated schools are not always welcoming places for Black educators. Mabokela and Madsen (2003) found that Black individuals in predominantly White settings were acutely aware of their otherness—socially and professionally. Mabokela and Madsen (2003) also found that Black teachers in predominantly White environments tend to be isolated by their non-Black peers. Black teachers struggled to deal with the duality of insider-outsider status (Mabokela & Madsen, 2003 and 2007). On one hand Black teachers have the education and professional training to be an insider, however the social realities of their Blackness precludes them from ever truly integrating into the mainstream culture of the school in which they were employed (Mabokela & Madsen, 2003).

In situations where Black educators are the minority their skills, talents, and abilities as educators are pigeonholed based on how they are perceived (Kelly, 2007; Mabokela & Madsen, 2003 and 2007). Often times Black educators in predominantly White settings are perceived as experts on Black children regardless of the background of the educator and/or the student (Mabokela & Madsen, 2003; Kelly, 2007). These

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expectations place unfair pressure on Black educators to conform to certain ideology of Black educator behavior.

Some of the key findings of Mabokela and Madsen (2003) were echoed in the work of Hilton Kelly (2007) which focused on the racial tokenism of Black educators in predominantly White settings. Kelly posits that some Black individuals seize the opportunity to work in predominantly White settings as an opportunity to problematize the misconceptions about Blacks at a grassroots level. Interestingly enough Kelly (2007) and Mabokela and Madsen (2003) both found that class and the socialization of Black educators were key influencers of the experiences of Black educators in predominantly White school settings. Kelly (2007) and Tutwiler (2009) found that racial consciousness and socio-economic status greatly influence the interactions and relationships that Black educators build with Black students.

In order for Black educators to acculturate themselves in predominantly White school settings they have to acclimate themselves to the culture that exists in predominantly White schools. The Black educator may or may not be familiar with this culture, however in order to be productive members of the organizations they are expected to conform to a degree- both behaviorally and philosophically. Individuals that work within and/or are educated by predominantly White learning institutions will undoubtedly be impacted by those institutions. Larson and Ovando (2001) assert that institutions are designed to perpetuate systems of power established by the socio-political dominant group. The institution of the k-20 education in America has been greatly impacted by the influence of White hegemony. According to Larson and Ovando

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“institutions are not material constructions; they are social constructions. People create and sustain the institutions we have today.”

Berger and Luckman (as cited in Larson & Ovando, 2001) delineated four distinct stages of institutionalization of inequity: habitualized action, reciprocal typification/shared logic, sedimentation, and exteriority. Habitualized action “is a patterned response to social stimuli.” Habits can be grand or insignificant. For example, middle school students that walk on certain sides of the hallway are engaging in a habitualized action. Habitualized actions are beneficial because they tend to be efficient. One answers the phone without thinking before saying “hello”. The second stage of reciprocal typification/shared logic occurs when individuals within the institution act collectively, no longer as individuals. Habitualized actions evolve into reciprocal typification because the habits that individuals adopt become normative and expected. Sedimentation is defined as the deep rooted organizational culture that stands the test of time. Ovando and Larson (2001) noted that when sedimentation levels are high individuals concede to expected patterns of behavior and see that concessions as normative. Exteriority refers to the objectification of the institution. In this stage individuals are able to separate themselves from the institution, however feel ill equipped and incapable of influencing the organization (Larson & Ovando, 2001). In the field of education White hegemony has been infiltrated every level of school system. The marginalization of Black educators and Black students has been systemic, if not strategic. For this reason it is important to note how individuals within the organization make meaning of their experiences inside the institution, especially when they have insider-

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outsider status, to determine how to better prepare individuals from marginalized groups to navigate and counteract the efforts of an oppressive education system.

My conceptualization of the institutional identity is informed by Ovando and Larson's institutionalized inequity and the process of organizational socialization (Lunenburg, 2013). The process of organizational socialization features seven stages: (a) selection of entry-level candidates, (b) humility inducing experiences, (c) job mastery, (d) rewards and control systems, (e) adherence to values, (f) reinforcing folklore, and (g) consistent role models. Individuals that do not assimilate quickly into the culture of the organization will be deselected—formally or informally (Lunenburg, 2013).

BMEs have to be aware of each of these characteristics as they navigate their professional experiences in a predominantly White school setting, particularly as it relates to deselection. One can be a “member” of the organization without being an actual member of the organization. Organizations have ways of teasing out the employees that don't perpetuate an agenda that continues the dominant narrative that the organization was founded on. A deselected member of the organization may find themselves consistently looking through the glass ceiling at the upward mobility and success of others. Ultimately, Black males have to determine the cost of integrating into the institution before fully engaging in the workplace environment. According to the Lunenburg model it requires a certain degree of humility for BMEs to integrate the predominantly White institution.

The Black males that are most successful in America are individuals that are adept at adapting physically, culturally, mentally, intellectually, and emotionally in an environment dominated by the Anglo-American value system (Rath, 1997; Yosso, 2005).

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Of course, the ease with which each individual is able to adapt is influenced by circumstantial factors including, but not limited to formal schooling, socio-economic background, professional experience and age. Double consciousness also represents a filtering of the Black experience through the lens of a dominant culture. It is unnatural to see one's self through the eyes of the oppressor. However in an environment made hostile by the forces of institutionalized racism, it is necessary to survive. Thus is the riddle of the Black existence in America. In order to succeed in mainstream America Ciccariello-Maher (2007) suggests that individuals have two perspective responses when confronted with the veil. One can choose to assimilate into the mainstream or one can choose to evolve beyond the constraints of the veil. This project will provide an opportunity to examine how contemporary BMEs have responded when confronted with this dilemma.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Methodology**

This study analyzed the complexity of the socialization of BMEs and how that process impacts both their interactions with colleagues and students in the context of a predominantly White school district. First, I explored how BMEs make meaning of their experiences in a predominantly White school setting. Second, examined what influence these experiences had on their professional practice and pedagogy. A secondary goal of this study was to explicate the strategies that BMEs employ to navigate their professional experiences as minorities in a predominantly White environment. This study expands the conversation about BMEs beyond the urban context to acknowledge the experiences of Black males in a predominantly White school environment.

#### **Research Questions**

The inquiry for this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do BMEs make meaning of their experiences as professionals in a predominantly White school district?
2. What influence do the experiences of BMEs have on their relationships with Black male students?

#### **Research Design**

The lack of knowledge regarding the experiences of BMEs is a problem for several stakeholders. First, the lack of knowledge regarding the professional experiences of BMEs is an issue for public school administrators and hiring managers that are seeking to employ qualified educators that reflect a diversity of skill and perspective that is representative of larger society. The lack of knowledge about the experiences of BMEs

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impedes the effectiveness of their recruitment and retention practices and contributes to a lack of effectiveness in the strategies that are used to recruit, train, and retain BMEs in teacher preparation programs. Additionally, the lack of scholarship presents an issue of concern for future and current BMEs whose voices have been marginalized and essentialized in the current discourse. Ergo, this lack of knowledge is damaging to the students that would benefit from the pedagogical practices and socio-cultural support of having teachers, counselors, and administrators not only reflect their own racial and social identities, but also understand and communicate in their language. For this reason, this study was approached as a problem of practice for multiple stakeholders including teacher educators, public school administrators, and BMEs themselves.

The purpose of qualitative research is to establish understanding and engage in sense making. Qualitative research asserts that knowledge and understanding are socially constructed (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). Moreover, knowledge is not static and often times experiential, thus a qualitative approach was most appropriate for this work. This particular case study was both interpretative and critical in nature. It was interpretative in that the researcher sought to deepen understanding regarding the experiences of BMEs in a specific context, specifically how BMEs make sense of their own experiences in a predominantly White school context. It was also critical in that the researcher was interested in how BMEs counter act the dominant discourse through their pedagogical practices. In this chapter I outline the research design of this study, describe my data collection and data analysis processes, discuss the role of the researcher and trustworthiness of the study, and lastly I address the limitations of the study.

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Merriam defines case study research as “an in depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (Merriam, 2009, p.40). Merriam (2009) and Stake (1995) assert that the selection of case study methodology is more about the specific unit of analysis—or study—than it is about the researcher’s preference. Merriam (2009) further describes three distinct features of case studies: particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic. Case studies focus on a specific phenomenon or issue gives the researcher a singular focus (Merriam, 2009). Additionally, the singular focus of case study research makes it especially useful for addressing problems of practice. The results of case study research produce data that is thick, rich, and thoroughly covers a particular phenomenon. Lastly, case studies are designed to elicit new knowledge and understanding of the particular phenomenon that is examined (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995).

This study was conducted as a multiple case study inquiry that examined the lived experiences of BMEs in a predominantly White school district. Multiple case studies require researchers to collect data from several sites united by a common thread (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). In this particular study the common thread was that each of the units of analysis (the individual BME participants) were employed in the same context, one of the 3 comprehensive schools in MSD, and identify as both Black and male. As anticipated there were some commonalities and differences that produced a robust portrayal of the BME experience in a predominately White school district. The quality of the findings of this study were strengthened by drawing data from multiple cases and conducting cross case analysis to explicate differences and highlight similarities between the different cases (Merriam, 2009).

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Several case study researchers have noted that case study research examines phenomena that are bounded by time, and context, and the context of case study cannot be separated from the issue that is being studied (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). It is important to note that case study research also places emphasis on the context in which a particular phenomenon occurs. In fact, the context is as important as the issue being studied (Creswell, 2009; Creswell et al., 2007; Yin, 2009). Merriam (2009) and Stake (1995) posit that the selection a case study methodology is determined by the phenomenon being studied. Consequently, I was not simply interested in researching Black males, but in understanding how their status as men of color influences their lived experiences in a predominantly White environment.

The primary benefit of doing case study is the emergence of case themes based on the findings (Creswell et al., 2007; Yin, 2009). The units of analysis for this study were BMEs employed in secondary school buildings in MSD, including classroom teachers, administrators, and one school social worker. I interviewed nine participants at three different high schools in MSD. Using multiple data sources provided an appropriate data source to answer the research questions (Creswell et al., 2007; Yin, 2009). The research questions and that guided this inquiry were purposely designed to be open ended and descriptive so as to elicit meaningful feedback that offers insight into the issue being studied (Creswell et al., 2007).

Case study research seeks to build a deep contextual understanding of a particular issue and is most appropriate when examining a particular phenomenon in a particular context (Stake, 1995). This project focused on such a precise context based issue relating to a narrowed group of individuals that case study was the most appropriate research lens

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for discovering an answer to the research questions (Creswell et al., 2007). The decision to design a case study with the lived experiences of BMEs as my unit of analysis to develop a counter narrative is consistent with much of the recent literature on Black male teachers and critical race pedagogues (Brown, 2009a; James, 2002; Lynn, 2002 and 2006; Lynn & Jennings, 2009). Multiple CRT and CRP scholars have used case study methodology as effective analytic tool to critically examine the experiences of historically disenfranchised individuals (Brown, 2009a; Decuir & Dixon, 2004; Lynn, 2006).

### **Context of Study**

MSD is located in the city of Mission, a small Midwestern town of about 150,000 residents. The city is home to two small private colleges and a large, public, research university. Education and healthcare are the two industries that drive local economy. The Mission community has a reputation for being highly educated and politically progressive. Education is highly valued by individuals in the Mission community and it is one of the most educated cities in the nation. These factors give Mission a distinct college town feel.

MSD is one of the largest school districts in the state with over 20,000 enrolled students and over 1,400 employed teachers across 24 elementary schools, 6 middle schools, and 3 high schools. In the 2013 academic year approximately 63% of MSD students identified as White, 20% as Black, 5% as Hispanic, 5% as Asian. MSD does not publicize demographic data of educators, however viewing the various picture profiles of teachers and administrators employed at the various buildings in the district would lead one to believe that educators of color are a rarity in MSD. The achievement

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gap is widely acknowledged. District officials have stated that improving student achievement is a district priority. The MSD mission is to provide an excellent education for all students, however district data suggests that this is not happening. District data shows there are academic performance gaps between the standardized test scores of White and Asian students and the standardized test scores of Black students, and low income students.

The description of a college town denotes that a high importance is placed on post-secondary education. Although some might characterize MSD as a suburban district, the city of Mission actually functions as a scaled down version of a large city. MSD has students that come from neighborhoods that are distinctively urban. Urban is often a euphemism for poor and/or of color and while the majority of MSD students embody the suburban demographic, there is tangible amount of students that embody common sense definitions of the urban existence. The district recognizes that inequities exist in the community, however the majority of the district's energy is directed towards supporting and enhancing the perceived modal experience of middle class, Eurocentric, western values in the school setting. In this context the experiences of people of color in general and Black males specifically is both recognized and ignored. Urban issues in a district that is perceived as suburban are often marginalized.

### **Participants and Sampling Procedures**

As noted by the Hatch (2002), the numbers of possible participants for this research project were dictated by the site I selected, Mission School District (MSD). I chose MSD as my research site because of its accessibility and the fact that it meets the specific demographic components outlined in my research purpose. I have relationships

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with district gatekeepers that aided me in gaining access to potential participants employed in the district. I contacted the Assistant Superintendent of MSD to gain approval for my study. Through my assigned district contact I was able to obtain contact information for 12 BMEs employed in MSD secondary schools. I sent letters of invitation to each potential participant inviting them to participate in the study. This initial email communication also had consent form and demographic questionnaire attached. Individuals were asked in the communication of the body of the e-mail to access the attachments if they consented to participate in the study. Additionally, I asked participants to complete the attached demographic questionnaire and contact me via e-mail or telephone if they were interested in participating. I contacted 12 potential participants and 9 consented to participate. I employed purposeful sampling for the selection of participants, which is needed in qualitative research to ensure that the data researchers collect aligns with the research purpose and generates meaningful data that address the research questions (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). Potential participants were defined as Black, male, credentialed, professional staff. The research questions for this project were context specific and purposive sampling was the most appropriate practice to follow to ensure that participants meet the stringent specifications needed for this project (Creswell, 2009). Broadening the criterion for potential participants may have yielded several more participants, however it was important for me to specifically target educators working in the high school setting. The experiences of educators differ based on the level in which they are employed, especially as it relates to my second research question. The pedagogical approach of a BME with a 12 year old 7<sup>th</sup> grader will be different from the interaction between a BME and an 18 year old high school senior.

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To be sure there will be commonalities, however the potential differences in participant backgrounds was worth noting, and consequently I narrowed my sample for this reason. Ultimately, the number of participants chosen for this project was determined by the focus of the research questions and constraints of time and availability for would be participants.

I only targeted participants that hold professional staff/faculty positions and/or have been credentialed by the state education agency. MSD employs a number of Black males in non-certified positions and although these positions are critical components of the MSD school environment, they do not have the prominence or responsibility associated with certified roles such as principal, teacher, and/or counselor. Based on the small pool of potential participants I did not target individuals of a specific age, a specific amount of experience, or specific job title, of course, I acknowledge these factors influenced the data that I collected. Table 1 depicts the demographic data for research participants.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Racial ID</b>	<b>Raised</b>	<b>Educated</b>	<b>SES</b>	<b>Current Role</b>	<b>Experience</b>
<b>Adewale</b>	22-35	Af. Am.	Suburban	Suburban Public	Middleclass	Teacher	3
<b>Andre</b>	50+	Black	Suburban Urban	Suburban Urban Public	Poverty	Administrator	15
<b>Carlton</b>	36-49	Af. Am	Rural Suburban	Public	Lower Middleclass	Teacher	22
<b>Corey</b>	22-35	Black	Urban	Urban Public	Poverty	Teacher	11
<b>Graham</b>	36-49	Af. Am European	Suburban	Suburban	Upper Middleclass	Teacher	16
<b>Kendrick</b>	22-35	Black	Urban	Urban Public	Poverty	Administrator	7
<b>Nassir</b>	36-49	Af. Am.	Urban	Public	Poverty	Social Worker	13
<b>Sean</b>	36-49	Af. Am.	Urban	Public	Middleclass	Teacher	13
<b>Wassulu</b>	22-35	Af. Am	Urban	Urban	Lower Middleclass	Teacher	3

### **Data Collection**

The data collection process consisted of nine face to face interviews. Each participant was interviewed once face to face for approximately 30-60 minutes. The demographic information was used to inform the content of the interview allowing for flexibility and reflexivity in regards to the semi structured interview. The semi structured interview design was chosen to draw out participants' perspective on their lived experiences and the concept of double consciousness as it relates to their professional experiences (Hatch, 2002; Yin, 2009). The interview followed a set line of questions, however in some instances the order of questions was adjusted based on participant responses. To ensure quality I maintained interview notes, digitally recorded, and transcribed each interview. Digital recordings were kept in a locked cabinet in my office and interview transcripts were secured in password protected file.

### **Human subject's protection and other ethical considerations.**

This case study necessitated human subject participation thus it was imperative that the researcher took measured steps to protect the rights of research participants (Yin, 2009). The importance of protecting the rights of participants was heightened by the fact that I conducted research in my work environment. There are four specific ethical considerations I considered before I embarked in this study: (a) how I will obtain informed consent, (b) how will I ensure honest and straight forward interactions with participants, (c) how will I maintain confidentiality, and (d) how will I protect individuals from vulnerable populations (Yin, 2009). Each of these concerns were addressed in my informed consent and cover letter documents.

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Prior to contacting officials in MSD I submitted a copy of my informed consent form and cover letter to the University Of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB). After I gained IRB approval I made contact with MSD central office. They were unable to provide me with a list of BMEs employed in MSD summer schools, so I worked with my district contact to establish an exhaustive list of potential participants and made initial contact via e-mail. Electronic copies interview transcripts were immediately coded for anonymity and kept in a secure password protected files. Demographic questionnaires were collected and kept in a secured file cabinet in my office. The only individuals that had access to the data were my dissertation advisor and me.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis process was informed by CRP as outlined in the conceptual framework. CRP seeks to explicate the specific actions that social educators employ to counteract systemic oppression in formal education settings. I interviewed participants and shortly, thereafter, began transcribing the data, in most cases the next day. I jotted down notes, impressions, questions I wanted to come back to, connections to other data that had been collected, and connections to the literature. These initial codes were the genesis of my formal data analysis process (Merriam, 2009).

In addition to open coding, codes were created to protect the anonymity of participants. Each participant was given a pseudonym to protect the confidentiality of his identity. The pseudonyms were based on Hip-Hop figures that projected characteristics or embodied facts relating to participants that were discovered during the interview process. For example, Kendrick was given his pseudonym because of his ability to clearly, articulate the thoughts, emotions, and perspective of not only himself, but other

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participants as well. Nassir, was given his pseudonym because of his ability to share his perspective through the use of anecdotes. Carlton was assigned his pseudonym because of the politicized nature of his responses. Wassulu was given his pseudonym because of grasp of history and geopolitics. Andre was given his pseudonym because he was the elder statesmen among participant. Sean was assigned his pseudonym because of the sense of pride and allegiance he felt towards the community he was raised in. Adewale was given his pseudonym because of his ability deftly communicate across perceived cultural barriers. Graham was given his pseudonym as a nod to his international background. Cory was assigned his pseudonym because of his commitment to helping others escape the poverty that characterized his childhood and adolescence. In addition to protecting the anonymity of participants these codes represent my early analysis of participants and are indicative of another layer of my data analysis.

It was interesting to note that several participants actually engaged me in debriefing sessions immediately following their interviews. These sessions were informal and initiated by participants. The topic of conversation varied somewhat, but for the most part focused on the goals of my study, questions about my experiences and how it compared to their experiences, and discussion on the state of BMEs and/or Black male students in MSD. I found that participants were as eager to process the interviews as I was.

As previously stated my interview notes were used to inform the formation of my initial codes. For example, after meeting with Sean, who was my first interview, I began listening to a digital recording on my way home from the interview. The next day I began transcribing his interview. After transcription of Sean's interview was completed I

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began forming codes. Two codes that emerged from my early analysis of his interview were the role of sports and nominal Blackness. As I conducted and transcribed the rest of the interviews my list of codes continued to grow. I read, highlighted, made memos, and wrote questions on each transcript. After the last transcript was created (including my initial coding) I began to compare and contrast the different transcripts to see what similarities and differences existed between the interviews. This process of cross case analysis helped me see patterns in the data, additionally as I conducted my cross case analysis my list of codes grew until I had approximately 40 initial codes.

The axial coding process began after the final interview and set of initial codes were created (Merriam, 2009). I printed off a list of each of the codes, and cut them out and begin working on grouping the codes as I searched for emergent themes. Some codes were subsumed under others, for example dual identity was subsumed under the larger theme of the veil of double consciousness. Other codes were grouped together to form entirely new codes that were more accessible. For example, encounter moments and nominal Blackness were grouped under the umbrella term of racialized foundations. Lastly, I went back to the data and reread each of the transcripts to verify that these codes were truly rooted in the data.

The broadly described emergent themes were developed in multiple ways. I focused on codes that were repeated within cases and across cases, highlighted codes that connected to the literature, and used my intuition to highlight codes that were especially salient. For example, Corey, Nassir, Adewale, and Kendrick all used variations of the term code switching to describe how they reconcile their personal and professional identities. In my final write up code switching was subsumed under the heading of tools

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of navigation. Andre's description of how BMEs navigate their experiences in predominantly White settings was reminiscent of DuBois' description of how Black men living in the White world must learn how to survive—physically, spiritually, socially, and intellectually. The resulting codes, with some refinement, became the emergent themes. I concluded my data analysis by providing a detailed summary of the generalizations that were gained from analyzing the data I collected and situating this data in research literature (Merriam, 2009).

### **Researchers Stance**

In my current role as a researcher I did not have formal power over any participants, accordingly participants were not coerced into participating against their will. I acknowledge that I have professional relationships with several participants, which is a direct byproduct of conducting research in the context in which I am employed. I was careful to inform potential participants that they were in no way obligated to participate in this research.

In retrospect these relationships were instrumental in securing enough participants for this research. Several participants that elected not to respond my initial e-mail query changed their mind after seeing me in person after I conducted interviews with a participant in their building. I recognize that my Black male identity may have impacted participant responses. Some participants were more comfortable disclosing their experiences because of my identity as a Black male. For the same reason, other participants may have felt obligated to provide responses that capture the modal black experience. It is impossible to with absolute certainty the degree to which my identity

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impacted participant responses, however based on the findings it is my perception that my identity—racial and gender—was an asset during the interview process.

The genesis of this research study was my own personal experience growing up as Black male. I have been aware of racial dynamics for as long as I can remember. I grew up attending predominantly Black schools, however I never had a Black male teacher outside of physical education classes. The dearth of Black male educators is not just something I read in a research article. It is something that I have experienced firsthand. Throughout my formal schooling experiences I struggled to come terms with my need to be affirmed both socially and intellectually. To be clear I recognize that a Black male educator would not have solved this dilemma for me. I bring this fact up to recognize the conscious and unconscious desire I have had to see my identity and culture reflecting in the individuals that were charged with educating me.

Despite the paucity of examples of BMEs in my own school experiences at the age of 15 I decided to become an educator. As a first generation college student and Black male I often felt out of place early in my undergraduate years at the University of Missouri. After 18 years as a member of the majority (in school settings) I became a novelty. Though the experience in and of itself was not new, the intensity and duration of this feeling was.

It was around this time that I first read DuBois' *Souls of Black Folks* and was introduced to the concept of double consciousness. This concept resonated with my experience because it described exactly what I was trying to do at the University of Missouri. I had the felt the twoness that DuBois describes, however it was not until I discovered the work of DuBois that I was able to access the formal language to articulate

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the feelings of isolation and frustration that I began to understand the impact of double consciousness on my experiences as Black male. At the time I was trying to express my authentic Black self, while attempting to develop an institutional identity that would allow me to access that which I sought when I entered the university in the first place. It was a tough balancing act, one that I had no real preparation for.

My friends in my neighborhood back home had no idea what it was like to be on a college campus or in a predominantly White environment for an extended period of time. I didn't have a road map to follow. I had to figure it out on my own. Initially, I embraced the role of being the spokesperson for Black perspective in my various classes, however after a while it got tiring. I struggled once I realized that if I did not speak up, often times no one would. In the absence of my voice, the experiences of those like me remain unheard. It has taken some maturation on my part to embrace the responsibility that my status as an educated Black male demands of me.

One particularly salient moment in my maturation process occurred when I was a first year counselor at a high school, one of the few Black males employees in the building. Some black males students were clowning in an assembly nothing outrageous, just normal teenage male shenanigans. One of my colleagues, a White female assistant principal asked me to go up and sit with the group, ostensibly to get them to quiet down. Several things are worth noting here: a) during assemblies neither I nor the assistant principal had assigned seats we typically watch assemblies from the back of the auditorium, b) assistant principals are responsible for student discipline, and c) I had no real connection to these boys at this time save for the shared identity of being Black and male. Against my better judgment I went up into the bleachers and sat down with the

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group and one of the boys seemingly out of nowhere said, “Mr. Martin it ain’t you, but they just sent you up here because you Black”. I was surprised because of his insightful response and immediately embarrassed because I had been played. In that moment when my colleague asked me to go quiet the group of boys down it wasn’t because of pedagogical skill set, it was because I was the closest Black body.

Since that moment I’ve been more purposeful and careful about how I engage with my colleagues. In that moment it became obvious to me although I am part of the team, my role on the team is to a certain extent defined by my status as a Black male. To be effective in professional role I have learned to balance my authenticity with accessibility as I have further developed my institutional identity.

In the school where I am employed the school motto is “freedom with responsibility.” The idea behind this philosophy is that the school promotes individuality for students and employees, with high standards for productivity and achievement. This school bears little resemblance- racially, socio-economically, nor philosophically- to the high school I attended, nonetheless, I connect to the message of individuality inherent in that motto. I seize the opportunity to be unique. For example, I embrace my love of poetry and Hip-Hop and have used both as pedagogical tools to connect with students. I was initially nervous to do so because I am acutely aware of the stereotypes regarding Black males and do not want to play a role in promulgating that narrative. However, at the end of the day I am who I am. I cannot control the perceptions of others, only my actions, furthermore I decided to exercise my agency by expanding the notion of what it means to be a culturally relevant pedagogue. I have developed a reputation in my building for both my authenticity, my use of poetry and/or Hip-Hop influenced

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pedagogical practices, and ability to connect with students. Though the road has been arduous and discouraging at times I have become comfortable negotiating my own double consciousness. This study was designed to see how other Black men survive (and even thrive) in similar predominantly White environments.

### **Trustworthiness**

In qualitative research trustworthiness relates to the authenticity of the data collected and the plausibility of the generalizations that the researcher draws from that data (Merriam, 2009). To ensure the validity of the interview data I audio recorded and transcribed each interview (Merriam, 2009). During the interviews, when appropriate, I paraphrased participant responses to ensure correct interpretation (Merriam, 2009). In qualitative research narrative member checks are an effective tool for ensuring that data recorded is an accurate reflection of participant responses (Merriam, 2009). As a natural addendum to the informal debriefing sessions I met with several participants after interviews were conducted and data analysis had begun in earnest to solicit feedback and reaction to my early findings. I found that during those conversations the feedback that participants shared on my findings was positive and affirmative. At the conclusion of the data analysis process each participant was provided a transcript of their individual interview to verify, confirm, the wording and also a copy of their profile to ensure that their confidentiality was protected. Conversations with multiple participants reiterated that the findings that emerged from the data analysis process were an accurate reflection of participant responses.

One of the benefits of conducting a multiple case study research is having more than one data source. The reliance on triangulation of multiple data sources raises the

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credibility of the research (Merriam, 2009). The triangulation process for this project included cross checking the observation notes and interview transcripts to ensure that data was analyzed appropriately and accurately (Merriam, 2009). Additionally, I shared my initial findings with my advisor to ensure that my interpretations are rooted in the data.

To ensure transferability I provided rich, thick description of both the research setting and the individual participants (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) posits that the purpose of rich, thick description is to provide readers with enough information to determine if the findings or analysis of a particular study can be applied to the reader's particular situation. I recognize that not every aspect of the study may be applicable to the every reader in the same way. However, my goal was to provide enough detail that every reader can garner worthwhile knowledge from this research study.

### **Limitations**

Case study research is helpful in producing detailed descriptions of the phenomena that are studied, however there are several limitations to case study research. First, case study research is limited by constraints on time and resources (Merriam, 2009). The researcher must balance the need of developing a rigorous study with the reality of what is practical and plausible for one to complete in a timely manner. For example, I chose to conduct this research project in an area that was convenient because of its proximity and my availability of access to the research site. There are other potential research sites, however my limited resources made MSD the most plausible choice. It is also worth noting that this study was limited by the time constraints on both participants and the researcher. I was only able to conduct one interview with each of the

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participants. Subsequent interviews may have solicited new data, or further illuminated data from the initial interview. Second, in case study research the researcher is the primary investigative tool and the findings of the research project are greatly influenced the skill set of the researcher (Merriam, 2009). The presentation of research findings are affected by the skills of the researcher, and the reality is some researchers are more adept at this process than others (Merriam, 2009).

Critics of qualitative research have noted that case study research has limited generalizability because of its focus on a specific phenomenon in a specific context (Merriam, 2009). Flyvbjerg (2006) asserts that generalizability is not the purpose of case study research, nor it is what makes case study research valuable. On the contrary the context specific nature of case study research allows for the development of a deeper understanding of the case that is being studied (Flyvbjerg, 2006). In some instances the findings from one particular case study can be transferred to inform the approach that scholars and practioners assume in related situations. The findings of this study give insight into the experiences of BMEs in the predominately White context, however it is important to note that its relevancy is not confined to its specific context. As I outline in the final chapters of this study has implications for individuals in educator preparation programs and k-12 settings. As a qualitative researcher I do not subscribe to the idea of a universal truth or experience, however I recognize that there is value in considering multiple viewpoints on a single issue. Thusly, there is value in conducting research that deepens our understanding of specific phenomena, particularly those that relate to populations that are underrepresented in the research literature. Qualitative research gives an opportunity share voices that have been marginalized.

### **Assumptions**

I recognize that the research methods chosen for this project are based on particular assumptions. First, I chose to do research a topic that I had personal experience with and held personal meaning to me. According to Yin (2009), case study researchers are required to be familiar with the subjects and issues they choose to study. My prior knowledge and understanding of my own racial consciousness informed my approach to this study. I have reflected on the topics raised in this dissertation many times. The foundation of this study was based on the assumption that the racialized experiences of Black males and the phenomenon of double consciousness are both multi-layered, complex concepts that can be understood from multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2009). As a researcher I was careful not to develop set expectations for what my actual research findings might be (Yin, 2009). As detailed in my discussion of the findings some of my intuitive predictions proved true, while others did not. I recognize that I bring certain values garnered from my specific lived experiences to the research process, nonetheless I was committed to remaining open to findings that were contradictory to what I knew about my research topic (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2009). This research project was also based on the assumption that multiple realities do exist (Creswell, 2009). Each experience, including my own, is affected by a number of factors including, but not limited to how individuals were raised, age, orientation, and educational background. Accordingly, I understand that there is no singular Black male educator experience. Ultimately, this research project was based on the assumption that individuals are the most valuable sources of knowledge and this study was designed to provide insight into complex phenomena and give those individuals voice.

### **Significance of Study**

This study is significant because it adds to the literature regarding the experiences of BMEs. It is unique in its focus on the experiences of BMEs in a predominantly White school district in a Midwestern college town. As previously stated the majority of literature that examines BMEs has focused on their experiences in an urban and/or homogenous school setting, which effectively marginalizes the experiences of BMEs whose professional experiences occur in outside of that context. This study is also unique in its examination of the intersectionality of lived experience, racial consciousness, and social context, and the impact of these factors on both the pedagogical practice and the relationships that educators build with students.

American public schools, like our nation, are getting more diverse, and gaining an appropriate understanding of the pedagogical strengths of BMEs has implications for all children. All children can benefit from having a diverse population of talented and committed educators, regardless of their racial identity. The findings are clear that BMEs have a kinship bond with Black male students, however all students can benefit from engaging with individuals from a different perspective. The increased recruitment and retention of BMEs is imperative, students deserve to have educators that reflect and affirm the culture of the students in the building. The critique of power dynamics Ultimately, this research study illuminates the complexities of the Black male experience outside of the urban context and provide knowledge that will impact the training, recruitment, and retention of BMEs. This study also serves as a knowledge source for individuals working with potential BMEs in teacher education courses.

### **Summary**

The goal of this chapter was to provide a detailed description of the research design and methodology behind my inquiry into the Black male educator experience in a predominantly White school setting. I explained the reasoning behind my decision to conduct a multiple case study, including the strengths and limits of case study research. Furthermore, I described the specific steps I will take to protect the integrity and rigor of the research as well as the confidentiality and rights of participants. Ultimately, this study is designed to deepen understanding of the complexities of the BME and ultimately inform the recruitment, training, and retention of BMEs.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Findings**

As previously stated in the first chapter, the purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of BMEs in a predominantly White school district setting and consider what influence those experiences have on their professional practice and pedagogical approach. I wanted to highlight the complexities of their experiences and challenge commonsense assumptions about the pedagogy of BMEs in general, and BMEs employed in a predominantly White context specifically. I was particularly interested in discovering the specific strategies that BMEs utilize to negotiate their experiences as Black men in a predominantly White educational environment. Lastly, it is my goal to make the findings from this study be available and a useful for resource for future BMEs.

This study was conducted as a multiple case study examination of the BME experience in Mission School District. The data sources for this project were nine semi structured interviews with self-identified Black, males, employed in professional staff positions in secondary buildings in MSD. Participants included two administrators, six classroom instructors, and one school social worker. The interviews sessions occurred at a place of convenience for the individual participants. After the interviews were transcribed the researcher conducted member checks to ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of his analysis.

This chapter begins with brief profiles of each of the nine participants. I introduce each of the participants, provide pertinent background information, and offer general impressions garnered from the respective interview sessions. In the next section of the chapter I describe the central themes that emerged during the data analysis process.

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Cross case analysis was conducted to connect interview responses among the individual participants and establish themes. Next, I discuss each of the five themes and illustrate how evidence of these themes manifested itself in the data that was collected. This is followed by a description of how the emergent themes are situated in the literature. I conclude the chapter by addressing how the data and the emergent themes answer the research questions for this study.

### **Participant Profiles**

#### **Sean**

Sean is originally from the Cleveland, Ohio. During his undergraduate years he participated in intercollegiate athletics at the local university and returned to Mission after being a professional athlete for several years. His intent in relocating to Mission was to complete rehab on the injury that stalled his career; however, he got involved with the baseball team at Jackson High School and decided to stay.

When I was done playing professionally I tore my patella tendon. I was rehabbing my knee [a guy I knew] had taken the head coach job uh at Jackson and he had nobody to help and I was gon' be on the shelf for a while so you know I told him I would help him. And from there ended up sparking up relationships with kids and figuring out that you know was kind of what I wanted to do with my life, is make a difference with kids. The next step became kind of obvious.

As an educator, Sean relishes the opportunity he has to influence the lives of students in his role as a classroom teacher and as a Coach.

I love that I love seeing kids completely change the direction of where they're going and choose to do to the right things I love to see them have tangible

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success. To see the look on their face when they do something that they didn't think they could do those are amazing experiences that they really top anything of my own individual experiences that I've had.

Sean's identity and perspective on race and culture is greatly influenced by his experiences growing up in the Rust Belt city of Cleveland.

...In Cleveland your race alone is never gonna separate you from anybody else, it's gonna be purely gonna have to be based on your accomplishments, setting yourself apart.

So, even though he is completely aware of the realities of race in America and life as a minority living in White, middle-class culture there is a part of Sean that is still empowered with message of autonomy and agency that he received during his formative years in a predominately Black, urban setting.

**Nassir**

Nassir was born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia. He has been employed in MSD for 10 years. He is certified in English education, but enjoys his current role as a school social worker at Jackson High School.

I would say it's an awesome position, um, to aid kids that really need it.

To really get into family homes and make a difference.

Growing up in poverty greatly influenced Nassir's upbringing and his experience in school.

...issues at home made it difficult to focus on school. Um, and this is in hindsight you know as a kid, as a child I really didn't understand, um, why I wasn't performing up to my ability at school. Um, but you know just looking back I had

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some difficulties at home you know whether it was living arrangements um basically who my mom was dating at the time it just you know something was always going on in my house. It made it really difficult to focus on just school...I didn't perform up to my potential

Additionally, as a child he struggled behaviorally in school which contributed to some academic struggles. This eventually led to him being placed in special education as an elementary school student

Elementary school was uh started off normal uh and then eventually and eventually I probably around third grade got myself into a bit of trouble, you know, expelled from school and then I know that's where I fell behind... I ended up the next year having then to stay back a year...it led to my um you know my instructors and my teachers thinking that you know that I was needing some special ed classes and things of that nature and eventually by um seventh grade caught back up and it was basically normal.

His experiences in Special Education and being a product of urban poverty came up several times during his interview. Nassir uses his experiences as a struggling student and as a child of poverty to relate and make himself accessible to students.

**Wassulu**

Wassulu grew up in Columbus, Ohio. He was unique among participants in that education was his first choice as a profession.

I've felt like even since high school I wanted to be a teacher. I was really big into, um, history and sports. And so when I went to college that's what I was gonna

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do--you know, teach history. I majored in history and political science and you know played football. Those were my interests.

Although he took a circuitous route to his current position he feels like he is a good 'fit' for MSD in general and Jackson High School in particular. He recognizes the opportunity he has to be an example for the students he serves.

There's not a lot of Black males [in education]. You can be a role model in this position...It's a unique position and you can take advantage of that position. He also takes great pride in his mastering his subject area.

You know there are certain things that people say that kind of catch your eye...they [white colleagues] may think that you were hired for...you know if there was a they might think that there was white person that was more qualified, they probably think that I got it [this job] because I was African-American, even though that's impossible because nobody is more qualified to teach, you know my subject matter than I am. They can be just as qualified, but they're not more qualified...Like I said, I know my subject matter.

Even though Wassulu is soft spoken he is very confident in his abilities as a professional and as a role model for the students he serves.

### **Graham**

Graham has been teaching in MSD for 15 years and has worked at both the elementary and high school levels. He was born in Germany to a German father and African-American mother. He was a nonconformist for most of his k-12 experience and struggled to succeed in learning environments that didn't always embrace his traits as a learner.

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[My school was] not a community that's like 'oh there's different type of learners here' at all so I didn't do so hot there. Ironically, at Jackson High School he is responsible for teaching 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders, most of who tend to be high achieving Honors and AP students. When his students ask about his high school education he replies honestly. "I did really well on things I liked, so like, it's funny...like, the classes I enjoyed I'd have A's in. The classes I didn't enjoy, I wasn't there. I'd just leave."

Graham was very direct in describing the negative experiences he had in k-12 experience. In fact, his decision to enter k-12 education was directly influenced by those struggles.

I think I ended up in education because I didn't like the way related to the kids in the schools that I was in. And, I don't know. I think a lot of times we kind of pretend there's one way to do school, one path.

### **Adewale**

Adewale grew up in the city of Mission and graduated from Grant High School. As a recent graduate of MSD he offers the unique perspective of being a student during the time that district initiated some of its recent efforts to be more responsive to diversity. Though, designated as gifted Adewale being the product of a single parent household negatively impacted his perspective on himself amidst a peer group that was decidedly middle class. He found identity in sports.

...but athletically that's when it evened all out. I was faster than everybody. I could jump higher. I do all that kind of stuff. It was no longer Cedric the kid with the single mom, it was we want to win let's get Cedric... that's when I felt normal. That's when I felt at peace.

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Although he is certified to teach special education Adewale does not consider himself to have a background in education. He viewed education as “a means to an end”, a perspective that was drilled into him by his mother, who also has a background in education. His desire to be a Coach led him into teaching

...and in order to coach you had to teach. So, um and the best advice I got when I very first started this was good coaches are good teachers. Because it's the same thing. Since I had that kind of viewpoint um kind of gave me the idea that I can do it. If I can coach football, I can teach in the classroom.

He views himself as relationship oriented and uses his ability to connect with students to deliver curricula that is both academically sound and culturally relevant. These are skills that have been valuable to him as a staff member at Davis High School, the recently built high school created. As one of the new employees in the building he has had an opportunity to help in molding the culture at Davis High School.

### **Cory**

Cory recently moved to Grant High School from a large urban district to be closer to family. Although he has over ten years of experience in education he is fairly new to MSD. He has always been interested in working with kids and worked for the Division of Youth Services before matriculating into the field of education via substitute teaching. The relative affluence of MSD has been an eye opening experience for Cory.

I came from Memphis Public so I expect the worst of everything...And the district is to me on the up and up. And they do kind of follow by their mission statement. They want to be the best district in Missouri. I do see them work towards that.

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Not all of his experiences in MSD have been positive in nature, but he enjoys working with the students he serves and his current role

What I like most is the day to day interaction with kids, who, who don't have a clue on what's going on. And it's me to enlighten them every day. Every day I can teach them something different. Every day they can teach me something different.

He sees himself as a role model and like Adewale uses his background in coaching to relate to kids. He views himself as tough and fair in the classroom setting.

### **Andre**

Andre, an administrator at Grant High School was the most experienced of the participants I interviewed with over 20 years of experience in MSD as a teacher, coach, and administrator. He was a star basketball athlete at the State University and returned to Mission after a successful professional career. His name and reputation make him an influential community member and a prominent face in the Black community. He has been employed as a classroom instructor and administrator in MSD for over twenty years. He viewed his relationship with MSD from a pragmatic perspective.

... Mission School District and I piss a lot of people off because I say you [MSD] can't tell me what to do, nobody can tell me what to do. I do it because of the relationship I have. I accept Mission School District policy and guidelines in exchange for their money. If it wasn't for the money we wouldn't have a relationship.

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Andre acknowledges that he has to work within the confines of the district, but is adamant that he maintains a degree of autonomy. He concedes that colleagues and families sometimes chafe at his no frills approach to his job

Education is a business. It's a multibillion dollar business, it's nothing personal. You better start looking at it like a business, because if you don't then it will be very personal when you don't have the things in life that you think you would want to have and you're not given opportunities that you think you should be given. This is a business, you know, people want to come in here and make it personal. I make it personal because I have to have that personal contact because I am in the people business, okay. I'm in the business of helping my young people.

### **Kendrick**

Kendrick has had a very successful career in MSD. He taught science for three years at Jackson High School before becoming an Assistant Principal at Grant High School. In that role Kendrick took on multiple building level and district responsibilities. This fall he will assume the building principalship at Grant High School at the age of 30.

His ability to quickly rise up the ranks is indicative of his desire to increase his sphere of influence.

[The reason] I stepped out of the classroom was because I felt that I could change 120 lives every single year when I was in the classroom. But, I said man I gotta do something about education because there's still a systemic issue. Then I got into administration and I realized that as an assistant principal I deal with a lot of managerial type things with discipline and attendance which are major concerns that I have the power to make a difference in, but still...there's so much red tape

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and there's so much bureaucracy that you can't really change a whole lot, so I had to move up to the building principal.

Although Kendrick's experiences have been fortuitous and fulfilling on a personal level, he is disheartened by the lack of progress the district has actually made in bridging the achievement gap.

I say it's a loaded question because my experiences have been fantastic professionally, but it's also been disheartening to see the slow progress that we've made.

**Carlton**

Carlton is also product of Mission School District, graduating from Grant High School in the early 1980's. He actually planned on having a career in human services, but early on that path he realized that he could make a more significant impact on young people through working in the public school setting. He joined MSD as a school social worker and is currently employed as a classroom instructor and Head Track Coach.

Carlton offered a critique of the district's current approach to creating equitable access to rigorous coursework and academic support. He called the district's response "reactionary". Carlton stated, "Part of [the district's] problem with the achievement gap is we're reactive. He saw the district as being defensive in the manner in which it initiated and implementing efforts designed to improve the academic achievement of disengaged students.

Carlton recognizes the importance of collegiality among Black male staff in Grant High School.

We exhibit...that's what I can say about the Black men in this building. We exhibit a lot of respect in public for each other, in private we do too, but we exhibit a lot

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of respect in public. You'll never hear me call Andre, Andre in public or call Kendrick, Kendrick in public. It's always Mr. Lamar. It's always sir, this that and the other, um, so that we can sort of promote that with our young Black men.

Carlton found that these outward signs of respect aided in his collaboration with other BMEs in the building and increased their effectiveness individually and collectively.

### **Emergent Themes**

The sub-headings for each of the five teams are accompanied by quotes from participants that encapsulate the major premise that each theme represents. In discussing each theme it is important that in some ways each of the first four themes—racialized foundations, the veil of double consciousness, stalled progression, and tools of navigation could be subsumed under the overarching theme of CRP. Critical race pedagogues are individuals that are acutely aware of their own racial identities, adept at negotiating identity in racially and culturally hostile environments, are able to critique systems of power, and engage in sincere and in depth self-reflection regarding one's experiences, elements of these tenets are dispensed in my reporting of the findings for the other four themes. However, for the sake of a more structured discussion I categorized my findings in the following way: racialized foundations, the veil of double consciousness, stalled progression, tools of navigation, and the delivery of critical race pedagogy.

#### **Racialized Foundations—"It's ever present in my thinking"**

As the above quote from Kendrick denotes, for the participants in this study race was a both a prominent aspect of their identity as well as a strong influencer of the lens through which participants understood their personal and professional experiences. For the purposes of this study racialization is defined as the categorization or identification of

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a person or persons on the basis of race. It also refers to the perception or perspective of events, individuals, and experiences through a racial lens. Each of the nine participants had some form of a discovery and/or encounter moment that influenced how their understanding of what it means to be Black. Additionally, each of the participants discussed formative events in their life—participation in sports, early schooling experiences—through a racialized lens. Accordingly, this section addresses how those some of those events/experiences impacted the participants in this study.

Just as there are multiple manifestations of Blackness, the participants in this study told stories that described their own unique paths to understanding Blackness. Geller (2012) states that the process of an individual becoming Black involves a combination of three factors: intersubjective conversation, naming, and the experience of racial prejudice. Each of the participants' encounter moments fits into one of these categories. Each moment was unique based on contextual factors such as age of the participants, the messages they received from their families, and the location of where they were raised. In Chapter Two, encounter moments are described as moments when Black individuals realize the social realities of race (Fhagen-Smith et al., 2010). This can happen in multiple ways. For example, Andre, 55 years old, stated simply "I grew up at the time when Black men and Black people were second class citizens." His early education occurred while he was attending racially integrated schools, while the community he lived in was very much segregated ethnically and racially. He learned racial boundaries, racial identity, and racial pride at a young age as a necessity. Kendrick, although appreciably younger than Andre, similarly identified as Black at a young age. When asked about what he recalled about his decision to identify as Black,

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Kendrick responded “I never felt I had a decision to identify as Black. I was told I was Black. ...and that’s what I was.”

Nassir recalled never really thinking about race growing up in Atlanta, Georgia. Growing up in such a diverse area with a large minority population, his blackness alone did not make him stand out. He discovered his Blackness by listening to the messages of the individuals in his community and his family. Sean growing up in Cleveland, Ohio heard similar messages. Although, he was bi-racial his community readily identified him as Black “I grew up in an all-Black neighborhood, and no one considered me not Black so...to me I was just Black. Like I said before, Black kid, White mom. In private school I was always the Black kid.” In a similar fashion Wassulu described his decision to identify as Black in as something that has “always been a part of my personal--I guess recognition--it's something that I really haven't thought through that much.” Like Sean and Nassir, from an early age the messages the messages he received from the community reinforced his nominal Blackness.

Racial identification does not come without consequences the following quotation captures Corey’s encounter moment as a boy growing up in Memphis, Tennessee. In response to the interview question, “What do you recall about the first moment you realized you were Black?” Corey stated, “...being harassed by the police at a very young age’. When prompted to expound on the statement he offered the following description.

Probably as early as 7 or 8 years old guys were on the corner and I’m walking through. Everybody’s on the corner, everybody’s on the ground. Everybody’s getting searched and at that time as a little boy it didn’t make me mad it almost

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excited me. Like ‘ah, I was down there with the 14 year olds, 13 year olds, not knowing what was going on.

Corey in this moment associated Blackness with being mistreated and saw this experience as a rite of passage into Black manhood.

Carlton’s formative moment occurred when he was 12 or 13 years old going to door to door offering to mow neighbor’s lawn to make pocket change and a White neighbor had a negative response because Carlton, a young Black male, went to the front door. Although not too far removed from Jim Crow era in the city of Mission, he was surprised at the reaction he received. When he got home his folks ‘rapped’ to him about the realities of race and the obstacles that he would encounter as a Black male living in America.

Adewale, the youngest of my participants, recalled being acutely aware of his race as one of a few Black students at his elementary school. “I was very conscious of my perception and how people looked at me.” He was aware that his Blackness made him different from his classmates. Adewale also went into detail sharing his perspective on difference between being called “Black” and being called “African-American”. He describes Black as a term that is typically used to reinforce stereotypes, often as a negative connotation whereas the term African-American is used in a more positive or professional manner. He provided the following example.

We have ten thousand scholars who got 36 out of 36 on the ACT are they Black or African-American...I think in the news it’s gonna be we had a group of African-American students that were able to do this.

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In this conversation on the power of racialized labels, he stated that he wanted to be more known for more than his athleticism or as “the fast Black kid”. He wants to be known for his skill set as an educator.

Graham, who is bi-racial, and lived in Houston, Texas before settling in Missouri. As a young adolescent, fitting into static categories of race proved difficult. He noted that what race you identify as personally and what race you're identified as by others may or may not be the same thing. Although, he fully embraces his recognizes his multicultural/multinational background he concedes that the nominal aspect of race reminds him that he is perceived as Black.

It's what other people see you as that's your race. I mean it really is. You can identify as whatever you want but, you know, when you grow up in Texas, if you're brown, you're brown. It doesn't matter what flavor of brown you are.

This comment highlights the fact that racial identity is a social construction with internal implications. What people perceive you as does matter.

It is worth noting that racial identity development is not a linear process and individuals can have multiple experiences that shape and mold one's perspective on race and what it means to be Black. Sean, who identified as bi-racial described going to Nigeria as a youth Kendrick had paradigm changing moments as an adolescent. Kendrick describes his first intimate experience with overt racism in the following response.

I was working at the I-70 Drive in Theater one night and they [a white co-worker] said ‘ah, you should have been here last night’, because I had took the night off one night. ‘This woman came in here, she was acting crazy’, and this,

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that, and the other and they said, the woman said to me...I want to get her exact words. 'Man, she was acting crazy someone burned her fries and she was just acting like a nigger'... First time I experienced overt racism and I didn't know how to take that. So, I ended up having to leave work that night. I did a lot of reflecting because I was confused, how can I use this word on a daily basis...I was the n-word king when I was in high school. I used it left and right.

For Kendrick being confronted with the racism of his co-worker made him question how he viewed his own Blackness. "How can I use this word on a daily basis, but then get so angry because this woman used the word...It sounded a lot different when it came out of her mouth than when I would use it." This underscores the both the consequences of internalized racist messages and the external consequences of racist acts.

Race not only shaped the positionality and perspective of the individual participants, but it also greatly influenced their perspective on their educational experiences. Nassir and Corey had memorable education moments that resonated with them because of the care and compassion that individual teachers showed for them. Corey stated that his most 'memorable school experiences would be people, teachers showing that they actually cared.

Nassir struggled at the elementary and middle level grades. Nassir described how working with a teacher that helped him mainstream out of special education classes left a significant impact on him.

She was one of the main reasons why I got caught up and then mainstreamed out of my special ed classes and she, she was a midget. I remember her being a very short but she was really patient with me and she really got me to um into reading

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books she had high expectations for me. And to this day I really don't know what made me connect with her so much being that she was a short, midget, white woman, but I did. And she got me reading. And she got me on track to where I needed to be. So I remember her, and you know I remember really, really feeling comfortable doing school at that point because I was with her.

For Nassir and Corey, the teachers that made the most impact were the ones that helped them began to realize their academic potential.

Not every participant shared a positive moment. Wassulu and Graham both discussed negative school experiences that shaped their view of themselves as learners and ultimately their practice as educators. Wassulu shared a story about an incident that occurred when he was in the fifth grade and he had a teacher that held a negative perception of him and treated him accordingly.

I kind of felt like the teacher lumped me into a box. And, you know, just, you know sometimes falsely accused me of things and wouldn't one day, or for like a week straight this guy--his name was Marcus--was always, but for some reason, you know this week he just wanted to pick on me. Slap me in the back of my head, do all kind of things. Tell the teacher "Marcus is messing with me"? And she yell at me "Wassulu, go sit down". You know, I'm doing what I'm supposed to do... And one day I'm getting a drink of water at the water fountain and he shoved my head in the water fountain, so I turned around and punched him. And the teacher gave me a detention, but you know in my head, I'm thinking I been coming to you and you ain't do anything. I got in trouble all the time in fifth grade, um, but in 6th grade I got in trouble like the first week of school, got into a

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fight and the teacher sat me down, talked to me. I didn't get in trouble anymore--the rest of that school year.

He developed a pattern of misbehavior in 5<sup>th</sup> grade due in part to this instructor's negative perception of his capacity to behave and learn in a school setting.

...so I felt like, you know, while I do take responsibility for the things I did do--I did feel like teachers played a big role in how, you know, I behaved...In you know what they expect. If they expect you to do well, sometimes you can rise to those levels of expectations and if they're expecting you to get into trouble--like that situation was just one example where I felt like you know I was I did what I was expected to do. What else was I supposed to do let this guy keep picking on me? Um, so I do feel like teachers can play an important role in behavior of students.

Wassulu would eventually go on to have other teachers that positively impacted him, however this incident greatly shaped how he viewed authority in the classroom and affects how he relates to students in his current role. He resists the authoritative approach and has a collectivist approach in which he delivers curriculum.

Graham was unique in his response to the interview questions about his own educational experiences. Graham had a rough experience at every level. He stated that there is a misconception that all teachers enjoyed their educational experiences as students.

I think that's a stereotype I get some times when we're doing PLT meetings, we're doing shared planning. I've heard people say, "You guys are all here because you

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could do school well”... and I'm like well [laughter]. That's not true [laughter].

Not everybody was like that.

Graham's approach to education was greatly influenced by his identification as a student that was not very good at school. He didn't doubt his intelligence, but he did recognize that his learning style did not always mirror the learning approach of his peers.

**The Role of Sports.** Sports played a prominent role in the socialization of several participants. In fact, most of the participants I interviewed were college athletes, only Graham and Kendrick did not play collegiate sports, even still, both of them competed athletically in high school. Sports played a bigger role in the stories of some compared to others.

Participation in athletics had a profound impact on Adewale who struggled to find a positive educational moment that occurred inside the school building. In our interview session every positive educational moment revolved around his participation in athletics. Adewale discussed how in elementary school he struggled to have a positive image of himself as a student. He commented that athletics and his athleticism were sources of confidence for him. His identity revolved around his athletic ability.

But athletically that's when it evened all out. I was faster than everybody. I could jump higher. I do all that kind of stuff. It was no longer Adewale the kid with the single mom, it was we want to win let's get Adewale... That's when I felt at peace. Everywhere else I felt like I was stared at. Like I was an experiment.

In a similar way participation in interscholastic athletics taught Carlton learned lessons on how to relate others that were different from him. He learned the following from his high school football coach

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If I want people to treat me with respect I have to treat them with respect. You know, this guy over here that's running and sweating drinking out of the same water bottle as me his grandpa could hate, but this dude don't. So, I can't blame all White people for what some White people do....The same way I can't blame all Black people for what some Black people do. Those are some of the things you learn in sports.

For Andre, sports provided an opportunity to pay for his college education

Initially they plucked me out of my home to bring me here because I had marketability, to serve their purpose and agenda. They came here to pimp me for exploiting my physical abilities. It didn't take long for me to learn that I need to exploit them just as much as they're exploiting me.

Andre was able to use that opportunity to get a college education and position himself to take care of his family. He readily acknowledges the privilege that comes with athletic success.

I was readily accepted because I had another title associated with my name. I was a college and professional athlete, you know, so uh, race is always an issue, but for me personally I've always had additional titles that opened doors for me that the average Black person is not gonna experience or begin to understand.

For Andre, his athletic privilege minimized the role that race played in his ability to navigate his professional identity in MSD. However, that privilege did not alleviate him from fighting the label that comes with being viewed as an athlete. He mentioned his desire not be perceived as a dumb jock or just as an athlete. These generalizations were not without impact. Andre said several times in the interview that he was not 'a dumb

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jock’, that he ‘was smarter than the average bear’. It was important for him to note that yes, even though he was a Black male athlete he was also intelligent. Andre made a concentrated effort to challenge some commonly held perspectives on athletes in general, but Black male athletes specifically.

Sean discussed the role of sports in his life through the lens of coaching. He recognizes the influential role he has in student’s lives.

Some coaches use that platform to be negative. To [air quotes for the recording] make kids tougher. I don't think that's what kids need. I think kids need to be loved. I think kids need to be encouraged. I think they need to be pointed in the right direction to have some hope to have

It is imperative to him that he capitalizes on this platform by ensuring that he sends students messages that will increase their confidence and ability to improve their current condition in some shape or fashion. Sports were not just a core aspect of several participants’ socialization, but also a vehicle through which some were able to make meaningful connections with students.

### **The Veil of Double Consciousness-“We all still wear the mask”**

The second theme to emerge from the data was the DuBoisian (1903/1965) notion of double consciousness. This theme was best articulated by Carlton in the above quotation. He asserted that all Black males assumed the dual identification associated with double consciousness. Although quote most clearly relates to the aspect of dual identity, most of Carlton’s (and those of other participants) subsequent comments referred to the concept of the veil. Carlton stated that he was expected to perform, and as long as he fit into the dominant culture’s conceptualization of Blackness he was fine.

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However, if he were to act contrary to those expectations, there would be implicit consequences. Double consciousness is experiential in nature, thus participants varied in their individual manifestations of double consciousness, however there was a shared sense of knowing in regards to the veil.

Double consciousness at its core is about the experience of otherness. Each of the participants described feelings of otherness—psychologically, emotionally, culturally, and or professionally at various times throughout the nine interviews that were conducted. I use the term veil of double consciousness to highlight the multilayered influence of double consciousness in the lives of the participants in this study. I summed up my reconceptualization of double consciousness with the following passage taken from my literature review.

Double consciousness not only affects how an individual views the world, but also how the world views that individual. For the purpose of this research study, I describe the veil as the physical and socio-emotional consequences of systemic racism and oppression. These consequences impact the lived experiences of individuals both from the minority and the majority. In this regard double consciousness is not just about dual identities and notions of otherness, it is also about the internal response that Black individuals have to their lived experiences. For this reason, it is important to note that my discussion of double consciousness encompasses multiple aspects beyond the traditionally trumpeted aspect of dual identities.

**Racial Consciousness.** Several participants noted that race is a prominent aspect of their identity Sean shared that “I’m someone that always comes into a situation feeling

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a little like, like that maybe someone is predetermining who they think I am based on what my race [is].” He went on to say “they look at my race they look in my background and they expect certain things of you—to respond a certain way to believe certain things.” Kendrick plainly stated, “Race plays into everything that we do [as a Black individual].” Andre remarked, “Race is first and foremost when they [White folks] look up and see me coming.” Corey stated, “Let’s be real. There’s still...its 2014. There’s still some prejudices going on...I think people already got a perception, prior to talking to you. You already a Black man, you know, that’s the deal.” Graham commented that even though he sees himself as multi-racial he knows that the social reality of life in America makes him Black. Although he would rather it not be the case, Graham conceded that race is what people see first when they see him because of his physical appearance. Because Blackness is such a prominent aspect of how they are perceived these Black males exercise high levels of racial consciousness as survival skill.

A byproduct of racial consciousness was the kinship that BMEs felt towards Black male students. Although, it was not the sole purpose of this study to examine the dynamic between BMEs and Black male students participants, I found that it was a salient aspect of the pedagogical approach of the BMEs in this study. Several participants described seeing themselves in the Black male students they served and reported feeling drawn to advocacy on their behalf. It was apparent from the data that racial consciousness has a direct influence on how Black males interacted with both Black male colleagues and Black male students. For that reason in my discussion of the pedagogical approach and professional practice of BMEs as it relates to my second

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research question I highlight insight into the relationship with BMEs have with Black male students that was garnered through interviews.

**Dual Identity.** It is important to draw a distinction between dual identity and the veil. Dual identity is an aspect, or manifestation of the veil of double consciousness. Every participant who mentioned the duality of identity experienced double consciousness, however not every participant that discussed double consciousness expressed a duality of identity. For example, Carlton described the mask of dual identity and the impact of understanding his experiences in the predominantly White environment through the lens of the dominant culture. I expected participants to be clearer in their expression of the dual identity aspect of double consciousness, however what I found was that participants were more in touch with their veiled experience of double consciousness. As multiple participants noted how others see you does not dictate your actions or eradicate your agency, it does however color the way others perceive and interact with you. Participants were acutely aware of how they were perceived by colleagues and viewed this level of heightened awareness as a necessary skill.

Kendrick addressed his double consciousness while relating how he connects with Black male students from the perspective of an adult Black male stating, “[I’m] living in a reality that I’m a Black male living in a White society that has allowed me to help them [Black male students] navigate some of the social nuances of the school and of life.” He recognizes his own dual identity and also is purposeful about assisting other Black males who struggle with balancing their own consciousness and the social realities of race in America.

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When asked about what advice he may offer future BMEs entering the profession in his current role, Carlton stated, “Understand that you have to wear a mask.” He stated that there are negative perceptions that individuals hold regarding Black males that negatively impact how they are perceived in the workplace. He conceded that prejudices have abated somewhat, yet they are still systemic forces of oppression at work for younger BMEs. “My younger brothers that are working in the profession have more room to be [themselves] than I do, but we all still wear the mask.” . . . Andre talked about having to set aside elements of the culture he was raised in to be able to survive professionally.

When I start talking my passion starts coming out. That same passion offends and put other people in a defensive position, because I can't be passionate about what I do because I'm a Black man...when I start speaking passionately about what I'm doing and my voice inflection change and because of my size and demeanor I become intimidating. So, I deal with that every day of my life. I have to work, you know, and make sure I present myself in such a way that people are very comfortable around me

For Nassir having professional credentials was not enough for him to eliminate feelings of otherness and the double consciousness of his experience in MSD. He shared that even with his education and experience some of his colleagues struggled to embrace him fully.

I was unapproachable all of a sudden it wasn't enough that I had a [private college] education you know what I'm saying...That would put me in good but...I

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was still unapproachable uh to be around just because and I know it was just because I was this big black guy you know what I mean.

Awareness of the duality of identity did not necessarily mean that participants were adept at reconciling the two distinct identities.

**The Veil.** Double consciousness is not only about how one behaves, or what one has accomplished, but it is also about how one is perceived, which DuBois describes as the veiled experience. Some individuals are more readily accepted than others. Kendrick discussed how he has to be cognizant of how he is perceived as a Black male in his role as an administrator. He made the following comment

I don't want this to sound like a cop out, but we have to be very very careful as African-American administrators how we talk with people, because they can misconstrue what we say. They may not understand our cultural norms and take it the wrong way.

His acknowledgement of the veil directly affected how he communicated with students and colleagues in his administrative role.

Several participants noted that cross cultural communication is challenging when it isn't reciprocated by White colleagues. Corey commented that he was perceived as intimidating, because of his intelligence and his confidence, in addition to his style of communication. Despite his efforts, he still had issues communicating across cultural barriers in his building.

It is worth noting that some participants were more adept at balancing the two conflicting identities. Participants that were most skilled in this areas were the ones who were most intentional about their communication. For example, Kendrick stated BMEs

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need to be “conscious of the conversations [they] are having...making sure that [they] are systematic and methodical” about the messages they communicate and the image they project. Adewale articulated the following observation.

There is a huge distance between where the dominant culture would like us to be and what our own culture would like us to be. You know what I mean? What the norm is versus what culturally we think is normal or what we have dictated as normal for African Americans. Until that gets addressed it's different. And the perception and the influence of each case will be a little bit different

The above comments illuminate the influence that messages—direct and indirect—have on Black individuals. There is pressure on placed on Black males to conform—first to dominant narrative of what Blackness is, and second to conform to the socio-political demands associated with race in America.

The concept of dual identities was also evident through pervasive ‘us vs. them’ statements regarding the practices of Black educators and or Black people. For example, Adewale stated that “as Black males um, there are different lessons that *we* have to learn different lessons in order to be successful” ...Wassulu made a similar observation when he offered the following comment.

I'm Black, you know, and that's who I am. That's an aspect of who I am...it's not everything, but it is I am a Black male living in America. And I think that's how today's society identifies us as, as African Americans. And I don't think that's a positive or negative...it's just is what it is.

Andre drew a distinct line between his identity as a Black male and his identity as a member of his institution. He remarked,

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I do a job that a lot of people do, but they assume because I do this job that I think like them, you know, I act like them and I wanna be them. And that's a misconception of this society.

Andre was staunch in his decision not sacrifice his Black identity for the sake of his professional identity. He accepted the constraints of being Black in a predominantly White settings, nonetheless holds fast core values he associates with his authentic self. He later raised an interesting point when he stated, "I have not sold my soul to the system...I tell my students play the system otherwise the system is going to play you." His commitment to maximizing what he gains from this system was a consistent theme throughout his interview. It would seem that Andre chooses to deselect himself rather than pay the socio-emotional cost of becoming a member of the organization (Lunenburg, 2013). As, stated in Chapter Two, an individual can be a part of an organization without being a member of an organization. Andre commented that "America is based upon people assimilating America's culture. America does not embrace other people's culture and identity." For Andre to become a member of the organization he would have to sacrifice a portion of his identity.

Adewale discussed being devalued as a professional because of the deselection process.

I feel that um if you're not in the right crowd or if you're not perceived a certain way or if you don't conduct yourself or handle yourself you get looked at as not being as effective, and you could be...just because you don't appease someone you're looked at as not being effective.

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Nassir encountered the same deselection process, but did not have the leverage that Andre had as a former professional athlete and lamented his plight. He wondered if his MSD experience would have been better under different circumstances.

If I was homegrown. If I was a little lighter you know what I'm saying... it just seems as though those things are that you know it will make life a little bit better you know around here. I was unapproachable all of a sudden it wasn't enough that I had a Westminster education you know what I'm saying.

Despite the difficulties he faced accessing fully fledged membership in his organization Nassir still tried. "I wanted to blend in, you know...I really wanted to because that's how I fed my family...so I wasn't trying to mess that up." Nonetheless, feelings of otherness persisted.

### **Stalled Progression-“When you put action toward it, some people will start back pedaling”**

The above quote by Kendrick articulates the frustration that multiple participants faced in regards to the lack of progress towards equitable outcomes and experiences for Black students in MSD. MSD is one of the top school districts in its state, with average ACT/SAT scores that exceed the state average, yet historically Black and Latino/a children have not performed at the district average. Each participant commented that MSD purports to be a diverse community of professionals that meets the needs a diverse student population, however participants recognized discrepancy between the message the district sends and the reality that occurs. Kendrick summed up the perspective of several participants when stated that “the district in theory and in thought are very, what’s

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the word I'm looking for, they're very progressive in their thought processes, but still very far behind in putting those things into practice.”

In recent years the district has increased its focus on closing the achievement gap between Whites students, and Black, Latino/a, and students that receive free/reduced lunch. MSD efforts have included increasing enrollment of underrepresented students in Honors and Advanced Placement classes, hosting community forums to discuss how the district can better meet the needs of underrepresented students, professional development workshops, and a concentrated effort to hire educators that reflect diversity that exists in the individual buildings in MSD. To be clear some of these practices have produced results. In fact several participants (Adewale, Graham, and Sean) were hired at MSD through alternative certification programs or gained temporary certification while employed by MSD. Nassir and Carlton were recruited to MSD through formal and informal networking on behalf of district employees. Only Kendrick, Andre, and Wassulu completed traditional undergraduate teacher development programs. Although MSD hasn't been as effective recruiting BMEs, they have done an adequate job of holding on to the BMEs it does employ.

Andre, the most tenured of the participants, noted that simply hiring BMEs is not enough. He remarked, “You can have a school full of Black men that don't mean that the minority achievement gap gonna change. Do they have the resources that are necessary to overcome some the things they have to deal with?” He stated that the district needs to be purposeful about providing BMEs with the professional resources they need to thrive and avoid putting undue pressure on BMEs to solve the ills of all Black male students in what equates to professional silos. According to Andre, some of these resources might

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include manageable instructional loads, meaningful mentoring programs, and appropriate levels of autonomy.

The individual personal success that some participants experienced did not eradicate their frustration with the lack of achievement among Black male students. Andre offered a similar lament. “I can't stand to see 'em [Black male students] suffer. I can't stand to see my males not take advantage of this education opportunity.” While the paradox of the individual career success that individuals such as Kendrick and Andre have had in the district and the general lack of success that Black males have had at the same time. Kendrick summed it up neatly, “my experiences have been fantastic professionally, but it's also been disheartening to see the slow progress that we've made.”

Several participants noted that the district's large scale success, minimizes the attention and resources that are directed towards students from demographic that have been traditionally marginalized, including Black students, and/or students living in poverty. Carlton described the district as short sighted. “We don't work in terms of building for the future, because somewhere along the line that means, you know, we've acquiesced working with the now, we've given up in some way.” Again, Carlton later described the district as “reactionary”. He suggested that the district was more concerned with the appearance of a statistical success rate for Black students, than they were the individual success of a Black student. He gave the example of a district initiative to enroll more Black kids in Advanced Placement and Honors classes. “We don't know if that's a choice [Black students not enrolling in AP classes] or systemic.” My district makes an all-out push to put Black kids in AP and Honors I salute that. But when they do it wholesale, you know, it angers me.”

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In some ways the double mindedness that occurs in the experiences of students in MSD is mirrored in the professional experiences of several participants. For example, Adewale discussed how he has encountered not only a lack of interest in changing, but an outright resistance to change.

What I feel like I've learned now and what I've seen is that it takes a lot to change [chuckles]. Um, we admit it what our problems but we struggle getting there and those that speak out openly or express their opinions in ways that the mass don't appreciate negative things happen.

As a young teacher and self-described non-educator (because of his nontraditional certification process), Adewale explained that he felt his colleagues have not been as enthusiastic for change as they appear to be on the surface. He said

We have a lot of people that want change, they talk about it, and they're good for it. Yeah, this is what we need, but when it actually comes to doing it, I'll rather someone else do it. Or I don't really want to put myself in that situation.

This sentiment was echoed by Kendrick whose quote about backpedaling headlined the section. Kendrick talked about the district initiating conversations on the achievement gap early in his career and stated that several years later there has been little progress.

Graham, former elementary school teacher and parent of two secondary students enrolled in MSD, suggested that the district focus too much on narrowing the achievement gap at the high school level.

[What] I noticed in our district is we talk about closing the achievement gap and all this stuff and the level that I teach at here, at mostly 11th and 12th graders the problem is 3rd and 4th grade and 5th grade. The problem is so early and we're

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here at the back end saying you need to fix this. I'm like 'no, somebody needed to fix that [earlier] cause if I look at all these kids coming in as 9th graders and 10th graders and we got a whole bunch of Black and Brown kids that are in Algebra 1 when they should be in Geometry and Pre-Calc at least.

He suggested that the district be more aggressive in providing support for underachieving students at the elementary level.

The district also sent a conflicting message to the Black males it employed. Nassir asserted

I really think that we're really behind the times of bit and get out of the good old boy nature of things um I think I think that we haven't we haven't um blended very well. Um, I think that we...I think that it is more tolerance than blended so so it's um it's okay to a certain point.

Corey talks about the district being progressive, but at the same time lamented that he felt his talent as an educator was undervalued and underutilized. Andre offered a warning for future BMEs in MSD. "Number one, you have to get them to take you serious, that you're not just another token." He continued saying MSD, like America, is not about embracing the culture of others, it is assimilating others into the culture of MSD. For a Black male to be an effective educator he needs to learn how to navigate the environment accordingly.

Additionally, Andre was critical of the how proud the district felt in hiring teachers of color to solve its shortcomings with minority students. "You got this minority problem, so why don't we get a minority teacher and then at least that way we can say we did something." Hiring minority teachers was not enough. He stated that MSD needs to

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a better job of supporting the minority educators they do have, ensuring that they have the resources they need to be successful.

Sean struggled to reconcile the top down mandates from the district with doing what's best for kids.

Everything we should be doing should be about the outcome of kids...sometimes the politics, sometimes, the policy, long-standing relationships, sometimes the ways things have always been done, sometime the refusal to look outside the box to get out of the fishbowl hinders that process and that can be frustrating at times.

In his experiences he's struggled to follow mandates with no discernible value or direction

I'm a "why" person. Why are we doing something? And when you can give me a good common sense of why, I'm on board 100%. And when any time you know somebody tells me "just because" I know we're going in the wrong direction.

His issue was the lack of efficiency in the decision making process and the lack of clarity in the district's motives in dealing with issues of equity and race. Sean later conceded that the problems that MSD faces are not unlike problems that other organizations face stating

Sometimes in any large structure there is going to be bureaucracy. There is going to be policy there are going to be things that don't necessarily have that best outcome in mind and you know that's the kind of a frustrating thing at times.

The bureaucratic nature of large organizations serves as a barrier for hearing the voices of individuals that have been historically marginalized.

**BLACK ON BOTH SIDES****Tools of Navigation-“You gonna have to navigate through this”**

In the above quote Andre summarized his perspective (and the perspective of several other participants) when he compared his experiences in MSD to playing a game. I use the phrase tools of navigation to describe the skills that BMEs employ to make meaning of experiences in their current environments. This phrase is inspired by the terminology Andre used in response to a question about what skills have allowed him to be a successful employee in this district. “You know it’s enough roadblocks, there’s enough obstacles, there’s enough good, there’s enough bad, there’s enough every [darn] thing in in place, but you, you gonna have to navigate through this.” He continued, “...and if it’s important to you and it’s something you really want to do despite the peaks and the valley you still have to navigate through everything.” Wassulu and Corey both used the analogy a chess match while describing how they have achieving professional success in MSD.

As Andre noted, there a host of obstacles that BMEs face when working in the field of education, perhaps the staunchest obstacle participants faced was fighting were stereotypical perceptions of Blackness in general and Black males specifically. Multiple participants, including Andre, Carlton, Nassir, Sean, Corey, and Kendrick, discussed being acutely aware of being perceived as the archetype Angry Black man. Nassir discussed how he tried to make efforts to blend in culturally, but felt like his efforts were ill received. “I was still unapproachable uh to be around just because and I know it was just because I was this big black guy you know what I mean.” Sean expressed a similar sentiment. He saw that individuals from the majority were quick to place him in a box, because of what they assumed about his professional skill and his physicality.

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You know there's people, there's stereotypes that people hold. There's a certain amount of marginalization that happens. You know you only have a certain amount of ability to articulate, a certain ability to comprehend, a certain ability to understand things that aren't traditionally considered Black. I think I'm off putting in that. I think I'm off-putting in that. I can talk about some things and make comments about things where people are like “wait a minute”.

Sean made a concentrated effort to trouble the myths about Black males and took pride in the fact that he did not fit into the so-called image of what it means to be a Black male.

Carlton experienced this same paranoia and fear in his own experiences. He advised young BMEs to be very conscious of the image they project at all times. “You can frown and send the whole room in panic because you are...we still even though we're educated we still haven't moved very far from people being afraid of that Angry Black man. Corey was more direct in his appraisal “a lot of people are intimidated by Black males. They intimidated by Black males. Intimidated by Black males who are educated and actually know what they're talking about.” In some instances what participants perceive as confidence, or passion has been perceived as anger and arrogance.

Individuals have expectations about how Black men should present themselves and how they should behave. Additionally, some folks have learned responses to certain actions a Black man may take. For example, Andre felt like he couldn't engage many folks in in his office in a passionate conversation because he was afraid of coming off as an “Angry Black man”. Sean noticed a similar consequence in his conversations with colleagues in his building. He also discussed making a conscious effort to disarm people because the image he projects. Combating the negative stereotype of the Black male is

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what Carlton termed “understanding the subtlety of education politics”. Part of those politics are understanding that there are “stigmas” about what Black manhood looks like and acts like.

Not only are BMEs typecast according to how they present themselves physically they also combat perceptions about how they relate to students. Sean stated he “resented” the notion that he could not connect with White students. Adewale, expressed frustration that someone would state he’s an expert in dealing with Black kids. “That’s insinuating that I’m not good with talking to the White kids and we have more White kids than we do Black. So you’re saying I’m not being effective at my job.” In his role as a school social worker Nassir is responsible for bridging the need between school and community. He noted that he can get pigeon holed into dealing only Black students.

You call me if you need help with the kid and it’s an African-American kid. You don’t call me you don’t call me if a white kid a rich white kid is having difficulties...but I think I can aid in those areas too because half of the time I know what he’s gone through some I know personally, I’ve seen his twitter you know what I’m saying but I really don’t get the chance to get to those kids and then it [racism] plays a big part in because we because we haven’t blended we kind of tolerate each other.

His comments offer added insight into his earlier statement about the marginalization of BMEs in MSD. Again, there is a perceived skill set or expectation of what a Black male educator. Kendrick recognized the stereotypical perceptions of African American males and made a concentrated effort to counteract those perceptions—in the political power he wielded and the image he projected. Kendrick stressed the importance of realizing that

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the community and sometimes the district is not always receptive or understanding of the perspective of African Americans. He warned “always keep your eyes open to everything. Even though the district is progressive, we still live in the Midwest and people are always watching you.” Kendrick more so than others was explicit about being in tune with the political dynamics in MSD. He charged future BMEs to “understand this district from a political level, because it’s very very political”. Kendrick noted his quick ascension from being a classroom instructor for three years, assistant principal for years before being tapped as a building principal before the age of 30, and was unapologetic for his success. He explained the reasons for his moves in the following response

I felt that I could change 120 lives every single year when I was in the classroom. But, I said man I gotta do something about education because there’s still a systemic issue. Then I got into administration and I realized that as an assistant principal I deal with a lot of managerial type things with discipline and attendance which are major concerns that I have the power to make a difference in, but still...there’s so much red tape and there’s so much bureaucracy that you can’t really change a whole lot, so I had to move up to the building principal.

His rise through the ranks is about increasing his political power as a means to combat the systemic forces of oppressions that exist in MSD. He asserted “we have to be very strategic about how we as African American men in Mission act...we already have social ills that lead to stereotyping, people saying Black people are this, Black people are that.” Carlton expressed frustration noting that BMEs are often placed in a no-win situation with regards to how they’re expected to respond.

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It's amazing that if you're an African-American male in this profession if you don't speak you're arrogant. You could have something on your mind. If you do speak you're ignorant, you know if you talk too much you're ignorant. It's that balance, and finding that balance.

These images, however, misinformed influence how individuals perceive Black males in MSD and the effective BME has to respond accordingly.

Andre and Graham stressed the importance of being authentic. Andre talked remaining loyal to his a “personal agenda” that focused on helping his Black students succeed at all costs. Although Andre valued his autonomy and authenticity he also recognized that there structural rules that he was bound by. He recognizes that he can work within the system of education without succumbing to inauthenticity. For Graham, being authentic meant “being true to who I am.” His authenticity to himself was most clearly manifested in the collectivist approach to learning and instruction. He talked about resisting his buildings implementation of a school wide behavior plan for disciplining students. He preferred to be authentic in his interactions with students and when an issue arose he was able to deal with it effectively. He stated plainly, “I’ve felt pressure to conform sometimes in certain situations, but I mean I don’t...I really love what I’m doing, but if I had to do it in a non-authentic way I wouldn’t love it.”

Adewale and Sean highlighted their ability to communicate effectively across cultural and racial differences as the biggest factor in achieving success in their perspective careers. Sean saw his ability to relate to colleagues as a key asset in his professional life. “I think I can sit in a room and I can talk to anybody about most topics...I have a pretty broad worldview.” In this context of tools of navigation Sean

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discussed how valuable his childhood experience of living in Nigeria as a minority affected how he views the Black-White racial binary. “I’ve been part of a majority been a part of the minority [I] actually get things through both lenses in that realm.”

It is not only the fact that he has a broad worldview, but it is his ability to verbally express that perspective that has garnered him success.

In a similar way Adewale saw his ability to communicate as the primary factor that allowed him to be successful stating that “he could care less if [a colleague] pisses me off if we have a kid that is a mutual student then that's what it's about. It's not about the relationship that you and I have. It's about what we need to do to help the kid out. Adewale developed the skill of focusing his interactions with colleagues around serving students and found that he has been able to do so without alienating his colleagues. He also relied on his ability to communicate to build relationships with students. “I can develop a really good rapport with kids. We can communicate about a lot of different things and it’s easy for them to communicate with me. And that allows me to be looked at or viewed as needed.” For Adewale communication was not just a tool for his personal survival, but also a pedagogical tool that made him a valuable asset in his building.

Adewale’s use of his communication skills to become a valuable member of his organization is akin to Nassir and Corey’s response about becoming indispensable members of the school community. Carlton discussed carving out a niche within the school.

Don’t make yourself expendable. Make sure you are necessary, so that means sometimes, you know, you have to work and do some of the things that you might not want to do in order to get where you're trying to get to occupationally.

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The ability to code switch was another critical aspect the success of several participants. Nassir in particular discussed how learning how to code switch allowed him to be successful in his role in MSD. Initially, he struggled with the transition from urban Atlanta to the small city population of Mission. Because Mission is “blended” and not integrated Nassir has to be adept at learning how to communicate effectively in different situations. Although he admits that sometimes those interactions don’t go as well as he would prefer. He discussed a recent interaction with a colleague in which he got into a disagreement with. As Nassir was making his point he was direct and honest, nonetheless his colleague took offense.

I didn't put my hands up to fight you know the confrontation of things made it to where it seems as though I was thugged out again like I was coming for blood again you know what I'm saying. In essence I was just saying, hey you will not disrespect me in a nut shell I think was the verbiage and how the way they said it as opposed to the way I said it said that hey I want to fight and all I was saying was how dare you?

Corey had a similar perception of his interactions with White colleagues.

I believe if you have a problem with somebody you should address it...you shouldn't have to go talk to three people and have this thing blow up like it's a big problem and it never comeback, you know to the person you have a problem with...a lot of, you know White staff, they don't like to face anything head on.

He expressed disappointment in the fact that it was difficult to have meaningful conflict or even discussions with colleagues without running the risk of making someone uncomfortable. This anecdote highlights the fact that although BMEs are members of the

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organization (in title at least) they don't always subscribe to the same cultural practices or values that mirror the White, middle class perspective that is pervasive in school settings (Kelly, 2007). For Nassir in particular, it is a work in progress to translate and communicate across the culture barrier. Carlton shared his perspective on how he avoids such moments.

Even though they know I'm gifted and they know that I'm solid and I do great work...when you have conflict with them [White colleagues] you have to be very careful about not showing them, not meeting their stereotype, or meeting what they think of you.

Based on the anecdotes that Corey and Nassir shared it is obvious that code switching is a necessary skill for BMEs to employ.

As stated in Chapter Two, not all stereotypes have negative connotations. For example, one common sense myth is that Black males are experts at relating to Black males. What I found is that Black males are not necessarily more gifted than anyone else who shares a similar background with a student. Social class, cultural background, and age, for example, are factors that have varying effects on what types of connections are made between BMEs and Black male students. This connection is based on several things, for Nassir it was living or coming from a similar background. For Wassulu it was seeing himself in the kids he serves. For Kendrick it was a desire to change people's life through education. For Graham it was helping students tap into their own authenticity. Participants discussed their connections with Black male students, while rejecting the notion that they were only effective with Black students. For example Carlton remarked "...again, I'm not the [expert], sometimes you get they think you're the expert on being

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Black. As if Black people don't have different feelings, different background knowledge, and different experiences. You know, I'm not the expert on being Black.” He resented the fact that White colleagues assumed he had knowledge of all things Black and reduced the culture to one generic conceptualization. Graham also was the recipient of similar assumptions. He stated, “People defer to you like ‘oh, you’re Black’ or ‘You’re a guy you’ll be able to take care of this situation better than I can, which may or may not be true depends on the situation.” Keeping with his focus on authenticity, Graham stated that he sees individuality and expressed disappointment that his racial identity supersedes all other aspects of his identity.

Several participants discussed the lack of heterogeneity in the perception of Blackness with frustration. As Corey astutely observed, “You’re pre judged by the Black males too, not just by White people, you’re prejudged by students.” Students also struggled to reconcile the image of Black male hood that they saw in participants and the images of Black manhood they see outside of the school setting. Adewale shared his perspective on this matter from the perspective as a recent MSD graduate and as a BME. He reflected, “I didn’t go to school with very many that looked like me. Either you were ghetto or you were extremely smart.” Black students that did not fit into this binary were marginalized, save for one exception—the athlete. As a teacher no longer, with the athlete label, students struggle with how to categorize Adewale’s identity as a Black male. “That first look my students give me if I’m dressed to the nines with my suit and tie that whole thing...it's instant. I'm not able to relate to ghetto kids or the perceived quote unquote ghetto kids. I can't.” His authenticity is questioned so he bridges that perceived gap by telling kids his story. Once they hear about some of his struggles in life

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they realize he is “real” and has “credibility”. Corey also found that he had to prove his authenticity with Black students because of the professional image he portrayed. “With some Black male students it mean getting a job you come here with a shirt and tie on, you know, it’s a White man’s world, it’s the Uncle Tom deal.” He acknowledged that maintaining a professional image is a key component of navigating through his professional experience. He later commented that if students want to have similar success they would need to adopt a similar approach. The Black male professional struggle with being viewed in a dichotomous way,

Kendrick encountered similar reactions in some of his work with Black male students stating “their scope is so monolithic, their scope is so limited on what they see and experience.” Many of his students have not encountered professional Black men, so when they do encounter a professional Black male they struggle to reconcile that image with the image and messages they get about what it means to be a Black male outside of the school environment. Kendrick is purposeful about building relationships with students and models the heterogeneity of Black males. He describes his intentions in the following comment.

I build relationships with kids that even, who have an adverse idea of who I am as a Black male and then try to re, not reeducate them, but show them that there are a variety of different, different Black experiences.

Kendrick recognized that with limited experiences with Black males it was imperative that he be purposeful about dispelling myths about what it means to be a Black male. Sean was equally intentional about projecting a counter image to preconceived notions of Blackness.

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I'm conscious of it all the time, of being a representative here in this interaction.

Again it's assuming you think a certain thing, you think this is gonna be this way.

I'm a representative (of Blackness) showing you it's gonna be another way it's gonna be something different.

Not only did BMEs represent alternative conceptualizations, but they also were intentional about communicating this message with the students they served.

**Finding Allies.** Establishing meaningful and beneficial relationships with allies is a critical component of the success of the several participants. Nassir remarked that finding colleagues who were willing to collaborate to hold struggling students accountable as a one his favorite aspects of his job.

You have some people that in this district whether that black or white they don't care what color you are. They're going to work with you there going to see the areas you know that if you got a kid that you working in the hood they gonna work with him too. They gonna have them same high expectations of em too. And you get kids, and you get your fellow workers like that, and I love that about em. That really say 'Hey, you're here to learn. I'm not going to enable. You're capable...I love that about some of the people you work with too because they understand also that nothing is being given to you gonna have to work your butt off to get this so I feel that I like the fact that that we can work together

Nassir noted that bigotry is expressed through low expectations and enabling. He expressed that it was extremely important for him to ensure that students, particularly struggling Black males are challenged rather than coddled. Nassir also valued the professional relationships he established with colleagues that allowed him to use his skills

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as a social worker to work with students that did not fit the typical profile of students he worked with (i.e. students of color and/or students of poverty).

... they (my colleagues) may have a student is a rich kid or whatever that all comes from a higher demographic background and am still working with them we can work together on that you know what I mean I like that type of person. I like the type of departments where that happens.

For Nassir, who also struggled with code switching and being recognized for the skills he brings to his position as a school social worker it was important to maintain professional relationships that provided an opportunity for him to show his versatility in connecting with diverse groups of students.

**Passing on Tools.** Each participant was asked to give advice for future BMEs entering in their field. The following responses provided insight into reasons participants teach, how they feel about certain obstacles they face, and what they want to accomplish in the field.

Wassulu and Corey charged future BMEs to embrace the opportunity to be a role model in the lives of students. They both commented on the fact that there are few Black males employed in schools, and that students benefit from seeing role models who reflect their own race, culture, and background. Nassir challenged future school social workers to make a difference in the lives of students, "...really be that community person that links community with school". Sean suggested that Black males assume the attitude of being "all things to all men", making a point to relate to different types of students beyond students that look and act in a familiar ways. BMEs should enter the field with mindset of being a role model to every student they encounter. Kendrick advised future

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BMEs to be politically aware and “incessant about your desire to make sure that we’re providing the best experience for all kids.” He stressed the importance of being an advocate on behalf of Black children and other minorities that are historically marginalized in education. Adewale advised future BMEs to be authentic and “be themselves”. He remarked

Find what you're good at. And whatever it is you're good at focus on it Build on your repertoire as you go, but know your strengths know what your weaknesses are. Concentrate on your strengths and when you get an opportunity work on your weakness.

Black male educators should be confident in the skill set they bring to the profession, even if is not mirrored, appreciated, or even understood by everyone in they encounter. Graham offered similar perspective in his discussion about the role of authenticity in his own practice, however, he was matter of fact with the advice he offered.

Actually, the advice I've given people for going into education “try it” and if you don't love it. I mean if you're not like “this is what I should be doing!” then just leave, go do something else because it’s not worth it, because it's way too much work and you don't get paid that much. So, you know go do something else.

This quote reiterates his earlier statements about the importance of authenticity. Individuals who are not sincere or are not passionate about education tend to be ineffective.

Andre issued advice from a more practical perspective. He stated that BMEs have to aware of the fact that there are factors of systemic racism and oppression that are working to counteract the efforts of Black male educators, particularly those looking to

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improve outcomes for Black male students. Carlton encouraged future BMEs to not be afraid to do the less desirable or less prestigious jobs to be willing to work towards more prominent roles.

### **Critical Race Pedagogy-“Play the system otherwise the system is gonna play you”**

Andre advised future BMEs and the students to be aware that be systemic forces of education at work in the education are designed to subjugate individuals from marginalized populations. He, like, each of the other participants sought to mitigate these effects through purposeful and intentional efforts. As previously stated, CRP provides a lens to understand the various ways that educators purposefully act to counter the effects and direct influence of systemic oppression and racism in the context of schools and the field of education. In this section I will discuss the findings and pedagogical practice of participants through the lens of CRP, highlighting the ways in which the participants in this study assumed the role of critical race pedagogues in their work as BMEs in a predominantly White environment.

As already stated earlier in this chapter each of the participants was acutely aware of the social realities of their racial identity and its effect on the pedagogical practices. The perspective of the participants could be best summed up in two comments: One from Andre, “Race is first and foremost when they look up and see me coming.” One from Kendrick that was shared earlier, “I consider myself to be a Black male. It’s ever present in my thinking.” These two quotes highlight the fact that the race of these men is always a factor. Race affects how individuals perceive them and their competency. It also affects how they view themselves and the lens through which they come to understand

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the world around them. It was clear from the responses that participants were cognizant of the social realities of race and their impact on education.

Lynn (2004) theorized that critical race pedagogues engage in four distinguishing practices: a) iterating the importance of African culture as a component of their content, b) promoting self-affirming thoughts, attitudes, and behavior, c) dialectic interactions with students, and d) counter action to thwart the influences of systemic racism and oppression in schools. This next section will details the various ways in which the BMEs embody the characteristics of critical race pedagogues. Although approaches varied each participant where intentional about utilizing their pedagogy for social justice actions.

Wassulu, a history, teacher was the most purposeful about embedding an Afrocentric perspective in his classroom instruction. He saw African/African-American culture as a critical piece of learning for all students, not just Black students.

We are all intertwined. America would not be where it would be without White people, it for sure wouldn't be where it is now without Black people. We've (Black people) played a crucial role in this country.

He also made it point to state that he doesn't apologize for Afrocentricity in general, and focusing on Black history specifically.

And you know studying Black history isn't, you know racist. Some people, some students, ask me, "Why do they need an African American history teacher?". Because if we don't study this...why don't you tell me about African-American history, you can't. What role has African American history had on the United States? You don't have anything to say...that's why we need African-American history.

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He sees the critical need for an Afrocentric perspective in education and takes the onus on himself to provide that perspective.

The Afrocentric perspective is not just about teaching and prompting Black history. It is also about utilizing aspects of African/African American culture in an authentic way that engages students. For example, Corey uses Hip-Hop aesthetics as a reference point to engage students in a discussion about code switching behaviors. CRP's emphasis on Afrocentricity is not just for the sake of Afrocentricity. The purpose behind that emphasis is to highlight the need for pedagogical practices and approaches to education that is culturally relevant. As discussed in Chapter Two the Black experience is varied and multilayered. Carlton, in a comical fashion said, "I don't wear the hippie, hip hop clothes. I don't, you know, I'm not in there. I don't understand that. I've never sagged...I don't use the lingo." Connecting through culture meant building relationships with families, becoming an uncle like figure. "Now, I know your Mom and Daddy, you know what I'm saying." The differences between these approaches, again, highlights the in group diversity of the pedagogical practices of BMEs.

As a consequence of the researcher lens I assumed for this project and in my inquiry into answering my second research question I envisioned receiving more concrete instructional methods than I actually received. The information I received was no less valuable; nonetheless the type of responses I received was indeed surprising. In the interviews I asked BMEs about their relationships with Black male students because I was interested in their general thoughts in regard to the literature that depicts BMEs as the saviors of Black male children (Brown, 2009a and 2009b; Lynn, 2002; Naman, 2009). In short, I wanted to know if BMEs felt that assumption was a salient aspect of

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their pedagogical approach. When asked about the specific messages that they communicate to Black male students most respondents answered in holistic terms. For example, Wassulu, Sean, and Kendrick stressed the importance of embracing the power of individual autonomy. Wassulu remarked

You can be successful no matter what your background is, no matter where you are right now...your past doesn't determine your future. It easily can, but it doesn't have to. You determine your future on what you want to do.

It is not only important that Black male students realize their autonomy and agency, but also that they are strategic about maximizing that potential. Kendrick offered a response that echoed this sentiment, "You can't always choose your experiences, but you can choose how you, how you tackle those experiences." This message of agency is a direct contradiction to prevailing notions of Black male achievement and certainly to the images of Black males that are portrayed in popular media.

Sean also stressed the message of agency; however, he elaborated on this idea by noting that in his experience students in MSD underestimated the power they did have, "You know, sometimes I think that people are limited to what their current situation is. They don't know understand what the opportunities are, and how to create those opportunities." He sees his role as an educator to correct this misconception

That's the message we gotta send you (Black male students) got an opportunity especially in Mission School District, you know. The kid who's on free and reduced lunch goes to the same school with the same teachers as the millionaires. It's not like a city situation where like is like. You live in a poor neighborhood, you go to school with poor kids. You live in a rich neighborhood you go to

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school with rich kids. I think that've valuable for everybody. You get a real life view of the world...

In that regard there is some semblance of equitable access to for Black males that are looking to improve their condition. It is clear that BMEs want Black male students to know that success is attainable.

In discussing the quest for success it is important to note that success may look differently for different students. Sean said he wanted to students to be prepared for whatever opportunities that may come, "...whether it's trade, or technical or an additional 4 year education". Regardless of what the path is the importance of having a plan also could not be overlooked or minimized. Corey remarked, "Let's write this down and figure out how to get you to where you want to be". As a special educator, Corey felt it was important to challenge the Black male students he works with to not only have confidence in their dreams, but to also have a well thought out plan on how to realize that dream. Corey recognized that he had to be explicit about the methodology behind success. "I try to make everything make sense, make it real life for 'em. I use everything from the sitcom to the TV shows they watching, it's just gotta be real life all the time with these kids." For success to be possible presentation has to be present and plans have to be plausible.

Andre stressed the importance of teaching Black males that "education is a business" and either "the system plays you or you play the system". His message offers a contrast to the ideology of a post racial society. Race does matter and impacts the experiences of Black males in education. For that reason he noted that in addition to core curriculum that all students receive Black males benefit from specific instruction tailored

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to their experience. Kendrick, also noted that the message he communicates to Black male students differs from the message he delivers to all students is that they have to deal with the social realities of Black male hood in America. Understanding these prejudices and the analogy of education as a game Adewale emphasizes the importance of code switching—modeling the behavior himself and teaching students to do the same. He stated that teaching students the “language of power” will give them access to opportunities to doors that would be otherwise closed. Demonstrating the ability to adopt traditional middle class cultural values shouldn’t be a precursor to Black males gaining access to educational, social, and professional opportunity; however, this is the context that Black males navigate.

Even as Black males students are being profiled and stereotyped, Graham encourages Black male students to strive for personal excellence in all facets of life “whatever it is, whether you got a part time job at McDonalds, whether you're working on your Algebra.” Although, hard work in and of itself guarantee personal success it is an essential factor. Nassir’s advice builds on Graham’s point. He challenges his students to be sincere and serious students and reiterates the fact that Blackness and academic prowess are not mutually exclusive.

It's okay to be a reader...to pick up the Bible. It's okay to play sports to get yourself to school. You don't have to have money to do that. It's okay to not be good to not be okay uh highly proficient in education. It's okay to be a worker to get to that, you know what I'm saying. It's okay if it don't come right now but you have to go to tutoring to get that back. Cause I been in special ed I know it's difficult you know what I'm saying. I know it's difficult to comprehend I know it

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takes a little bit of time but I know once you get it you got it and it's cool you know what I'm saying. It takes work. It takes perseverance.

Nassir's message is critical especially for student students that have been disengaged because the struggle academically or have been marginalized by culturally irrelevant instruction. Nassir is able to communicate this point from personal experience and his students respect that fact.

The participants emphasized different aspects of performance and used different terminology, but it was clear that they wanted similar success for their students. Additionally, each of the respondents described their pedagogical practices in a broad, approach based perspective. In my earlier discussion of CRP I discussed the importance of expanding the understanding of pedagogy to include both formal and informal instructional strategies. In addition to broadening the understanding of pedagogues to include administrators, school social workers, and school counselors in addition to class room instructors. This decision was informed by the acknowledgement that there is a lot learning that occurs outside of the traditional classroom format and cannot be wholly quantified using a traditional understanding of pedagogy. With that said participant responses to questions about their pedagogical practice primarily focused on the informal relational aspect of pedagogy.

### **Research Question One**

The first three emergent themes, racial conscientization, veiled double consciousness, stalled progression directly relate to the first research question: How do BMEs make meaning of their experiences in the context of a predominantly White school district?

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To summarize, each of the participants in this study experienced paradigm changing events that shaped their racial consciousness. In addition each of the participants were acutely aware of the various ways in which their racial identity was socially constructed and have come to terms with social realities that come with being a Black male in America. For some participants, athletics was a prominent role aspect of their identity and granted privilege that in some instances that mitigated some effects of race and racism in their individual lives. For others, growing up in poverty or in households with educated middle class parents were the primary factors shaping their socialization as Black men.

Even with the varied backgrounds each of the participants in this study each participant discussed dealing with aspects of double consciousness. Though not all of the participants were familiar with the actual language that DuBois uses in their respective ways participants described how they struggled with feelings of otherness, internalization of negative perceptions of Blackness, and engaging in the practice of code switching. As a consequence of double consciousness each of the participants developed a skill set to navigate their experiences in the predominantly environment. For some it was the skill of communication, others focused on developing political capacity, others focused on building relationships that humanized the Black male experience. These skills were beneficial for participants because many described their experiences in MSD with mixed feelings. Participants recognized that by most measures MSD is a fantastic school district that is committed to excellence, however they also participant noted the marginalization of students and staff from underrepresented groups, specifically Black males. Several BMEs reported fighting against essentialized perceptions of their role solely as experts in

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dealing with Black children in general, and Black male children specifically. Though each participant expressed a clear desire to help improve the condition of their Black male students, they also all expressed a desire to master their craft as educators and connect with all of the students they serve.

### **Research Question Two**

The last two themes covered in this chapter, tools of navigation and the critical race pedagogy, answer the second research question: How do the backgrounds of BMEs influence their professional practice and pedagogical approach?

The research questions for this project are closely related. It is clear from the discussion of the findings that the experiences of BMEs directly affect and effect the manner in which they interact with students in a predominately White context. It was interesting to note that in discussing the tools or skills that they use to navigate their personal and professional experiences as Black men participants offered insight into their interactions with Black male students. Additionally, it was obvious that the shared experience of racial consciousness created an unspoken bond between BMEs and Black male students. BMEs sought to connect with Black male students in ways that mirrored how they connected with influential folks in their formative years. For example, Kendrick discussed an influential teacher he had in high school who challenged him to broadening his concept of racial consciousness and furthered his social identity development as a young Black male. Wassulu discussed learning from passionate teachers about the relevance of history and its impact on things that occur today. Now, as a history teacher, he integrates that same approach as a key component of his pedagogical practice. Other participants sought to pass on helpful lessons to Black male students who

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were key to their own survival. For example, Adewale mentioned that code switching and Nassir discussed teaching academic perseverance and grit. The responses that were garnered showed that Black males are certainly invested in the success of Black male students, but do not all take the same approach to helping Black male students succeed

Participants were bonded to participants through the concept of double consciousness. For example, Nassir, who was raised in a situation and environment characterized by urban poverty, recognized the social realities and implications of race and although Graham, who described his background as upper middle class and spent a significant portion of his formative years in Europe, they both expressed a clear conceptualization of what it means to be Black in America. Graham learned very quickly that as a Black male, how his race is perceived by others greatly influences his experiences in formal educational spaces. To be sure, the consciousness of various participants varied in both its source and its expression, however racial consciousness was an essential aspect of each man's identity. This experiential knowledge fostered a sense of kinship that was obvious when participants discussed issues of race and its impact on their educational experiences and pedagogical practice.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion and Implications

The discussion of the findings in this study is conducted through the lens of CRP and focuses on the nuanced understanding that participants shared regarding their racialized experiences as Black men in America and as BMEs in a predominantly White school setting. The interview questions were designed to draw out the thoughts and attitudes of participants regarding race in general, and their racial consciousness specifically. I found that the pedagogical and professional approach of each of the participants could be quantified as CRP. Participants were racially consciousness, aware of power dynamics, reflexive regarding their own experiences—professional and personal, and purposeful about accessing their sense of agency and encouraging students to do the same (Jennings & Lynn, 2005). CRP is useful as an analytical tool for the data I collected because it provides formal language that explicates the social justice practices of these critical race pedagogues (Jennings & Lynn, 2005; Lynn, 1999). I primarily used CRP in two ways: firstly, I used CRP to highlight the racialized foundations and social justice practices of participants, second, I used CRP to offer a critique of the systemic forces of oppression in education broadly, and in the context of participants specifically. Ultimately, this critical analysis served as the basis for the recommendations I offer in this chapter.

At the beginning stages of this project, I anticipated that the findings of this study would fit into my neat conceptualization of race and its role in the school setting. As stated in my positionality statement my sense of racial consciousness has produced in me well rooted thoughts and attitudes with regards to race that in turn affect my approach to

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this study. Milner (2007) notes all researchers have biases and consequently no research study can be considered completely objective. Throughout the various stages of this study I challenged myself to examine, understand, and critique the biases I had in regards to race and education. Specifically, that meant setting aside my idea of what double consciousness in contemporary America looks like and feels like. It meant being humble to the fact that although race in America has tangible social realities associated with it, to some degree it is also experiential. That is to say one's conceptualization of race and its impact on one's life is greatly influenced by key events and moments in one's life.

I was not surprised that the findings from this study were supported in the literature. I was surprised by the way in which the findings from this study were supported by the literature. The concept of race, which I discussed extensively in my literature review, was perhaps the most intriguing in regards to the literature. In the literature review I discussed the Cross model of Nigrescence (the original and revised models) and Geller's (2012) work on nominal Blackness. Evidence for both of these perspectives surfaced in the findings. My discussion and analysis on racial consciousness was influenced by the work of Paulo Friere (1970), who asserted that consciousness was innate and in part a product of living as a minority in amidst a dominant majority population. So, while individuals are being maturing chronologically, their consciousness, fed by daily interactions—both benign and significant—is maturing as well. This multipronged approach to understanding the development of racial consciousness is evidenced through experience of multiple participants. For example, Wassulu described being singled out by a White teacher as an elementary student as a significant moment for him, a benign moment would be his educational experience in

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fairly integrated multi-racial high school. These events, although occurring years apart, worked in concert to develop his racial consciousness.

Cross (1971), of course, maintained that racial consciousness began with encounter moments, critical racial awakenings that opened the eyes of Black individuals to the incredulous nature of racism—systemic and individual—and its impact on their life as a Black individual. This contrasts with Geller who describes Blackness as a title that is bestowed on individuals early in the socialization process. What Geller describes is more deliberate and ritualistic process. The participants in this study exhibited elements of both processes. For example, Nassir and Wassulu couldn't recall the moment they realized they were Black. That aspect of their respective identities had been ingrained in them when they were young. It was just as natural as knowing their name, however both individuals expressed a sense of knowing about their Blackness. For other participants, including Corey and Carlton they knew were Black, but didn't really know what that Blackness meant until they experienced the social realities of it for the first hand. For Corey it was getting harassed by the police at 7 or 8 years old, and for Carlton it was a White neighbor reacting negatively to him coming to her front door.

Consciousness details both the ability of individuals to reflect on their social condition and the societal factors that shape that condition and their ability to change that condition (Friere, 1970). Racial consciousness is then defined as one's awareness and critical reflections on how race has impacted their socialization, and social condition. Moreover, when I discuss the racial consciousness of the participants in this study that denotes their awareness of how race influences their various life experiences. For example, for Adewale mentioned that the perception he has a young Black male

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influences both how he views the world, and in turn how the world views him. It is in that space of expectations Adewale is then able to access his own agency by projecting an authentic image that does not succumb to staid conventional notions of Blackness. As he overcomes stereotypical perceptions he forces others to reconsider their notions of Blackness as well.

Racial consciousness is established at an early age through the messages we receive from individuals around us, however it is important to note that one's racial consciousness can be matured over time. For example, Sean's understanding of his Blackness was greatly impacted by the two years he spent as a light skinned, biracial, child in Nigeria. In Nigeria his authenticity as a Black individual was questioned, this was a stark contrast to his Cleveland experience where he fit in neatly into a predominately Black neighborhood and no one questioned his Blackness at all. Sean used the phrase "paradigm changing experiences" to describe nominal moments that shaped his racial conscious (Geller, 2012).

Sean described multiple events that shaped his racial consciousness, whereas Kendrick described a steady progression of his racial consciousness that was more reminiscent of the Cross Model (1971). His first recollection of Blackness was captured in the feeling he felt the first time he read Ezra Jack Keat's *The Snowy Day*, which featured a Black boy on the cover. He was enamored with this book because it had a boy on its cover that looked like him, and was someone he could identify with. He had never seen this image of Blackness. At a young age he was aware of his Blackness and expressed a sense of pride associated with his Black identity. The positive messages of Black pride that he received in his home life were reiterated by African-American

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teachers he had in elementary school. In adolescence his consciousness was matured by the relationship he developed with an African-American Studies teacher whose class he enrolled in. This teacher taught him about Black history and made connections between what occurred in the past and the social realities of race and racism in contemporary times. He described the experience of being in this teacher's class as the event that "started that conscious, the race conscious belief in [his] mind." Cross describes these types of event as encounter moments (1971). None of these events occurred in silos and the interrelated nature of these experiences is apparent. The development of racial consciousness is not a linear process, nor is it a static process. I agree with the stages of the Cross Model, however based on the data accumulated through this study, it is worthwhile to consider the development of racial consciousness from a broadened perspective that is not delineated by stages.

Analyzing the responses of participants through the lens of double consciousness gave insight into the psyche of participants. I did not include any interview questions that alluded to double consciousness in any way because I did not want to foreground this concept in the study. If themes of double consciousness were to emerge from the data they had to do so organically and authentically without interference from the researcher. The themes that emerged had more to do with the veil aspect of double consciousness than I anticipated. I was surprised at how many individuals spoke of aspects of the veil, specifically the impact that systemic oppression had on their expression of their authentic Black identities. Carlton and Kendrick were the most forthright about using the scholarly language of double consciousness however each participant expressed a veiled experience. As Freire (1970) stated participants were acutely aware of how their current

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condition had been influenced by systemic racism and oppression. Additionally, the tenets of CRP indicate that critical race pedagogues are not only aware, but also purposeful about counteracting such influences through social justice action.

In the literature review it was discussed how the dominant narrative has consistently characterized BMEs as saviors of Black male children (Brown, 2009a and 2009b, Lewis, 2006, Naman, 2009). While the findings of this study suggests BMEs do have a propensity for connecting with Black male students, it was equally clear from the findings that BMEs rejected the narrative that essentializes their efforts and situates BMES solely in relation to Black male students. Perceptions are powerful. Participants consistently reported that their competency was often perceived solely in relation to Black students. This sentiment echoes the findings of Kelly (2007) and Mabokela and Madsen (2003), which found Black educators are often described as de facto experts of the Black experience, a notion that ever participant outright rejected.

The oversimplification of the role of BMEs in formal education spaces gives insight into how Black male students are perceived in similar spaces. This is particularly salient for the participants in this study because the majority of students they work with in MSD are non-Black male students. To quantify their work in MSD strictly in terms of how they relate to Black male students is to diminish the quality of the work they do with other students (Kelly, 2007). For example, Sean refused to accept the simplified narrative that schools need more positive Black male role models (ostensibly for the sake of Black children), because it insinuates that Black males are not capable or effective role models for non-Black students, in particular White, middle class students. Madsen and Mabokela (2003) noticed similar concerns from Black teachers working in predominantly

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White environments suggesting that Black teachers were relegated to roles and viewed through lens of set expectations. These concerns are not new. Tillman (2004) and Horsford (2010) found that this narrative regarding the ineffectiveness of Black educators working while working with non-Black students was used to justify the systematic expulsion of Black educators from public schools in the post-Brown years.

Participants in this study maintained a delicate balance between taking an active role in the formal and informal education of the Black male students they served, while negotiating how to avoid being typecast into the dominant narrative of what it means to be a Black male teacher. It is imperative that stakeholders expand their collective understanding of what it means to be a Black male educator—both in formal and informal education spaces. As noted by Douglas and Peck (2013) informal learning spaces and informal pedagogical approaches can have just as much impact on students as what occurs in a school building. Participants in this study owned this truth to provide both formal and informal pedagogy to meet the needs of the students they served.

Some common sense notions about the BME experience were supported in the findings of this study. Participants welcomed the opportunity to serve as role models and assumed the responsibility that came with that role. For instance, Corey, Wassulu, and Nassir situated themselves as someone that students could imitate themselves after. They recognized that their presence alone affirmed the experience of their students. Adewale observed that because of what he represents as a Black male the Black male students he interacts with him can give him more credit than he deserves when they experience success. He remarked

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Sometimes it sucks just because I've done just as much for a kid as a white counterpart, but for me they [black students] look at me as I'm God's gift...Sometimes the White teacher could have done way more. You know they just happen to come into my room to get some work done, now all of a sudden I'm the hero, I'm the savior, because I'm cool. I let them come in and work. Um, I really didn't do anything...I just made myself available.

The presence of Black male role models in schools impacts Black male students. It also seems that Black students place expectations of mentorship on BMEs. Kendrick shared about having students that viewed him as their only trusted adult in the school setting. As Corey noted for a number of students, a BME maybe the only interaction that student may have with a professional Black male.

In his study on surrogate Black fatherhood in school settings Brockenbrough (2012) noted that assuming the position of a role model is not without challenges. Expectations are placed on the shoulders of BMEs by students and colleagues. In the instance of several participants these expectations also included fitting into a narrowed perception of Blackness. Kendrick and Cory, like Tutwiler (2009) noted that class differences can impact the ease with which some Black students embrace BMEs. The age of participants also affects how they connect with the students they serve. Sean observed that in his tenure as an educator he had gone from big brother to uncle to now a father like figure based on his age. Carlton conceded that he was no longer adept at keeping abreast with youth culture and sought to connect with students from the perspective of an elder.

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The underachievement of Black male students has been well documented in the research literature (Brown, 2009a and 2009b; Foster, 1997; Howard, 2014; Hughes & Davis, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Lynn, 2004; Noguera, 2003). Black males are overrepresented in discipline referrals, special education referrals and underrepresented in various factors of achievement including standardized test scores, high school graduation rates and college attendance (Harper & Davis, 2012; Howard, 2014; Noguera, 2003).

In response to the continued underachievement of Black students in general, and Black males specifically scholars and practitioners have tried to gain a more adequate understanding how to improve the engagement and achievement levels of Black male students. Delpit (1995) and Ladson-Billings (1995a and 1995b) were among the first to address the importance of engaging students on a cultural level, however this was a prominent aspect of the professional practices of the participants in this study. Emdin (2010), like Corey and Wassulu, has championed this point in recent years through his work on utilizing Hip-Hop Pedagogy as a tool for engaging Black male students. A natural offshoot of the discourse on Black male student engagement is then, who is most equipped to meet the needs of Black male students and what tools do they employ (Naman, 2009).

Some decades after the forced exile of thousands of Black educators in the immediate post-Brown era, stakeholders are strategically seeking ways to reengage BMEs. It is under this guise that I consider the CRP of BMEs as a tool for engaging Black male students specifically. The experiences of Black male students and BMEs are inextricably linked if for no other reason that current Black male students are the very source from which future BMEs will emerge. For that reason it is worthwhile to explore

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the professional practice and pedagogical approach of BMEs broadly, and specifically as it relates to Black male students.

Participants in this study were intentional about combating the systemic forces that impeded the success of Black students in their sphere of influence. Several participants used the terms *we* or *us* to discuss the condition of Black male students in MSD and expressed frustration at the systemic obstacles Black male students face. Andre, like Larson and Ovando (2001), noted that organizations are designed to perpetuate the systems of power that are currently in place. The socio-political forces that shape the cultures of most schools are not designed to engage marginalized students, nor are they implemented to give agency to marginalized educators.

Those socio-political forces place constraints—perceived or otherwise—on the level of professional autonomy agency BMEs exercise in predominately White school settings. The work of Berger and Luckman (as cited in Larson & Ovando, 2001) asserted that there were four stages of institutionalized inequity, which included habitualized action, reciprocal typification/shared logic, sedimentation, and exteriority. These stages are presented in a linear fashion, however I found that some participants in this study exhibited aspects of exteriority more so than the other stages. For instance, Andre expressed a clear understanding that the education system was an arena of power designed to enable the promulgation of inequity. He was realistic about changing the system, and focused his efforts squarely on teaching students to emulate the success he had maximizing his skill set and professional capacity to navigate the system. The concept of exteriority directly relates to the dual mindedness of double consciousness that several participants addressed, specifically the notion of being aware of one's oppression

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and its impact on their citizenry in a particular organization. Each of the participants successfully engaged in habitualized actions that aided in their integration into the organization culture with varying degrees of success. I found that participants without a readily accessible path into inner sanctity of the organization, such as notoriety (Andre) or fast rising potential (Kendrick), struggled more than those that did not have a clear entryway to ingratiate themselves in the culture of the organization.

The final interview question asked participants in what ways, if any, does the message they communicate with Black male students differ from the message they want to communicate with all the students they serve. I noted several participants were hesitant or reluctant to say that their message differed at all. Wassulu implied having a different message for Black male students would be hypocritical because he doesn't want a White teacher to give his White students messages he didn't share with Black students. When asked the same question several others hesitated in their response before replying that their message was the same. For example, Carlton, said that his message didn't differ by audience when prompted, however earlier in the interview he contended, "There are some realities that I discuss with Black men and women that I don't discuss with my White men and women because they'll never have to [go through it]." This contradiction gave me insight into the responses of a few other participants that said their message didn't differ.

Other participants seemed to have no qualms about tailoring specific messages to Black male students they served. Kendrick and Adewale were quick to point out that the spirit of their messages they communicated to all students were the same, however because of the social realities of associated with Blackness they tailored their messages

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they communicated with Black males to reflect the context in which they must navigate.

Adewale stated

..As high school students there's that common core that you have to learn, that everyone has to learn in order to be considered educated. But as Black males um, there are different lessons that we have to learn different lessons in order to be successful.

Kendrick agreed. The overall message he wants to communicate is that his students possess the capacity to improve their condition regardless of what their circumstances are. Kendrick outlined those differences in the following statement:

I would say the only difference is with my African American males I do make it very very explicit because you are a Black male living in America. It's an ugly truth, but its reality... your race does matter.

BMEs should not apologize for communicating specific messages tailored for those living through the very conditions that the messages are designed to help students navigate. With an increased focus on standardization through efforts such as the proliferation of common core curricula and accountability there is a misnomer that equality and equity are synonyms. Adewale and Kendrick's pedagogical approach reiterates Woodson's (1933) assertion that education that doesn't prepare individuals to be successful in their own social realities is worthless. In contemporary education circles the preferred term is cultural relevance (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). It is imperative to validate and affirm the cultural knowledge and experiential expertise that all educators bring into formal education spaces. Educators who recognize such learning needs should feel safe enough—professionally and personally—to meet those needs. Moreover,

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schools need to create spaces for BMEs—and other critical race pedagogues to have these types of conversations.

The purposeful and intentional actions in which the participants engage underscores that CRP is an active and prominent aspect of their work as educators. The messages that participants engaged in to counteract the historic disenfranchisement of Black educators and Black students were prevalent throughout the interviews. Each of the participants in this study should be characterized as critical race pedagogues. From a scholarly perspective, CRP was employed to deepen the appreciation that scholars have for the complexities of the pedagogical practices of Black male educators as well as the heterogeneity of the Black experience in general. As critical race pedagogues, the participants in this study are aware that schools are spaces for political discourse, thusly it is pertinent that students from marginalized groups including Black males are equipped with the necessary tools to successfully navigate such environments.

### **Recommendations**

Given the findings and the discussion of those findings in regard to the literature on Blackness, and Blacks in education I offer several recommendations for educator stakeholders-both in k-12 and higher education settings, respectively, regarding the prominent themes that emerged in the findings of this study. Before I delve into my recommendations note that the author is aware that not every school in America marginalizes non-White, middle class students. To be sure there are schools that support and cultivate the minds and spirits of children from marginalized populations. Despite this fact, more needs to be done to ameliorate the systemic forces of oppression that impede academic achievement of many of our students. I use the term “our”

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intentionally to highlight that the lack of achievement among any population is a problem for all stakeholders. As this study noted failure is not reserved simply for urban environments. This is a problem to which all educators must pay attention.

The goal of CRP scholarship is to explicate the influence of intersectionality of multiple aspects of identity including race, social class, and gender to increase the critical consciousness of educators and students. It is worthwhile to consider how k-12 schools can reverse their practice of marginalizing students who don't come from a White middle class background by using CRP as a framework for critiquing the systemic forces that are allowed to act as barriers for Black students. The first step stakeholders must take is to retire the notion that 21<sup>st</sup> century America is a post racial society. Race matters. School boards, school district administrators, and school teachers have to acknowledge the role that race has on student engagement and achievement. Several participants noted that White colleagues felt uncomfortable broaching the topic of race (and the culture that is embedded in race) in a constructive manner. A lack of comfortability can no longer be a valid excuse for why the topic of race is marginalized and/or oversimplified by k-12 school leadership.

Educators cannot expect students to assimilate into the culture of schools if we do not honor the identity and culture that they come to schools with. Post-racial ideology doesn't only isolate and marginalize students, it also has negative effects on educators as. Minority educators who already may be dealing with the challenges of tokenism deserve space to express their racialized identities (Kelly, 2007). It is clear from the literature and findings of this study that race (and the culture that is imbedded in it) has a huge impact on the lived experiences of Black individuals (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, 1995; Lynn, 1999).

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It is inappropriate to silence the racialized experiences of these individuals under the guise of post-racialism. If schools are to become more equitable spaces educational leaders need to be forthright about the role of race in their own lives, in the lives of the students they serve, and in the lives of the educators they employ.

One avenue that is well suited to generating genuine and beneficial conversations about race is formal k-12 mentoring programs. School districts need induction/mentoring programs that teach individuals-of all backgrounds—how to have open, honest conversations about race and culture. The uncomfortable reality is that when school brings together diverse populations—racially, culturally, and socio-economically—school leaders need to be purposeful and intentional about integrating the respective cultures of all stakeholders. This is particularly important in contexts such as MSD, where marginalized populations can be silenced by the inaction and/or inattentiveness of school leaders. It is important to not only value the desegregation of school buildings, but to continue to strive towards an integration of multiple cultures in one building.

The battle for equitable education is also waged in higher education spaces that prepare future educators. Preparation programs for all educators—classroom instructors, administrators, and school counselors, social workers etc.—need to emphasize the importance of molding educators that are advocates for promoting equity in formal education spaces (Milner, 2010). Educators often discuss notions of social justice, but in practice certain populations continue to be marginalized. As several participants noted, diversity is appreciated in theory, however it takes tangible efforts to actually integrate diverse perspectives into an existing culture. Such efforts must be consistently critiqued for the sake of improvement. The literature suggests that the urgency of this matter

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cannot be over stated (Howard, 2014). Not only are we failing to maximize the potential of certain populations of students, failing to do so has effectively limited the talent pool of future educators. One wonders if Black male students have negative school experiences how many of them will be open to the profession in the future. If current trends continue BMEs will continue to be rarities in k-12 schools. It has been noted in the research literature that education preparation programs play a prominent role in the development of professional identity of educators (Lee, 2013). Teacher education programs have to be able to equip future educators with a more critical lens. Students cannot afford for educators to be blind to their experiences. Equity training begins with exposure.

Collaboration between school leaders and education preparation programs can be mutually beneficial in this regard. School leaders can provide spaces for future educators to authentically engage with populations both unlike and like their own. Education preparation programs can also provide opportunities for pre-service educators to enter community based spaces, such as community centers and after school programs, to get insight into the informal pedagogy that students receive. This will be helpful to compare and contrast these approaches to develop a true sense of cross cultural relations. Educators in k-12 settings need to be better prepared to have critical conversations regarding the impact of race and culture on the educational practice of professionals and the academic achievement. Additionally, educators and scholars have to resist the urge to essentialize marginalized populations as a proxy for meaningful conversations. It is impossible to quantify the experiences of students and faculty without meaningful engagement. Critical race pedagogues focus on consciousness moving beyond surface

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level conceptualizations of race, class, and gender. Undoubtedly popular youth culture is a viable tool for engaging students, it cannot alone be credited as a critical cultural consciousness. There is a difference between appreciating culture and appropriating culture, and when schools tend towards appropriation Black students are done a disservice.

The findings of this study illuminated the role that informal pedagogy and informal learning spaces have on the professional practice of BMEs. Individuals, such as Sean and Carlton utilize non-formal spaces such as a baseball diamond or track to connect with students and educate them in a way that tangible and responsive to the needs of the Black male students they serve (Douglas and Peck, 2013; Shujaa, 1994). As Brockenbrough (2012) noted, not every BME will utilize similar spaces in a similar manner, however those individuals who do utilize their skill set in such ways deserve to be honored by receiving the support of the school leaders. For example, school leaders can provide lunch for a BME that decides to conduct group discussion sessions every Friday for minority males. Another example would be a principal allowing a BME to conduct a professional learning session regarding the practical aspects of implementing Hip-Hop pedagogy as a tool for engaging all students. Authentic engagement of students is the responsibility of all educators.

In encouraging BMEs to continue in the work of CRP school leaders have to be careful not to pigeonhole BMEs as experts in only dealing with Black students. School leaders need to be cognizant of their own biases and perceptions of what a BME is, and what is abilities as an educator are. Teachers in the school building, more often than not, will imitate the perception of colleagues that is perpetuated by leadership. If colleagues

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see that a BME is relegated to a certain role then he will be perceived accordingly. As Nassir noted, the BME needs allies to thrive in a predominantly White school settings.

### **Future Research**

This study has generated a rich discussion regarding the role of racial consciousness as well as expanded traditional notions of pedagogy is and isn't. I am interested in exploring several concepts that emerged during the data analysis process that are pertinent to improving conditions for individuals that have been historically disenfranchised in American formal education spaces. The first of these concepts is the notion of racial consciousness, of particular interest is how it influences and is influenced by the interrelated aspects of social context, socialization, and academic achievement. This study examined the perspective of educators regarding this topic, however it is also worth considering students perceptions regarding the influence of racial consciousness on their experiences in American schools.

Secondly, as suburban schools become more racially diverse it is imperative to increase understanding of the lived experiences of Black students in this environment. Several participants described significant racialized moments that occurred in their pre-adolescence years. The increasing popularity and prevalence of social media has provided young people with greater access to information and messages regarding their socially constructed racial identity, however these messages greatly impact how students view their racial identity. These conceptions are worth exploring. Further study into the perceptions and influence of racial consciousness among secondary students can offer suburban and/or predominately White school districts insight in to how to better support students of color and increase student achievement.

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It is also worthwhile to continue to explore the impact of CRP on the professional practice of social justice educators in general and Black educators. Conversations regarding social justice often focus on a macro level, however the findings suggests that there are numerous actions that individuals can and do take on a micro level. There is a clear need for scholarship that elucidates the work of Black educators in formal education spaces—highlighting both the formal and informal teaching that occurs. The burden of providing culturally relevant instruction cannot be borne solely by Black educators. Scholars and practioners should discover what methods or approaches that Black can be emulated by others, for the betterment of all children. Moreover, White educators need to explore how their own conceptions of race and their perceptions of the race of others impacts what happens in the school setting. Racial consciousness, like social justice approach, is not a right reserved strictly for folks of color. The social consequences of race vary from person to person, however the reality of race impacts us all. Educators will be ill equipped to help students make sense of their own existence and help them counteract the systems of power/oppression that they face if they have not first conceptualized their own racial existence and its impact on their personhood.

There is also a need to continue to explore the experiences of Black male educators, particularly the experiences of those outside of the urban context. Although not highlighted in the findings several participants in this study mentioned the role that suburban poverty has on the educational outcomes of the students they serve. Race matters and social class matters. Scholars must consider how to illuminate the experiences of marginalized individuals—racially and socio-economically—in the school to deepen understanding about how the power dynamics inherent in school setting impact

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student achievement. It is also worth exploring how educators from marginalized groups integrate into bureaucratic structures with staid cultures that may or may not be welcoming to individuals that do not reflect that culture. More specifically as it relates to this study, it is important that scholars continue to trouble commonsense notions of what Blackness looks like in the school setting. If we don't closely examine the practices of BMEs we relegate them to caricatures. Some of the practices of BMEs are replicable in some forms. It is worth exploring what BMEs do that works in order to see what is transferrable for all instructors as well as what might be effective in both similar and dissimilar contexts.

The power of the sports based relationship between BMEs and Black male students is a topic worthy of further study. It was unclear from the data whether BMEs pursued mentor/mentee relationships intentionally through sport or if it was an unavoidable coincidence. I suspect that the coaching relationship was perused because of the fraternal bond that is inherent in athletic competition as well as BMEs seizing the opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of the student-athletes they interact with. To know for certainty the impact that sports have on the relationship between BMEs and Black male students the research and interview questions would need to focus more intently on the motives behind BMEs decisions to coach. This topic is especially relevant because as Corey and Adewale noted, coaching and teaching are more similar than dissimilar and if not for the pull of coaching several participants would not have entered the field of education.

This study explicated how the pedagogy of BMEs was influenced by racial consciousness and its impact, however most of the participant responses focused on

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informal teaching methods or general approaches to pedagogy. Further studies can be designed to explicate how the formal instructional strategies and curriculum development are influenced by racial consciousness and multiple layers of identity. Additionally, scholars must continue to theorize CRP to explore how to better prepare future educators to purposefully and effectively engage in the fight for social justice as advocates for equity in formal education spaces. CRP provides a lens for understanding how the intersectionality of multiple aspects of identity impacts learning. It also offers a framework for critiquing the overt and covert manners in which schools perpetuate inequity. It is imperative for scholars to continue to critique systems of power in formal education spaces, while challenging themselves as educators to model the inclusivity and cultural relevancy that they profess.

The focus of this study was the experiences of BMEs, however it is equally important for scholars to continue to explore the experiences of Black male students, in particular as it relates to the impact of racial consciousness on academic engagement and academic achievement. How does racial consciousness influence how Black male students perceive their agency inside and outside of the school setting? It is also worthwhile to explicitly explore the relationship between BMEs and Black male students. The findings of this study found that BMEs shared a connection with Black male students, however it is worth exploring this connection from the perspective of Black male students. Do they feel a connection? If so, what is the source of the connection? What can be learned from this connection that inform the relationships Black male students cultivate with educators from other backgrounds?

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Finally, it is important to note that CRP is not just about increasing racial awareness, it also emphasizes agency and empowerment—both for educators and for students. For example, a critical aspect of this study was providing voice to the participants and illustrating the myriad of ways that these men are working to create more equitable spaces in the buildings in which they work. This study provided a platform for BMEs to share their perspective on their experiences. It is worthwhile exploring to what degree formal education spaces reinforce or retard the agency of the educators they employ and students they serve. Why are the experiences of some students more highly valued than the perspective of others? Further research can explore ways in which educators can create spaces in schools to develop the agency of the students they serve and the educators they employ. In particular, I am interested in examining how critical race pedagogues infuse traditional content with a critical pedagogical approach that creates more equitable opportunities for marginalized students.

Agency is an essential ingredient in increasing positive outcomes for students in general, and Black male students specifically. Although, the findings generated in this study were not empirical in nature the anecdotal evidence provided by participants suggests that there is lack of perceived agency amongst Black male students that has seriously impeded their academic achievement and acts as a barrier to their academic engagement. School leaders have to be intentional about carving out spaces for students to exercise their agency. Additionally, finding spaces for individuals to exercise agency are equally as important for educators. Schools should be places where we honor the efforts of individuals whose pedagogical approach is focused on eradicating systemic forces of oppression in American schools. Too often individuals with a social justice

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focus are placed to instead of partnered with. Although, true social justice work is not about being popular, it is implausible to expect to create more equitable outcomes for Black students in a macro sense without critical race pedagogues gaining support from other relevant stakeholders.

At the onset of this study, I anticipated discovering easily digestible responses and insight into how teacher education programs and school districts can better recruit and retain Black male educators. There was no simple answer to this question, however the findings of this study suggests that the recruitment and retention efforts of school districts and teacher education programs begins with a critique of the critical consciousness of the program. That is, is this program a safe place for potential BMEs to express their identity? Are the efforts of BMEs that engage in social justice work undermined by race-blind administrators and faculty and staff? As Graham declared the talented Black male does not have to be educator, if he can't be himself in formal education spaces he can pursue other careers and connect with young people community based spaces. When this happens, schools lose out. To successfully recruit more BMEs school districts and education preparation programs have to ensure that they are providing current BMEs with the resources they need to excel.

This dissertation study illustrated how the double consciousness of being a BME in a predominately White context is influenced by lived experiences and as well as how those experiences influence the relationships BMEs have with Black male students. Additionally, this work illuminates the collective and individualistic actions that BME take to counteract the forces of oppression in the school setting and work towards equitable opportunity and outcomes for marginalized students in general but Black

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students or rather Black male students in particular. It is my hope that this study can serve as the impetus for further conversation in k-12 schools and the academy, and ultimately an increase in the collective racial consciousness of educators in both k-12 and higher education.

### **Conclusion**

As a Black male educator employed in a predominately White setting conducting this study was a deeply personal task for me. Although future opportunities will allow me to share more of my perspective on the topics broached in this study, I was keenly aware that this study was not about airing my own opinions. My focus was on using the tools of scholarship to provide voice to individuals and to an experience that has often been overlooked, under theorized, and overgeneralized by scholars and laymen. Initially, it was difficult to quiet my voice and perspective as I crafted the research proposal for this study. Feedback from my committee and advisor rooted methodologically. There were several moments in each of the nine interviews that I conducted when I heard my own experiences shared through the responses of the men I interviewed. It was uncanny. In seeking to affirm the voice of others, I found my own voice affirmed. Once I began to conduct interviews I was amazed at how strongly I identified with various participants.

I, like Graham, see my authenticity as one of my most valuable aspects of identity.

I, like Sean, spent the majority of my k-12 experience in predominately Black schools. The formative years I spent in that environment reinforced messages of pride and intellectual freedom that I received in my home. It was affirming for me to see the diversity amongst my mostly Black teaches and mostly Black peers. I learned that Black

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could be intelligent. Black could be nerdy. Black could play chess. Black could like math. Black did not fit in an easily contained presumption.

I, like Corey, experienced prejudice and biases from classmates as one of the few Black males on a PWI campus as an undergraduate student. I felt the discouragement and isolation. I did not succumb to it and overcame.

I, like Kendrick, entered the field of education because I wanted to make a difference in the lives of students that were disengaged academically. I could not understand why peers that looked like me and came from the same community that I came from did not embrace education the way that I did. My decision to become an educator was rooted in my desire to revolutionize the education system.

I, like Andre, recognize that the education system as currently construed is designed to perpetuate a narrative that further marginalizes students and educators that look like me. Stories like mine are not the dominant narrative, though it should be.

I, like Nassir, struggled to learn how to adapt to the unwritten rules of collegiality the first time I was immersed in a predominately White environment. There were implicit rules I didn't pick up on initially. I learned the hard way how to survive.

I, like Wassulu, embrace the opportunity I have as an educator to be a strong, positive, consistent role model in the lives of the students I serve. It is frustrating at times to see the obstacles that students face-socially and structurally. It is frustrating for me as an educator to endure the constraints that are placed, however I know that the strength in knowing that I am playing a significant role in the lives of my students.

I, like Adewale, use my ability to communicate in the language of power to demonstrate for my students how use their formal school experiences to their advantage.

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It was not obvious to me initially that my ability to communicate ideas verbally and written would be an asset. I speak with my students on nearly a daily basis about the importance of learning how to code switch.

I, like Corey, experienced prejudice and biases from classmates as one of the few Black males on a PWI campus as an undergraduate student. I felt the discouragement and isolation, but I did not succumb to it and persevered.

I, like Graham, see my authenticity as one of my most valuable aspects of identity.

I, like Carlton, understand the social implications that my racial identity has on my personal and professional experiences and I have “worn the mask”.

At the conclusion of this study I realize that not only was I the primary investigator for this study I also was a participant. My story is intertwined in the story that participants shared with me. It is my hope that this study will be made accessible to future BMEs to reiterate richness of the opportunity that BMEs have to make a meaningful difference in the lives of students. The opportunity does not come without challenges, as highlighted in this study, however the potential rewards outweigh the alternative. Ultimately, I want future BMEs to be secure in the culture they bring into the school setting and know they are valuable components of maintaining a quality American public school system.

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## Appendix A

## Recruitment Letter

Dear Sir,

I am a doctoral student at the University of Missouri as well as a school counselor in [REDACTED]. As a Black male I have always had an interest in telling the stories of other Black males, particularly in the field of education. Currently, I am conducting a study on the experiences of Black Male Educators. This study seeks to explore how Black male educators make meaning of their experiences as educators in a predominantly White school setting. Secondly, I would like to explore how Black male educators work with Black male students in this setting. Simply put, this research is about telling the story of your experiences as a Black male educator.

As required by the University of Missouri Institutional Research Board, names and identities of participants will be anonymized. This study has no foreseeable risk. If you are willing to participate I would ask that you submit the attached questionnaire and the consent form. The questionnaire, approximately 10 minutes in completion time, is demographic in nature. The purpose of this demographic data is to identify your preferred contact information, age category, educational background, number of years in the field, etc. Upon receipt of your consent and the demographic survey responses, I will contact you via email (or other sources of your preference) in order to schedule a convenient time to conduct a face to face interview with you.

The face to face interview will last approximately 30-60 minutes depending on participant responses. These interviews would be audio recorded for transcription purposes. Information produced by this study will be stored in the investigator's file and identified by a code number only. The code key connecting your name to specific information about you will be kept in a separate, secure location. Information contained in your records may not be given to anyone unaffiliated with the study in a form that could identify you without your written consent, except as required by law. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Completion of the attached questionnaire indicates your consent to participate in this study.

You reserve the right to terminate participation at any time. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at 314-496-0414 or [smartin@columbia.k12.mo.us](mailto:smartin@columbia.k12.mo.us), also you may contact my faculty advisor Dr. Juanita Simmons at 573-882-4218 or [simmonsjm@missouri.edu](mailto:simmonsjm@missouri.edu). If you have any concerns or questions regarding your rights as a participant in this research please contact the University of Missouri's Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 573-882-9585 or at [umcresearchirb@missouri.edu](mailto:umcresearchirb@missouri.edu).

Electronic Consent: Clicking on the link below indicates the following:

\*You have read the above information

**BLACK ON BOTH SIDES**

- \*You have read the attached consent form
- \*You voluntarily offer your consent to participate in this study and understand that you reserve the right to terminate your participation in this study at any time.
- \*You offer your consent and are willing to participate in a face to face interview scheduled at your convenience

The consent form and demographic survey can be accessed via the following link:

Demographic Survey

[Demographic Questionnaire.docx](#)

Consent Form

[Cover Letter Consent Form.docx](#)

I look forward to your participation in this study. Thank you for time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Samuel Martin

## Appendix B

## Recruitment Flyer



## **AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE EDUCATORS WANTED FOR A RESEARCH STUDY**

My name is Sam Martin, I am a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership at the University of Missouri and I am conducting a research study about the experiences of Black male educators. I am interested in interviewing individuals that hold professional positions (including teachers, counselors, administrators, and home school communicators) in [REDACTED] and identify as a Black and/or African American, and male.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of Black male educators in predominantly White school settings. Participants will be asked to fill out a brief demographic questionnaire and complete a face to face interview lasting approximately 30-60 minutes. Interviews will be scheduled and conducted at a place and time most convenient to participants.

If you are interested in participating in this research project please contact Sam at [stmypb@mail.missouri.edu](mailto:stmypb@mail.missouri.edu) or 314-496-0414.

**BLACK ON BOTH SIDES**

This research study has been approved by University of Missouri Institutional Review Board and Columbia Public Schools and will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Juanita Simmons, Educational Leadership Policy Analysis.

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## Appendix C

## Demographic Questionnaire

Age Range

22-35

36-49

50+

Describe your racial identity:

How would you describe the community you were raised in (Circle one)?

Rural

Suburban

Urban

How would you describe the demographics of the k-12 schools you attended (Circle all that apply)?

Rural

Suburban

Urban Public Private

How would you describe your family's socioeconomic status growing up (Circle one)?

Poverty

Lower Middle Class Middle Class Upper Middle Class

Current Position:

Extracurricular Duties/Assignments:

Years in education

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Interview Scheduling Preference

Before school

During School

After School

Preferred Interview Location

Hill Hall University of Missouri Campus

Other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Method of Contact

Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix D

## Interview Questions

Background Questions

1. What was school like for you growing up?
2. What type of student were you?
3. What were some of your most memorable school experiences?
4. How did you end up in the field of education?
5. Was education your first career choice?
6. How did you decide to work for CPS?

CPS Experience Related Questions

7. How would you describe your experiences in this district?
8. If a Black male educator were to ask advice about working in your position in this district, what advice would you offer?
9. What skills have allowed you to be a successful employee in this district?
10. Describe what you like most and least about the culture/climate of your work environment.
11. In your perception, what if any, influence has race played on your relationships with colleagues your current work environment?

Racial Consciousness Questions

12. Earlier you stated that you identify as \_\_\_\_\_ what is your recollection about your decision to identify yourself as \_\_\_\_\_?
13. What, if any experiences did you have that brought you to this decision?
14. What role has race played in your educational experiences?
15. Has race influenced how you do your current job (teach, discipline, counselor, etc.)?
16. If so, to what extent? Can you give me examples?

Relationships with Black male students

17. What influence has race played in your relationships with Black male students?
18. How do your experiences differ from the experiences of the Black male students you work with? How are they similar?
19. Have you found that your experiences influence how you relate to Black male students?
20. How do you think that the Black males you interact with perceive you?
21. What message do you want to communicate to the Black male students you serve?
22. Is the message different in any way from the message you communicate with all other students you serve? How, so?

Conclusion

Is there anything else you would like me to know about this topic that you have yet to share?

## VITA

Samuel Thomas Martin IV was born February 15, 1983 in St. Louis, Missouri. He attended Bible Way preschool, Pershing Accelerated Elementary School, Ronald E. McNair 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Center, and Brittany Woods Middle School, before graduating from University City High School in 2001. At UCHS Samuel was a situational right handed relief pitcher and an inside linebacker on the baseball, and football teams, respectively. Athletic competition was his first love, however as a high school student Samuel felt called to become an educator. He attended the University of Missouri with this singular focus. Samuel graduated with from the University of Missouri with a BSED, Middle School Language Arts and Social Studies in 2005, and a MED in Counseling Psychology, Secondary School Counseling in 2007. Samuel has been employed in Columbia Public Schools since 2007. He lives in Columbia, Missouri with his wife Angela, and two children, Sydney Pearl and Samuel Thomas V.